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*Liberal Order in Crisis? Post-Cold War Russia and the Evolution of  
International Society*

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*Abstract:* The past several years have witnessed the apparent return of great power rivalry as Russia-West and China-West relations have grown strained or deteriorated outright, owing in significant part to disputes over instances in which the nature of state sovereignty was contested. This has led to questions concerning the future of the liberal international order, including debates over what the liberal international order precisely is – the extent to which it is rooted in American leadership and whether it includes a commitment to certain values that go beyond mere rules-based cooperation. But the strengthening character of hegemony, the emergence of a truly global international society and the increasing rigidity of certain international norms all raise further questions regarding how recent developments should be conceptualized. Drawing on a range of English School and other sources, this dissertation will explore the relationship between international society, conceptions of sovereignty and international order. It will situate the liberal international order with respect to these concepts in the post-Cold War context, examine the sources of today's Russia-West conflict, and explore the multiple vectors that inform Russia's current position in international society, including with respect to its deepening partnership with China. It will then derive conclusions regarding the future of hegemony and great power rivalry in international society.

# *Liberal Order in Crisis? Post-Cold War Russia and the Evolution of International Society*

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## *Chapter 1*

### *Introduction: Sovereignty, Liberal Order and International Society*

#### **1.1. Background and Key Question**

The post-Cold War era, inaugurated with a period of Western triumphalism and claims of the supposed “end of history”, has come to be marred by normative contestation and rivalry. The rise of a human dimension to security and development – culminating in particular with the entrenchment of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in 2005 which, among other things, attempted to legitimate certain military interventions for humanitarian purposes – has been met with disagreement over the nature of state sovereignty.

In Europe, the territorial integrity of Serbia and Ukraine – among others – have been compromised by the West and by Russia respectively. Ostensibly, to legitimate their actions, both parties have appealed to fledgling humanitarian norms, with many Western capitals noting that Kosovar Albanians deserved protection from the threat of Serbian ethnic cleansing and Moscow making a similar claim regarding the need to protect ethnic Russians from the nationalist excesses of Ukraine’s Maidan revolution.<sup>1</sup> However, these justifications have been accompanied by accusations of more nefarious intentions, with Washington allegedly couching its realist aims in liberal rhetoric and aiming to consolidate a unipolar Atlanticist order in Europe on the one hand, and Russia, on the other hand, disregarding the

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Kertsen, “Does Russia have a ‘responsibility to protect’ Ukraine? Don’t buy it”, *The Globe and Mail*, 4 March 2014, available online at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/does-russia-have-a-responsibility-to-protect-ukraine-dont-buy-it/article17271450/> (last accessed 29.06.2016)

sovereignty of states in its “near abroad” and using ethnic Russians outside its borders instrumentally in a ploy to secure the long-term foundations of its great-power status.

In the wider Middle East, rival conceptions of sovereignty have also plagued debates over Iraq, Libya and Syria. In the case of Libya, this left not just Russia but also Brazil, India and even Germany concerned with the breadth of the mandate supposedly provided by UN Security Council Resolution 1973, authorizing a military intervention in the name of R2P.<sup>2</sup> NATO was accused of effectively picking sides in a civil war, with Western calls for regime change rendering the Libyan insurgents more intractable, thus prolonging the violence and failing to reduce threats to the security of the Libyan people.<sup>3</sup> This exacerbated tensions between the great powers as much global attention shifted to Syria – of greater strategic importance to Russia than Libya<sup>4</sup> – resulting in Moscow and Beijing invoking their Security Council vetoes on several occasions.

This debate over the nature of state sovereignty that has accompanied the return of great power rivalry has led to questions surrounding the future of what has come to be known as the liberal international order. Particularly following the expansion of the European Union into Central and Eastern Europe and the launch of the Eastern Partnership in the 2000s, Russia and Western countries found themselves at loggerheads in much of the post-Soviet space.<sup>5</sup> This could be interpreted as the continuation of the natural expansion of the liberal sphere of states, or alternatively could represent evidence that one of the liberal order’s primary manifestations – the European Union – had transformed itself from a peace project into a geopolitical bloc,<sup>6</sup> with consequences for the order’s future shape and the principles on

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<sup>2</sup> Roy Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194-5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 195-6.

<sup>5</sup> See Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 97-134.

<sup>6</sup> See Cristian Nitoiu and Monika Sus, “Introduction: The Rise of Geopolitics in the EU’s Approach in its Eastern Neighbourhood”, *Geopolitics*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (2019), pp. 1-19.

which it rests. In both the Orange and Euromaidan revolutions, assertions concerning Ukraine's right to choose its geopolitical orientation, the structure of its economic and political system, and the extent to which it belonged to Russia's "sphere of privileged interests" demonstrated that debates over sovereignty were intimately connected with questions surrounding global order and the European security framework. According to some, the tension found today between Russia and Western states in the European theatre is partly the result of Western institutions such as the EU clinging to a particular interpretation of liberal internationalism at the expense of Russia's security concerns.<sup>7</sup>

The descent of Russia-West – and now, increasingly, China-West – relations into a confrontational logic has been accompanied by the apparent retreat of the two great liberal Anglo-Saxon powers of the past two centuries from their international obligations under Brexit and Trump. Occurring a mere quarter-century after the supposed final triumph of the liberal model, this has led many to question what future the liberal order has on the global scene. The existence of such an order, however, is often taken for granted. Nor is there necessarily agreement on the nature and scope of this order. Does the liberal order have global reach, or is it effectively limited to the West and its "client states"? Does it primarily emphasize rules-based cooperation and interdependence, or does it also require a "thicker" commitment to democracy and human rights? To what extent is it rooted in American leadership?

Paul Staniland contends that the liberal international order has, in effect, never extended far beyond the transatlantic community, as the structure and content of American alliance-building in Europe has differed fundamentally from the American approach to

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), chapters 1-3. Also see Kadri Liik, "Two decades of Putin", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 9 August 2019, available online at: [https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_two\\_decades\\_of\\_putin](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_two_decades_of_putin) (last accessed 21.08.2019)

shaping order in East Asia and the Middle East.<sup>8</sup> Graham Allison perhaps goes even further, challenging the idea that the liberal order has been primarily responsible for upholding international peace since the end of World War II and that “constructing this order has been the main driver of U.S. engagement in the world” over the past seven decades.<sup>9</sup> The extent to which the liberal order has now become a “Kantian” force in international affairs that can survive the abdication of American global leadership has been the source of great speculation, and it is a question that this dissertation will attempt to address conceptually, including through providing a definition of the liberal order that reflects its presence in both the realms of material power and ideas. Contrary to those that believe that a restoration of Washington’s pre-Trump international posture is all that is required to resurrect the *status quo ante* and give new life to the liberal order, this dissertation will show that American overreach has been a leading cause of the order’s decline, generating as it has a non-negligible rise in great power confrontation as the Western political community has expanded into Russia’s “backyard” and failed to accord Moscow a satisfactory place in the European political and security order.

However, debates over sovereignty and the liberal international order are not clear cut and unidimensional. For example, regarding sovereignty, one can certainly observe a phenomenon of globalization and a backlash against it that have taken root over the past several decades. But, notwithstanding the discussion laid out above, it would be incorrect to posit that today’s world can be easily divided into an internationalist West and a sovereigntist rest. The United States has famously failed to ratify treaties such as UNCLOS and the Rome Statute. Russia and China, for their part, though they may promote the norm of non-

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Staniland, “Misreading the ‘Liberal Order’: Why We Need New Thinking in American Foreign Policy”, *Lawfare*, 29 July 2018, available online at: <https://www.lawfareblog.com/misreading-liberal-order-why-we-need-new-thinking-american-foreign-policy> (last accessed 24.06.2019)

<sup>9</sup> Graham Allison, “The Myth of the Liberal Order”, *Foreign Affairs*, 14 June 2018, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/myth-liberal-order> (last accessed 24.06.2019)



interference, have an internationalist dimension to their foreign policies, with one scholar claiming that it is their aim to “universalize universalism” rather than have its content be dictated exclusively by the liberal West.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, although a cosmopolitan global order was not fully entrenched following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, there remain important elements of international cooperation today – ranging from trade agreements to climate change to counterterrorism – that militate against a complete descent into a world defined by great power conflict. The degree and diversity of international integration today makes it difficult to isolate a country entirely,<sup>11</sup> and many middle powers and small states are likely to want to maximize the benefits that they can derive from deepening ties simultaneously with multiple great powers, whether it is East and Southeast Asian countries caught in the middle of the Sino-American rivalry or the Central Asian republics between Russia and China that are partaking in Eurasian order-building.<sup>12</sup> As for the liberal international order, as discussed above, the extent to which nondemocratic or non-Western states belong to its institutions and mechanisms is also a matter of contention.

As such, although debates over the future of sovereignty and the liberal order are very relevant, their complexity calls for an evaluation of international society more broadly – its norms, institutions and processes. Today’s global international society is culturally diverse and normatively thin,<sup>13</sup> although in terms of formal institutions quite thick and perhaps even robust. Moreover, barring the occasional glaring exception there remains a largely universal commitment to conducting international affairs in a rules-based fashion. While Graham

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see Dina Esfandiary, “Renewed U.S. Sanctions Unlikely to Isolate Iran”, *The Century Foundation*, 7 November 2018, available online at: <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/renewed-u-s-sanctions-unlikely-isolate-iran/> (last accessed 03.07.2019)

<sup>12</sup> For example, see Suisheng Zhao and Xiong Qi, “Hedging and Geostrategic Balance of East Asian Countries toward China”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 25, no. 100 (2016), pp. 485-99.

<sup>13</sup> See Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), pp. 301-2.

Allison may contend that “rules-based order” is a redundant concept,<sup>14</sup> this is not necessarily the case: There is a difference between an order that operates according to informal, inter-subjectively derived principles and today’s international society rooted in respect for a substantial body of international law, replete with international legal mechanisms and formal multilateral institutions. Whether international society’s institutions – both formal and informal – can survive a rise in great power competition and normative contestation is a matter that is directly relevant to the study of contemporary events. Moreover, the extent to which countries such as China have become reconciled to the norms of European international society – and whether today’s international society is in fact European in origin at all – is also a central question. With evaluations of contemporary international developments increasingly featuring discussion of “civilizational states”,<sup>15</sup> the direction of today’s international society appears to be shaped by a growing trend toward pluralism, for better or worse. Adam Watson, writing perhaps presciently nearly three decades ago, contends that “[t]he pertinent and unresolved question for our multicultural [international] society is: to what extent must an effective international society develop its codes of conduct, its values and its non-contractual assumptions within a common dominant culture?”<sup>16</sup>

According to geo-strategist Robert D. Kaplan, there are three principal regions of Eurasia that are either unstable or have the potential to become unstable due to the unravelling of the post-Cold War global order: Europe (including Russia), the Middle East, and China (along with the rest of East and Southeast Asia).<sup>17</sup> The Middle East does not contain any states that have the potential to become major powers at the global level, but the

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<sup>14</sup> Allison, “The Myth of the Liberal Order”.

<sup>15</sup> For example, see Adrian Pabst, “China, Russia, and the return of the civilisational state”, *The New Statesman*, 8 May 2019, available online at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/2019/05/china-russia-and-return-civilisational-state> (last accessed 24.06.2019)

<sup>16</sup> Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, p. 318.

<sup>17</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, “The Old Order Collapses, Finally”, *Stratfor*, 21 May 2014, available online at: <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/old-order-collapses-finally> (last accessed 13.06.2019)

other two regions do. Russia is a former global superpower with a massive nuclear arsenal, significant influence in neighbouring states, and territorial control over much of the heart of Eurasia. China is the world's most populous country and the second largest when judged by the size of its economy. Depending on how one measures it, its gross domestic product is set to surpass that of the United States in the coming years, and it has begun a military build-up that could allow it to dominate the South China Sea at the very least – which would enhance its ability to project power beyond its immediate region – in the not-too-distant future.<sup>18</sup>

There are many dimensions through which these two important countries – Russia and China – will be forced to deal with the question of sovereignty, particularly as each country's relative weight fluctuates over the years and decades ahead, which could potentially return international politics to some sort of multipolar state, with China – faced with a rising India and ASEAN and a still-significant Russia and Japan – unable to dominate the Eurasian space as the Soviet Union did throughout the Cold War.<sup>19</sup> Whether multipolarity is the right frame of reference for describing the situation to which the world appears headed is a question on its own, which will be discussed in this dissertation. As the world continues to move away from the “unipolar moment” of the 1990s, it will be crucial for foreign policy makers and analysts to understand Russian and Chinese worldviews and intentions.

This dissertation seeks to answer the following key question: Against the backdrop of renewed great power rivalry and normative contestation, how resilient is the liberal international order and what consequences will there be for international society and international order more broadly? These terms will all be situated in theoretical canon,

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<sup>18</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* (New York, NY: Random House, 2014), pp. 13-5.

<sup>19</sup> For more on Asian multipolarity, see Parag Khanna, “China Couldn't Dominate Asia if It Wanted to”, *Foreign Policy*, 3 February 2019, available online at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/03/china-couldnt-dominate-asia-if-it-wanted-to/> (last accessed 27.05.2019)

defined and explored in greater detail both below and in the next chapter. What is important for now is to make clear that this PhD thesis is not centred on Russian or Western foreign policy per se, nor is it focused on East-West relations more broadly. Rather, by delving into Russian (and, to a lesser extent, Chinese) conceptions of sovereignty and order, this dissertation aims to uncover certain processes currently underway in international society. In other words, it is theory *applied to* Russia and China.

## **1.2. Supplementary Questions**

To address this central question, this dissertation will focus on a series of sub-questions, which, when explored, will offer a broader perspective on the core issue that this dissertation explores. They are:

- What is the conceptual history of sovereignty in the West, in Russia and in China? Delving into this issue will provide a significant indication as to whether a country's interpretation of the norm of sovereignty is "in its DNA", so to speak, or whether it can in fact evolve depending on the circumstances.
- What are the characteristics of the contemporary liberal international order? As indicated above, this is in fact a matter of contention in the academic, political and policy worlds, and relates directly to the question of the extent to which Russia and China are challenging the order.
- How does the interaction between great powers shape international order? It is this process that will allow for a stronger conceptual understanding of where global politics are situated today.

- What were the historical events that produced the gridlock seen at the UN Security Council today? Have Russia and China's views on the legitimacy of certain elements of the liberal order evolved over the past several years? These questions open the door to the less theoretical part of this project, by providing an analysis of the relatively recent real-world events that have played a major part in shaping present-day great power rivalry. They can also, when taken with the answers to the three aforementioned sub-questions, provide an opportunity to speculate as to what may be necessary for a new, more functional consensus to be established between the world's major powers – or indeed if this is even possible.

- How can Russia's relationship with international society and with the international order be conceptualized, in light not only of renewed Russia-West rivalry but also Russia's internal struggles with nationhood and its historical oscillation between embracing the West and West-scepticism?

- How has the Sino-Russian relationship evolved in recent years and how sturdy is Russia's current position in Eurasia? Moreover, how does China view the contemporary international order, and how compatible are its views with Russia's?

### **1.3. Definitions**

Before proceeding any further, it is important to define some of the key terms that will be referenced in this dissertation. The most important place to begin is with the term *resilience*, which is referenced in the key question advanced above. David Chandler defines resilience as relying on an ontology of “emergent complexity” – a “postmodern form of governance” that critiques “liberal modes of top-down governing”.<sup>20</sup> Such a definition works well with Richard

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<sup>20</sup> David Chandler, “Beyond neoliberalism: resilience, the new art of governing complexity”, *Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (2014), pp. 47-63.

Ned Lebow's "cultural theory" of international relations, which will be outlined in Chapter 4, which emphasizes the relationship between change and emergent complexity.<sup>21</sup> Such a determination is key, as it implies that any resilient form of governance (or order, as will be outlined below) must be adaptable to change. Therefore, the resilience of the liberal international order is conditioned in part on its ability to demonstrate its flexibility against the backdrop of renewed great power rivalry. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 7, with the help of the two-level model of the global political system advanced in Chapter 2 and a broader critique of liberalism and liberal internationalism, this is an unlikely proposition. Although not a definitive indictment of all forms of liberalism or nominally liberal ordering practices, Chandler's positing of resilience in opposition to the liberal logic of governance already provides an indication to that effect.

This dissertation also makes reference to several other terms that require defining. *Sovereignty*, as will be elaborated upon further below in this chapter's discussion of the English School of international relations, is a core principle of the contemporary international society of states. Chapter 2 will outline the varying materialist and idealist accounts of its development. However, despite (or perhaps because of) its status seemingly atop the pyramid of norms and institutions of a diverse international society, the precise nature of sovereignty today is contested. For some, it implies a rather strict adherence to the principle of non-interference in states' internal affairs. For others, it is effectively granted only to great powers and not to smaller ones. For many in the liberal West, it is often conditional upon the fulfilment of other normative criteria, failure in which could leave one prone to a series of actions ranging from sanctions to military action. Therefore, although sovereignty may remain to a significant extent an ontological reality and building block of today's

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 58 & 506.

international community, for the purposes of this dissertation it is more useful to think of it as a norm (or institution) that is continually contested, particularly so after the Cold War in which international society appeared to have been gifted with a “blank slate” of sorts – a testament to the real-world impact of ideas.

Another idea that is contested is *democracy*. Although debates over sovereignty have served as the key flashpoints in post-Cold War relations between Russia and the West – such as in Kosovo, Iraq and the colour revolutions – disagreements over the nature and spread of democracy further highlight the extent to which sovereign states retain their ability to uphold their normative preferences in international affairs. In the Western conception, this requires a commitment to more than just electoral democracy and often includes the absence of significant levels of corruption, the presence of a regime that will operate strictly within the constitution and allow for veritable opposition, or even a commitment to upholding human rights (even though democratization and political liberalization are technically separate phenomena). Nominal attempts to promote a particular interpretation of democracy and human rights have been a particularly salient feature of the foreign policies of many Western states in the post-Cold War era, encountering resistance from other states that prefer to emphasize their own interpretation of sovereignty.

The term “democracy” has also been referenced by non-Western states, albeit according to alternative interpretations. “Sovereign democracy” or “managed democracy” has been put forward in Putin’s Russia as some sort of balance between full electoral democracy and the need of the regime to manage society’s economic and political goals unhindered, while the “democratization” of international relations is referenced by China as a means of combating the perceived excesses of American unipolarity, even if this means strengthening the voices of nondemocratic states in international affairs. As such, determining a regime’s legitimacy according to the benchmark of its alleged democratic character can be seen as a “normative

rather than legal” process.<sup>22</sup> Widespread international support for principles such as sovereignty and democracy does not preclude the possibility that rival interpretations of those principles can have meaningful consequences. An intermediate definition of democracy that might have reconciled those advanced by the Western-led liberal international order and its current challengers is explored by David Held and will be probed in Chapter 3.

While sovereignty and democracy are ideas whose interpretation is contested, *hegemony* and *legitimacy* are two interrelated concepts whose meaning is more fixed. Ian Clark defines hegemony as an institution that is “legitimated within international society”, “applicable to material conditions of primacy [...] underpinned by social understandings” and that “confers special rights and responsibilities on a state (or states) with the resources to lead [...] it is a status bestowed by others, and rests on recognition by them.”<sup>23</sup> Legitimacy is therefore key to hegemonial status. According to Christian Reus-Smit, “legitimacy is an inherently social phenomenon. Whether or not an actor or action is legitimate depends on the perceptions of others, perceptions made with reference to prevailing intersubjective understandings. [...] Auto-legitimation is impossible.”<sup>24</sup> Even Nuno Monteiro, writing from a systemic and materialist perspective rather than a societal and normative one, observes that “unparalleled military power requires unequalled self-restraint” in order to preserve a unipolar order, as a unipole that attempts to increase its power will ultimately undermine its own position by encouraging other powers to balance against it, whether by acquiring nuclear weapons or increasing their conventional power.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Roy Allison, “Russia and the post-2014 international legal order: revisionism and *realpolitik*”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 93, no. 3 (2017), pp. 519-43.

<sup>23</sup> Ian Clark, *Hegemony in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 34-5 & 46-7.

<sup>24</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, “Power, Legitimacy, and Order”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (2014), pp. 341-59.

<sup>25</sup> Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 231-2.



This definition of hegemony is not incompatible with Gramsci's famous notion of a mixture of coercion and consent.<sup>26</sup> Consent is required for a given hegemony to be considered legitimate, while coercion (or deterrence) is a given in power relations – recognition of states' capabilities, whether one considers that recognition to be “social” or not, is a sufficient condition for its existence as a consideration in interstate relations. As such, the more germane condition to examine is that of consent. As will be outlined in subsequent chapters, hegemony that has lost legitimacy is merely pre-eminence, which in the context of today's world threatens to hollow out the conditions that have sustained much of the modern international society of states. The emphasis on legitimacy as being rooted in perception (i.e., intersubjectively agreed-upon norms and practices) is key to this dissertation's analysis. While other sources of legitimacy may theoretically exist – such as morality or law – these are less relevant in the context of the post-Cold War world.

Although international law can be used a form of justifying an action, rival interpretations of international legal norms in the context of economic sanctions and military interventions show how international law is not merely an objective body of codifications but also a subjectively and intersubjectively interpreted set of norms.<sup>27</sup> As such, and as will be discussed below, this explains why international law is often included as a primary institution of international society alongside sovereignty and therefore subject to contestation. As for morality, rival visions and norms in today's diverse global international society points to its limited utility as a source of legitimacy. The Latin root of the word “morality” – *moralis* –

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<sup>26</sup> Anne Konrad, “Theorizing Realist and Gramscian Hegemony”, *E-International Relations*, 2 September 2012, available online at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/09/02/theorizing-realist-and-gramscian-hegemony/> (last accessed 04.03.2020)

<sup>27</sup> The tension in the post-Cold War era between international law and legitimacy was rendered particularly manifest by the Independent International Commission on Kosovo, which famously characterized the NATO-led bombing of Yugoslavia as “illegal but legitimate”. See Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report: Conflict, International Response, Lessons Learned* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 4.

means “custom”, suggesting an often-subjective character. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, perceived attempts at spreading specific interpretations of norms – often in the name of morality but also seemingly for the purpose of expanding the Western political community – has contributed to the crisis of the contemporary liberal order.

One final notion that is often referenced in this dissertation is that of *identity*. Alexander Wendt, in his early noted attempts to contribute to social constructivism, defined identities as “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self” by participating in “collective meanings”.<sup>28</sup> This emphasis on relative stability and “collective meanings” shows the extent to which identity can be operationalized not only at the domestic level but also at the international one, demonstrating how it can be forged within states in a co-constitutive (either convergent or divergent) manner with other states. It can also be employed as a tool that buttresses the resilience of an international society of states, in line with the definition advanced by Buzan below. In other words, elements of shared identity play a crucial role in ensuring that international institutions, norms and practices are upheld. Among other things, it will be discussed how the failure to construct a “Greater Europe” in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse has impacted Russia’s identity, led to the partial consolidation of blocs whose emergence threatens the cohesiveness of the contemporary international society of states, and inaugurated a seeming drift toward a post-Western world. In sum, this dissertation brings these core concepts together in the following way: Contestation over key ideas and principles such as sovereignty (along with others such as democracy) affects the individual identities of states as well as their collective identity (and vice-versa), challenges the resilience of the liberal international order and the norms and institutions of the contemporary international society, and damages the perceived legitimacy

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<sup>28</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics”, *International Organization*, Vol. 46, no. 2 (1992), pp. 391-425.

of Western hegemony (including the hegemonic status of the liberal order within international society) thus casting doubt on its durability.

Some clarifications are now necessary when it comes to core concepts relating to order and society. As one scholar known for his writings on liberal order notes, “it is up to every student of world order to think about and devise the appropriate framework for analysis”.<sup>29</sup> Barry Buzan defines an *international society* as “the institutionalization of shared interests and identity amongst states and the creation and maintenance of shared norms, rules, and institutions among them”.<sup>30</sup> Specifically, this dissertation’s understanding of international society will be situated in an intermediate position between those advanced by the two significant tomes of the English School canon mentioned above: *The Expansion of International Society* and *The Globalization of International Society*. The former contends that international society as we know it – including its norms and institutional practices – originated and developed in Europe before expanding across the globe in various stages,<sup>31</sup> while the latter emphasizes the polycentric origins of international society as well as the fact that it has qualitatively changed rather than merely expanded.<sup>32</sup>

As will be discussed in the next chapter, this dissertation will place its conceptual feet largely in the assumptions put forward by *The Globalization*, in particular when it comes to the relationship between international order and society as well as the understanding that international society has evolved to become more complex. However, it also acknowledges that today’s international society contains facets of Western structural dominance – the

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<sup>29</sup> Georg Sørensen, *Rethinking the New World Order* (London: Palgrave, 2016), p. 216.

<sup>30</sup> Barry Buzan, “How regions were made, and the legacies for world politics: an English School reconnaissance”, in T.V. Paul (ed.), *International Relations Theory and Regional Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Adam Watson, “European International Society and its Expansion” in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 [1984]), p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> Christian Reus-Smit and Tim Dunne, “The Globalization of International Society”, in Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit (eds.), *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 29.

product of the last several centuries. As such, where relevant, the term *European international society* is used to distinguish between the polycentric origins of international society as a whole and the specific subset that countries such as China encountered in the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Today, the level of interaction among states and the formal equality between them indicates that we now have a truly global international society across multiple dimensions of engagement. As Buzan and Little note, Eurasia previously featured multiple full international systems in tandem with a single economic international system before the consolidation and emergence of a single, full Eurasian system.<sup>34</sup>

The concept of international order and its relationship to international society will also be outlined in the next chapter. However, an analysis of international order first requires a definition of *order*. Lebow defines order as “legible, predictable behaviour in accord with recognized norms”, requiring a degree of solidarity to be robust.<sup>35</sup> This emphasis on at least a “degree of predictability” is echoed by other scholars as well.<sup>36</sup> However, it is important not to conflate predictability with inflexibility. “Recognized norms” are evidently able to evolve through an intersubjective process at the international level. Rather, predictability is an indicator of the range that norms can be seen to evolve (or not) while still being considered legitimate. An order that is seen to be evolving too quickly will be unstable, whereas one that fails to respond to pressures for change will also lack resilience. This dissertation therefore defines order as a transient political condition that rests on agreed-upon legitimacy. This

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<sup>33</sup> Buzan notes that prior to 1945, there was a “globalized European international society” rather than the “global international society” that exists today. As will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters, normative contestation can leave an imprint on international society, which explains how elements of structural Western dominance survive in global international society even as norms concerning the legitimacy of empire and colonialism have evolved. See Buzan, “How regions were made”, p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 100.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 305-6.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see Tang Shiping, “Order: A Conceptual Analysis”, *Chinese Political Sciences Review* Vol. 1 (2016), pp. 30-46.

coincides neatly with the employment of Watson's "pendulum" model, which will be outlined in the next chapter, where it is made clear that there is no invariable formula through which the degree of hegemonic centralization translates into stable order. In other words, though the concept of order may possess some trans-historic features, a given order's stability depends on historically contingent factors. Moreover, the reference to norms in definitions of both society and order shows the extent to which the concepts overlap and are bound by a close relationship, which the model advanced in the next chapter will attempt to conceptualize.

As defined by this dissertation, it is possible that an *international order* could take the form of a single uniform order of states, or alternatively it could contain several sub-orders and states that interact and even compete with and challenge one another. In other words, states and sub-orders are the primary unit actors in any international order. The scope of an international order is not necessarily global and such an order presupposes only thin normative agreement between actors on interstate practices and configurations of power. The term *global order* is occasionally used throughout this dissertation to refer to an international order of global scope or an attempt to deploy the concept of order at the global level. It is conceptually distinct from the term "world order", which will be outlined below. Taking an intermediate position between the definitions advanced by Richard Sakwa and John Ikenberry, as discussed above, the *liberal international order* will be defined as historically a set of principles regarding how to organize the international space in a cooperative fashion that has left an imprint on international society at various moments in history and thus become quasi-autonomous, but in today's context is fundamentally rooted in American leadership and requires a nominal commitment to "thick" liberal principles such as democracy and human rights, not just "thin" agreement on a rules-based framework.

The term “quasi-autonomous” is used here for several reasons. First, because norms infused into international society by individual actors can take on a life of their own, with American-endorsed liberal internationalism and capitalism being a prime example of this. Per a similar logic, Mark Raymond notes that shifts in rules governing state behaviour can themselves occur due to a “rule-governed social practice of making, interpreting, and applying rules”.<sup>37</sup> Second, because the institutions of international society, contractually negotiated as they are, constrain (or at the very least delineate) the actions of states. For example, despite instances of the United States unilaterally using force, the UN Security Council was used as a forum to discuss post-intervention dynamics in both the former Yugoslavia and Iraq. And third, the “quasi” serves to acknowledge that individual states and orders can have an impact on the shaping of international society. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, Western relative material power combined with the imprint left on global international society by the liberal international order produce an international society today that is infused with a “structure of Western hegemony”.<sup>38</sup> As such, international society can be imbued with normative content, but individual states or orders no longer completely control that content once it enters the realm of international society. The consequence of this, as will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 7, is that the current Russia-West conflict will have normative consequences affecting the future of both the liberal order and global international society that will be difficult to reverse. The notion of normative quasi-autonomy highlights the meaningfulness of contemporary great power contestation in international society and to a certain extent challenges one of the core assumptions of social constructivism, lending further support to the decision to base this dissertation’s theoretical model in the English School canon.

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Raymond, *Social Practices of Rule-Making in World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 45.

<sup>38</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 43.

The term *world order* refers to an international order that is necessarily global in scope and requires comprehensive agreement from all players on the rules of the game, including the requirements for becoming a legitimate member of the order. As such, due to the intimate relationship between order and society posited in *The Globalization*,<sup>39</sup> a world order comes close to embodying international society itself. While an international order or global order are thought of as being confined in large part to the international level of interaction, the level of overlap between a world order and international society presupposes a need to consider the degree of shared identity between actors. In other words, a world order transcends the domestic and international levels of analysis. Although elements of the liberal international order reside in international society and therefore enjoy universal appeal, the former and the latter have not become completely synonymous. Therefore, it would be accurate to say that today we have a *rules-based* world order, but not a liberal world order. In other words, despite elements of convergence and cooperation between states, the character of the contemporary world order is thin.<sup>40</sup> Due to the diversity found among the members of today's global international society, it is doubtful that a world order can ever be fully liberal. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, part of the instability in global affairs seen today is due to the differing standards for membership and "first-class citizenship" in the liberal international order and in international society advanced by rival major powers. There is therefore a form of international contestation occurring that features rival interpretations of the character of the contemporary world order, with leading members of the liberal international order considering its content to be thicker than is actually the case.

Finally, the term *international system* is used in this dissertation in several ways. In an English School context, it is a specific construct in which interstate interaction is limited to

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<sup>39</sup> Reus-Smit and Dunne, "The Globalization of International Society", pp. 31-2.

<sup>40</sup> Given the definition of global order advanced above, it is therefore accurate to make reference either to the "rules-based world order" or the "rules-based global order".

the purely regulatory and operates according to a Hobbesian logic. For this reason, the term is also invoked when referring to assertions advanced by theories such as neorealism. However, outside of these specific theoretical contexts, it is also used sparingly in this dissertation as a shorthand for the international level of analysis or the collection of states that exist at the global level, without making any presuppositions concerning the international order that prevails among them. This differs from the term “global political system”, which brings together both international society and international order and will feature in the conceptual model outlined in the next chapter.

#### **1.4. Literature Review**

As the previous section shows, answering this dissertation’s key question will be a complex matter, as several different themes will need to be addressed. Although the emphasis will be placed on Russia – the first major power to challenge Western leadership outright, and whose criticism of the West on high-order political issues has been quite vocal and pointed – a focus on both Russia *and* China will paint a fuller portrait of what the international order of the coming decades will look like. Furthermore, the aim of this dissertation is to make a contribution both to the development of key concepts in English School IR theory as well as to efforts to conceptualize Russia and China’s respective places in contemporary international society, contributing to debates over sovereignty and the liberal international order in the process. The literature mentioned below will be explored and cited in greater depth throughout the body of this dissertation, with this section dedicated to providing a thematic overview that will situate it in the existing body of academic work.

One of the most prominent recurring themes in the literature on Russia is the country’s general Western orientation dating back to the era of Tsar Peter the Great.



Although Westernizing and Europeanizing forces throughout Russian history have differed in their aims, with some wanting to emulate Western values and others wishing simply to obtain material benefits, the consensus is usually that Russia's general foreign policy orientation is strongly dependent upon the nature of its relationship with the West at any given moment in time – specifically with respect to whether it is accorded the status of an equal great power or whether, instead, it is treated as a junior partner. This is a recurring theme in books such as Angela E. Stent's *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), Andrey P. Tsygankov's *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013) and Iver B. Neumann's *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995). Viacheslav Morozov's *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) goes even further in this respect, suggesting that Russia – regardless of its orientation at any given moment – remains dependent on the West in both material and normative-discursive terms throughout modern history,<sup>41</sup> in many ways denying it meaningful agency. This differs from Richard Sakwa's *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), which charts the deterioration of Russia-West ties since the fall of the Berlin Wall – attributing it to the emergence of rival visions for organizing the European space and the wider international order – and outlines the emergence of a post-Western world. The rationale behind this dissertation's theoretical assumptions will be outlined below and in the next chapter. For now, it suffices to say that developing a conceptual model that clarifies Russia's position in contemporary international society, allowing for both the realness of the ideas that Moscow

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<sup>41</sup> Viatcheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 86-90 & 103-4.

promotes for organizing the international space and the structural constraints that both it and the wider international order face, will be a central aim of Chapters 4 and 5.

As Russia has gradually become estranged from the West over the course of the past three decades – particularly since the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine five years ago – its strategic partnership with China has deepened. Several notable works have attempted to qualify the nature of the Sino-Russian relationship. One of the most well-known, chronicling the deepening bilateral partnership already more than a decade ago, is Bobo Lo's *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), which – as the title suggests – claims that rising cooperation between Russia and China is meaningful but ultimately asymmetric and largely tactical in nature. Similarly, Gilbert Rozman's *The Sino-Russian Challenge to the World Order: National Identities, Bilateral Relations, and East vs. West in the 2010s* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014) contends that the current Sino-Russian rapprochement is somewhat of an ephemeral development and that identity-related phenomena could gradually drive the two sides apart.<sup>42</sup> These contrast with works such as Marcin Kaczmarski's *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015) and Alexander Lukin's *China and Russia: The New Rapprochement* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), which emphasize elements of normative convergence between the two states, elaborating upon common themes such as their joint desire to act as co-architects of the international order and their inability ever to be subsumed into a US-led international order due (among other things) to their size.<sup>43</sup> Paul J. Bolt and Sharyl N. Cross in *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) note that, although there may be

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<sup>42</sup> Gilbert Rozman, *The Sino-Russian Challenge to the World Order: National Identities, Bilateral Relations, and East vs. West in the 2010s* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 267-77.

<sup>43</sup> See for example Marcin Kaczmarski, *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 134.

certain obstacles to overcome in their bilateral relationship and they may be occasionally driven by differing foreign policy imperatives, Moscow and Beijing share scepticism regarding Western excesses and are jointly able to shape international order.<sup>44</sup> Although Kaczmariski details the ways in which Russia and China relate differently to the contemporary international order,<sup>45</sup> what is still required is an analysis of how each is currently positioned in international society conceptually and historically, and what consequences this is likely to have. This will be outlined in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

Academic literature on sovereignty is quite extensive, with some works such as Charles Tilly's *Coercion, Capital and European States: AD 990-1992* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992) tracing the development of the modern state to material developments including war, and others such as Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2012) looking at ideational developments that led to the sacralization and legitimization of the state. This dissertation is interested not as much in tracing the origins of the sovereign state, however, as it is in uncovering the nature of disputes over the now-established norm of sovereignty and the consequences they will have on the future of the liberal international order and international society more broadly. Daniel Philpott's *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) discusses how both Westphalia and the process of decolonization changed how global actors conceived of sovereignty. Anne-Marie Slaughter has called the adoption of R2P as "the most important shift in the definition of sovereignty [...] since the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648".<sup>46</sup> Whether or not this is accurate

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<sup>44</sup> Paul J. Bolt and Sharyl N. Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 301.

<sup>45</sup> Marcin Kaczmariski, "Convergence or divergence? Visions of world order and the Russian-Chinese relationship", *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2019), pp. 207-24.

<sup>46</sup> Anne-Marie Slaughter, "A New U.N. For a New Century", *Fordham Law Review*, Vol. 74, no. 6 (2006), pp. 2961-70.

has proven to be a matter of significant contention between states, as the UN's legal framework on the authorization of the use of force has not changed – any military intervention undertaken in the name of R2P still needs to be sanctioned by the Security Council.<sup>47</sup> The debate over what (and whose) norms are legitimate on the question of sovereignty and intervention has been chronicled most recently by Roy Allison in *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), although an explicit discussion of the consequences this will bring for the future of the liberal international order and international society is largely absent.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the definition of the liberal international order itself is very much in question. John Ikenberry's many writings – which will be explored in Chapters 2 and 7 – often claim that its reach has become global and that it operates in a quasi-independent fashion, according to a logic of rules-based cooperation that is self-sustaining.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Sakwa's definition essentially reduces the liberal international order to the Western alliance and its associated institutions, structures and norms.<sup>49</sup> Both of these speak to realities that can simultaneously be true – liberal internationalism is a philosophy regarding how to organize the international space and has created an order that has become autonomous in important ways, but also retains a connection with the Western power base that launched it in the aftermath of World War II. This dichotomy, which will be incorporated into this dissertation's conceptual model outlined in Chapter 2, brings consequences for the future of international society which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

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<sup>47</sup> Gareth Evans, Tatiana Romanova *et al.*, "Humanitarian intervention is justified when...", *Global Brief*, 27 June 2011, available online at: <https://globalbrief.ca/2011/06/humanitarian-intervention-is-only-justified-when/> (last accessed 25.06.2019)

<sup>48</sup> See for example G. John Ikenberry, "The Liberal International Order and Its Discontents", in Rebekka Friedman, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (eds.), *After Liberalism?: The Future of Liberalism in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 92-101.

<sup>49</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, pp. 18 & 42-4.

English School literature on international society is obviously extensive, seeing as it is the concept for which the paradigm is principally known. Two of the most significant and well-known edited volumes in the canon are Hedley Bull and Adam Watson's *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) and Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit's *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). The two differ in significant ways, particularly regarding how they define social interaction at the international level and trace the content of international society over history.<sup>50</sup> However, of particular interest to this dissertation is Dunne and Reus-Smit's claim that a "close connection" exists between international order and international society,<sup>51</sup> which they do not discuss in conceptual terms at length. This dissertation's model will attempt to fill that gap and elaborate upon the process through which order and society interact. It will also attempt to contribute to the study of hegemony in international society. Nuno Monteiro's *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) theorizes the pitfalls of unipolarity at length, but his is a largely materialist analysis. English School works that consider hegemony include Adam Watson's *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992) and Ian Clark's *Hegemony in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Clark's work provides a clear illustration of the various configurations that hegemony can take in international society, although his analysis does not consider whether orders rather than states can be hegemonic – one way of conceiving of the liberal international order's position in contemporary international society.<sup>52</sup> For its part, Watson's famous pendulum model – which will be outlined in detail in the next chapter – may fail to account for several factors, ranging from state agency to the specific content infused by hegemonic forces into the international order.

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<sup>50</sup> Reus-Smit and Dunne, "The Globalization of International Society", pp. 29-32.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>52</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 43.

Moreover, though Watson may raise important questions regarding the extent to which there should be uniformity in a culturally diverse international society,<sup>53</sup> he does not touch explicitly on what this implies for the liberal international order's place in that society.

By bringing together a focus on sovereignty, the liberal international order and international society, this dissertation aims to contribute to all three concepts as they are understood in current academic literature. This task will begin with the outlining of a model in the next chapter which incorporates normative contestation, situates the liberal order with respect to existing theoretical concepts, and conceptualizes its relationship with contemporary international society.

### **1.5. Analytical Framework**

At first glance, it appears as if either one of the two principal international relations paradigms could fit the bill for this dissertation: liberalism and realism. The latter appears particularly well suited for questions related to the re-emergence of great power rivalry and the supposed rebirth of a balance of power system in which Russia increasingly appears to be balancing against the West with the help of China. Regarding liberalism, perhaps it could be contended that global politics are currently merely experiencing a “crisis of transition” – largely the product of the success of the liberal order – that does not fundamentally challenge the rules-based character of today's world order.<sup>54</sup> However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that liberalism has some important shortcomings that make it unsuitable for this work.

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<sup>53</sup> Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, p. 318.

<sup>54</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “The end of liberal international order?”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 94, no. 1 (2018), pp. 7-23.

The grounds for liberalism – in one respect or another – initially seem to be numerous in nature. Sovereignty is a concept firmly rooted not just in international society but also in international law. One sees evidence of liberal principles at work regularly in global affairs. For instance, when two states are party to an international dispute, the consent of both is required for the case to be dealt with by the International Court of Justice. Furthermore, the R2P doctrine itself was adopted unanimously at the UN World Summit in 2005. If a norm was endorsed by – and continues to be managed at – the institution responsible for generating and upholding international law, then it would seem as if this dissertation’s analysis should be rooted deeply in liberal theory.

However, there are several problems with this approach. Not all institutions reflect this commitment to sovereign equality. The West’s veto power at organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) has helped to produce a sense of alienation among the world’s developing countries. The creation of the China-led Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank along with continued gridlock in the WTO’s Doha Round of negotiations on the liberalization of global trade reflect the fact that several rising powers are not content with the present state of global affairs. Whether they intend to upend the American-led international order or simply reshape it remains to be discussed. But the elements of regionalization that have emerged in recent years in response to global events suggest already that states will have to deal with one another in strategic terms. When trade liberalization becomes a bilateral or plurilateral – and not a global multilateral – affair, then the commercial benefits that increased trade brings are but one consideration among several. Moreover, even though it is the United Nations Security Council that is responsible for authorizing action to prevent the outbreak of mass atrocities, the failure of that body to stop the bloodletting in Syria has made it clear that political and

even geopolitical considerations – particularly those of Russia and China – are increasingly relevant in global affairs.

The degree of rapid change and uncertainty witnessed today has caused many to begin to question some of the liberal paradigm's principal predictions. But it is not just the tactical setbacks for liberalism caused by recent events that are at play here – some of liberalism's fundamental assumptions appear today to be misguided. For example, despite its traditional association with interwar idealism and the liberation of the individual from various structures, liberalism as a theory fails verily to provide for real agency: It believes that certain structures and institutions can generate predictable behaviour across time and space, thus failing to account for variance among cultures or the importance of different ideas. Not only does liberalism envision a very specific telos, its relevance is also largely confined to a specific period in history – that of the modern industrialized world – suggesting that it may fail to provide insights concerning how one can expect states and individuals to behave in a pre-industrial or (possibly emerging) post-industrial context. As one scholar puts it, liberalism confuses an ideal-type interest-based world with the real world – seeing as interest is in fact merely one human motive – and forgets that there exist, in theory, several interest-based responses to the modern industrial world besides the creation of capitalist democracies.<sup>55</sup>

Liberalism's description of the global system, while supposedly Kantian in its logic, has also been accused of relying more so on the thinking of John Stuart Mill, with his dichotomy between “civilized nations” and “barbarians” having now been replaced by one between democracies and authoritarian states.<sup>56</sup> To posit that global affairs today consist of an ideological struggle between a liberal and an illiberal coalition of states is to ignore the challenges to liberalism within the world's sphere of liberal states, to forget that a series of

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<sup>55</sup> Lebow, *Cultural Theory*, p. 76.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.



overlapping international alliances and partnerships exist and are continuing to proliferate, to contend perhaps erroneously that some sort of global competition is underway when in reality it may be a series of regional orders that are being renegotiated,<sup>57</sup> and to turn a blind eye to the fact ideological competition may not be as prominent in today's world as it was during the Cold War.

On the other hand, leaning toward a realist framework suggests a belief that the complete upending of the existing international order would not be desirable, as realism places much of its faith in stability and order – at least as a philosophy.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, there is an inherent desire even among realists to have the primacy of the United Nations – which technically enforces the rules of the game – survive. Perhaps a more appropriate approach will deal in what many call liberal realism (or the Kissingerian approach), a paradigm that accepts the importance of state interests and the balance of power, while also allowing for the fact that states with differing worldviews can ultimately come together to craft a world order that all principal actors view as being legitimate. Models that posit that states endlessly seek power, such as John Mearsheimer's "offensive realism", will ultimately not prove useful in this endeavour. Moreover, hegemony – either by a single power or by a group of them – implies a degree of international governance, even if informal, leading one scholar to contend that anarchy "explains little about order or behaviour".<sup>59</sup> In the discipline of IR, conceptualization of anarchy as an ordering principle largely begins only after Kenneth Waltz, and the concept itself may simply tell us one way in which a system is *not* ordered

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<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Trine Flockhart, "The coming multi-order world", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2016), pp. 3-30.

<sup>58</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, "The Realist Creed", *Stratfor*, 19 November 2014, available online at: <https://www.stratfor.com/sample/weekly/realist-creed> (last accessed 29.06.2016)

<sup>59</sup> William R. Thompson, "The United States as Global Leader, Global Power, and Status-Consistent Power?", in Thomas J. Volgy, Renato Corbetta, Keith A. Grant and Ryan G. Baird (eds.), *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 30.

rather than explain a fashion in which it *is*.<sup>60</sup> This dissertation will thus need to employ a theoretical framework that allows for the importance of power, while also not failing to comprehend just how critical a shared sense of legitimacy is when it comes to crafting world order.

Moreover, a theoretical approach is required that does not ignore the importance of material and structural factors – factors that are particularly noteworthy when discussing the foreign policy of Russia, a country possessing few natural barriers and a vulnerable geographic distribution of its human and economic assets.<sup>61</sup> Liberalism does not fail to attribute meaning to these elements, but seeing as we are dealing here with a case of potential challenge to the liberal order, it would not be prudent to use a theory that prioritizes such a worldview. Furthermore, and in a similar vein, it has now become clear that the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union did not presage the end of geopolitics, or at the very least the end of great power rivalry. Academics have quibbled over the meaning of the word “geopolitics” and are not all convinced that today’s world exhibits a clear instance of it,<sup>62</sup> but a paradigm that makes room for the more inclusive notions of competition and confrontation is indeed required.

Again, one’s mind naturally turns to realism, but when it operates as a theory of international relations (rather than as one of foreign policy), it considers the fundamental character of such relations to be unchanging.<sup>63</sup> In reality, it may not be the absence of central authority that causes states to fight invariably for power and security, but rather the

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<sup>60</sup> Jack Donnelly, “Beyond Hierarchy”, in Ayşe Zarakol (ed.), *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 244-5.

<sup>61</sup> George Friedman, “10 maps that explain Russia’s strategy”, *Business Insider*, 1 February 2016, available online at: <http://www.businessinsider.com/10-maps-that-explain-russias-strategy-2016-1?IR=T/#russia-is-almost-landlocked-1> (last accessed 21.09.2016)

<sup>62</sup> See Stefano Guzzini, *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe?: Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 29-44.

<sup>63</sup> See J. Samuel Barkin, *Realist Constructivism: Rethinking International Relations Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 119-30.

“robustness of society” internationally that helps to shape states’ actions.<sup>64</sup> Nor do realists extensively incorporate into their theory the difference between power and influence: If a power wishes to transform the former into the latter, then it has incentives to abide by international norms – that is, the content of international society.<sup>65</sup> It is clear, therefore, that neither realism nor liberalism necessarily has a monopoly over ideas of order.

This dissertation wrestles with national conceptions of overarching ideas and perhaps even first principles – namely sovereignty and order – in addition to the complex process of interaction between them. It will be impossible to do so adequately without discussing the way in which peoples interpret their history – both early and recent – as well as their role in the world. In short, ideas matter.<sup>66</sup> The current standoff between Russia and the West was not inevitable, and rival conceptions of order – not just divergent interests – helped to produce it, as will be discussed throughout this dissertation.<sup>67</sup> If the aim is to provide as complete as possible an explanation to what the guiding factors of Russian and Chinese foreign policy are in a historical situation that is in many ways unique, then a more neutral starting point that allows for the reality and (at the very least) the quasi-independence of ideas would be advisable. And indeed, it is possible to combine material and ideational factors to analyze

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<sup>64</sup> Lebow, *Cultural Theory*, pp. 2-8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 497.

<sup>66</sup> Regarding the importance and origins of ideas and identities: The historian and political scientist Benedict Anderson is famous for his notion of “imagined communities”, which are constantly invented and reinvented through various cultural means. Identity is constantly reimagined, but culture and a shared sense of belonging are inherited before this takes place, a process that has been in place ever since the advent of “print capitalism” and the crystallization of European nation-states that followed the advent of “national print-languages”. The anthropologist Ruth Benedict, for her part, interestingly refers to culture as being “the raw material of which the individual makes his life”. To use such strong vocabulary is to imply the sacrosanct nature of a nation’s culture, and to emphasize the trauma or unease that can be caused by its perceived loss. Through this prism, one can clearly see how it would be possible for Russia and China to associate Western material geopolitical advances with creeping cultural Americanization, and thus to construct or emphasize a set of principles related to sovereignty and international order as a sort of defensive mechanism. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983) and Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1934).

<sup>67</sup> See Tuomas Forsberg and Hiski Haukkala, “Could it have been Different? The Evolution of the EU-Russia Conflict and its Alternatives”, *Avoiding a New ‘Cold War’: The Future of EU-Russia Relations in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis*, Special Report 20, LSE IDEAS, March 2016, pp. 8-14.

international problems without running into fundamental epistemological and ontological challenges. For instance, although realism and constructivism respectively privilege material and ideational notions, each acknowledges that both are present in international relations.<sup>68</sup> An example of the combination of both material and ideational forces at work is the post-Cold War transatlantic relationship, in which American preponderance has not erased the shared ideas present on both sides of the Atlantic nor the economic and military-political links between Western states.<sup>69</sup> Due to the very magnitude of recent changes in the character of statehood and the shape of the international system, some scholars believe that the case for combining material and ideational factors in order to cast a wider net has become strong.<sup>70</sup>

When dealing with challenges to international order, it has often proven appealing to view reality through the lens of power transition theory. But analyzing Russia's position in international politics from this perspective would be challenging: Unlike China, it is much more difficult to find agreement over the notion of Russia as a "rising power", due in part to the country's undiversified economy and unhealthy demography. There remains much debate as to what shape the world will take in the years and decades ahead. Will China's rise continue and thus create a multipolar system? Even if China's rise does proceed largely unabated, will the term "multipolarity" be the most accurate conception of the world that it ends up shaping?<sup>71</sup> A multipolar system would not be novel in the history of modern international relations, but one in which the centre of gravity no longer rests in the Euro-Atlantic and Mediterranean theatres certainly would be. Furthermore, none of the anticipated great powers in the potentially multipolar world of tomorrow has any veritable experience operating within a system defined by multipolarity: the United States – with some notable

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<sup>68</sup> Georg Sørensen, "The Case for Combining Material Forces and Ideas in the Study of IR", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 14, no. 1 (2008), pp. 5-32.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> See Trine Flockhart, "The coming multi-order world".

exceptions – adopted a quasi-isolationist stance throughout much of its history; the world has not verily yet witnessed the formation of a united Europe; and China had never encountered a formidable adversary before the Opium Wars of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>72</sup> Even in the case of Russia, it may be difficult to say with complete confidence that its present-day incarnation is the same as its pre-revolutionary counterpart that operated within the European balance-of-power system for a century and a half; after all, the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw not one but *two* Russian empires fall. Add to all this the existence of nuclear weapons and a highly integrated global economic supply chain, and it begins to appear as if global affairs are headed into uncharted waters.

As will be elaborated upon throughout this dissertation, at the core of much of the contemporary Russia-West (and China-West) dispute are questions of legitimacy, including the key dilemma of when it is legitimate to set aside state sovereignty in pursuit of certain aims. Is it legitimate to pursue regime change to protect populations from potential mass atrocities? Is it legitimate to trod on the territorial integrity of one's neighbour paradoxically in an attempt to defend certain international norms such as polycentrism and the sovereignty of great powers? In times when questions of international legitimacy and order seem germane, concepts drawn from the English School of international relations – which has charted the transformation and expansion of international society's key norms and institutions (broadly defined) throughout history – appear particularly relevant. The rationale for why a theoretical model rooted in English School concepts is most compatible with this dissertation's central arguments will be discussed in greater length in the next chapter. But the English School certainly presents a good home in which to discuss theoretical questions related to international legitimacy.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2011), pp. 16-7.

<sup>73</sup> Ian Clark, *Hegemony in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. v.

Moreover, as this dissertation will be dealing with questions of hegemony – including hegemonic overreach – in regards to the position of the United States in the post-Cold War international order, it is worth noting that English School literature has considered a hegemon to be concerned both with material advantages *and* with standards of civilization in its enforcement of the rules and its upholding of order.<sup>74</sup> This complies with the materialist-idealist distinction outlined above. Furthermore, the English School’s focus on both “primary” and “secondary” institutions allows for a more complete discussion surrounding the impact of great power rivalry. “Secondary” institutions represent the formal institutional architecture of international society, including bodies such as the United Nations or the World Trade Organization.

Besides questions surrounding the future of American leadership and the transatlantic alliance, discussions surrounding the future of the liberal or rules-based international orders have tended to focus on secondary institutions, such the extent to which liberal powers can “save” multilateralism, including multilateral bodies such as the EU or the WTO.<sup>75</sup> However, as the name implies, “secondary” institutions merely serve the purpose of strengthening and upholding the viability of international society’s “primary” institutions – the fundamental agreed-upon principles and practices that allow any such society to function. For example, while neorealism may be inclined to view the balance of power as a “mechanistic property”, the English School sees it as a “social contract” whose violation can cause any international society to destabilize.<sup>76</sup> These institutions have traditionally included sovereignty, great

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<sup>74</sup> Adam Watson, *The Limits of Independence: Relations between States in the Modern World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), p. 127.

<sup>75</sup> For example, see Richard Gowan and Anthony Dworkin, “Three crises and an opportunity: Europe’s stake in multilateralism”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 5 September 2019, available online at: [https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/three\\_crises\\_and\\_an\\_opportunity\\_europes\\_stake\\_in\\_multilateralism](https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/three_crises_and_an_opportunity_europes_stake_in_multilateralism) (last accessed 28.02.2020)

<sup>76</sup> Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), p. 29.

power management, the balance of power, war, diplomacy and international law, but some lists have been more expansive and have sought to conceive of forces such as hegemony, nationalism, dynasticism or the market as primary institutions as well.<sup>77</sup> As mentioned above, debates over the nature of state sovereignty – including the conditions under which it can legitimately be set aside in the context of an intervention – have been one of the driving forces behind the return of great power rivalry. Some scholars dispute the notion that sovereignty is a primary institution of the contemporary global international society, preferring instead to think of it as a “deep constitutional structure”.<sup>78</sup> Regardless, it remains clear that the principle of state sovereignty is one of the core features of today’s society, if not *the* core feature from which other primary institutions flow: Great power management, war, diplomacy and the balance of power are conducted between sovereign states, while a whole body of international law deals with the criteria for and responsibilities of sovereign statehood. As will be conceptually discussed in Chapter 2 and revisited over the course of this dissertation, contestation over such a fundamental principle of international society comes with consequences for the stability of that society.

At this point, it is worth mentioning why this dissertation has chosen not to adopt constructivism as its theoretical framework, particularly considering that it discusses issues surrounding Russia’s national identity. First, as was mentioned above, the core model and argument put forward by this dissertation concerns questions of international legitimacy – which the English School is well suited to discuss – rather than national identity. The dissertation’s discussion of the sources of Russia’s challenge to the liberal international order serve to illustrate the broader conceptual points being advanced regarding the nature and

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-12. Also see Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*.

<sup>78</sup> See Christian Reus-Smit, “The Liberal International Order Reconsidered”, in Rebekka Friedman, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (eds.), *After Liberalism?: The Future of Liberalism in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 169-70.

stability of international orders and societies in general. Second, this dissertation contends that the specific content of Russia's vision of international order that Moscow projects in great power relations – the principles that the order should uphold and the shape it should take – is imbued with veritable agency. Although the next chapter will outline a conceptual model that is not completely alien to constructivist logic, this nonetheless contrasts with the constructivist view, which would contend that Russia's preferred international norms are shaped by international structures, even though those structures may be immaterial.

Finally, although Alexander Wendt's early "thin" constructivism initially posited that "states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory", as constructivism has developed and adopted a "thicker" character it has moved away from that assumption.<sup>79</sup> As this dissertation is concerned with the consequences of the return of great power rivalry, a theory that clearly allows for an ontology of states is a more appropriate fit. In particular, and as will be elaborated upon in the subsequent chapters, it has become clear that there remain key differences in the norms projected by great powers today despite elements of convergence and commonality. The at least partially pluralistic character of today's diverse international society lends itself to a more "state-centric" frame of analysis,<sup>80</sup> particularly considering the emergence of the great-power debate over sovereignty – the tool through which international political units differentiate themselves from one another. Moreover, the return of great power rivalry rests in large part on material forces such as changes in the global balance of power and the modernization of Russian and Chinese military forces.<sup>81</sup> Without discounting the "realness" and the significant impact of immaterial forces of

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<sup>79</sup> Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 199-208.

<sup>80</sup> Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School*, p. 89.

<sup>81</sup> See for example Michael Kofman and Richard Connolly, "Why Russia's Military Expenditure Is Much Higher Than Commonly Understood (As Is China's)", *War on the Rocks*, 16 December 2019, available online at: <https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/why-russian-military-expenditure-is-much-higher-than-commonly-understood-as-is-chinas/> (last accessed 08.04.2020). Also see Kaczmarek, *Russia-China Relations*, pp. 116-7.



constructed identity, these would not be able to assert themselves and create change in international society as decisively without the relative decline of the United States and the rise of non-Western powers. As such, while there may be a place for constructivist logic in this dissertation, elements of an underlying materialist ontology are required, as is made clear by the definition of hegemony advanced above. A conceptual model blending these two theoretical facets will be outlined in the next chapter.

## **1.6. Theoretical Bases and Methodology**

The political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset is known, among other things, for his “formative events theory”. This school of thought posits that the political cultures of societies are partly, if not largely, determined by the events that created them. For instance, the United States’ rhetorical promotion of democracy and freedom on the international stage as well as its focus on individual achievement domestically are attributed to the American Revolution, which emphasized life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, based on this mode of thinking, Lipset establishes that the influx of Loyalists during the American Revolution, combined with the pressures of the American Civil War and the pursuit of Manifest Destiny that nearly coincided with Canada’s founding in 1867, are responsible for Canada’s continued emphasis on distinguishing its political culture and its values from those of its neighbour to the south.<sup>83</sup>

In brief, if one were to apply the same principle to Russia and China, one would posit that the former is destined to remain an insecure and occasionally expansionist land power in

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<sup>82</sup> Nelson Wiseman, *In Search of Canadian Political Culture* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2007), pp. 25-6.

<sup>83</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), see ch. 3.

some capacity,<sup>84</sup> whereas the latter will always be convinced of the singularity of its culture and of its destiny to possess a leading role in the world.<sup>85</sup> In a similar vein of thought, one could emphasize the sources of Russian and Chinese foreign policy that flow from the geographies of both countries.<sup>86</sup> Such a line of thinking could help to explain Russia's desire to maintain buffer states or a sphere of privileged interests, resulting from its vulnerability to conventional attack as evidenced by history. What both these strains of thought – either events-based or geography-based – share is that there is an element of fatalism at play. In other words, the fundamental assumptions that guide Russian and Chinese foreign policy can change, but only up to a point.<sup>87</sup>

However, determining how far Russia and China have stretched – and can stretch – the limits “inherent” to them can lead to a greater understanding regarding the degree of agency that these two states possess. This leads to the question, “To what extent have the general principles of the foreign policies of Russia and China evolved over time?” This is where English School concepts – drawing to an extent on constructivist logic – will prove useful. Can one conceive of some sort of co-constitutive process through which each of these major powers interacts with the rest of international society, with each shaping the other? Or are there sharp limits on the extent to which Russia and China can change, based on entrenched historical patterns and other structural forces? In either case, what will be the impact on the future shape of international order?

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<sup>84</sup> “Interview: Robert D. Kaplan On How Geography Affects The Fate Of Nations”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 11 September 2012, available online at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/robert-kaplan-geography-fate-nations/24704951.html> (last accessed 29.06.2016):

<sup>85</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2012), see ch. 1.

<sup>86</sup> See Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate* (New York, NY: Random House, 2012).

<sup>87</sup> For more on how social, economic and political developments throughout history have shaped contemporary political systems, see Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

This project will be primarily textual. The aim will not be to contribute any new data to the field, but rather to make a theoretical and conceptual contribution that will enrich the IR field's understanding of English School concepts, situate the liberal international order within these concepts, and clarify how Russia and China fit into and are shaping the international order. For the purposes of this dissertation, the author conducted elite interviews and combined this with source analysis dealing directly with the topic and actors at hand. Three distinct categories of interviews were conducted: with Western academics focusing on the future of international order, and with experts on Russia and China. Among others, this dissertation will delve into the analyses of individuals such as Simon Adams, Richard Gowan, Oliver Stuenkel and geo-strategist Robert D. Kaplan, as well as Russia experts Andrey Kortunov, Sergey Karaganov, Bobo Lo and Marcin Kaczmarski, and China experts William A. Callahan, David Shambaugh, Paul Haenle, Yan Xuetong and Zhao Suisheng. The aim of the interviews was to garner a deeper and more nuanced understanding of some of the "big-picture" dynamics affecting the liberal international order, international society, Russia and China, as well as the interaction between them.

Many of the questions posed during the interviews dealt with "first-order" issues, for example asking interviewees to provide their views on the degree to which China is challenging the liberal international order, the extent to which Eurasianism is a viable national pursuit for Russia, or whether it is now too late for Russia and the West to pursue a full-fledged rapprochement and reset that fundamentally transforms the paradigm on which their relationship is based. The purpose of such broad questions was not to obtain answers that are necessarily scientifically demonstrable, as this may represent an essentialization of complex and multifaceted issues, but rather to open a wider conversation with the interviewees to increase their level of comfort and allow them to delve deeper into their respective areas of expertise. The goal was to find commonalities between central

conclusions found in the existing literature – written by scholars from the West, Russia and China alike – and the views expressed by interviewees, as well as possible synergies between them that allows for new conclusions to be reached. In other words, the interviews serve to complement and enrich the discussion of those topics that help to illustrate the dissertation's core argument and model. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured fashion, with a set of predetermined questions for interviewees in the US, Russia (except for Vladivostok) and Asia respectively, but with the ability to jump around the list or omit certain questions depending on how the interview progressed. Interviewees were selected with the aim of obtaining a diverse range of opinion and maximizing the number of interviews conducted, with the goal of uncovering elements of commonality to support this dissertation's findings. For example, regarding interviews conducted in Russia, the author was careful to pursue interviewees coming from both the scholarly and policy worlds, with some known for their efforts to bridge elements of the Russia-West security and ideational divide and others more inherently sceptical regarding whether Russia and the West can ever develop a cooperative and synergetic relationship.

Before concluding this section, and as an introduction to this project as a whole, it may prove useful to take a moment to examine briefly certain parallels (albeit imperfect ones) between the contemporary and previous historical periods, to situate global affairs in historical context and uncover a central dilemma of contemporary international relations. Some of the most salient features of today's international society are: (1) It is increasingly, although not entirely, polycentric. (2) It is characterized by debates over the nature of sovereignty, such as in the case of R2P. (3) One of the principal balance-of-power dynamics is some form of containment of major powers accused by the hegemon of revisionism, namely China and Russia. (4) Despite a lack of economic growth and vibrancy, Russia remains a major power in the global system, for reasons ranging from its natural resource

endowment to its vast geography to its possession of nuclear weapons. (5) The global order features at least one major naval power whose reach spans beyond its country's immediate vicinity: the United States. China is currently working to expand its navy's capabilities as well. (6) Finally, one of the principal actors of the system is in relative decline: in addition to Russia, this is also true of the United States, downgraded from unipolar superpower to one power among many, albeit still the most powerful country on the planet and the only one able to project all dimensions of power comprehensively on a global scale.

The historical systems of modern European international relations are, chronologically: the era dating from the Peace of Westphalia until the entry of Russia into the balance of power system in the Seven Years War; the period ranging from the Treaty of Paris until the Napoleonic Wars; the Concert of Europe period that lasted until Bismarck's wars; the era lasting from the German unification until the outbreak of World War I; the inter-war period; the Cold War; and the post-Cold War order. Each period is separated from the next by a general war or major cataclysm.

Two of these systems satisfy all these criteria: the period of 1763-1815 and the interwar years. The era contained between the Seven Years War and the Napoleonic Wars was indeed multipolar in nature, and the adoption of the fundamental Westphalian principle of sovereignty had taken place at the outset of the previous geopolitical system (1648-1763), just as the adoption of R2P will have taken place in the order immediately preceding the emergence of a post-Western international order. Although alliances in pre-Napoleonic Europe were not explicitly designed to contain France the way that the Quadruple and Holy Alliances were in the Metternich system, the existence of a balance-of-power system was intended to regulate France's ability to achieve conquest. A divided set of German states served as a buffer between France and other powers, allowing the former to regulate the continental balance of power while the geographically isolated Britain could ensure that

neither side on the European mainland – whether it be France or the other powers – would become powerful enough to threaten its global trading interests on the high seas.<sup>88</sup>

Russia was a consideration in this order, having entered the European balance of power system for the first time during the Seven Years War. Britain had already become a major, global naval power by the late eighteenth century: This was the period immediately preceding *Pax Britannica*, during which Britain obtained unchallenged naval dominance internationally. And in terms of reduction of strength, every member of the European system of states had been made relatively weaker by the entry of Russia. Furthermore, one could argue that France's defeat in the New World and in India in the Seven Years War, and its subsequent transfer of territory to Britain and Spain, had rendered it particularly weaker.

Regarding the inter-war period: It was multipolar, as European states had yet to have been subsumed into one of two global alliance blocs. The end of World War I brought about new international norms on sovereignty: the principle of national self-determination and the concept of collective security to resist aggression. Sovereignty was to be granted not just to empires, but also to peoples in search of self-determination. The new map of Central and Eastern Europe after 1918, featuring a new set of nation-states, reflected this commitment made by the United States. This system was designed to contain “aggression” of all kinds and not a specific power, although the punitive measures imposed upon Germany at the behest of Britain and France certainly were intended to act as a disincentive for Berlin to “start” another war.

Russia, and later the Soviet Union, was a member of this system. Britain was still a major global naval power, and the global reach of the United States Navy had grown to more

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<sup>88</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2014), pp. 31-41.

than regional proportions when the U.S. came to control the Philippines as a result of the Spanish-American War of 1898. And finally, this was a system replete with changes to the balance of power: the rise of the United States after the Union's victory in the U.S. Civil War and the subsequent domination of the Caribbean by Washington caused the relative weakening of the European powers in global terms. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, once one of Europe's principal powers, had been divided more or less along ethnic lines. The Ottoman Empire had also disappeared, while a weakened Russia withdrew from the First World War in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Germany was obviously reduced by a punitive Versailles Treaty in 1919 that deprived it of its colonies, and furthermore by the inflation imposed in the 1920s by Gustav Stresemann. And finally, China's Qing Empire had collapsed in 1912 after a series of uprisings and military defeats, ultimately resulting in national disunity and a new "Warring States" period of sorts.<sup>89</sup>

A central conclusion to draw from these two historical periods is that neither of these systems lasted long. The French Revolution took place just twenty-six years after the end of the Seven Years War, which ultimately produced Napoleon and his continent-wide conquests. The collective security system set up by Woodrow Wilson was unable to distinguish aggressor from aggressed (as this depended on one's point of view), and Germany and Japan began their expansionist policies barely more than a decade after the 1918 armistice. The short duration of these two systems represents a cautionary tale. As will be demonstrated over the course of this dissertation, although there are elements of institutional and normative resilience present in today's international society, various forces endanger not only the integrity of the liberal international order but also the symbiotic relationship that exists between the broader international order and international society. This is not the first instance in which international society's institutions appear fragile or marred by contestation

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<sup>89</sup> Kissinger, *On China*, pp. 87-8.

between great powers. But the resurgence of Russia and China against the backdrop of debates over conceptions and exertions of sovereign power will bring consequences for today's international society, as well as for the liberal international order that is one of its most salient features.

### **1.7. Core Contributions and Chapter Outline**

With the premise of this project now established, the subsequent chapters will proceed as follows. Chapter 2 will lay out this dissertation's central conceptual model, attempting to advance a new understanding for how international order and international society interact. By employing a revised version of Adam Watson's famous "pendulum" model and revisiting Richard Sakwa's two-level conception of the global political system, it will be shown how renewed great power contestation over the norm of sovereignty and the shape of the international order is leading to the erosion of the contemporary international society. In particular, this conceptual model will demonstrate how the resilience of any international society's normative content depends on a stable and flexible international order. This dissertation's particular conceptualization of the liberal international order will also be advanced in order to outline some of the structural challenges and contradictions that it faces. Chapter 3 will then provide an analytical account of major post-Cold War developments in Russia-West relations and explain how the attempt by the West to transform the liberal international order into a liberal *world* order failed. Specifically, it will outline the crossroads at which the global political system found itself upon the Cold War's end with the help of David Held's cosmopolitan theory of global order and demonstrate how key moments such as the disputes over Kosovo, Iraq, the colour revolutions and the Arab Spring squandered the



opportunity to strengthen global international society's insulation from rival great-power visions, ultimately leading to the gradual emergence of a "multi-order" world.

Having discussed the potential for norms deployed by great powers to affect the character of international society, Chapters 4 and 5 will zero in on the Russian case. Drawing on fieldwork interviews and a survey of the academic literature, these chapters will try to grasp what some of the central parameters are guiding Russia's post-Cold War development that relate to its evolving position in international society. Lebow's "cultural theory" of international relations will be brought in as a supplementary tool to enrich the dissertation's conceptual discussion of the impact of Russian foreign policy on the global political system. A nuanced account and partial critique of Sakwa's theory of "neo-revisionism" and Viacheslav Morozov's contention of Russian subalternity will help to illustrate the complex co-constitutive relationship between contemporary Russia and international society.

Chapter 6 will then turn to Russian Eurasianism, Sino-Russian relations and China's place in international society, laying the groundwork for a discussion concerning the extent to which their associated dynamics pose a challenge to the Western-backed liberal international order. In particular, although there exist limits to how close a relationship Moscow and Beijing will be able to forge in spite of their ongoing normative and strategic rapprochement, it will be shown that Russia's desire for independent great power status retains its capacity to generate macro-level change at the global level. Finally, Chapter 7 will revisit the relationship between international order and international society in light of an increasingly post-Western global landscape. Through a multi-theoretical analysis of hegemony and an exploration of recent writings on the liberal international order, it will be discussed how the distribution of material and normative power at the end of the Cold War combined with the Western-led liberal international order's desire expand rather than transform to generate a contest over fundamental principles between Western and non-Western powers. Specifically,

structural contradictions related to the liberal order helped to antagonize Russia and bring on an era of seeming international disorder. This implies that the existential crisis facing the liberal order today is rooted in factors produced by the order itself and does not depend on the ability of non-Western powers to implement their signature initiatives successfully.

In addition to a conceptual focus that brings together sovereignty, the liberal order and international society, this dissertation makes several original contributions to knowledge. Perhaps most important among them is that it provides an original conceptualization of the liberal international order and its hegemonic position in international society – one that marries rival views of the order’s foundations. The dual nature of the contemporary liberal order – tied to its Western power base but featuring varying degrees of buy-in at the level of international society – implies that it now faces a form of structural instability from which it will not be able to escape without fundamentally altering its character. Put simply, the liberal international order is prone to double standards and therefore not particularly resilient. However, this lack of resilience is not due to the rise of a potential hegemonic challenger such as China but rather due to the contradictions and tensions of the order itself. The change being witnessed in global politics today is a phenomenon more complex than a simple changing of the hegemonic guard. This determination is made by adopting Sakwa’s two-level conception of the global political system but challenging his conceptualization of the liberal international order.

On a theoretical level, the two-level conceptualization of global politics advanced in the next chapter leads to an original illustration of the workings of the close relationship between international order and international society that is advanced in recent English School works such as *The Globalization of International Society*. Moreover, it also lends itself to conclusions related to Russia that Sakwa does not advance himself. First, Russian neo-revisionism has become a quasi-autonomous force in international society rather than a

mere instrument of Russian foreign policy. Just as the liberal order has projected itself onto the realm of international society at the initiative of Western powers, Russian-backed norms have also become structures shaping global affairs that Moscow can no longer entirely control. Second, this dissertation also demonstrates how the foundations of this neo-revisionism are solid – in other words, great power rivalry is likely to be a durable feature of contemporary international politics, whether or not Moscow succeeds in developing a “Greater Eurasian” rival to the West with Beijing in which it is accorded a satisfactory position. Third, this dissertation also expounds on the effects of neo-revisionism for the stability of the contemporary international society’s norms and institutions. This is achieved through a theoretical understanding that differentiates between the global balance of material power and the balance of normative influence, as well as one that emphasizes that the Sino-Russian strategic partnership is a force exerting change on international norms rather than one stabilizing the international system per a neorealist logic. And fourth, contra Sakwa, this thesis demonstrates how individual great powers’ relationship with international society in the realm of norm projection represents a phenomenon of a different nature to the litigation of polycentrism and polarity between them.

Additionally, this dissertation sheds further light on several topics that have already been explored elsewhere. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 describe in detail the limits but also the inevitable continuity of Russian dualism, which expresses itself in several forms. Moreover, unlike previous analyses, the employment of an English School framework that draws both parallels and connections between the international and domestic realms allows this dissertation to establish a conceptual link between discussions of Russian nationhood and dualism on the one hand and Russian neo-revisionism and its impact on international society on the other. This dissertation also provides a slightly more nuanced account than the often-simplistic discussion surrounding whether Russia and China should be thought of as purely

status quo or revisionist powers. By employing a framework that explores both powers' multifaceted relationship with international society rather than one that merely considers their status as beneficiaries or losers of the American-led order, a more nuanced conclusion is reached that paints Russia as a *conservative* power with certain status quo aims but revisionist tactics and China as a largely *cautious* power that remains uncertain of its relationship with international society. Finally, this dissertation explores certain parallels and elements of symbiosis between the English School, neo-realism and Lebow's "cultural theory" of international relations, and in doing so enriches the English School's ability to characterize and illustrate the causes and nature of change in international society.

## *Chapter 2*

### *Watson's Pendulum and the Liberal Order: Conceptualizing the Relationship between International Order and International Society*

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Events since 1989 raise fundamental questions about three closely related concepts – sovereign power, the liberal international order and international society – as illustrated by the resurgence of Russia, the rise of China, and the backlash against liberalism and globalization in the West. Sovereign statehood is one of the pillars of contemporary international society – both as a criterion for membership in that society and as an organizing principle of international diplomacy – and is enshrined in the UN Charter. Contestation over the nature of sovereignty, including regarding how it should be interpreted and under what conditions it can legitimately be set aside, has featured prominently over the course of the post-Cold War era in relations between leading Western states – who have sought to uphold their interpretation of what constitutes a liberal international order – and other great powers in international society.

Although the era following the collapse of the Soviet Union opened with great optimism, the Russia-West relationship began to deteriorate in the mid-1990s following Western criticism of Moscow's actions in Chechnya – actions which Russia perceived as being essential to the preservation of its national unity.<sup>1</sup> In the middle of a very economically challenging decade, Russia's geopolitical alienation from the liberal sphere ultimately

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<sup>1</sup> Irvin Studin, "Europe 2.0 or a March to War", *Global Brief*, 19 February 2016, available online at <http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2016/02/19/building-europe/> (last accessed on 29.05.2016)

manifested itself through a decision to change foreign ministers, from the more Western-friendly Andrei Kozyrev to the more nationalistic Yevgeny Primakov.<sup>2</sup> Things got even worse following NATO's military intervention in Kosovo in 1999, which took place without a mandate from the United Nations Security Council, outside of the alliance's traditional zone of operation and inside Russia's historic sphere of influence. Although attempts were made following both the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the inauguration of the Obama administration to reset the relationship (in the former instance by the Russians and in the latter by the Americans), the state of affairs deteriorated further after the 2003 Iraqi invasion, the 2008 Russo-Georgian conflict, and then the NATO-led intervention in 2011 in Libya that – contrary to what Moscow believed was within the purview of the alliance's internationally sanctioned mandate – resulted in the toppling of the Gaddafi regime. A new low has been reached since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent incursions into the Donbas region in Ukraine.

Central to this conversation is the question surrounding how Russia views the Western-led liberal international order and whether these views have evolved at all over the course of the past twenty-five years. While many in the West consider Russia to be a revisionist power against the liberal order almost by default, Moscow naturally has a different perspective. The dominant view in Russian politics today is that a new world order featuring great power collaboration and a convergence of equals had been discussed well before the Soviet Union's collapse, and therefore that the United States has acted as a revisionist power ever since 1991.<sup>3</sup> With mutual accusations having now generated a political stand-off, exploring the sources and possible consequences of the current Russia-West malaise has

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<sup>2</sup> Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Andrej Krickovic and Yuval Weber, "To Harass and Wait Out", *Russia in Global Affairs*, 30 March 2016, available online at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/To-Harass-and-Wait-Out-18070> (last accessed on 29.05.2016)

become an important task. However, missing from most analyses is a three-pronged focus on sovereignty, the liberal international order *and* international society, which would allow for conclusions to be reached not only on key themes related to global and European regional order but also on conceptual matters related to American global leadership and theoretical questions concerning norms in the discipline of IR.

Whatever its worldview may be, at present Russia is not entirely a status quo power, despite the contention that Moscow employs spoiler tactics merely to preserve the influence it has possessed for centuries in certain regions. Richard Sakwa contends that, while Moscow had once sought to align itself with the EU and NATO, it ultimately developed into a “neo-revisionist” power that seeks to assert itself within the contours of the existing system.<sup>4</sup> At the very least, Moscow’s consistent emphasis on the supposed advent of a “polycentric world” is a direct challenge to the notion of an American-centric order, even if the Kremlin understands that Russia has benefitted significantly from the relative stability engendered by Washington’s global leadership over the past number of decades.

China’s participation in international politics has not been without controversy either, concerning issues ranging from human rights, to labour standards and trading practices, to forced technology transfers, to the impact its geopolitical rise is having on its neighbours in the East and South China Seas. Each of these has a particular relevance to the stability of today’s global order: the contemporary liberal order is premised at least partially on a commitment to the advancement and protection of human rights;<sup>5</sup> the issue of determining labour standards was central to debates surrounding the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an economic accord that clearly possessed a geopolitical dimension due to its exclusion of

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), pp. 30-5.

<sup>5</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0”, in Tim Dunne and Trine Flockhart (eds.), *Liberal World Orders* (London: British Academy, 2013), p. 26.

China, ostensibly because the latter refuses to cede what it considers to be a key economic edge; and if Beijing were to dominate the South China Sea, it would be able to project its influence into other critical bodies of water, likely transforming it into a veritable global power in the process.<sup>6</sup> Although Beijing has largely eschewed global leadership to date, leaving high-profile political issues to Moscow, there are signs that this may be beginning to change.<sup>7</sup> Whether the rise of a non-democratic power such as China will result naturally in the erosion of the liberal order is a matter of contention, and will likely preoccupy Western policymakers for years – if not decades – to come. Some analysts are of the view that almost every rising power in history has attempted to transform its newfound economic might into political influence.<sup>8</sup> This, in turn, could lead to conflict, as great power wars have tended to be caused by growing disagreement over the content and arbitration of the rules of the international game.<sup>9</sup> Others, by contrast, assert that China and international society are locked into a constant process of co-constitution, and therefore find a one-dimensional analysis focused on the “norms of power” to be problematic.<sup>10</sup>

To quote Marcin Kaczmarski, “Russia and China see themselves as the co-architects of the international order on a par with Western states.”<sup>11</sup> A relevant question that will be explored throughout this dissertation, particularly in the later chapters, concerns the extent to which the sources of these seemingly similar Russian and Chinese foreign policies differ. A commonly expressed view among Western analysts has often been that

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<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* (New York, NY: Random House, 2014), pp. 13-4.

<sup>7</sup> Marcin Kaczmarski, *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Coker, *The Improbable War: China, the United States & the Logic of Great Power Conflict* (London: Hurst, 2015), pp. 38-9.

<sup>10</sup> Ian Clark, “International Society and China: The Power of Norms and the Norms of Power”, *Chinese Journal of International Politics* Vol. 7, no. 3 (2014), pp. 315-40.

<sup>11</sup> Kaczmarski, *Russia-China Relations*, p. 134.



Russia's view toward multipolarity holds that the Western-dominated, post-Cold War international system has sidelined its security interests in its immediate neighbourhood and suppressed what it sees as its rightful role as a great power. [...] In contrast to Russia, China recognizes that it has benefited from the rules-based international order. [...] Therefore, unlike Russia, Beijing's vision of a multipolar world order does not necessarily envision a radical dismantling of the current international system; instead, China seeks to reform the system of global governance to increase its role and influence to match its growing economic power and size.<sup>12</sup>

This dissertation's conceptual model, which will be outlined below, paints a slightly more complex picture. With current debates surrounding Libya and Syria – linked as they are to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine – clearly having to do with the nature of state sovereignty, it remains clear that there is a connection between sovereignty and international order. Exploring that connection in greater detail is where this chapter will begin, before proceeding to outline this dissertation's core conceptual framework for further analysis.

## **2.2. International Society and International Order**

Relying on English School concepts, Trine Flockhart has recently spelled out the four components of the "ideal-type" international society. They are: power (i.e., material capabilities), identity (which she describes as coming from "the order's self-understanding, core values and vision expressed through shared norms and social practice"), primary

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Stronski and Nicole Ng, "Cooperation and Competition: Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 28 February 2018, available online at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/28/cooperation-and-competition-russia-and-china-in-central-asia-russian-far-east-and-arctic-pub-75673> (last accessed 15.06.2018)

institutions (such as diplomacy, international law, and “recognized patterns of shared practices”) and secondary institutions (i.e., the formal “institutional architecture” of the system).<sup>13</sup> Certain scholars in the English School tradition contend that a system of states does not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members.<sup>14</sup> But Flockhart’s notion of a “multi-order world”, in which – as will be discussed below and in subsequent chapters – liberal concepts no longer enjoy exclusivity as organizing principles in international affairs, appears well suited to describe a possible future global order that is multifaceted and normatively heterogeneous. Moreover, her model explicitly makes room for both material and ideational factors.

A conceptualization of global politics that features occasionally overlapping international orders that oscillate between competition and confrontation appears particularly relevant in today’s world. It has been asserted that one of the causes of the onset of full-blown conflict between Russia and the West over Ukraine was a collision between two international architectures (or orders) – namely the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union, each of which was seeking to pull Ukraine toward its own gravitational orbit.<sup>15</sup> If rigidity and a zero-sum dynamic rooted in rival norms and standards helps to generate incompatibility between orders, then perhaps more flexible ordering practices and geographically overlapping orders that allow smaller countries to obtain benefits from multiple “patron states” could allow this emerging multi-order world to rest on more stable ground.

The quintessential English School notion of “international society”, which Martin Wight defines as a common set of norms that “define the boundaries of a social system” and

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<sup>13</sup> Trine Flockhart, “The coming multi-order world”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2016), pp. 3-30.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 1977), p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Irvin Studin, “Ten Theses on Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, *Global Brief*, 27 November 2017, available online at: <http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2017/11/27/chapter-1-%E2%80%93-ten-theses-on-russia-in-the-21st-century/> (last accessed 22.04.2019)

“condition [states’] behaviour and identity”, is also relevant to the exploration contemporary international questions.<sup>16</sup> Unlike its sister concept of “world society”, it more clearly possesses an ontology of states.<sup>17</sup> As will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3, this makes the former more suitable for the purposes of this dissertation than the latter, as the “universalist cosmopolitanism” of the latter does not properly reflect the state of global affairs today.<sup>18</sup> The English School views the characteristics of international politics as being threefold, fluctuating in importance between the more Hobbesian-oriented “international system”, Lockean or Grotian “international society” and Kantian “world society”, depending on the period in question.<sup>19</sup> While realism would certainly have a firm grasp of the first of these three dynamics, the second most strongly reflects the contemporary reality of an American-centred liberal international order – some of whose features have spread across the globe – that has contributed to determining what constitutes legitimate state behaviour, although recent scholarship contends that the latter of the three has also played an important role in shaping international society.<sup>20</sup> And it is precisely this idea of legitimacy – an idea that is strongly related to the concept of international society – that makes the English School so relevant.

As Ian Clark notes, any notion of legitimacy in the international sphere is rooted in a sense of boundedness; one cannot discuss what constitutes legitimate action without conceding that there exists a *community* – not just a group – of entities within which these actions take place.<sup>21</sup> A realist interpretation would contend that contemporary great power rivalry is due to power imbalance, insecurity or even sheer opportunism, but this only paints

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<sup>16</sup> Wight, *Systems of States*, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

<sup>20</sup> Christian Reus-Smit and Tim Dunne, “The Globalization of International Society”, in Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit (eds.), *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 33-4.

<sup>21</sup> Clark, “International Society and China”, pp. 319-26.

half the picture, as it fails to make room for the sincerity of the convictions that states possess – in other words, for the importance, realness and independence of ideas. Although international society is considered to be under varying pressure from the international system and from world society (to the extent that it exists), states today broadly “conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules” and share certain interests and institutions as well,<sup>22</sup> even if their respective interpretations of the rules can at times vary.

It is not just international society that is of interest per se but also its expansion and evolution across time and space. Russia was only accepted as a great power in the “European family” around 1760.<sup>23</sup> China, for its part, was fundamentally altered by its entry into international society, “from universal empire to ‘civilized’ state”.<sup>24</sup> One narrative contends that there were four phases through which Europe’s international society was spread across the globe: the consolidation of Christendom in Europe by crusades into Iberia and the Baltics, three centuries of exploration during which European international society evolved, the Industrial Revolution which allowed Europe to fill and administer virtually the entire globe, and finally a period of decolonization.<sup>25</sup> The expansion of European international society has produced a tension fundamental to global affairs that is central to discussing the intentions of states such as Russia and China today. Hedley Bull summarizes it thus:

The non-European or non-Western majority of states in the world today, which played little role in shaping the foundations of the international society to which they now belong, have sought naturally and properly to

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Little, “Revisiting Realism and the Balance of Power”, in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (eds.), *Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 35-6.

<sup>23</sup> Adam Watson, “Russia and the European States System”, in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 [1984]), pp. 70-1.

<sup>24</sup> Gerrit W. Gong, “China’s Entry into International Society”, in Bull and Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 178.

<sup>25</sup> Watson, “European International Society and its Expansion”, in Bull and Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 32.

modify it so that it will reflect their own special interests. It should not be overlooked, however, that by seeking a place in this society they have given their consent to its basic rules and institutions.<sup>26</sup>

And, as mentioned in the previous chapter, although the postwar order is institutionally thick, the character of international society today is thin – that is, there exist a variety of cultural ideas, norms and perspectives that are at times in conflict with each other. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson note that while the period since World War II has seen “an immense growth of international law, diplomatic representation, and international organization”, states in today’s international society are “less united by a sense of common interest in a framework of rules and institutions governing their relations with one another” than were those of previous eras of modern history.<sup>27</sup>

Despite important elements of convergence, leading states may conceive of state sovereignty in different ways, not only concerning the nature of the norm itself but also to whom it applies. For example, while the United States considers Ukraine to be a totally sovereign state, Russia does not necessarily believe this to be the case, claiming for itself a “sphere of privileged interests” in its “near abroad”.<sup>28</sup> As Vladimir Putin once famously remarked to George W. Bush, “Ukraine is not even a country”.<sup>29</sup> And today’s international society, already thin to begin with, has grown progressively thinner in recent years. To quote Barry Buzan, today’s international society is not coherent and uniform; in reality, it is “a kind of conglomerate, more core-periphery in form, with a dominant West and a variety of regional international societies in varying degrees of concordance with and alienation from

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<sup>26</sup> Hedley Bull, “The Emergence of a Universal International Society”, in Bull and Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 124.

<sup>27</sup> Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, “Conclusion”, in Bull and Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 430.

<sup>28</sup> Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 127.

<sup>29</sup> Rajan Menon and Eugene Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine: The Unwinding of the Post-Cold War Order* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), p. 1.

each other and the core”.<sup>30</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, echoing this view, notes that international politics today constitute “at best a weak society”, featuring “diverse values and identities” and whose members interact “in a variety of different ways”.<sup>31</sup> The diversity of today’s system, according to Lebow, can be seen by virtue of the contemporary competition over standing – a contestation that goes beyond mere power politics and that reflects the different values systems present in the world.<sup>32</sup>

Contrary to the expectations of liberals, the arrival of Wilsonian idealism on the international stage has in some respects caused global normative divergence instead of convergence. The common political and civilizational attitudes featured during the era of the Concert of Europe gave way to a vision rooted in national self-determination after World War I that, if realized, would require “endless upheaval and disorder” to get the real world to reflect its prescriptions; and this, in turn, was followed by an international order premised on Mutual Assured Destruction, which indicated a further downgrade in the amount of normative order and agreement in international politics.<sup>33</sup> Far from representing the final and definitive victory of liberalism, the collapse of the Soviet Union could well represent an additional step toward a more disorderly world that persists in its normatively thinness – a world that American norms cannot completely conquer, that fails to feature even the strategic coherence and predictability of the Cold War era. In parallel to this process of increasing international incoherence, we have seen the norms and practices surrounding statehood degrade as well – a further sign that there is a connection between conceptions of state sovereignty and the state of international order. As Adda Bozeman put it:

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 498.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 499.

<sup>33</sup> Elie Kedourie, “A New International Disorder”, in Bull and Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society*, pp. 347-9.

The integrity of the concept ‘state’ is critically impaired [...] because it is applied to political establishments that are too different to be comparable or equal in terms of either international law or power politics. In the West, meanwhile, attributes once firmly assigned to the state have been transferred gradually on the one hand to ‘government’, on the other to ‘the world society’.<sup>34</sup>

Or as Bull and Watson put it, the existence of “pseudo-states” or “quasi-states” has made for a “weakening of cohesion” in international society.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, then, principles in international society can evolve between being more or less cohesive, that is, more or less accepted by the members of the society. However, further clarification will be required on several fronts. The future of what is often called the liberal international order has become a central topic of discussion in recent years, which begs the question of how to conceptualize this order – how does it relate to the English School concepts of international society and international order? Addressing this is of direct relevance to this dissertation’s core question, which seeks to evaluate the consequences for international society and the broader international order that flow from the potential resilience (or lack thereof) of the liberal international order. Furthermore, international societies that are thin – possessing a limited degree of cultural and normative agreement – are not necessarily unstable.<sup>36</sup> How, then, can one therefore conceive of today’s sources of international instability? The first of these two questions will be answered through the conceptual model advanced later in this chapter,

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<sup>34</sup> Adda Bozeman, “The International Order in a Multicultural World”, in Bull and Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 405.

<sup>35</sup> Bull and Watson, “Conclusion”, p. 430.

<sup>36</sup> Zachary Paikin, Kaneshko Sangar and Camille-Renaud Merlen, “Russia’s Eurasian past, present and future: rival international societies and Moscow’s place in the post-cold war world”, *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2019), pp. 225-43.

while the latter will be addressed in Chapter 7 by way of a conclusion that can be drawn from this model.

One of the central questions of this dissertation involves examining the extent to which Russia is challenging the contemporary international order. As mentioned above, it has been noted that Russia was incorporated into European international society as a full member in the eighteenth century, as Muscovy became imperial Russia and began to look west after the centuries of eastward and southward expansion that followed the casting off of the Mongol yoke. This account, while having been promulgated by many scholars, is perhaps best embodied in Bull and Watson's *The Expansion of International Society* – a European society that ultimately grew to encompass Russia, then other outside powers such as the white settler states and Japan, and finally the entire world. The narrative present in *The Expansion*, however, has been challenged in recent scholarship, most comprehensively by Dunne and Reus-Smit's *The Globalization of International Society* that claims, by contrast, that international orders and societies emerge out of heterogeneous rather than homogeneous cultural contexts.<sup>37</sup> The editors of *The Expansion* lend possible credence to the notion that China is a more serious challenge to the stability of the contemporary international society of supposedly European origin, seeing as Russia has been one of its integral members since the eighteenth century and is thus more socialized into it, while China – a country with a much larger population and whose international socialization and national development may therefore take longer – only began to interact with it in the nineteenth century. This dissertation will explore the reasons as to why this is not necessarily the case.

The account put forward in *The Globalization* presents some interesting conclusions concerning Russia's position in the contemporary international order. First, Dunne and Reus-

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<sup>37</sup> Reus-Smit and Dunne, "The Globalization of International Society", p. 38.



Smit note that international society has *changed* over the centuries rather than having merely *expanded*, pointing out, for example, that absolute monarchy ultimately gave way to popular sovereignty in European states and that the “hybrid order” of sovereign European states possessing empires in the global periphery disappeared in favour of a “universal order of sovereign states”.<sup>38</sup> Non-Western powers have undergone normative change along with international society as well. For instance, one scholar contends that although “states continue to contest the appropriateness of external coercion as a means to protect populations”, there is still “widespread support for the general premise that sovereignty is not a license for tyranny” – what is desired is simply more oversight, restraint, procedural justice and a fair distribution of costs.<sup>39</sup> Buzan, writing in the same volume, notes concerning the evolution of global norms that “[u]niversal sovereignty, and particularly sovereign equality, is a relatively recent arrival as the main framing for international society. Older forms of it were radically different from what we have now, and there is little reason to think that this dynamism is at an end.”<sup>40</sup> All of this puts the contemporary rivalry between Russia and the West into historical perspective, with the latter not being the only one to have evolved in normative terms.

Second, in contrast to earlier English School pluralists who believe that heterogeneity has weakened international society, the editors of *The Globalization* volume assert that contestation should be viewed not just as “incorporative or corrosive, but as an engine of international social development”.<sup>41</sup> As Reus-Smit and Dunne put it, “rather than seeing declining sociability as a marker of systemic politics, we see conflict and contestation as integral to any international social order”.<sup>42</sup> Upon reflection, this appears quite natural, in fact, as David Lake notes that ambiguity is both “inherent in any norm” and “results from

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<sup>38</sup> Reus-Smit and Dunne, “The Globalization of International Society”, pp. 18 & 29.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Teitt, “Sovereignty as Responsibility”, in Reus-Smit and Dunne (eds.), *The Globalization*, pp. 343-4.

<sup>40</sup> Barry Buzan, “Universal Sovereignty”, in Reus-Smit and Dunne (eds.), *The Globalization*, p. 246.

<sup>41</sup> Reus-Smit and Dunne, “The Globalization of International Society”, pp. 26-7 and 36.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

struggles over the content of specific norms. To the extent that norms matter, it should not be a surprise that they are continuously contested.”<sup>43</sup> The question remains, however, whether too much (or perhaps a specific kind of) contestation can ultimately undermine an international society’s foundations. The extent to which normative contestation between great powers is either constitutive of international society or has a deleterious impact on it is evidently of direct relevance to this dissertation’s core question and will be addressed below and throughout the subsequent chapters.

Dunne and Reus-Smit also contend that, unlike the early English School scholars who advance the notion that it takes a degree of shared understandings before an international relationship can be said to have reached the level of “society”, there is in fact no difference between the international system and international society, seeing as mere mutual recognition is social.<sup>44</sup> However, the idea that contestation is integral to order interacts interestingly if not somewhat uncomfortably with another of their contentions, namely that a “close connection” exists between order and society, and thus that “[a] breakdown of international order is not merely a failure to realize the primary goals of the society of states; it is a failure of the rules and institutions that constitute that society”.<sup>45</sup> At first glance, it would appear as if contestation being a part of any social order is a notion that is at odds with the idea that the very “rules and institutions” of international society are threatened when order breaks down. But upon reflection, it becomes clear that it is not the society itself that is at risk: Order and society are closely related, but not completely synonymous. And if it is the society that is at risk, then it is the precise normative and institutional mixture constitutive of that society that may give way rather than social interaction at the international level in its entirety.

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<sup>43</sup> David A. Lake, “Laws and Norms in the Making of International Hierarchies”, in Ayşe Zarkol (ed.), *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> Reus-Smit and Dunne, “The Globalization of international Society”, p. 32.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

Finally, and as previously mentioned, *The Globalization* asserts that the origins of the contemporary international order are numerous and span the globe, rather than having their roots exclusively in European civilization. A “polycentric pattern of expansion” continued until the late eighteenth century, with Europe only eclipsing the rest of the world from 1800 onwards, rather than with the dawn of the Age of Exploration as conceived of in *The Expansion*.<sup>46</sup> What Andrew Phillips, writing in *The Globalization*, calls the Sinosphere, the Islamicate and Latin Christendom all interact with one another over the centuries, and are far from being self-contained.<sup>47</sup> Conspicuously absent from Phillips’ chapter is Russia, which is not mentioned even once. Is this omission a tacit admission that, while international society may have globalized through the meeting of multiple civilizations in the form of China, the Muslim world and Europe, Russia was in fact subjected to European society’s *expansion*? This idea and its potential consequences will be probed in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

### **2.3. Watson’s Pendulum and the Changing Content of Hegemony**

As mentioned above, one of the principal points of contention between the world’s major powers today concerns the nature of state sovereignty. With the global balance of power being somewhat more evenly distributed in the wake of the Great Recession and following sustained Chinese economic growth, recent discords have proven to be particularly polarizing – going beyond questions of power and delving into the realm of influence and legitimacy. Russia and China believe that Western states exceeded their UN-sanctioned humanitarian mandate in Libya by forcing regime change, while the West denounces Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its meddling in the Donbas region of Ukraine and China’s actions in the South

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<sup>46</sup> Andrew Phillips, “International Systems”, in Reus-Smit and Dunne (eds.), *The Globalization*, p. 60.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

China Sea. Regardless of the degree of global (and regional) economic integration, cooperation and institutionalization being witnessed today, these political controversies are significant drivers of debate in contemporary international affairs.

The origins of state sovereignty and the timeline of its evolution is a topic much written about in the social sciences, and it would be impossible to summarize all the available material. The principal accounts, however, tend to veer strongly toward one of the two poles of the materialist-idealist dichotomy, with some tracing the development of the state to war and other material factors and others emphasizing philosophical concepts and inter-subjective normative change. Charles Tilly, for instance, provides a strongly materialist account. He divides the history of states post-990 AD into four separate eras, the divisions between which are marked by changes in the relationship between warfare and state organization.<sup>48</sup> The trend, he argues, has largely been toward the creation of “national states” (as opposed to empires or federations, for instance) through either coercion-intensive or capital-intensive routes.<sup>49</sup> Empires, defined as one state exercising sovereignty over at least one other, may have dominated the map in the mid-sixteenth century, but by the time the Peace of Westphalia came about one century later, the Habsburg-dominated Holy Roman Empire was in irreversible decline.<sup>50</sup> That being said, direct rule did not come about for another century or so. It was the expansion of France’s military force for the purposes of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars that drove the process of state formation and ironically resulted in the civilianization and centralization of government – a model ultimately emulated by (or imposed on) the states it conquered.<sup>51</sup> The contours of the relationship between state sovereignty and international order are once again visible here. Just as state sovereignty

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<sup>48</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States: AD 990-1992* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), p. 29.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103-22.

began to consolidate before the arrival of direct rule (i.e., a more recognizable form of sovereignty from our vantage point), so, too, according to certain analysts did a mere proto-state system exist upon the conclusion of the Thirty Years War before a more fully fledged “Westphalian” balance-of-power system came about in the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup>

There are numerous accounts that privilege the ideational dimension of sovereignty’s evolution. Some trace the intellectual history of sovereignty throughout the Middle Ages, with William of Ockham’s theorizing laying the intellectual groundwork for the consolidation of power by centralizing monarchies (*regnum*) in competition with the Catholic Church (*sacerdotum*), ultimately paving the way for the sacralization of the state during the Enlightenment.<sup>53</sup> An important step exists between Ockham and the Enlightenment thinkers as well, and can be found in the writings of the likes of Hobbes and Machiavelli. According to Jean Bethke Elstain, “raison d’état had medieval antecedents in the idea that the king can sometimes act outside the law,” but that “what, for the medievals, is the exception becomes, for Machiavelli, the norm”.<sup>54</sup> For his part, in contrast to early Christian thinkers, Hobbes’ writings give legitimacy to the notion that “there is no such thing as an ‘unjust law’” and that “[h]uman beings do not require human society to fulfill their natures [...] but, rather, to protect them from their natures, to tie them by fear of punishment to a system of rules”.<sup>55</sup> In sum, “It was Hobbes, and Bodin before him, that helped to give centralizing regimes, whether monarchical or parliamentary, a basis in legal and political theory”.<sup>56</sup> This ultimately laid the groundwork for the emergence of the sovereign state as the legitimate unit actor in international society in the ensuing centuries, demonstrating how ideas can play a role in

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<sup>52</sup> See Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso Books, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> See Jean Bethke Elstain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

determining the scope of legitimate state action and ultimately the shape of sovereign statehood itself.<sup>57</sup> Questions surrounding this scope have re-emerged as a central political debate in a post-Cold War era featuring both international integration and intervention. Both these may be material phenomena, but they are also sustained by concerns in the realm of ideas, such as the desire to uphold free trade, multilateralism and the protection of civilians as global norms.<sup>58</sup> This mixture characterizes an international society and international order that are in flux and subject to varying degrees of contestation, as will be elaborated upon below and in subsequent chapters. In today's context of a global international society featuring both elements of convergence and divergence,<sup>59</sup> the nature of this contestation will impact the extent to which state sovereignty can be seen to erode.

Other idealist accounts employ a genealogy to identify the major breaking points in the history of sovereignty. Jens Bartelson, for instance, notes that the growing political impotence of the papacy, the rise of the Ottoman Empire and the discovery of the non-Christian New World led to the decline of the medieval notion that questions of authority and ontology were intertwined.<sup>60</sup> Later, we find a role for sovereign states based on the principles of identity, individuation and order during the post-Westphalia "classical" period of sovereignty, which were ultimately to be replaced by a principle of what the author calls "difference" in the post-Enlightenment modern era.<sup>61</sup> This principle will be of interest to those seeking to understand the Russian worldview, for instance, seeing as some analysts

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<sup>57</sup> For more on the timeline surrounding the emergence of the sovereign state in modern history, see Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States* and Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*.

<sup>58</sup> See G. John Ikenberry, "The end of liberal international order?", *International Affairs*, Vol 94., no. 1 (2018), pp. 7-23.

<sup>59</sup> For example, despite the persistence of an anti-hegemonial tendency in international society, Buzan notes that there has been some intercultural exchange of values at the global level as well as an "unprecedented degree of ideological convergence" on economic issues. See Barry Buzan, "How regions were made, and the legacies for world politics: an English School reconnaissance", in T.V. Paul (ed.), *International Relations Theory and Regional Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 46.

<sup>60</sup> Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 93-108.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-9 and 189.

contend that Russia is still a state based on principles from the modern era, in contrast with the West, which has already reorganized itself along postmodern notions.<sup>62</sup>

Idealist narratives may differ in their methodology and terminology, and may also disagree on when the age of state sovereignty truly begins, but they tend to identify similar watershed moments, at various points in the medieval period, with additional developments during the eras of Italian city states and the lead up to Westphalia, followed by a significant modernization during the Enlightenment that set the stage for the French Revolutionary Wars. Similarly, contemporary international integration and intervention have been dubbed “revolutions in sovereignty” on a scale similar to Westphalia and decolonization – both of which were caused by revolutions in ideas about justice and political authority and historically helped to alter the geographic and political reach of the sovereign state.<sup>63</sup> It is therefore reasonable to conclude that an endpoint has not yet been reached to the litigation over how this pillar of international society should be interpreted. As will be made clear by this dissertation’s conceptual model below, as well as by Lebow’s “cultural theory” of international relations laid out in Chapter 4, change is the norm in international society.

Due to the complexity of our own times and the danger of resorting to presentism while analyzing the past, a model is required that transcends the strict division between materialism and idealism. But the focus of this model must also go beyond conceptions of sovereignty and into the character of international order, for they are related. Seeing as differing conceptions of order are being asserted in today’s world, an approach that enshrines the notion of an international system composed exclusively of formally independent states (and inviolably so) would not be an appropriate rubric for this dissertation. Adam Watson’s

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<sup>62</sup> Boris Mezhuev, “Modern Russia and Postmodern Europe”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2 March 2008, available online at [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_10362](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_10362) (last accessed on 29.05.2016)

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 3-4.

famous pendulum is a more appropriate metaphor (see Figure 1), as it has built into it the possibility of fundamental change in the character of international society.<sup>64</sup>

At the left-most extreme lies a theoretical system characterized by “absolute anarchy”. Moving rightward, one witnesses increasing administrative centralization and/or cultural-normative homogenization:<sup>65</sup> first, “limited degrees of involvement between neighbours”, followed by international societies, which “always originate within the matrix of a dominant culture” and in which states are limited by impersonal pressures, rules and hegemonial authority. Beyond this, as the character of hegemony strengthens, one arrives at suzerainty, where the dominant actor exercises some influence over the internal affairs of other states although they remain formally independent; then dominion, which is verily more of a supranational system rather than an international one; and finally, empire, featuring what in practice appears to be a single state: political entities are distinguishable but highly subordinated, varying by consent or by coercion.<sup>66</sup>

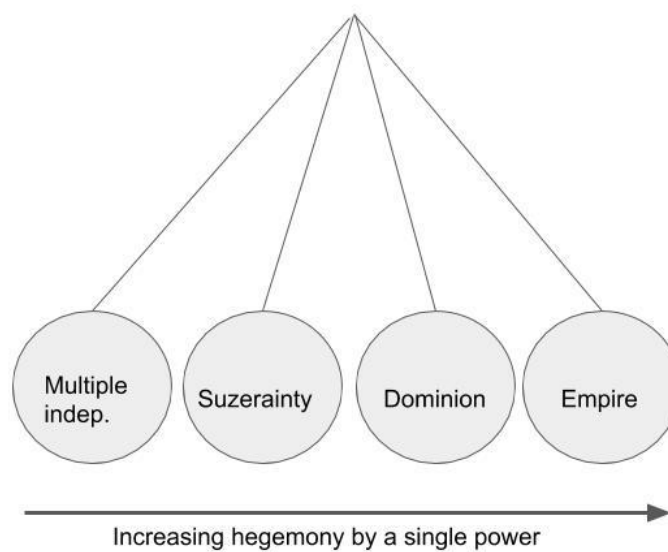
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<sup>64</sup> For more on how Watson’s pendulum can help to explain the deterioration of Russia-West relations in the post-Cold War period due to the liberal order’s attempt to increase its international hegemony too rapidly, see Zachary Paikin, Kaneshko Sangar and Camille-Renaud Merlen, “Russia’s Eurasian past, present and future: rival international societies and Moscow’s place in the post-cold war world”, *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2019) pp. 225-43.

<sup>65</sup> A conceptual clarification is required at this point: It would be wrong to infer that administrative centralization should be equated exclusively with material coercion and cultural-normative homogenization with consent. Administrative centralization by a hegemon can occur gradually and can be rooted in a degree of mutual consent, with smaller states agreeing to the hegemon serving as a security provider so long as it demonstrates a requisite amount of restraint in its international conduct.

<sup>66</sup> Adam Watson, *The Limits of Independence: Relations between States in the Modern World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), pp. 118-20.





**Figure 1. Watson's pendulum in the realm of international order**

Watson notes that this spectrum of varying degrees of centralization can apply both to states and to systems; that is, both domestically and internationally.<sup>67</sup> This is particularly interesting for the purposes of this dissertation, as it provides further evidence that there is a parallel between the conception and exercise of state sovereignty on one hand and the character of international order on the other. On this very point, Watson notes that an increase in hegemonial authority can lead to a change in the conception of sovereignty: For example, the ultimate effect of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was to make sovereignty less sacrosanct, as intervention became an “accepted feature of international society” after the establishment of the Concert of Europe.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Reus-Smit writes that in the nineteenth century, “liberal conceptions of legitimate statehood and procedural justice became not only the prevailing measures of political legitimacy and rightful state action, but

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-1.

had a profound effect on the nature of domestic political institutions”.<sup>69</sup> Important as well is Watson’s reminder that swings of the pendulum, when they take place, appear to be more permanent than they actually are.<sup>70</sup> In other words, change is built into his model – the very character and norms of international society can evolve in fundamental ways with time, with no ultimate endpoint. History, in short, never ends. As Watson puts it, “[T]he most stable point along the curve is not some invariable formula, but is the point of optimum mix of legitimacy and advantage, modified by the pull on our pendulum away from the extremes.”<sup>71</sup> Every international order is different, and the order evolves regularly.

One weakness of Watson’s model is that it appears to restrict the scope of state agency and normative contestation significantly, with pendular swings occurring mechanistically in reaction to attempts by a single power to consolidate or expand its hegemony. But an equally significant weakness is that his model is unidimensional. That is, it identifies quasi-cyclical trends – whether a given historical system was more prone to centralization than another – while ignoring secular trends (i.e., the qualitative evolution of the character of hegemony over time). Some of his own work identifies these trends without verily incorporating them into his model. For instance, he notes that *ragione di stato* in the era of the Italian city-states could be employed as “a justification of any policy”, whereas Richelieu’s later concept of *raison d’état* more clearly recognized a ruler’s obligation to his ruled.<sup>72</sup> This is reflected through how leaders viewed themselves as states developed and

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<sup>69</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, “The Liberal International Order Reconsidered”, in Rebekka Friedman, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (eds.), *After Liberalism?: The Future of Liberalism in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 178.

<sup>70</sup> Watson, *The Limits of Independence*, p. 123.

<sup>71</sup> Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), pp. 131-2.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

consolidated – for example, Frederick the Great thought of himself not as the state’s “incarnation” but rather as “its first servant”.<sup>73</sup>

As will be outlined below, the nature of hegemony has strengthened throughout time. This is true not only when it comes to the relative material strength of hegemonies throughout history (with postwar United States being more powerful than Victorian Britain, and the latter more so than its pre-Napoleonic predecessor, etc.), but also regarding the principles and norms that they assert – that is, not just the character but also the *content* of hegemony in international society and the international order. This is very much in line with the fact that global politics have witnessed evolutions in how sovereignty and other international norms are understood. *Raison d'état*, which helped sovereign states to consolidate through the pursuit of their interests, ultimately led to the rise of nationalism as these newly formed polities sought to legitimate their existence by transforming their subjects into citizens.<sup>74</sup> At this point, the diffused hegemony that embodied the Concert of Europe had already transformed the balance of power from an informal principle that guided international conduct to a formal one that regulated it. The nationalism of the long nineteenth century eventually gave way to an even stronger legitimating concept as national self-determination became an international norm and institutionalized liberal internationalism began its rise. A further indication of the strengthened normative character of hegemony is that the legitimacy of rule in the eighteenth century – defined hereditarily and through treaties – was “a formula of convenience rather than of absolute right”; it was predictable, but flexible.<sup>75</sup> The contrast with today’s stringent human rights norms and international law – not inflexible rules of the game but rather a supposedly inviolable legal code – could not be more striking. Watson

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>74</sup> David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 43-6.

<sup>75</sup> Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, p. 204.

himself, describing contemporary international politics, notes that as a result of many of these changes, the “operational practices of the system are considerably more integrated than its fragmented legitimacy, and the gap between the practice and the theory of the system is unusually wide”.<sup>76</sup> This gap between legitimacy and behaviour – in effect, between expectations and actual events – is one of the drivers of normative contestation in Russia-West relations today. The effective inability of Watson’s pendulum to address the potential magnitude of these secular trends – which have ultimately produced the specifics of the contemporary liberal international order and today’s international society – suggests that an adapted model is required to tackle this dissertation’s core question.

As international society has expanded (or perhaps globalized) to include non-European countries, it has had to deal with rising normative pluralism within its ranks. As a result, the strengthening character of material and normative hegemony has come up against an increasingly hostile international environment. Put differently, although norms and practices are being pushed by the system’s dominant actor(s) more and more forcefully, some critical ones are progressively being viewed as less and less legitimate. As Watson observes, “Legitimacy usually lags behind practice. But a conspicuous and growing gap between legitimacy and practice causes tension and the impression of disorder.”<sup>77</sup> In fact, he notes that this gap has been widening for some time, claiming that international society in the nineteenth century was “pulled by nationalism and democracy and the growing importance of its non-European members away from the tight hegemony instituted by the Vienna settlement” that followed the Napoleonic Wars, which emphasized national independence even as “advances in technology and other factors were integrating the worldwide system

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 301-2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323.

into an ever closer economic and strategic net of involvement and interaction” – a gap between theory and practice that would grow even wider in the ensuing century.<sup>78</sup>

Therefore, one can imagine Watson’s faster-moving pendulum, ranging from multiple independencies to empire, operating in tandem with a second, slower-moving pendulum that measures the qualitative character of relative material and normative hegemony. This second entity is referred to as a pendulum because, while it has been moving toward the “strengthened” end of the spectrum over the past several centuries, this dissertation will contend that the actions and norms advanced by Russia and China today threaten to exert the opposite influence, pushing it back in the “weakened” direction. In other words, the gap between practice and legitimacy has reached a critical point and has produced a pushback by dissatisfied powers. Watson claims that his pendulum “appears to be moving back toward greater authority and order” today, rightward along his spectrum.<sup>79</sup> This may be true when one considers the European Union’s political consolidation after the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and the rising or returning influence of Russia and China in their respective “backyards”. But these are regional international societies: At the global level, the growing assertiveness of Moscow and Beijing against American hegemony suggests a move in the opposite direction. If Flockhart is correct and we are indeed headed toward a “multi-order” world, this would indicate that a crossroads may have been reached concerning the very ability of hegemony to exercise its influence within the entirety of the global political system.<sup>80</sup> Ironically, the erection of these multiple regional and transregional international orders has been facilitated by liberal internationalism’s support for the proliferation of formal, “thick” institutions.

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 275-6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>80</sup> For more on how multiple international orders have emerged as a result of interactions between the dominant liberal West and other “subaltern” states, see Oliver P. Richmond, “Peace in the Twenty-First Century: States, Capital, and Multilateral Institutions versus Positionality Arbitrage, Everyday Mobility, Networks, and Multiverticality”, *Globalizations*, Vol. 14, no. 6 (2017), pp. 1014-28.

Bull outlines three levels of rules that govern international society, in descending order of importance: constitutional normative principles, that when contested usually produce international disorder; rules of coexistence, which are “minimal behavioural conditions for society” such as the “sanctity of agreements” and “limits to violence”; and rules to regulate cooperation in politics, strategy, society and economy.<sup>81</sup> Unlike theories that posit that states are only preoccupied with survival in an anarchical world, this English School understanding posits that there exists content in the sphere of interaction between states. Furthermore, it provides a framework to determine with greater accuracy which actions and ideas represent a threat to the stability of an international society. Despite the rise of international integration in recent decades, state sovereignty remains a resilient and cardinal principle in international society.<sup>82</sup> It stands to reason that profound disagreements over when state sovereignty can legitimately be set aside, marking sustained gaps between codes of conduct and actual state behaviour, can cause a crisis in great power relations at the level of international society. Instances of post-Cold War disagreement ranging from Western or Russian interventions in Kosovo, Iraq, Libya, Syria and the post-Soviet space fit this pattern and will be explored in the next chapter. What is of interest for now is how to model this crisis of international society conceptually.

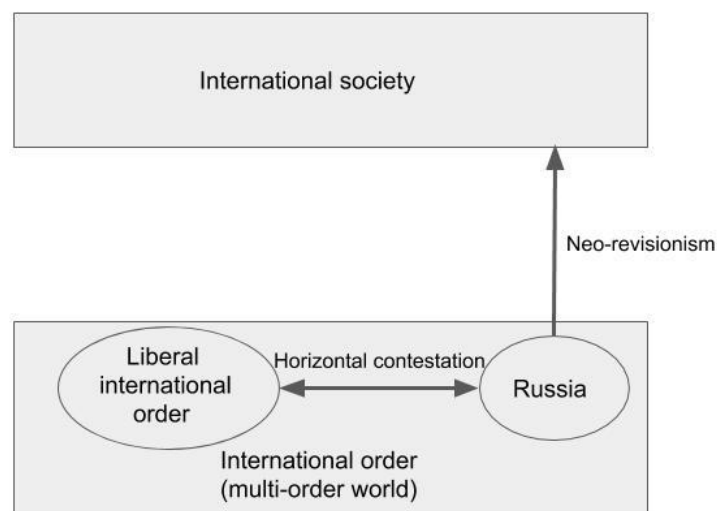
Building on Flockhart’s model of a “multi-order world”, Richard Sakwa has recently articulated a two-level conception of the global political system (see Figure 2). The top level consists of international society, including its primary and secondary institutions; the bottom level, for its part, features the realm of international order, which today takes the shape of a

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<sup>81</sup> Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), p. 98.

<sup>82</sup> Michael N. Barnett, “The End of a Liberal International Order That Never Existed”, *The Global*, 16 April 2019, available online at: <https://theglobal.blog/2019/04/16/the-end-of-a-liberal-international-order-that-never-existed/> (last accessed 01.05.2019)

multi-order world.<sup>83</sup> States and sub-orders within the bottom level interact with one another horizontally in the “sphere of international relations”, as well as with international society vertically in the “sphere of norms”, with the vertical dimension tempering the trend toward polycentrism.<sup>84</sup> One of Sakwa’s key claims concerning Russian foreign policy is that it is not revisionist but “neo-revisionist” – the sources and examples of which will be explored in subsequent chapters. For now, it is sufficient to note that he claims that this neo-revisionism expresses itself simultaneously through a horizontal challenge to the liberal West in the sphere of international order while defending the autonomy of international society vertically from perceived Western violations of global norms.<sup>85</sup>



**Figure 2. Sakwa’s two-level conceptualization of the global political system and Russian neo-revisionism**

<sup>83</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 44.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

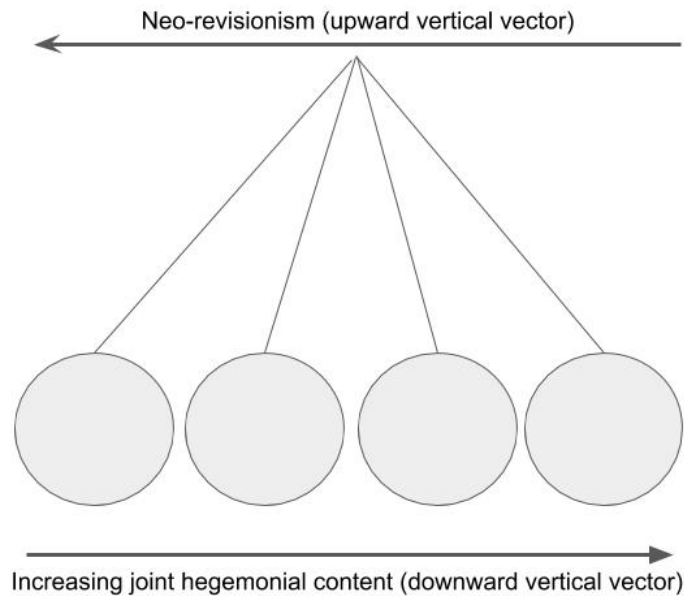
<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

This dissertation contends that this neo-revisionism – the vertical vector that extends upward from the realm of international order toward the realm of international society – is exerting a leftward push on the second pendulum outlined above. Watson’s pendulum, which describes the degree of material and normative centralization around a single hegemon *within* a given international order (that is, exclusively within the bottom level of Sakwa’s two-tier model),<sup>86</sup> is therefore of a different nature to this second pendulum, which by contrast measures the relationship *between* the realms of international society and international order (see Figure 3). Unlike the former, the latter is not concerned with questions of polarity and polycentrism, but rather great power relations as they relate to international society. As noted above, Dunne and Reus-Smit conceive of a close relationship between international order and society, and it is here that this close relationship becomes evident. The advent of a multi-order world plagued by increasingly zero-sum relations between blocs affects not only the shape of international order, but that of international society as well. From a conceptual perspective, then, it is not merely the ordering practices and behavioural patterns within a given international order – or increasingly, between orders – that are of relevance to contemporary global affairs, but the impact that these have on the condition of international society.

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<sup>86</sup> In the context of a multi-order world, this also applies to the degree of centralization around a hegemonic order – in this case, the Western-led liberal international order – within the realm of international order.



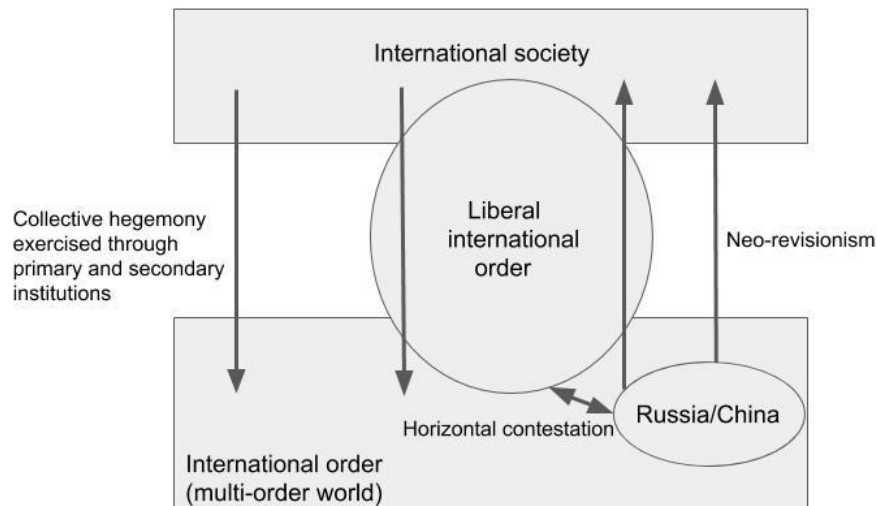


**Figure 3. Second pendulum, governing the relationship between international society and international order**

Furthermore, in addition to the horizontal and upward vertical vectors described by Sakwa, this dissertation conceptualizes a third vector. If the upward vertical vector exerts a leftward push on the second pendulum, then it stands to reason that a *downward* vertical vector has the opposite effect, occurring when great powers, through the primary and secondary institutions of international society, collectively infuse an international order with thicker and more clearly defined content (see Figure 4). Both the upward and downward vectors have been on display in the post-Cold War period. For example, the number of topics deliberated by the UN Security Council has increased and definitions of security and development have expanded, even as permanent members Russia and China have become more willing to exercise the use of their veto.<sup>87</sup> Watson's pendulum, then, measures the

<sup>87</sup> Bernard J. Firestone, "U Thant", in Manuel Frölich and Abiodun Williams (eds.), *The UN Secretary-General and the Security Council: A Dynamic Relationship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 83.

degree of *single-power* hegemony, while the second pendulum measures the degree of *collective* hegemony.<sup>88</sup>



**Figure 4. Revised two-level conceptualization of the global political system**

The revised two-level system found in Figure 4 represents the core theoretical contribution made by this dissertation, providing an original conceptualization of the liberal international order and describing in detail the working of the intimate relationship between international order and international society outlined in recent English School scholarship. The novel pendulum put forward in Figure 3, by contrast, serves more of an illustrative purpose regarding the impact of Russian neo-revisionism on the foundations of great power cooperation. Its relevance is twofold. First, it provides a supplemental conceptual illustration on top of the model outlined in Figure 4 of the effects of substantial great-power normative contestation, to the effect that such contestation is accompanied not only by the erosion of many norms, institutions and practices of a given international society – which will be

<sup>88</sup> The distinction between singular and collective hegemony already enjoys a basis in English School scholarship. See Ian Clark, *Hegemony in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 60.

discussed at greater length in Chapter 7 – but also by the reduction of effective great-power hegemony. This growing hegemony throughout modern history expresses itself not only by the increasing relative strength of the hegemonic state in the international order throughout modern history, as will be detailed in the analysis of Knutsen’s work in the next section, but also through the growth and increasing depth of agreed-upon norms and structures in European international society through the centuries – ranging from the consolidation of the modern state, to the growing obligations of rulers to their subjects, to the gradual proliferation of thicker international primary and secondary institutions.<sup>89</sup> As mentioned above, Watson’s work discusses these factors without incorporating them into his model, effectively rendering it trans-historic in character without accounting for elements of historical contingency necessary to understand the sources and impact of today’s resurgent great power rivalry. The revised two-level model outlined above makes clear that the downward vertical vector representing collective great power hegemony is of a different nature to the horizontal litigation of a single state’s (or order’s) relative power. As such, attempts to combine these two distinct phenomena into a single and unidimensional pendulum model would not be advisable.<sup>90</sup>

Second, it serves to complement additional limitations of Watson’s pendulum. While the latter may be able to explain why a counterhegemonic coalition may form at any given moment in history, it does not provide a meta-historical account of the complexities of today’s great power contest, in which a gap has gradually grown between behaviour and

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<sup>89</sup> See Zachary Paikin, “Great power rivalry and the weakening of collective hegemony: revisiting the relationship between international society and international order”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (2020), DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2020.1720602

<sup>90</sup> Watson attempts to do just that by noting that the Vienna settlement represented a middle ground between Napoleon’s imperial conquests and the post-Utrecht European propensity toward polycentrism due to the Metternich system’s “diffused” great power hegemony. However, as will be made clear throughout this dissertation – in part due to the character of the emerging multi-order world – one should not confuse strengthening regional orders around individual great powers and the advent of a new collective hegemony with a rightward swing of Watson’s pendulum. See Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, p. 238.

legitimacy in international society over the course of several historical periods. Although the English School has been known to contain a variety of competing perspectives – incorporating the respectively Hobbesian, Grotian and Kantian logics of “international system”, “international society” and “world society” into a single theory – the existence of this gap can be seen even if one adopts a more comprehensive view of English School literature. The English School features two main traditions of thought – pluralism and solidarism – the former of which emphasizes coexistence between states despite their “separateness and difference” and the latter privileging elements of universalism and convergence in international society.<sup>91</sup> As such, pluralist accounts have tended to emphasize the declining coherence, cohesiveness and sociability of international society as it has expanded to encompass a culturally diverse globe,<sup>92</sup> while solidarist ones have sought to uncover empirical elements in which international society has evolved rather than declined.<sup>93</sup> However, these competing narratives are not necessarily in conflict with each other, and together can be seen as illustrating a broader point – namely, the “evolution” that international society has undergone as it has “globalized” has created an overall legitimacy that has struggled to keep up with differences in state behaviour and normative pronouncements in an increasingly multicultural world. As will be illustrated further in the next chapter, the uncertainty surrounding today’s novel era has effectively “radicalized” many of the leading players in international society even as certain norms have genuinely

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<sup>91</sup> Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School*, p. 90. For a more wide-ranging discussion of pluralism and solidarism, see pp. 81-167.

<sup>92</sup> See for example Kedourie, “A New International Disorder”, pp. 347-56 and Bozeman, “The International Order in a Multicultural World”, pp. 387-406. Additionally, for an account of how both the “material” and “societal” balances of power have been eroding since the nineteenth century, see Richard Little, “Revisiting Realism and the Balance of Power”, in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (eds.), *Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 21-44.

<sup>93</sup> See Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School*, pp. 163-5. Also see Reus-Smit and Dunne, “The Globalization of International Society”, pp. 29-33.

become more globally entrenched in relative terms.<sup>94</sup> In addition to the rivalry that has resulted from the inability of Russia and the West to develop a stable paradigm to regulate their relations in the post-Cold War era, a prime example for this has been the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, in which neither the principle of state sovereignty nor the reframing of it as a responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocities is contested, but where there is significant disagreement over when and how sovereignty can be set aside in the name of achieving humanitarian aims.<sup>95</sup>

Although solidarism may be an empirical and not merely normative account, this does not change the fact that norms are imagined (and contested) concepts in addition to being implemented in the “real world”. As such, though the solidarist account may highlight the extent to which certain norms have successfully and robustly proliferated across the globe, this does not imply that they are not still subject to rival interpretations. Buzan also notes a link between pluralist and solidarist themes, not only because the pluralist institution of sovereignty has now been extended to all on the principle of human equality since decolonization, but also because the states spread most comprehensively across the world by Europe were those of the nineteenth century rather than 1648, by which time Europe’s pluralist primary institutions had already been affected by the rise of nationalism.<sup>96</sup> The second pendulum conceptualized above serves the purpose of illustrating this tension of historical proportion between international society’s simultaneous “expansion” and “evolution”. Much like Watson’s pendulum whose swings are not always symmetrical,<sup>97</sup> this novel pendulum also possesses certain shortcomings – for instance, it may be that some

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<sup>94</sup> See Irvin Studin, “Only Asia can save Russia and the West from themselves”, *South China Morning Post*, 7 April 2018, available online at: <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2140666/only-asia-can-save-russia-and-west-themselves> (last accessed 09.03.2020)

<sup>95</sup> See Teitt, “Sovereignty as Responsibility”, pp. 327-44. Also see Oliver Stuenkel, “The BRICS and the Future of R2P”, *Global Responsibility to Protect*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (2014), pp. 3-28.

<sup>96</sup> Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School*, pp. 112 & 141.

<sup>97</sup> Paikin, “Great power rivalry and the weakening of collective hegemony”.

elements of collective hegemony may be strengthening while others simultaneously weaken. Nonetheless, it provides a deeper illustration of the historical impact of Russian neo-revisionism and today's great power rivalry, uncovers new ways in which the English School's competing perspectives can in fact be married into a coherent narrative, and lays the groundwork for further research detailing the factors affecting collective great power hegemony and the "thickness" of international society.

Sakwa's two-tier model that places international society above the realm of international order, combined with the two vertical vectors described in this section, leads to an important conclusion regarding how the global political system should be conceptualized. Namely, it is international society that rests on the international order, and not vice versa. As such, this dissertation's understanding of the relationship between international order and international society is closer to that of Hedley Bull than that of Martin Wight. The notion that a given international order rests on international society's norms, institutions and criteria for membership would appear to make more sense at first glance, with international society providing the overall cultural and political framework within which certain rules can be established and behavioural patterns can take root, thus forming an international order. This would be in line, for example, with Wight's notion that international relations are shaped in part by "the nature of the sovereign state".<sup>98</sup> Bull, by contrast, in developing his notion of an "anarchical society" claimed that "anarchy is intolerable and thus states establish institutions, though not sovereign, to mitigate its worst consequences and allow the pursuit of certain 'elementary goals'".<sup>99</sup> In other words, the institutions and norms of international society flow from the anarchical character of interstate interaction. Similarly, this dissertation's conceptual model contends that relations between states and blocs within the emerging multi-order world

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<sup>98</sup> Ian Hall, *The International Thought of Martin Wight* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 111.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112. Also see Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

are driving not only a shift in the shape of international order but also a normative contestation over the nature of international society's institutions and core principles, with the debate over sovereignty and intervention representing a key manifestation of this dispute. These disagreements are manifested through the upward vertical vector – through which actors in the multi-order world project their visions onto international society – with examples including the liberal international order's post-Cold War drive toward universalism and Russia's neo-revisionist response. Moreover, as will be elaborated upon in Chapter 7, manifestations of the downward vertical vector can be thought of as pillars that allow international society to rest stably upon its foundation – the realm of international order – and infuse it with content. As such, although this infusion of content may make it seem as though international order depends on international society, the stability of international society and its ability to perform its core task of organizing international order in fact depend on the international order itself.

#### **2.4. Cycles of Order**

Torbjørn Knutsen, in his book *The Rise and Fall of World Orders*, outlines a set of cyclical patterns that have been identified over the course of modern history's international orders. Knutsen identifies four distinct and increasingly strong historical “hegemonies” that preceded the World Wars of the twentieth century: the Iberian hegemony of the sixteenth century, that of the United Provinces in the seventeenth, and two separate British ones in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively.<sup>100</sup> These four eras were inaugurated and terminated by mass military confrontations that occur roughly every one hundred years: the Italian Wars, the Thirty Years War, the military campaigns of Louis XIV, the Napoleonic Wars, and World

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<sup>100</sup> Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *The Rise and Fall of World Orders* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 4-5.

War I.<sup>101</sup> Most importantly, each period is divided into three phases: hegemony, challenge and decline. To quote Knutsen:

The thirty or forty years of peace which follow every wave of great wars correspond to a new world order's relatively peaceful, hegemonic phase. This phase is undermined by an increase in conflict and wars which mark the phase of challenge. This is, in turn, followed by a reduction of interstate violence as a balance of power principle establishes itself among the great powers. Finally, a new wave of great wars destroys the declining world order altogether.<sup>102</sup>

Crucially, Knutsen notes that hegemony is constituted by power rooted in consent, not force: In the latter part of a given international order, the leading power does not merely lose military and economic weight, but also normative influence.<sup>103</sup>

The case of postwar American hegemony is somewhat separate. A series of secular trends – punitive (e.g., nuclear weapons), remunerative (e.g., economic globalization) and normative (e.g., the internet) – may have disrupted the cyclical patterns of modern history.<sup>104</sup> Secular trends tend to bring about new ideas and institutions, whereas cyclical ones reinforce the status quo; therefore, the former have the potential to be more influential than the latter. Notably, however, Knutsen admits that punitive trends do not create shared values, the worldwide dissemination of Western products over the course of the past five hundred years has not created consensus nor peace, and Western norms have been emulated by some but have been rejected as nothing more than the projection of American power by others. In other

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-2.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 263-9.



words, there may be an “integrated world” today, but humanity has not yet necessarily formed one “world community”.<sup>105</sup>

For its part, the designation of postwar America as a hegemon may be an instance of historical revisionism or applying the benefit of hindsight: Although Washington emerged as the world’s only superpower at the outset of the 1990s, it could be contended that more countries looked to the Soviet Union’s promise of equality and material wealth in the early years of the Cold War, even as the United States and United Kingdom fought over postwar Western leadership. The reality is that the Cold War featured, generally speaking, two separate international orders within global international society rather than one – a trend that has continued with the gradual advent of a multi-order world in the post-Cold War decades.<sup>106</sup> The economic and trading benefits associated with the United States’ position as a naval power only manifested themselves with time, and it may have taken the pursuit of racial equality for Washington’s normative clout to entrench itself at the international level.<sup>107</sup> Perhaps a fuller way to view things is that the Cold War represented for the first instance – from a Euro-centric historical perspective – in which international order did not overlap completely with the international system. Post-Cold War American unipolarity may have appeared to provide a brief respite from this, but it now appears likely that this period was but transitional in nature. Scholars and policymakers are only beginning to explore and comprehend the complexity of today’s international system – the first one to be verily global in nature rather than controlled from metropolises.

Knutsen sees American postwar hegemony as waning from the mid-1960s onward, with a phase of challenge taking its place.<sup>108</sup> However, he suggests that the end of the Cold

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>106</sup> Flockhart, “The coming multi-order world”.

<sup>107</sup> See Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1996), pp. 97-138.

<sup>108</sup> Knutsen, *The Rise and Fall of World Orders*, pp. 224-35.

War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union inaugurated a new cycle – a second American hegemony. The fact that the containment of the USSR in the 1980s did not compare with the scope and cost of previous cycle-ending wars could perhaps be viewed as the triumph of secular trends over cyclical ones.<sup>109</sup> Taking the hundred-year cycle of world orders into account, one is left with two possibilities. First, a cycle was inaugurated with the outbreak of World War I and the subsequent first American attempt at developing a liberal international order – a proto-American hegemony of sorts. The collapse of that order after roughly eighty years and the inauguration of a new American hegemony would fall within the parameters of the established pattern. That would mean that the current return of great power rivalry represents a new phase of challenge. Seeing as secular trends prevented an all-out great power war in the 1980s, one could anticipate the peaceful inauguration of another period of American hegemony and unipolarity in a decade or two, with Washington's primary geopolitical rivals suffering an economic collapse yet again. Some geopolitical forecasters have already predicted this outcome.<sup>110</sup> And indeed, the United States did experience an economic transformation in the form of the neoliberal and technological revolutions of the 1980s and 1990s, which would fit the pattern of an ascending power about to embark on its hegemonic phase.<sup>111</sup>

Alternatively, one can interpret the start of American hegemony as having taken place in 1945, with the construction of a more durable liberal international order in which Washington was more actively involved. If this is the case, then it is difficult to believe that the cycle could have concluded after a mere forty-five years. As Knutsen readily admits, after the phase of challenge, it is natural to witness the decline of the hegemon's primary rival and

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 261-2.

<sup>110</sup> See Peter Zeihan, *The Accidental Superpower: The Next Generation of American Preeminence and the Coming Global Disorder* (New York, NY: Twelve Books, 2014).

<sup>111</sup> Knutsen, *The Rise and Fall of World Orders*, pp. 25-32.

a renewal of the primary power's confidence.<sup>112</sup> In this scenario, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decade or so of American unipolarity would represent a mere post-challenge respite. The rise of China would therefore gradually bring about a phase of decline, with balance-of-power politics being established before eventually collapsing and giving way to a general war, or at the very least a change of international order.

There is ample evidence to suggest that the post-Cold War world embodies a phase of decline rather than one of renewed hegemony. Knutsen himself notes that “old pre-eminent great powers increase their international commitments during the third phase of world order”.<sup>113</sup> This falls in line with the American military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Moreover, according to his analysis, the phase of decline features three characteristics: the introduction of new states to the system, the instability of old enemies and the re-introduction of balance-of-power politics.<sup>114</sup> The Cold War system was global in reach, so it would be difficult to add new states to the system, although the transition from geopolitical bipolarity to something approaching multipolarity, as well as the rise of various non-state actors in the post-Cold War period, could be thought of as the introduction of new elements. The “instability of old enemies” fits the bill for Russia after the Soviet collapse, both materially (e.g., due to the declining price of oil and unpromising demographic prospects) as well as ideationally.<sup>115</sup> And China's rise, if sustained, could herald a return to balance of power politics.<sup>116</sup> Finally, the erosion of both domestic and international consensus within and vis-à-vis the dominant power precedes the fall of a given international order.<sup>117</sup> Not only could this

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-2.

<sup>115</sup> For more, see Alexander Astrov and Natalia Morozova, “Russia: Geopolitics from the heartland”, in Stefano Guzzini (ed.), *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 192-215.

<sup>116</sup> See Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> Knutsen, *The Rise and Fall of World Orders*, p. 131.

reflect increasing Russian and Chinese wariness of the exercise of American power, it would also include phenomena such as the Occupy and Tea Party movements, as well as the rise of candidates such as Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump from outside the American political establishment.

One important conclusion to draw is that although many countries may wish to emulate the American economic and cultural model, this does not imply that the order underpinned by Washington will not ultimately face important challenges or challengers.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, it is worth recalling Knutsen's assertion that, in line with the second pendulum that this chapter conceptualizes, "[t]he degree of postwar consensus – and hence the hegemonic condition – grows more pronounced as modern history progresses".<sup>119</sup> Unlike the systems dominated by Spain, the Netherlands and Britain before it, has America succeeded in establishing an international order that is durable? Moreover, what precisely is this liberal international order which is so often referred to today?

## 2.5. Liberal Order

Similar to France's imposition of values and models of governance on other European states over the course of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the United States has attempted to remake the world in its image ever since 1919, first through Wilsonian idealism, and later by a more robust set of institutions that formed a liberal international order.<sup>120</sup> Due to a wide variety of factors, including Russian and Chinese resistance of certain American norms and actions, many have begun to suggest that this order is in crisis. One of liberal internationalism's most prominent proponents – John Ikenberry – has disagreed, claiming

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>120</sup> Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism", pp. 26-39.

that we are witnessing a “crisis of the American governance of liberal order and not of liberal order itself.”<sup>121</sup> To quote him more fully:

The crisis today is that the old *hegemonic* [author’s emphasis] foundations of the liberal order are no longer adequate, rather than reflect a failure of the order itself. [...] Liberal order generates the seeds of its own unmaking, which can only be averted by more liberal order – reformed, updated, and outfitted with a new foundation.<sup>122</sup>

One of the central aims of this dissertation is to assess how Russian and Chinese conceptions of sovereignty and order are shaping international politics today. If Ikenberry is correct, then the answer is that illiberal ideas emanating from Moscow and Beijing are ultimately inconsequential, and that sustained and deepened global liberalism is a foreordained conclusion. However, he makes several claims that, upon examination, contain significant deficiencies.

First, Ikenberry claims that one of the reasons for liberalism’s likely survival is that a “grand alternative does not exist”.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, some China-influenced model or varied competing regionalisms would not present a full-fledged and clear alternative to the existing hegemonic neoliberal global order, and it is doubtful that global capitalism itself would be challenged by the fact that China has never fully practiced market capitalism.<sup>124</sup> But does a grand alternative need to exist? Powers such as Russia and China may not yet be capable of forming a comprehensive rival order, but they may be able to cause the existing one to erode beyond repair. A multi-order world may ultimately boast overarching, strengthened liberal

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<sup>121</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “The Liberal International Order and Its Discontents”, in Friedman *et al.* (eds.), *After Liberalism?*, p. 92.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>124</sup> Owen Worth, *Rethinking Hegemony* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 184-5.

institutions, both at the global and regional levels.<sup>125</sup> But the slow move away from the status quo could turn also out to be disorderly.<sup>126</sup> Other analysts will readily admit that a “system of state power” underpins the current order,<sup>127</sup> or that all international orders are “systemic configurations of political authority”.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, the absence of a serious alternative is not the only reason for the liberal order’s survival. This notion is consistent with hegemonic stability theory, which claims that “a liberal international order can only be maintained by a strong hegemonic power.”<sup>129</sup> One may now be forced to contemplate a future without a global hegemon, and thus a reality featuring a more unpredictable international environment.

Second, Ikenberry sets the bar relatively low for an order to be liberal. States may continue to “cooperate in open and rule-based ways” on certain files, but to believe that this is all that is required for the liberal order to survive is somewhat misleading. The trend over the past century has been toward liberal order encompassing more than just a set of rules to govern national sovereignty, self-determination and economic interactions between states, having actively moved into the realm of human rights and other normative spheres. If a multi-order world eventually allows for different spheres of influence to govern themselves according to their own norms and values, would this truly be considered a liberal world order by today’s standards?

Ikenberry notes that the nineteenth century featured a liberal order due to the existence of open trade and the gold standard; however, it should not be forgotten that the Metternich system was deeply and explicitly rooted in balance of power principles, and that

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<sup>125</sup> Flockhart, “The coming multi-order world”.

<sup>126</sup> Janice Stein, “The order that held dysfunctional Middle East states together is over”, *National Post*, 18 November 2015, available online at <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/janice-gross-stein-the-order-that-held-dysfunctional-middle-east-states-together-is-over> (last accessed on 29.05.2016)

<sup>127</sup> Michael Cox, “Power and the Liberal Order” in Friedman *et al.* (eds.), *After Liberalism?*, p. 115.

<sup>128</sup> Reus-Smit, “The Liberal International Order Reconsidered”, p. 169.

<sup>129</sup> Ray Kiely, *Rethinking Imperialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 224.

conservative norms dominated within the Holy Alliance.<sup>130</sup> Both Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt advocated for a “great power concert” of sorts to enforce an explicitly liberal order based on principles of national self-determination and anti-aggression, but neither proposal proved to be very durable. The only liberal order the world has known that has been institutionally thick was the one produced after the Second World War, which Ikenberry admits was hegemonic in nature due to Europe’s comparative weakness and the Cold War rivalry.<sup>131</sup> America and its allies needed each other: It was an “inside system”, located within and held together by the global bipolar dynamic, and it ultimately became the global “outside system” after the dissolution of the USSR.<sup>132</sup> It has survived due to the preponderance of American power ever since. There is no historical evidence to prove that a liberal international order, as the concept is understood today, can exist without a liberal hegemon to underpin it. If rival powers grow confident and powerful enough to disrupt the order (even if they do not craft a comprehensive alternative) or if the hegemon grows tired of its hegemonic responsibilities, then there is no guarantee that it will survive in its entirety.

Third, Ikenberry has noted that, in addition to the incentives to maintain rules-based institutions pertaining to the economy and trade, “the threat to peace is no longer primarily from great powers engaged in security competition”, with transnational and diffuse threats, as well as the absence of a single geopolitical foe, suggesting an “explosion in the complexity of security interdependence” and a need for more institutionalized cooperation.<sup>133</sup> This is a very American-centric perspective. It ignores the ways in which Russia, China and others could view the projection of American power as a primordial threat. Moreover, even if there were to be incentives to cooperate on economic- and security-related issues, this does not

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<sup>130</sup> Ikenberry. “The Liberal International Order and Its Discontents”, p. 94.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism”, pp. 33-42.

<sup>133</sup> Ikenberry, “The Liberal International Order and Its Discontents”, pp. 98-9.

necessarily trump the fundamental political disagreement between Western and non-Western powers concerning the nature of state sovereignty and the norms that should underpin the international order. Ikenberry automatically assumes that the system is here to stay, and that any disagreements can be resolved within its contours. For instance, he writes that “the erosion of state sovereignty norms has not been matched by the rise of new norms and agreements about *how* [author’s emphasis] the international community should make good on human rights and the responsibility to protect,” as if the “international community” as the West conceives of it today were a fixed, cohesive and enduring reality with quasi-teleological and unchanging aims.

Before the “liberal ascendancy” of the past two centuries,<sup>134</sup> international relations operated according to principles other than liberal ones. The onus is on advocates of liberal internationalism to prove why the past seven decades have ultimately created an irreversible new reality that differs from the entire rest of human history. In the absence of such proof, one can assume that non-Western, non-liberal conceptions of sovereignty and order can indeed progressively shape international society. Moreover, the liberal order itself is replete with contradictions, and as such it may be only a matter of time before it collapses or erodes more significantly under their weight. They are several, and it will suffice merely to mention a few.

First, liberal orders generally believe in free trade and international integration, but these can ultimately undermine another liberal belief – domestic democratic accountability. Second, “Liberal theory favours a pluralism that includes all sovereign states and a nonpluralism that excludes nondemocracies”.<sup>135</sup> In other words, sovereign equality may be

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<sup>134</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order”, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (2009), pp. 71-87.

<sup>135</sup> Georg Sørensen, *A Liberal World Order in Crisis: Choosing Between Imposition and Restraint* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 184.



the fundamental principle underwriting international law, but human rights abusers are routinely criticized and Western-dominated “coalitions of the willing” often enforce international order. This is somewhat related to what Richard Sakwa calls the tension between “norms and spatiality”, in which one finds a potentially uncomfortable overlap between the normative power that is the European Union and the collective defence organization that is NATO – between Wilsonian idealism and the reality that liberal order is underpinned by a liberal hegemon.<sup>136</sup>

Third, and similarly, there is an inherent tension within liberalism between “imposition” and “restraint” – between the desire to spread liberal humanitarian and democratic norms and the liberal value of allowing for the preservation of diversity.<sup>137</sup> This tension was on display in the very founding of the postwar order, as the UN Charter upheld state sovereignty as its cardinal principle even as strong, sovereignty-constraining international institutions proliferated to generate a heightened degree of interdependence, in part to guard against the excesses of unrestrained prewar nationalism. Within all this lies an important reminder that liberal principles applied to the individual differ fundamentally from liberal ideas applied internationally: A society in which individuals respect one another’s freedom is one in which each person can only do harm to himself, whereas in an international society composed of sovereign states as unit actors, state elites can cause extreme harm to their own populations, even if their sovereignty is respected by other states. As international liberalism has moved more and more from restraint toward imposition, its embedded character has weakened, along with international agreement on key political issues as to the principles that should underpin the organization and operation of the global system – even at times among allies. Reus-Smit contends that this contradiction lies in the very characteristics

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<sup>136</sup> Richard Sakwa, “External Actors in EU-Russia Relations: Between Norms and Space”, *Avoiding a New Cold War*, pp. 86-93.

<sup>137</sup> Sørensen, *A Liberal World Order in Crisis*, pp. 94-114.

that emerged from the process of decolonization. In addition to the continuation of international “hierarchy without empire”, post-war international society featured both “statist” characteristics such as liberal proceduralism as well as “territorial particularism on the grounds of a form of ethical universalism”, with sovereign states as “the sole legitimate form of political organization, but the moral purpose of the state [being] to augment the purposes, and protect the basic rights, of individuals”.<sup>138</sup>

Finally, one of the major principles that the liberal order has enshrined, going back to 1919, is the national self-determination of peoples. In addition to the issues that arise from using concepts originally designed to apply to individuals to entire peoples, the projection of this norm by the West has ironically undermined national self-determination. This is partially due to the fact that state sovereignty in much of the world presupposes former colonial status, and not underlying nationhood.<sup>139</sup> But it is also because liberal norms imposed on individual societies in particular and on international society in general restricts the parameters of what constitutes an acceptable behaviour and worldview – both domestically and internationally – for all states. Additionally, the notion of national self-determination is to a degree revisionist, as it can result in the interests, language and culture of a given group within a state being privileged, even though the land occupied by the state in question may boast a rich, multiethnic history.

Much of the confusion surrounding the nature and future of the liberal order stems from issues related to conceptualization. As mentioned above, global international society and the liberal international order differ from each other. Today’s international society features a rules-based global order featuring all states and major powers, incorporating the

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<sup>138</sup> Reus-Smit, “The Liberal International Order Reconsidered”, pp. 181-4.

<sup>139</sup> Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 75-8.

power- and identity-related dynamics in a negotiated and co-constitutional fashion (in contrast to a mechanistic one, as neorealists would contend), in addition to all related global primary and secondary institutions. It is rules-based in the sense that it features international law, international legal regimes and a multilateral framework. International society does not, however, feature a liberal world order. Rather, it features a liberal *international* order rooted in the West, which co-exists and competes with other (occasionally overlapping) international orders centred on other major powers. This is in line with the criticism of Ikenberry outlined above, to the effect that an order being rules-based is not a sufficient condition to render it fully liberal. The liberal international order is rooted in American leadership and unless it tames its universalizing tendencies – which may be difficult without hollowing it out – is incompatible with multipolarity. Multilateralism and a rules-based order, however, are in fact compatible with multipolarity, even if a multilateralism born out of a multipolar context would differ somewhat in form than one emerging from a unipolar configuration,<sup>140</sup> providing further evidence of the distinct natures of the liberal international order and the rules-based world order.

However, it would be a mistake to relegate the liberal international order exclusively to the bottom level (international order) tier of the two-level model of the global political system outlined earlier in this chapter. To do so would be to equate it entirely with American hegemony, which would be an unfair criticism, as not only has there been a degree of buy-in to elements of the order by non-liberal powers, but it is also clear that the liberal order is thicker and more complex than a mere hegemonic condominium. On the first front, for example, institutions such as the World Trade Organization originated in the West but

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<sup>140</sup> See Nathalie Tocci, “The Demise of the International Liberal Order and the Future of the European Project”, *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, 19 November 2018, available online at: <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/demise-international-liberal-order-and-future-european-project> (last accessed 19.02.2019)

ultimately grew to encompass non-Western states and major powers, thus becoming secondary institutions of international society.

One of the central conceptual contentions of this dissertation, which will be outlined over the course of subsequent chapters, is that Washington and its European allies attempted in the post-Cold War era to transform the liberal international order into a liberal *world* order – that is, to make the liberal international order effectively synonymous with international society itself – and that the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 marks the definitive failure of this project. In other words, if one allows for a distinction between international system and international society, a diverse world is capable of allowing a global liberal order to operate as an international system, but not as an all-encompassing world order rooted in shared values. And due to the close relationship between international order and international society that has been conceptualized in recent English School scholarship, unstable relations between the liberal international order and its rival orders can lead to instability at the level of international society itself, occurring particularly when a wide gap emerges between legitimacy and behaviour – between the balance of expectations and the balance of actual norms deployed. However, although the effort to render the liberal order synonymous with international society has failed, the order has nonetheless left an imprint on international society, as mentioned above. As such, it straddles both realms – those of international order *and* international society. It has its power base in the liberal West, which means that multipolarity would inevitably threaten its status as a world order, but it also exists beyond it – it is *aligned* with American hegemony but not synonymous with it.<sup>141</sup> As will be discussed

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<sup>141</sup> In a similar vein, Christian Reus-Smit writes that the post-1945 order is a “hybrid”, being both “constitutional” and “hierarchical”. Its “construction has been driven by the United States” even as it relies on “agreed upon rules and practices”. See Reus-Smit, “The Liberal International Order Reconsidered”, p. 172.

at length in Chapter 7, this has direct implications for its potential resilience against the backdrop of contemporary developments.

Ikenberry himself writes that “[L]iberal internationalism [...] is not simply a creature of American hegemony. It is a more general and longstanding set of ideas, principles and political agendas for organizing and reforming international order.”<sup>142</sup> It is therefore more than a mere grouping of states, though it may be tied to such a grouping. It can be thus thought of as a force that exists in its own right with the ability to shape international society, along with the likes of nationalism, hegemony, empire and great power rivalry, even though the specific form that *today’s* liberal international order takes goes beyond this, involving thicker normative commitments and tying itself to American power since its postwar inception.<sup>143</sup> The fact that the institutions of international society have been so inconsistently listed by leading authors associated with the English School suggests that they characterize international society at a given moment in history.<sup>144</sup> The principles that are crafted supposedly to uphold and serve international society, as well as their strength and the form that they assume in secondary institutions, reflect specific historical circumstances.<sup>145</sup>

The contemporary liberal international order’s partial “ascent” into the realm of international society is evidence of the fact that it has in some ways become quasi-autonomous. The transition from “inside system” to “outside system” transformed the liberal order from an exclusive club into a looser entity where various states could pick and choose the elements in which they wanted to participate.<sup>146</sup> Whether it can survive this structural transition and cope with a world increasingly plagued by great power rivalry is a question

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<sup>142</sup> Ikenberry, “The end of liberal international order?”

<sup>143</sup> See Gideon Rose, “The Fourth Founding: The United States and the Liberal Order”, *Foreign Affairs*, 18 December 2018, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2018-12-11/fourth-founding> (last accessed 14.06.2019)

<sup>144</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*, p. 53.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>146</sup> Ikenberry, “The end of liberal international order?”

that will be addressed in Chapter 7. The fact that the Western-backed liberal order has helped to shape international society for decades without becoming fully synonymous with it has been implicitly highlighted by Reus-Smit, even though he may appear to refer to both somewhat interchangeably:

Parallel [...] to the construction [in the post-war era] of the liberal international order's architecture of fundamental institutions, sovereignty was being universalized. And where the first process involved liberal ideas about procedural justice licensing the development of distinctive, multilateral institutional practices, the second saw liberal principles of individual rights and legitimate authority codified in the legal core of the international human rights regime, and used to delegitimize the institution of empire and justify the proliferation of sovereign states. [...] While one can plausibly argue that the United States and other industrialized powers played a key role in the construction of the post-1945 architecture of multilateral institutions, they played no such role in the second process.<sup>147</sup>

As such, it is also worth noting that the quasi-autonomy of normative projects in international society extends to those promoted by non-Western powers as well. The neo-revisionism infused by Russia into international society in the "sphere of norms", expressed along the upward vertical vector outlined above, will impact the norms, practices and institutions of international society beyond considerations directly related to Russia's material power. That is, Moscow's "revolt against the West" may have a long-term impact, even if Russia itself remains a declining power. This will affect the viability of American hegemony, which – as will be elaborated upon later in this dissertation – differs from the question of the

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<sup>147</sup> Reus-Smit, "The Liberal International Order Reconsidered", p. 181.

resilience of American unipolarity. The United States clearly remains the most powerful country in the global political system and may remain so for decades to come. The material balance of power between the West and the rest did not shift dramatically in 2014 with the onset of the Ukraine crisis, but Moscow's open challenge to the perceived overreach of the liberal order did alter the West's relative normative influence in global affairs. As will be detailed in subsequent chapters, Russian neo-revisionism, emerging in response to perceived Western double standards, is gradually shaping the emergence of a multi-order world. The liberal international order thus faces dilemmas – pertaining both to its potential overreach in a diverse global international society as well as to the potential abdication of leadership from the hegemon that underpins it – that will shape the two realms of international order and international society in which it now resides.

Many policy experts share a certain scepticism about the long-term durability of the liberal order, and they come at it from different perspectives. Strategist and author Robert D. Kaplan contends that it “rests on Western civilization itself”, a civilization that has now become an “identifiable geopolitical instrument” like never before. When an order rests so evidently upon a single entity, its stability is not foreordained. Kaplan also notes that states historically have not enjoyed the same longevity as cities or empires – many today are dysfunctional, collapsing or simply “in trouble” – thus casting doubt on the ability of one of international society's most fundamental pillars to sustain itself over the long term.<sup>148</sup>

Richard Gowan of the Center on International Cooperation is of the view that the current international order rests on a “transatlantic conception”, underwritten by the United States since the San Francisco and Bretton Woods conferences. If this is the case, then the rise of China is likely to act as a disruptive force. Gowan notes that on issues ranging from

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<sup>148</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, personal interview, Skype, 9 August 2016.

instability in the European Union to climate change, we are seeing agreements that are rooted in the lowest common denominator, with cooperation getting “thinner and thinner” as years go by; it is seemingly almost cooperation for cooperation’s sake. This does not appear to fit the spirit of Ikenberry’s contention that crises within the liberal system always breed incentives to deepen international cooperation. Order is “always negotiated” and “never static”, according to Gowan, and the way events are transpiring today, we are likely eventually to see the “juice of liberalism” sucked out of existing international institutions, even if the shell of the current system survives. This would likely represent a reversion of sorts to the global system of the 1970s and 1980s, which featured a more sovereigntist-oriented United Nations, and would be accompanied by more regional – rather than global – ordering, even possibly spelling the end of global norms such as R2P.<sup>149</sup> As Flockhart notes, the “level of constitutionalism in the current international order is a relative recent addition and specific to the American-led order”, casting doubt on its durability, appeal and resilience capacity.<sup>150</sup>

Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, fears that a significant danger that the liberal international system faces today is that some of its most important ideas, such as human rights and R2P, may become “vacuous and without substance” if current trends hold, perhaps ultimately being rendered meaningless if they are co-opted by autocrats and dictators. He asserts that renewed competition between states does not necessarily herald a decline of the liberal order, but that the current system cannot survive in any event: It need not collapse, but it may erode.<sup>151</sup> This is a stark reminder that, although past liberal orders (such as the League of Nations) may have been institutionally thin, what has come to be expected from liberal internationalism today is

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<sup>149</sup> Richard Gowan, personal interview, New York, 16 August 2016.

<sup>150</sup> Flockhart, “The coming multi-order world”.

<sup>151</sup> Simon Adams, personal interview, New York, 16 August 2016.



something far more ordered and substantial. The steady erosion of the contemporary liberal order could thus create a crisis of confidence, ultimately exacerbating matters.

Surveying the academic world, one finds a great deal of uncertainty about the future of liberal order as well, with a whole host of potential threats and challenges being identified. Serhii Plokhii, a historian at Harvard University, asserts that there does not need to be a grand alternative to a given system for said system to collapse, citing the example of the Soviet Union, which ultimately dissolved not verily because of resurgent democracy or ideals associated with the nation-state, but rather simply because “the system stopped working”.<sup>152</sup> Mark Kramer, also at Harvard, notes that although the institutions of the contemporary liberal international order have now “taken on a bit of a life of their own”, the system is still in danger without US leadership.<sup>153</sup> This falls in line with previous assertions that the liberal order is – and must be – underpinned by a liberal hegemonic base of some kind. And William Keylor of Boston University notes that although the return of state competition could be a “healthy interaction” if it takes the form of a “rivalry to produce the best product”, it could also lead to “serious conflict” if controlling resources becomes its primary imperative. The key question lies in whether China will seek to flex its muscles under a mindset of dominating its near-abroad, just as the United States did in the Caribbean in the nineteenth century, the answer to which will be determined by internal debate between a more dovish economic class and a political elite that may be taken hostage by rising public nationalism or expectations.<sup>154</sup>

## 2.6. Conclusion

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<sup>152</sup> Serhii Plokhii, personal interview, Boston, 12 September 2016.

<sup>153</sup> Mark Kramer, personal interview, Skype, 15 September 2016.

<sup>154</sup> William Keylor, personal interview, Boston, 13 September 2016.

The years since the end of the Cold War have in many ways been tumultuous for relations between leading Western and non-Western powers. As has been noted, the status quo – relying as it does on material and ideational factors, as per this dissertation’s theoretical model – is under threat from both the inside and the outside. International orders are capable of erosion, even in the absence of a grand alternative. An agreed-upon notion of legitimacy is required both within a hegemon’s domestic society and on the international stage; otherwise, the foundations of world order are destabilized. This is precisely what appears to be occurring today.

It could be that liberal order is like a bicycle in that it must move forward or else it collapses. Today, it appears to be contracting for the first time in two centuries, challenging its universalist assumptions. It may not be a coincidence that Russia’s recent pushback against the United States and its allies – an indication that the liberal international sphere has reached its geographical limits – is occurring simultaneously with the erosion of trust in public institutions and the liberal elite in the West. Just as Napoleon’s campaigns were too radical and too quick to produce a stable settling point on Watson’s pendulum, so, too, has the American-led material and normative consolidation that followed the end of the Cold War proceeded at a pace too rapid to engender a sense of predictability and calm. The Baltic republics are a case in point: Formerly a part of the Soviet Union, they were incorporated into NATO not a decade-and-a-half after communism’s collapse. Moreover, unlike in previous systems where international law helped to facilitate relations between states rather than excessively control or regulate them, international norms today have grown more rigid even as the world’s institutional architecture has become thicker, despite the fact that the contemporary international society remains thin.<sup>155</sup> This suggests that a critical breaking point

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<sup>155</sup> Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, p. 189.

may have been reached, which could produce a swing in the second pendulum that measures the strength of international hegemony.

Watson writes that the lesson of the century that led up to the War of the Spanish Succession was that “once any state accumulated the power to lay down the law, it would exercise that power”.<sup>156</sup> The natural predisposition to anti-hegemony – and thus to multiple independencies and ultimately national self-determination – is deeply engrained in the logic of the contemporary international society. From the Greek *poleis* to the Italian *stati* right through to Westphalia, the West has been fundamentally influenced by this tendency.<sup>157</sup> If one adheres to Seymour Martin Lipset’s “formative events” theory – that the political cultures of societies are influenced profoundly by the events that surrounded their founding – then the resistance of both Habsburg and French hegemony that accompanied the founding of the modern European states system still haunts international society today.

To make power legitimate, “an actor’s claim to and its exercise of leadership must be based on shared conceptions of justice, so that others can be convinced that it is being used for the benefit of the community as a whole”.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, “[i]nstitutions presuppose common interests, even the existence of a community with many shared values and goals, and only then can they become the custodians of their norms and procedures”.<sup>159</sup> If one adheres to the view that the “liberal ascendancy” began in the nineteenth century, then liberalism’s universalizing desire to expand contributed to the imperialist fervour of the era. In other words, liberalism has regularly been compelled to “go global” – and it did so in a particularly pronounced fashion in a post-Cold War era featuring thick institutions, a neoliberal economic system of global reach and a liberal hegemon without a peer competitor.

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315

<sup>158</sup> Lebow, *Cultural Theory*, p. 556.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 561.

The result today is a diverse international society with few shared values on many key, high-level political issues. Under the wrong conditions, liberalism's revolutionary tendencies can prove to be deeply destabilizing, causing other states to worry that the liberal hegemon is not verily interested in pursuing a pluralistic and inclusive model of security and the common good. This appears to be what has transpired since the end of the Cold War, as will be detailed in the next chapter.

If the contemporary multicultural international society evolves without military confrontation between major powers in the years and decades ahead, the future of international relations may largely be reduced to a regulatory nature, much as relations between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire were in centuries past. Or instead, perhaps “[t]he states of the world, forced into unprecedentedly close interdependence and unwilling simply to accept ‘western values’, may be working out [...] ethical standards and codes of conduct which span more than one cultural frame”.<sup>160</sup> Unless the liberal order finds a way to tame its universalizing aspirations, this latter option appears unlikely. Barring the establishment of a genuinely multicultural order or a more “diffused hegemony”, the options appear to be limited to the advent of a multi-order world or the furthering of international disorder.

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<sup>160</sup> Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, pp. 307-8.

### *Chapter 3*

#### *From Liberal World Order to Multi-Order World*

##### **3.1. Quandaries and Concentric Circles**

At least since the launch of Wilsonian idealism in 1919, attempts have been made by a hegemonic power to consolidate some sort of “liberal” international order of varying reach and scope.<sup>1</sup> The historical context in which this process unfolded, the very nature of liberalism itself, and important structural and ideational shifts in recent decades present insights into the perceived gridlock facing international affairs today.

First, the birth of American-backed liberal internationalism coincided with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, German and Ottoman empires. Though there are certainly connections and parallels between how the domestic and international levels operate in any international order (as outlined in the previous chapter), the resulting focus on national self-determination as a central organizing principle of international society produced a peculiar change in the way that global affairs were conducted and perceived. Nation-states were treated as “analogous to an individual human being” as terms such as self-determination, “national will” and “national consciousness” rose to prominence, with one scholar referring to this as a “seismic shift” in European history.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0”, in Tim Dunne and Trine Flockhart (eds.), *Liberal World Orders* (London: British Academy, 2013). Also see Gideon Rose, “The Fourth Founding: The United States and the Liberal Order”, *Foreign Affairs*, 18 December 2018, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2018-12-11/fourth-founding> (last accessed 04.07.2019)

<sup>2</sup> Adrian Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics: Civilisational States and Cultural Commonwealths* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 21.

A perhaps unintended by-product of this development is that contemporary global discussion of what binds individuals and nations together beyond formal arrangements remains quite thin. Some thinkers assert that a transactional approach to politics is unlikely to provide the cultural recognition and even spiritual comfort for which people yearn,<sup>3</sup> with hyper-individualism – beginning with the rise of the New Left a half-century ago – often leading to the decline of family, community, patriotism and civic life.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore perhaps not coincidental that that rise of populism and identity politics within the West and the advent of great power rivalry on the world stage have occurred not long after the birth of neoliberalism and the global financial crisis of 2008-9.

The former of these two has been said to demonstrate the increasingly atomized nature of society and the growth of “naked” liberalism.<sup>5</sup> The latter, for its part, has helped bring about the apparent decline of Washington’s relative influence,<sup>6</sup> while also exposing the international dimension of hyper-individualism – “hyper-globalism”, under which “countries must open the economies to foreign companies, regardless of the consequences for their growth strategies or social models”.<sup>7</sup> As such, key manifestations of both the domestic and international pillars of the liberal order – economic, social and political liberalism on the one hand (at the very least inside the hegemonic West) and an open international economy with a single set of norms disregarding cultural specificity on the other – appear to be significantly challenged today, particularly as Russia-West and China-West relations have deteriorated.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see Ross Douthat, “The Crisis for Liberalism”, *The New York Times*, 19 November 2016, available online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/the-crisis-for-liberalism.html? r=0> (last accessed on 01.02.2017)

<sup>4</sup> See Adrian Pabst, “Politics of the void: How the left abandoned patriotism and the common good”, *New Statesman*, 22 August 2018, available online at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2018/08/politics-void-how-left-abandoned-patriotism-and-common-good> (last accessed 04.07.2019)

<sup>5</sup> See John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 116-7.

<sup>7</sup> Dani Rodrik, “Peaceful Coexistence 2.0”, *Project Syndicate*, 10 April 2019, available online at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/sino-american-peaceful-economic-coexistence-by-dani-rodrik-2019-04> (last accessed 04.07.2019)

Although these features have become significantly pronounced over the past three or four decades, their shortcomings may be due to contradictions that date back to the liberal order's inception. As was discussed already in the last chapter, even the emergence of national sovereignty – designed supposedly to protect territorial and cultural particularism – was grounded in a form of universalism. This connection between the values that simultaneously inform domestic and international societies is perhaps what leads Ikenberry recently to conclude that “[i]f liberal democracy survives this era, so too will liberal internationalism”.<sup>8</sup>

Arguably, while progressives and neo-conservatives spoke of a liberal world order and a new American century in the wake of the Cold War, others argued that the end of communism inaugurated a new global disorder. The events of 1989 and 1991 were not primarily an hour of victory of one ideological system over its rival but rather a time of crisis and trauma as a result of the implosion of the Soviet system. Contrary to the borderless utopia of liberal progressivism, critical voices like Hoffmann and Jowitt envisioned the redrawing of borders, the reshaping of national identities, an escalation of previously frozen conflicts and paralyzing uncertainty rather than post-ideological clarity.<sup>9</sup> What liberalism's short-lived hegemony concealed from view was the resurgence of old ethnonational and religious identities and the rise to power of alternative worldviews with a claim to universal validity – capitalism (compatible as much with liberal democracy as with illiberal authoritarianism) and Islamism. With the weakening of national states by globalization,<sup>10</sup> movements of contestation and rage have sprung up across the world – from new social movements and Al-Qaeda in the late 1990s via Occupy Wall Street after the global financial crisis to the Arab

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<sup>8</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “The end of liberal international order?”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 94, no. 1 (2018), pp. 7-23.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Ken Jowitt, “After Leninism: The New World Disorder”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 2., no. 1 (1991), pp. 11-20, expanded as *The New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992) and Stanley Hoffmann, *World Disorders: Troubled Peace in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> See Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

Spring and ISIS since 2011. If the aim of the victorious (particularly Western) powers in 1945 was to construct an international order that was more than a mere balance-of-power system but less than a full-fledged world government,<sup>11</sup> events since 1989 have upset this equilibrium, with debates between viewpoints emphasizing sovereignty and internationalism having returned to centre stage. This has naturally led to questions surrounding the future of the Western-led liberal international order.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there has been an increasing tendency throughout the era of liberal internationalism to view international institutions as representing and enforcing the very rules of the game, rather than simply serving as a set of more informal norms. Today, both Western and non-Western powers invoke international law, the former often as a means of universalizing its worldview and the latter partly as a form of protection against a seemingly imposing hegemon. This rigid interpretation of the norms of international conduct contrasts markedly with the visible global divergence in conceptions of order and the likely emergence of a multi-order world. This is likely to put the international order under additional strain precisely when it requires a modicum of flexibility. When combined with the inconsistently applied and intellectually disputed norm of national self-determination, which continues to feature as a prominent organizing principle of the current international order, one can see that the groundwork has been laid for upheaval.

Moreover, particularly since the latter part of the Cold War, human rights appear increasingly to be pursued in opposition to the state (or at best alongside it by way of independent advocacy) rather than through it, as evidenced by the rise of non-state groups such as Amnesty International and Helsinki Watch (now Human Rights Watch). In the modern liberal conception, states are the primary guarantors of individual freedom, which

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<sup>11</sup> Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics*, p. 10. For more on how free-market globalization has exacerbated the early contradictions of the liberal order and undermined the initial bargain of embedding markets in state and international institutions, also see pp. 23-31.



contrasts somewhat with the more recent rise of global civil society and an increasingly thicker international human rights regime (now including bodies such as the International Criminal Court, for instance). To invoke Georg Sørensen's terminology, as global liberalism has moved gradually from "restraint" to "imposition", thus attempting to spread liberal values more forcefully rather than accept the pluralistic character of international society,<sup>12</sup> support for certain traditional aspects and structures of liberal internationalism has therefore weakened. And yet, to varying degrees, states continue to defend the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, even as the Westphalian system appears to be in crisis: the economy is globalized, a century-old order has begun to collapse in the Middle East, and some states have even begun to pool their political sovereignty. In sum, there appears today to be a somewhat confused global politics, in which an equilibrium between the pursuit of liberalism and international stability has yet to be reached, possibly due in part to the former's trend toward hubris and universalism.<sup>13</sup>

It may be useful to think of contemporary events as representing the culmination of five concentric circles. The innermost circle is that of the contemporary liberalism of "imposition", beginning in the 1970s with the launch of the international human rights movement, continuing through the transition of economic power out of the hands of the state in the 1980s, and into the wave of globalization in the 1990s and beyond when intervening in the internal affairs of states around the world began to be viewed as a legitimate tool of American foreign policy<sup>14</sup> – a period when the American-led order appeared to become the global order. This era has been marked by the decline of Westphalian norms and is now being confronted by a set of rising powers seeking to reassert them at least in part. The second

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<sup>12</sup> Georg Sørensen, *A Liberal World Order in Crisis: Choosing Between Imposition and Restraint* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics*, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2012 [2011]), p. 447.

circle begins with the launch of liberal order, ideologically in 1919 but tangibly in 1945, characterized – broadly speaking – by a codified commitment to national self-determination (among other liberal political principles), a desire to pursue freer trade, and a Western-based power structure featuring substantial American leadership. The vote for Brexit and the election of Donald Trump – in addition to the rise of populist parties elsewhere in the West – represent a real and present challenge to this order, although it remains to be seen whether the outcome will be a revolution in the way global affairs are conducted or simply an evolution.<sup>15</sup>

The third circle dates to the French Revolution, which began the process of exporting the ideal of national self-determination in the first place. The end of the Napoleonic Wars also represented the beginning of the consolidation of the international states system as one would recognize it today.<sup>16</sup> All of these notions are being challenged today, the product of globalization, the selective application of norms and an emerging multi-order world. The fourth circle goes back to Westphalia itself, which marked the moment at which it became clear that the future would belong to national states and not empires.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, today, major cities have more in common with one another in many cases than with their own countries, traditional empires such as Russia and China are reasserting themselves, and economic and political globalization are creating new empires of sorts (such as international regimes underwritten principally by a limited number of states) even as they erode state boundaries.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the fifth circle begins with the Age of Exploration in 1492, which set the stage for five centuries of Western global dominance. The economic rise of non-Western

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<sup>15</sup> For more, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Will the Liberal Order Survive?” and Robin Niblett, “Liberalism in Retreat: The Demise of a Dream” in *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2017, pp. 10-24.

<sup>16</sup> See Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso Books, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 88-9.

<sup>18</sup> See Benjamin R. Barber, *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

powers, possible now in a post-colonial and industrialized world, is likely to bring this era to an end if it continues unabated.

All five of these circles have different starting points, but they all intersect in the present day. That is, it appears as if the world is witnessing the end not of one era – that characterized by American, liberal unipolarity – but rather potentially five, as will be elaborated upon later in this chapter. But first, the following sections will focus on events that have taken place within the confines of the first concentric circle, elaborating first upon why and how Russia and China have begun to challenge elements of the liberal order, before examining various narratives of what would emerge after the Cold War.

The emergence of a world with rival and occasionally overlapping orders – depending on the extent to which it does emerge – presents interesting parallels with a pre-modern medieval era which featured overlapping jurisdiction.<sup>19</sup> Buzan and Little, drawing on previous major historical transitions, claim that for a post-modern era to be inaugurated, this would require a shift in “scale [i.e., the geographic reach of international society], interaction capacity [between actors], and dominant unit”.<sup>20</sup> Putting aside the question of scale, as the reach of contemporary international society is already largely global, it is a lack of clarity on the other two fronts rather than an unambiguous transition that is most salient. Although rival international orders centred on individual great powers – and thus a multi-order world – do appear to be forming, the extent to which these orders mark a complete departure in terms of dominant unit from the modern era rooted in sovereign states remains in question.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Many scholars have attempted to describe the emerging post-modern era as neo-medieval. For a recent example, see Dritëro Demjaha, “The Post-Modern as Neo-Medieval: Intersections of Religion, Nationalism, and Empire in Modernity and Beyond (with an Excursus on Albanian Nationalism)”, *The Journal of South East European University*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (2018), pp. 218-50.

<sup>20</sup> Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 368.

<sup>21</sup> For example, subsequent chapters will mention how the Eurasian Economic Union, with Russia at its core, faces various challenges on the path to veritable supranationalism. China’s Belt and Road Initiative also faces challenges related to its conceptualization and perceived international legitimacy, while supercontinent-wide

Interaction capacity is also witnessing a certain blurring of the lines, shifting away from the state both up to the global level and down to the individual level simultaneously thanks to the proliferation and development of institutions, integration and technology. As such, if the gradual emergence of a multi-order world is not a manifestation of the onset of post-modernism, at the very least it represents the onset of an era of increased confusion and disorder – an in-between state of sorts, but a departure from the status quo nonetheless. Although, as outlined in the previous chapter, contestation is inherent to any social order, the normative contestation accompanying such a fundamental transition – reinforced by an uneven distribution of global power and differing expectations on the question of legitimate great power behaviour – can be profound enough to shake the foundations of international society, particularly when paired with the cumulative impact of previous historical events.

### 3.2. How Did We Get Here?

Richard Little, paraphrasing the seminal classical realist Hans Morgenthau, writes that “[w]hen the factors that sustain a societal balance of power start to break down, then the systemic balance of power kicks in and generates a disordered and violent international environment”.<sup>22</sup> In English School terms, one can interpret this to mean that the primary and secondary institutions of an international society represent an important safeguard against the Hobbesian logic that normally characterizes an international system. According to the

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order-building in Eurasia is also emerging in a haphazard manner. See for example Nikki Sun, “Xi pledges Belt and Road reboot amid rising ‘debt trap’ concerns”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, 27 April 2019, available online at: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Belt-and-Road/Xi-pledges-Belt-and-Road-reboot-amid-rising-debt-trap-concerns> (last accessed 22.08.2019). Also see Roy Allison, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: a fractured basis for Eurasian Order”, in Elena Korosteleva, Zachary Paikin and Stephen Paduano (eds.), *Five years after Maidan: Toward a Greater Eurasia?*, LSE IDEAS, May 2019, pp. 20-25, available online at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/reports/LSE-IDEAS-COMPASS-UPTAKE-Greater-Eurasia.pdf> (last accessed 22.08.2019)

<sup>22</sup> Richard Little, “Revisiting Realism and the Balance of Power”, in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (eds.), *Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 22.

narrative he puts forward, the modern state system – which came into being after the French Revolution – was born in contradiction: The Vienna system tried to appeal to growing support for the notion of national states and to the dynastic legitimacy of past centuries simultaneously.<sup>23</sup> With the idea of national self-determination on the rise, consensus surrounding the “societal balance of power” began to erode. The “universalizing ideologies” of the twentieth century – advanced by Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and the United States – dealt it the “final fatal blow”, which led to major powers beginning to conceive of international affairs as being a more zero-sum struggle of good versus evil.<sup>24</sup>

This account is highly intriguing, as it posits that an agreed-upon sense of legitimacy has been in decline in the international sphere for the past two centuries: in other words, over the entire period that Ikenberry calls “the liberal ascendancy”.<sup>25</sup> As a universalist worldview, liberalism may have the tendency at times to frame issues through the lens of “good versus evil”. But the globalization and evolution of international society in recent centuries has transformed many polities in a profound fashion. China, for instance, conceives as itself as a state with rights and obligations in a way that it certainly would not have prior to the mid-nineteenth century. On issues ranging from international development to trade, there exists today a certain degree of consensus between states. So, which elements of international society are actually under threat? Where does the divergence in conceptions of legitimacy lie, and what are the consequences for international order going forward?

When discussing such a topic, one must refer to the world’s major powers, their respective foreign policy cultures, and how they interact with one another. However, one must also take note of the fact that the post-Cold War order is unique in historical terms, due

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0”, p. 23.

to the unusually important relative power of a single country. As Andrew C. Kuchins and Igor Zevelev noted, “Even if a country’s international goals remained the same, structural changes on the world arena caused by the preeminence and assertiveness of the United States could require a different course of actions to achieve these goals”.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore instructive at this juncture to probe Russian and Chinese behaviour against the backdrop of the events and international structure of the post-Cold War world, to derive conceptual conclusions related to the emergence of the multi-order world. A more extensive evaluation of the sources and dynamics of Russia and China in international society will take place in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

### **3.3. Russia Between East and West?**

For the past several centuries, there has been non-negligible continuity in Russian foreign policy beliefs, including: Russia is a great power; Russia must catch up with the West in terms of economic, technological and military development; and for the past two centuries, the centrality of the debate surrounding whether Western liberalism is good for Russia, and whether Russia should ally itself with the West.<sup>27</sup> These views present somewhat of a paradox: Russian foreign policy culture is highly Western-centric, but Moscow’s belief in its own great power status (in addition to the privileges that it believes should accompany this status) prevents it from integrating completely with the West. In an era characterized by Western pre-eminence, this has proven to be problematic for Moscow, which has had difficulty adjusting to a world in which its relative power has diminished, in which international legal norms are evolving, and in which the United States is more readily willing

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<sup>26</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins and Igor Zevelev, “Russia’s Contested National Identity and Foreign Policy”, in Henry R. Nau and Deepa M. Ollapally (eds.), *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan and Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 198.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

to use force.<sup>28</sup> According to Roy Allison, the emergence of international norms is “inherently political” and comes from the “disparities in power” between states and the “contested discourses” between major powers.<sup>29</sup> Put differently, “a symbiotic relationship exists between norms and power in international society. The assessments states make about their relative power shape the interpretation, evolution, and diffusion of norms”.<sup>30</sup> And it was at a moment of considerable weakness that Moscow’s contemporary interpretations of international norms began to crystallize.

Although a pro-Western predisposition was predominant in Russian foreign policy culture in the early months following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a newer, more nationalist consensus had begun to solidify by 1993. This could have been due to the need to restore order in a post-Soviet space plagued by conflict and ripe for possible NATO intervention.<sup>31</sup> Alternatively, it could be explained by resentment and instability caused by the profound economic crisis that Russia was experiencing at the time.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps owing to its desire to integrate somewhat with the West and to the preponderance of Western material and normative power at the time, Moscow did couch its actions in solidarist language – such as the need to protect minorities and its pursuit of a “peacekeeping” role – to justify its interventions in the post-Soviet space in the early 1990s.<sup>33</sup> But nonetheless, the early post-Cold War years already mark the emergence or return of a Russian foreign policy mentality that privileges order over justice and stability over humanitarian concerns – a worldview that has visibly characterized its intervention in Syria in the present decade.<sup>34</sup> Related to this view, and perhaps also flowing from it, is the belief that international society’s normative content is

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<sup>28</sup> Roy Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121-5.

<sup>32</sup> Kuchins and Zevelev, “Russia’s Contest National Identity”, pp. 199-200.

<sup>33</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 127.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-3.

thin, and thus that a procedural (rather than a substantive) consensus underpins the logic of its operation.<sup>35</sup> In other words, for much of the post-Cold War period, Russia has possessed a “constitutionalist” predisposition toward international politics: It has been just as interested in who gets to make and modify the rules as it has been in what the rules themselves are.<sup>36</sup>

If the early 1990s mark the period in which Russian views on sovereignty and order within the post-Soviet sphere begin to form, driven in part by the need to preserve its own territorial integrity in the face of a restive Chechnya, then NATO’s intervention in Kosovo in 1999 was a key moment that helped to solidify Moscow’s present-day perspectives on order and legitimacy in international society more broadly. Indeed, there was a domestic element to Russia’s opposition to Operation Allied Force: Moscow feared that attempts to shield the Kosovar Albanians from Serbian action could also encourage secessionism in places like Chechnya.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, what is most notable is that NATO sought to intervene outside of its natural area of military operation (namely Western Europe), inside Russia’s historical sphere of influence, and without a mandate from the UN Security Council.

On this front, two significant developments are worth mentioning. First, Operation Allied Force provided Moscow with additional leeway to deal with problems within its own sphere of influence through the use of force.<sup>38</sup> For if the West could intervene militarily within the Russian sphere without a legal mandate, then surely – within certain limits and if reasonably justified – it must be legitimate for Russia to conduct certain operations in its own “backyard”. However, it should be noted that while Moscow’s stance on the Kosovo intervention can be interpreted as actions designed to prevent the rise of separatism both within its own borders and beyond, the Kremlin nonetheless supported certain separatist

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.



movements (such as in Georgia and Moldova) when it suited its interests.<sup>39</sup> One can begin to see here the emergence of a dual normativity, that of Russia emphasizing the importance of respecting state sovereignty as a general global principle, but ultimately not always practicing what it preaches in its “near abroad”. That is, Russia may view its own sovereignty as being inviolable, and may stress the importance of respecting state sovereignty in other global theatres as a means of emphasizing its own set of norms, but it may simultaneously be the case that certain countries in the post-Soviet space whose independence is viewed as being a historical accident are not seen as being fully sovereign by Moscow.<sup>40</sup> Bobo Lo expresses this sentiment in more general terms:

Less than twenty-five years ago, Russia was the largest land empire in history. The current political generation was born and raised in imperial times. And developments in its former possessions still have a significant impact on Russian interests (more so than with far-flung sea empires, such as the British and the French). It would be miraculous indeed if Russia’s ruling elite were able to transcend history so soon after the demise of the USSR. And of course they haven’t.<sup>41</sup>

Today, Russia sees itself as being one of a small list of major powers – a grouping of countries that it views as being able to make “genuinely independent choices”.<sup>42</sup> And the current global power configuration only encourages Moscow to continue to craft an independent role for and conception of itself. Collaboration between Washington and Beijing would transform Russia into a second-tier power, but conflict between these two geopolitical giants would force Moscow to pick sides, thus becoming a junior partner as well. The result

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-3.

<sup>40</sup> Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 127.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

is a Russia that attempts – to varying extents – to balance independently against both powers and assert its claim to independent great power status,<sup>43</sup> although the recent Sino-Russian normative convergence on questions of global order has led some to conclude that Moscow’s hedging toward Beijing is of a different nature to its attempts to resist the perceived excesses of American unipolarity.<sup>44</sup>

The belief that a different set of principles should apply within and outside the Russian sphere of influence obviously predates the dissolution of the Soviet empire. The existence of normative pluralism – and even a degree of normative regionalism – is a strong sign that the seeds of a multi-order world had already been planted well before they became manifest during the Ukrainian and Syrian crises. But nonetheless, NATO’s intervention in Kosovo marked a decisive moment in the post-Cold War world that helped to ensure that those seeds would grow, providing a clear indication that Russia would not become fully liberal or fully Western in its geopolitical and normative orientation. As will be discussed more at length in Chapter 7, the natural result of this is that the liberal international order failed to grow to encompass international society as a whole. This led to the former inheriting a form of structural instability that militates against its long-term resilience, set the stage for the resumption of great power rivalry and will ultimately come to affect the stability of the existing norms and institutions of international society. As the former American diplomat William Hill recently writes, more than NATO’s post-Cold War enlargement, it was the military alliance’s

decision to go to war in Kosovo without the UN’s imprimatur and over

Russia’s vehement opposition that caused the first serious post-Cold War

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<sup>43</sup> Kaczmarek, *Russia-China Relations*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>44</sup> See Alexander Korolev, “Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China-Russia Relations”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 9, no. 4 (2016), pp. 375-97.

rupture in relations between Russia and the West. Although NATO-Russia relations were later repaired, and cooperation was maintained for over a decade, Moscow's view of NATO as dangerously unilateralist and militarily menacing lingered [...]<sup>45</sup>

The second development, which is related to the first point, is this: After the Kosovo intervention it became clear that Russia insisted on being treated as a geopolitical equal by the West, rather than be expected to conform to the expectations and stringencies of an expanding liberal international order. Moscow's criticism of and opposition to Operation Allied Force was a sign that the Russian political elite in the late 1990s was more preoccupied with Russia's international status and its ability to determine the principles underpinning the international order than with questions of humanitarianism.<sup>46</sup> As one scholar put it, "it appeared to be more important for Russia to oppose what NATO was doing than to help solve a major humanitarian crisis in Europe".<sup>47</sup> Moscow's reaction to NATO involvement in Kosovo made it abundantly clear that Russia would refuse to become a subordinate actor in a Western-led international order, particularly on issues related to the European regional security framework.

At least one observer has posited that Moscow's suspicion of this American-centric order is rooted in the fact that Russia has yet truly to come to terms with the events of 1991, seeing as the economic crisis of the 1990s, the economic boom of the 2000s and the recent sharp deterioration in Russia-West relations have preoccupied the country's national psyche since the Soviet Union's collapse.<sup>48</sup> With Russia proving unable to engage in a national

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<sup>45</sup> William H. Hill, "Russia's Search for a Place in Europe", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol. 61, no. 3 (2019), pp. 93-101.

<sup>46</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 44.

<sup>48</sup> Fyodor Lukyanov, "The Lost Twenty-Five Years", *Global Brief*, 19 February 2016, available online at: <http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2016/02/19/the-lost-twenty-five-years/> (accessed 29.05.2016)

reimagination process, events, misunderstandings and rival conceptions of order have aggravated the state of affairs between Moscow and Western capitals, with one such event being what took place during and around Operation Allied Force in 1999.

Concerning the Kosovo War, Russia was of the view that “not only was NATO biased against the Serbs, it was actively seeking to engineer a situation whereby the talks [at Rambouillet that preceded the war] would fail, with the Serbs being blamed,” and that “[i]t was made clear by the United States that NATO reserved the right to launch airstrikes without consulting Russia, the UN or anybody else.”<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, this was transpiring on top of an existing Russian belief, developing since 1997, that “[NATO members] had never been willing to engage in genuinely thorough-going multilateral consultations, preferring instead to formulate common positions amongst themselves in advance of [NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council] meetings and then engage in rather desultory and non-binding conversations with the Russians”.<sup>50</sup> In other words, from Moscow’s perspective, after “winning” the Cold War, the West was no longer interested in what Russia thought about substantive international issues. Such a view, combined with a deeply held belief in Russia’s inherent great power status, would be certain to render relations between Moscow and the West adversarial in their nature. This reflects a clear disconnect between both sides that emerged after 1991, with Western capitals privileging humanitarian concerns in the context of Kosovo and Moscow being more preoccupied with the erosion of both its great power status and the principles of the European security order of which it was a guarantor.

The launch of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) after 9/11 brought with it its own set of consequences for Russian foreign policy. For one thing, the forcible removal of the

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<sup>49</sup> Martin A. Smith and Paul Latawski, *The Kosovo crisis and the evolution of post-Cold War European security* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 96-7.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

Taliban from power in Afghanistan may have been a *sui generis* case in legal terms, but politically it was exemplary.<sup>51</sup> It helped to produce temporary support for the norm of pre-emption in Moscow, driven largely by regional order-related goals.<sup>52</sup> However, it should be remembered that this support occurred in the context of a reset in Russo-American relations initiated by Vladimir Putin. In the early days of his presidency, the Kremlin was careful not to alienate Washington too forcefully on issues related to GWOT, despite its concerns regarding what the 2003 American-led invasion of Iraq could portend for the nature of structural power in the international system.<sup>53</sup> Moscow's temporary support for the norm of pre-emption and eventually even cases of territorial revisionism were due not only to opportunism, but also to Russia's post-Cold War normative orientation toward the West that followed its "return to Europe", as will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Beyond the US-led invasion of Iraq, it was the pursuit of Washington's neoconservative "freedom agenda" both inside and outside of the Middle East that ultimately posed the greater threat to stable U.S.-Russia relations. Unlike the initial eastward expansion of NATO, which could plausibly have been justified as being in the Russian interest through its taming of the irredentist tendencies of various Eastern European states, it was difficult to avoid the impression that the "colour revolutions" in the post-Soviet space pitted Western and Russian interests against each other in a zero-sum game.<sup>54</sup> This naturally contributed to strengthening the notion that rival conceptions of order were at work – one based largely on economic and political reforms and/or a pro-Western geopolitical orientation, and another on regime stability and a Moscow-centric alignment. As Fyodor Lukyanov writes, one of the key performance indicators for the EU's strength was "the unswerving expansion of the

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<sup>51</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 98.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113-8.

<sup>54</sup> See Stent, *The Limits of Partnership*, pp. 97-123.

Eurosphere. This resulted in a drawn-out battle with Russia, which was constantly reacting – increasingly sharply – to what it perceived as being driven further and further back into the depths of Eurasia.”<sup>55</sup>

Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008 marks an important flashpoint in understanding the logic that helped to produce the evolving global normative situation seen today. It is unclear whether Russia’s actions were tactical or strategic in nature. It may be that Moscow invoked humanitarian language with respect to the situation facing Abkhazia and South Ossetia simply to create ambivalence in Western capitals regarding whether it was Tbilisi or Moscow that was in the wrong.<sup>56</sup> Alternatively, Russia’s intervention could be thought of as being something more profound: a plot to prevent Georgia from joining NATO, or even an attempt to alter even further the norms of what Russia is justifiably allowed to do in its own “backyard”.<sup>57</sup> A similar question could be posed when it comes to Russia’s annexation of Crimea: Was it but a mere last-minute decision to avoid losing an important asset, rather than a conscious attempt to shift global norms on the rights of peoples and powers, as some have suggested?<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, the answer may matter little, as tactical moves can have strategic and normative consequences. This is precisely why Western states have strenuously opposed lending any legitimacy to the Crimean peninsula’s incorporation into the Russian Federation: Failure to resist change can lead to a new practice becoming normalized. The same logic applies to Moscow’s stance on recent developments in the Middle East: By refusing to forego the use of its Security Council veto on Syria, Russia has ultimately transformed the NATO intervention in Libya into a *sui generis* case.<sup>59</sup> That is, unlike in the case of Libya, a UN-

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<sup>55</sup> Fyodor Lukyanov, “Dawn Breaks on New Era in EU-Russia Relations”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 8 July 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/79452> (last accessed 08.07.2019)

<sup>56</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 167.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> For example, see Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p. 107.

<sup>59</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 205.

sanctioned military operation carried out by Western states and producing regime change has not occurred in Syria.

To what degree today is Russia “Western”? Or more pointedly, to what extent does it adhere to the norms and structures of the Western political community on issues related to sovereignty and order? To quote Allison:

Russia has tended to be selective in interpreting how global order norms on the use of force should be applied at the CIS regional level where it identifies core national interests. But it has avoided doing this too flagrantly or frequently for fear of undermining the wider regulation of force in an international system where it has limited leverage.<sup>60</sup>

Whether this remains the case after the annexation of Crimea is a matter of contention. Moscow may now feel more justified in acting – flagrantly or otherwise – to secure its interests and spread its norms in its “near abroad”. Its normative alignment with Beijing may have surpassed a critical barrier in recent years due to rising hostility between Russia and the West; that is, Moscow may now feel as if a closer relationship with Beijing is worthwhile, even if it comes at the expense of secure ties with the West. That said, in the years following the onset of the Ukraine crisis, Moscow gradually refocused its attention away from any attempts at territorial revisionism in the Donbas toward a renewed emphasis on its “pivot to the east” and Greater Eurasian integration project.<sup>61</sup> As such, with the most intense period of conflict in Ukraine having passed and a sense gradually developing that Ukraine has perhaps been “lost”, a more complex picture of Russia’s place in international

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>61</sup> Andrei Kolesnikov, “Why the Kremlin Is Shutting Down the Novorossiya Project”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 29 May 2015, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/60249> (last accessed 05.07.2019)

society appears to be emerging, with Eurasianism not necessarily equating to unrestrained expansionism and defiance of international norms.<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, when it comes to questions of sovereignty and order beyond Russia's immediate neighbourhood, Moscow's "Westernness" is also in question. Despite the contested nature of elements of R2P, does the fact that Russia made reference to humanitarian concerns and to the need to protect the general population in the context of the Libya mission mean that support for this emerging norm is increasing, and that consequently Russia finds itself within the global normative mainstream?<sup>63</sup> Or is its stance on Syria, which indicates a preference for regional order over solidarist principles, more relevant?<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, it is difficult to tell, as some scholars have pointed out that Moscow did not believe that the adoption of R2P in 2005 represented a revolution in the way that state sovereignty was to be envisioned, seeing as the fundamental parameters of the UN system – including the Security Council veto – remained in place.<sup>65</sup> (This discussion of R2P serves merely an illustrative purpose and does not mean to introduce new concepts to supplement this dissertation's theoretical framework.)

In a similar vein, the rapidity with which a multi-order world is emerging is also difficult to ascertain. Allison has suggested that NATO's 2011 intervention in Libya is evidence of the alliance's retreat from a global role to a quasi-regional one.<sup>66</sup> This would be in keeping with the tenets of a multi-order world, but confirmation will have to wait until more time has elapsed. In the meantime, one can say with certainty that despite its partial

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<sup>62</sup> Some Russian analysts have now begun to call for Russia to develop more normal relations with its neighbours and avoid professions of Eastern Slavic unity. See Dmitri Trenin, "It's Time to Rethink Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 25 April 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/78990> (last accessed 27.05.2019)

<sup>63</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, pp. 201-2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>65</sup> For example, see Irvin Studin, "Europe 2.0 or a March to War", *Global Brief*, 19 February 2016, available online at <http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2016/02/19/building-europe/> (accessed 29.05.2016)

<sup>66</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 198.



European heritage and identity, Russia is not *fully* Western and has been excluded from key European and Western institutions. As Lukyanov recently writes, referencing Mikhail Gorbachev's vision of an inclusive common European home, "it's clear that the era is over of building an all-Europe house using blueprints devised immediately following the Cold War".<sup>67</sup> In other words, the geographic expansion of the Western-led liberal international order has encountered a roadblock, which will inevitably have consequences for its structure and future.

### **3.4. China Rising?**

Unlike Moscow, which has taken on a very vocal role in high-level global political issues, Beijing has until recently often preferred to assume a lower profile, despite the occasional rhetorical support it lends to Moscow in instances when Russia criticizes Western actions. Russia is largely assumed to be a declining power that feels as if it must cling to its imperial past to preserve an international image of itself as a major global power. China, on the other hand, still requires time to continue its economic growth and development, and thus is often careful not to engage in actions that may jeopardize its trading relationships. Nonetheless, the image of a rising China challenging and ultimately upending American global primacy is one that has been strongly engrained in many minds. The prospect of a power transition in the years and decades ahead, combined with the dangers of attempting to predict the future of a delicate and complex relationship, together indicate that – unlike in the case of Russia where the issues are more straightforward – a more theoretical (and less historical) analysis may be warranted for now. It makes sense to begin by examining the regional context in which China operates.

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<sup>67</sup> Lukyanov, "Dawn Breaks on New Era in EU-Russia Relations".

The end of the Cold War presented East Asia with an evolving and delicate set of regional parameters: Sino-Russian relations began to improve, Japan's economic rise was peaking, the legacies of the Korea and Vietnam wars persisted due to the survival of communism in those two countries, and no equivalent to the European Union or NATO existed to bind the countries of the region together into a common framework. This served to undermine the regional bargains achieved during the Cold War, implying that regional order had to be renegotiated.<sup>68</sup> The distribution of power and authority between China and Japan remained unresolved after World War II, as they ended up on opposite sides of the capitalist-communist Cold War divide. The result was the United States interposing itself in Japan's place in its attempts to contain communism, thus preventing a China-Japan postwar reconciliation of a similar mould to the one that took place between France and Germany.<sup>69</sup> This has led to somewhat of a paradox, in which two models of regional order coexist – or are “layered” – simultaneously: an “inclusive” system in which American leadership is required to constrain China and an “exclusive” one in which China and Japan keep each other in check.<sup>70</sup> Until this paradox is cleared up in a meaningful fashion and a more durable order is constructed, institution building in the region can be viewed as being “epiphenomenal”.<sup>71</sup>

Absent a common foe in the form of the Soviet Union, Washington's presence in the region had to be justified anew after the end of the Cold War.<sup>72</sup> But according to Evelyn Goh, Washington's central role in East Asia is on less precarious footing than many assume. According to her analysis, the United States simply must manage conflicts rather than resolve them in order to sustain its position. Reincorporating North Korea into the Republic would

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<sup>68</sup> Evelyn Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy & Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 35.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

place tremendous economic pressure on Seoul, Beijing counts on Pyongyang to act as a buffer against Washington, and Tokyo would fear the presence of a bigger and stronger neighbour next door.<sup>73</sup> Perpetuating conflict in the South China Sea also strengthens the rationale for the United States to continue to act as a security guarantor in the region.<sup>74</sup> When one combines the presence of intra-regional rivalries with the continued dominance (at least for now) of US-led global structures, not to mention the open character of the East Asian economy, the difficulty of resisting American authority becomes clear.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, space was initially created for American hegemony in the region by the combined effects of the Meiji Restoration and the events surrounding World War II, both of which served to alienate Tokyo from the East Asian order – a reminder that many actors in the region may remain somewhat ambivalent about Japan.<sup>76</sup> Goh concludes that Washington deliberately upholds the collective memory of World War II in the region, which forces China, Japan and South Korea to rely on continued American leadership and prevents them from negotiating a new moral order between themselves.<sup>77</sup> Still, she concedes that the current regional order – featuring American hegemony and layered hierarchy between East Asian states – represents but an “interim outcome”.<sup>78</sup> China may have become enmeshed in many institutions that help to sustain American primacy in the region, and its role may be circumscribed to certain issues for now, but it remains an open question as to how long this will remain the case as power shifts and the region’s social compact is gradually renegotiated.<sup>79</sup>

Allen Carlson, for his part, provides a model for surmising how China’s worldview and foreign policy will evolve as it continues to engage with other members of international

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 204-5.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205-6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207-9.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

society, noting that “incremental, self-interested changes in the direction of boundary transgression” – that is, not resisting transnational norms and institutions – can lead to the “inadvertent creation of new sensitivities to external pressures for change, extended involvement in new institutional structures, and the production of new normative concepts about sovereignty”.<sup>80</sup> This interpretation fuses rationalism with idealism. That is, it combines the idea that conceptions of sovereignty come from states attempting to realize static interests with the notion that these conceptions exist in a dialectical relationship with the ideational power of identity.<sup>81</sup> In other words, countries internalize norms to a degree and then project the product of this process onto the world stage. In this sense, China represents a challenge for, yet remains embedded in, the contemporary international society.<sup>82</sup> To quote Carlson again:

“[N]ew” interpretations of sovereignty have not erased “old” ones within China, rather they have been written alongside them. Securing Chinese sovereignty then encompasses both approaches [boundary transgressing and boundary reinforcing], and as a result it is marked by apparent contradictions and tensions. [...] Such a task is becoming increasingly precarious, and because of looming challenges, is likely to become even more arduous in the near future.”<sup>83</sup>

That is to say, Beijing may eventually be forced to choose between one of the two pillars of its dual project: integrating with the world and unifying a multinational state.<sup>84</sup> Its current behaviour toward its Uighur population in Xinjiang, combined with its attempts at

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<sup>80</sup> Allen Carlson, *Unifying China, Integrating with the World: Securing Chinese Sovereignty in the Reform Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 235.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

securing the long-term foundations of its place in the global economy by way of the Belt and Road Initiative, reflect this dualism. Analyzing official claims related to Chinese sovereignty in the *Beijing Review* and the *Zhongguo Waijiao Gailan*, Carlson traces how China's dominant conception of national sovereignty evolved in recent decades, noting that while in the 1980s China's views on sovereignty were "relatively constant and boundary-reinforcing", Beijing's position changed in the 1990s to preserve a "static interpretation of territorial sovereignty" and "an unyielding and increasingly combative stance on jurisdictional sovereignty".<sup>85</sup>

So, while Beijing has come to terms with globalization, it has begun to resist some of the more purely normative components of the liberal order more forcefully. There are three possible conclusions that one could draw from this. First, China's more combative stance in the 1990s can be interpreted as the growing pains of its incorporation into an American-led, unipolar, liberal international society, but these challenges have now been overcome, with Beijing thinking of itself as being a responsible stakeholder within the confines of the present-day system. Second, China's opposition to many liberal norms is seared into its cultural worldview – with some scholars now advancing the idea that China is civilizationally unique<sup>86</sup> – and any reprieve from Sino-American confrontation is likely to be short-lived if Washington insists on pressing certain security or normative issues over the years ahead. The years following the announcement of the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" have seen Beijing further entrench illiberal practices domestically – ranging from the crackdown on Uighurs to the development of a social credit system – and solidify a strategic partnership

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-8.

<sup>86</sup> See Christopher Coker, *The Rise of the Civilizational State* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019). Also see Zhang Weiwei, *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State* (Singapore, World Scientific Publishing, 2012).

with Russia that is rooted partly in scepticism of Western norms.<sup>87</sup> Or third, China's evolving relative power, the country's specific sociopolitical and economic requirements at any given time, and the impact of other states' pronouncements and actions will together help to condition Beijing's continually changing worldview.

This latter possibility appears to be particularly pertinent today, with globalists on the wane among Chinese scholars and within the Foreign Ministry in the wake of the 2008-9 financial crisis, possibly due to hesitancy in Beijing to assume greater international leadership immediately after Washington's normative clout took a hit, or alternatively because of the sheer size of China's continued developmental needs.<sup>88</sup> On a spectrum ranging from nativists to globalists, China's centre of gravity has been said to tend toward the former, with the Foreign Ministry elite desiring an approach that engages with other major powers and the Global South, but ultimately being forced to respond to more realist and nativist forces with the People's Liberation Army, the Chinese Communist Party and society at large.<sup>89</sup> Ultimately, however, the reality may not be restricted to any one of these possibilities, and indeed may be most accurately represented by a combination of any of them. Regardless of which of these accounts is the most authoritative, in any of them Beijing will have difficulty juggling its competing imperatives of preserving a precarious national unity and integrating with the world.<sup>90</sup> At this point, what remains to be seen is whether China's rising power will have a greater impact on its international conduct than the ideational force of its continued

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<sup>87</sup> See Michael Cox, "China and Russia: Axis of Convenience or Strategic Partnership?", in Yu Jie (ed.), *From Deng to Xi: Economic Reform, The Silk Road, and the Return of the Middle Kingdom*, Special Report 23, LSE IDEAS, May 2017, pp. 19-25.

<sup>88</sup> David Shambaugh and Ren Xiao, "China: The Conflicted Rising Power", in Nau and Ollapally (eds.), *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers*, pp. 64-5.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-7.

<sup>90</sup> For more on China's national unity challenges, see Peter Zeihan, *The Accidental Superpower: The Next Generation of American Preeminence and the Coming Global Disorder* (New York, NY: Hachette, 2014), pp. 290-323.

integration into international society, and whether the latter will either soothe or further entrench some of the Middle Kingdom's illiberal tendencies.

Ultimately, it is perhaps Ian Clark's model of co-constitution that is most likely to provide the clearest frame of reference for comprehending how these three possibilities operate in tandem. Writing in 2014, he contends that there exists

a convincing consensus that China, for the moment at least, is largely supportive of the existing order. Any continuation of this, of course, is not for China alone to ensure, but depends equally upon the accommodation of others. [...] The power of norms will constrain not simply China's rise, but its potential to make norms in a manner of its own choosing. At the same time, the norms of power are just as likely to challenge the existing international normative order in the longer term, although there will be no mechanical or straightforward relationship in this respect either. Both China and international society can be expected to remake each other in this process.<sup>91</sup>

It is perhaps no coincidence that the three aforementioned possibilities appear to correspond somewhat with the English School's three divisions, with the first possessing the logic of a gradual move toward world society, the second resembling the international system (albeit with a combative normative character instead of a material one), and the last conforming with international society. Which of these three dominates at any given moment may ultimately depend on the logic characterizing the global political system at the time in question. It has been contended that the expansion of the European states system across the globe helped to strengthen the Hobbesian and Kantian dimensions – namely the international

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<sup>91</sup> Ian Clark, "International Society and China: The Power of Norms and the Norms of Power", *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (2014), pp. 315-40.

system and world society, through the World Wars and the founding of the United Nations, respectively – at the expense of international society’s Grotian logic.<sup>92</sup> The remainder of this dissertation will be devoted to determining whether or not the actions and worldviews of Russia and China against the backdrop of deteriorating relations with the West are helping to provide international society with renewed breathing room. As will be explored in Chapter 7 with reference to the conceptual model put forward in Chapter 2, some might make the case that the partial retreat of the Kantian dimension of global politics – symbolized by the onset of great power rivalry and an abdication of global leadership by the liberal hegemon – paradoxically represents an opportunity for international society’s institutions to reassert themselves after decades of liberal revisionism, or at the very least prove their resilience.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.5. The “Big Post-Cold War Picture”

“Just as the ability of the state to run the nation has declined, so has the ability of any one country to run the international system of states which is its counterpart.”<sup>94</sup> These words were written not four years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In hindsight, it perhaps should have been obvious that, when combined, the sheer economic size of Japan, the rapid rise of demographic giants such as China and India, and the power potential of an integrated Europe would make the advent of any unipolar world impossible.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps the euphoria that followed the United States’ “victory” in the Cold War combined with the historically

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<sup>92</sup> Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 61-2.

<sup>93</sup> For example, see Michael N. Barnett, “The End of a Liberal International Order That Never Existed”, *The Global*, 16 April 2019, available online at: <https://theglobal.blog/2019/04/16/the-end-of-a-liberal-international-order-that-never-existed/> (last accessed 23.04.2019)

<sup>94</sup> Matthew Horsman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State: Citizens, Tribalism and the New World Disorder* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), pp. 103-4.

<sup>95</sup> David P. Calleo, *Follies of Power: America’s Unipolar Fantasy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 10.



unprecedented power that fell into Washington's lap temporary distorted the perspective of many in the West. Or perhaps, more interestingly, the fact that most states systems have sooner or later ended up generating a universal empire (e.g., China in past millennia, or the Hellenistic-Roman world) persuaded universalizing liberals that something similar was possible – or indeed, seemingly already underway – in the post-Cold War era.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, from the early years following the Soviet Union's collapse, two big-picture errors were made – one material and one ideational. First, “economic questions and those of security were separated as far as possible in the institutions that planned the new order”.<sup>97</sup> Second was a failure to internalize the fact that “human rights, democracy and capitalism [...] can be applied differently, even where they are accepted; where they are not, many other traditions exist to legitimate state practices”.<sup>98</sup> Combined, these failings produced a “revolutionary” vision that “antagonizes states that fear decline [e.g., Russia] and states that anticipate improvement [e.g., China]”.<sup>99</sup> Put differently, other powers were forced to face a universalizing liberal ideology in the absence of new international security structures designed to provide for a stable global order and take their interests into account.

Washington's unipolar predisposition was only strengthened throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, as Europe failed to prevent the bloody collapse of Yugoslavia, NATO expanded eastward, and the Global War on Terror (which featured a different bipolar concept than the Cold War notion of coexistence between blocs) was launched.<sup>100</sup> The result of this predilection was that Atlantic institutions failed to adapt to the realities of a world that no longer featured a bipolar Cold War between superpower hegemonies, or of an international

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<sup>96</sup> Martin Wight (and Hedley Bull, ed.), *Systems of States* (New York, NY: Continuum International, 1977), p. 43.

<sup>97</sup> Horsman and Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, p. 161.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>99</sup> Calleo, *Follies of Power*, p. 4.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-3.

society that possessed a political union on the Old Continent.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, this has helped to erode not only the imagined (or perhaps partial) consensus of the post-Cold War world, but also the real consensus of the postwar order itself upon whose institutions the present-day international society is largely still built. To quote David Calleo: “[A]ccording to the multilateral [postwar] ethic that many states have come to value highly, America’s power, exercised unilaterally, has rapidly been losing legitimacy. Lacking legitimacy, it has been greatly devalued.”<sup>102</sup>

Of course, if one believes that a Hobbesian logic characterizes international politics, this suggests that there is the need for some kind of hegemonic force to act as a stabilizer, whether it takes the form of a single state, a collection of states or a mixture of both.<sup>103</sup> And every system beyond those that (in theory) can be defined by “absolute anarchy”, possessing at the very least “limited degrees of involvement between neighbours”, is characterized by at least some degree of hegemony.<sup>104</sup> But hegemony here is the key word, as “primacy is grounded in material resources alone, whereas hegemony is grounded explicitly in legitimacy”.<sup>105</sup> And indeed, one of the primary ways that a hegemon must legitimize its presence and actions is through restraint, which has, at times, been missing over the course of the post-Cold War American hegemony.<sup>106</sup> This has led to a peculiar situation in which the United States easily remains the world’s most powerful state but in which its ability to order international society has been significantly reduced, reflective of the diversity of today’s genuinely global and interconnected (and therefore “small”) international society. Not only does this reduce the term-setting capacity of the liberal international order in global affairs, it

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>104</sup> Adam Watson, *The Limits of Independence: Relations Between States in the Modern World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), pp. 118-24.

<sup>105</sup> Clark, “International Society and China”.

<sup>106</sup> Goh, *The Struggle for Order*, pp. 30-1.

also perhaps leads to an intriguing new equilibrium in international society on the fashion in which its norms and institutions are negotiated, thus ultimately imbuing it with new content and a new structure. No other capital is able to compete with Washington on a global scale, although many are nonetheless capable of checking American power in their own regions and challenging certain US-backed norms and institutions.<sup>107</sup> Put simply, the inability of the liberal international order to encompass global international society affects not only the potential resilience of the former but also the shape of the latter, with new intersubjectively derived norms effectively leading to the establishment of a new society built on some qualities and institutions inherited from its predecessor.

As noted above, a series of actions and conceptions of Western provenance over the past number of decades have been contested on the grounds that they lacked international legitimacy. Or put more bluntly: “The values and ideas that the US and its liberal capitalist allies seek to promote simply are not shared by the vast majority of the world’s population.”<sup>108</sup> It is one thing when the disagreement is limited to the organizing principles of pan-European security; it is quite another when thinkers begin to posit more prominently that Russia represents a distinct, non-Western “Eurasian” civilization, or that Russian and Western societies operate according to social contracts originating from different historical eras.<sup>109</sup> Naturally, it should be recalled that there remains a great amount of normative agreement within international society today. But disagreements have grown increasingly vocal and fundamental, touching key institutions or constitutional organizing principles of

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<sup>107</sup> See for example Michael Kofman, “Russian Demographics and Power: Does the Kremlin Have a Long Game?”, *War on the Rocks*, 4 February 2020, available online at: <https://warontherocks.com/2020/02/russian-demographics-and-power-does-the-kremlin-have-a-long-game/> (last accessed 16.03.2020)

<sup>108</sup> Horsman and Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, p. 166.

<sup>109</sup> For example, see Boris Mezhev, “Modern Russia and Postmodern Europe”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2 March 2008, available online at: [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_10362](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_10362) (accessed 29.05.2016)

international society such as the nature of state sovereignty.<sup>110</sup> When Russia, which benefits from trading with a stable and prosperous Europe, is said to be abetting and cheering on Eurosceptic forces across the continent, one can see that the tactical has taken precedence over the strategic, short-term considerations have been privileged over long-term ones, and the pursuit of power has begun to replace a fractured and contested set of norms.<sup>111</sup>

With the benefit of three decades of hindsight since the fall of the Berlin Wall, one can begin to identify fledgling features of the emerging global political system. Two of the most well-known narratives attempting to conceptualize the shape of post-Cold War politics have been Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" and Francis Fukuyama's "end of history". While civilizations are certainly difficult to delineate, perhaps a *crash* of civilizations rather than a clash is a more apt description for what has been witnessed in the intervening years since the end of the Cold War. The collapse of order in the Middle East features intra-Muslim violence to a degree far greater than any supposed clash between Western and Islamic civilizations. And seeing as Russia is at least partially Western, the challenges facing the European security framework that have followed NATO's expansion and Moscow's retaliation can be interpreted as being "intra-civilizational" as well, rather than a clash of two distinct civilizations.<sup>112</sup> As for Fukuyama, many have highlighted his contention that the "end of history" could always have been a temporary matter, with the

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<sup>110</sup> Whether sovereignty should be thought of as an institution or merely a "deep constitutional structure" of international society is a matter of contention among scholars. See Christian Reus-Smit, "The Liberal International Order Reconsidered", in Rebekka Friedman, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (eds.), *After Liberalism?: The Future of Liberalism in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 169-70.

<sup>111</sup> See Camille-Renaud Merlen and Zachary Paikin, "Can the EU Stand Up and Take America's Place?", *The American Conservative*, 2 November 2017, available online at: <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/can-the-eu-stand-up-and-take-americas-place/> (last accessed 05.07.2019)

<sup>112</sup> For more on Russia's "Westernness", see Adam Watson, "Russia and the European States System", in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 61-73.

boredom resulting from the triumph of a single sociopolitical model acting as a possible catalyst for history's reignition.<sup>113</sup>

Due to their fame, these two theses have already been dissected at length in other spaces. More interesting for the purposes of this dissertation is David Held's account, which reads as both an analysis of trends and a manifesto for a "cosmopolitan model of democracy", defined as "the legal basis of a global and divided authority system – a system of diverse and overlapping power centres, shaped and delimited by democratic law".<sup>114</sup> Held's work, which will be explored here to illustrate in greater depth this dissertation's discussion of the advent of a "multi-order world" rather than to introduce any new core concepts, is just as relevant for those areas where he ultimately somewhat missed the mark as it is for where he was strongly vindicated.

According to Held, a world featuring the entrenchment of democracy inside states contrasted with the pursuit of power politics among them has its structural roots in the Peace of Westphalia itself.<sup>115</sup> Sovereignty created an impersonal form of state power, which in turn made groups fight for a stake in a centralized power system, even as that system attempted to find ways to enhance loyalty to and the resources of the state.<sup>116</sup> International hierarchy, for its part, is derived from the fact that the consolidation of the state system has not been uniform.<sup>117</sup> The end of World War II and the establishment of the UN Charter system together represent a partial break from the Westphalian order. Although the role of great powers remains entrenched through bodies such as the Security Council, international legal personality was eventually granted to individuals, while international law and the general

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<sup>113</sup> For example, see Shadi Hamid, "The End of the End of History", *Foreign Policy*, 15 November 2016, available online at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/15/the-end-of-the-end-of-history/> (last accessed on 13.02.2017)

<sup>114</sup> David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 234-5.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46 & p. 97.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-1.

institutional architecture of the system developed substantially beyond mere political-strategic affairs.<sup>118</sup> Over the course of the ensuing years, as international agreements proliferated and global interconnectedness increased, the number and effectiveness of state political instruments is reduced and an erosion of the distinction between internal and external affairs takes place.<sup>119</sup> Held contends that the rise in permeability of state borders has implied a diminution of states' capabilities, which in turn creates a need for international cooperation, thus providing the rationale for a global governance regime.<sup>120</sup> This process, per his analysis, has not "fully run its course", as nationalism and the desire for sovereignty still exist. One therefore observes not the "end of the era of the nation-state", but rather a "challenge to the era of 'hegemonic states'", in part because the existence of nuclear weapons and the growth of economic globalization have made war less likely, thus giving smaller states some additional *marge de manoeuvre*.<sup>121</sup> In summary, a "new organizational principle" has emerged that is ultimately embodied in postwar legal and political developments, and this principle is in "marked tension with the form and dynamics of the states system itself".<sup>122</sup> This is in line with the contradictions facing the liberal order – and the parts of international society on which the liberal order has left an imprint – outlined in the previous chapter. Such contradictions militate against the order's potential resilience and thus leave it vulnerable and fragile when faced with great power rivalry in the "sphere of norms".

At first glance Held's narrative appears somewhat conventional, but it is the corollaries that he derives that are most interesting. To begin with, he concedes the following: "[B]y creating new patterns of transformation and change, globalization can weaken old political and economic structures without necessarily leading to the establishment of new

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-9.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 97-8.

systems of regulation. Political fragmentation or disintegrative trends are a clear possibility.”<sup>123</sup> If one approaches this statement through the looking glass of the past three decades, one can see that it has applied not just to economic globalization but also to American-centric political globalization. In other words, attempts to expand the Western-based liberal sphere of norms and states have led to an erosion of liberal international order rather than its consolidation, destabilizing the pan-European space rather than generating a new and inclusive European security order. But this concession aside, Held makes several claims that, with the benefit of hindsight, appear to be partially misguided or incomplete.

For instance, Held notes that the decline of European empires, the diminishment of America’s global economic position and the internationalization of productive capital finance together imply that even powerful states have fewer options regarding economic policy – for instance, Keynesianism only works reliably in a global context of embedded liberalism, which has been lacking since Washington withdrew from the Bretton Woods exchange rate system.<sup>124</sup> However, this claim is limited to the economic dimension – it ignores the possibility that while states may now be forced to behave differently than in centuries past in the economic sphere, they may still have a significant amount of independence and the ability to project norms within the political realm. On this latter front, he writes: “Global processes have moved politics a long way from activity which simply crystalizes first and foremost around state and inter-state concerns”.<sup>125</sup> This may be true to a degree, but recent events – most notably Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its privileging of order over justice in its intervention in the Syrian theatre – demonstrate that state and inter-state concerns are alive

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131-4.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

and well, and are in fact central to present-day diplomacy and international relations: either they are making a comeback, or they had never disappeared in the first place.

As for the more purely ideational front, Held contends that new global communications systems will have a “‘pluralizing impact’ on identity formation”.<sup>126</sup> But history has played out in a very different way. The rise of social media platforms and alternative news sites has allowed people to read only the information that conforms to their own worldviews, even as radical Islam has risen and countries such as Russia have become more defensive. Rather than allowing individuals to develop multiple identities, globalization appears to have helped existing ones to entrench themselves and even spread. Remarkably, this may also be the case among so-called globalists and cosmopolitans, who can be seen as more tribal and less open-minded than is often assumed when it comes to their values system.<sup>127</sup>

Held affirms that his vision of a cosmopolitan model of democracy is at loggerheads with the Westphalian notion of “effective power” – that might makes right – as it requires “sustained democratic negotiation”.<sup>128</sup> The problem is that just as there are competing views of legitimacy, so, too, are there differing interpretations of democracy. If one accepts the premise that the world is subjectively and inter-subjectively understood and constructed, then international norms and structures can only be objectively fair up to a point. Does democracy in this context refer to a system that (at least partially) enshrines liberal democratic principles? Or is international democracy – the idea that all states should have an equal say regardless of their domestic political structures – more important? What of “sovereign democracy”, Russia’s recent interpretation of a more managed system? For a model that Held

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>127</sup> Ross Douthat, “The Myth of Cosmopolitanism”, *The New York Times*, 2 July 2016, available online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/opinion/sunday/the-myth-of-cosmopolitanism.html? r=0> (last accessed on 14.02.2017)

<sup>128</sup> Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, p. 268.



contends must leave democracy within states “absolutely inseparable” from democracy between them, this normative divergence can pose a problem.<sup>129</sup> The failure of the United States and its liberal allies to recognize the deeply embedded pluralist character of international society in the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union has precluded normative convergence in a number of crucial international domains. Russia, a country whose less-than-fortuitous geography naturally lends itself to a degree of defensiveness, has become progressively convinced of the West’s malicious intentions as disagreements have mounted throughout the post-Cold War era. And as Held himself notes: “The durability of the existing war system is related to the reluctance of states to submit their disputes with other states to arbitration by a ‘supreme authority’. Unless this reluctance is challenged, the cosmopolitan model is likely to be stillborn.”<sup>130</sup>

Held’s analysis is on target when he writes that democracy must come to terms with reduced state regulatory abilities, interlocking political decisions between states, and emerging political identities, or risk losing the ability to determine the “shape and limits of political activity” in global affairs.<sup>131</sup> Consolidating a fully unipolar order after the Cold War would never have been possible, but neither did Washington or Brussels take the steps necessary to construct a truly pluralist order – both globally and in Europe – that would have strengthened their perceived legitimacy.<sup>132</sup> Rather, they vastly overestimated their ability to produce political change unilaterally, aiming to consolidate a single set of norms over a geographic space that naturally tends toward pluralism.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>132</sup> See Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 11-37.

<sup>133</sup> Richard Sakwa, “External Actors in EU-Russia Relations: Between Norms and Space”, *Avoiding a New Cold War*, pp. 86-93.

Held notes that the emerging world order, as it features overlapping and varied centres of power and influence, is neo-medieval in nature, and he suggests that if the development of sovereignty in 1648 was designed to generate stability and tolerance in the face of war and universalism, then a return to medievalism is unlikely to result in greater peace and accountability.<sup>134</sup> Held's theory is designed specifically to provide a modicum of predictability and justice to regulate this emerging neo-medieval world to the greatest degree possible. Flockhart's conception of a multi-order world appears to provide additional conceptual detail to the discussion surrounding the emergence of a neo-medieval world that has already been underway for some time. What remains to be determined is the extent to which the global political system is experiencing a departure from the institutions, norms and types of interaction that have defined it in recent centuries. Some attribute changes in international order to technological change, with war and revolution acting as mere catalysts.<sup>135</sup> This dissertation's model takes such developments as a given, focusing instead on how the normative contestation that change produces can engender further change.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, it is entirely possible that the international human rights movement – beginning in the 1970s and then accelerating rapidly as liberalism and global civil society spread in the 1990s – represents but a moment in time, and that international society will “return to normal”, so to speak, with a hollowing out of institutions and a renewed focus on inter-state affairs. The same phenomenon appears to be occurring throughout the concentric circles identified at the outset of this chapter. The economic and political hyper-liberalism that has marked the past several decades is being resisted both

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<sup>134</sup> Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, p. 137-8.

<sup>135</sup> Igor Ivanov, “Russia, China and the New World Order”, *Russian International Affairs Council*, 19 June 2018, available online at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/russia-china-and-the-new-world-order/> (last accessed 05.07.2019)

within non-Western states and on the international scene,<sup>136</sup> seemingly in a structurally anti-hegemonic fashion, almost as if polycentrism and anti-hegemonism are established norms in international society.<sup>137</sup> This is causing the liberal (and unevenly applied) principle of national self-determination, launched by the French Revolution and enshrined more than a century later at Versailles, to be challenged – or at least re-evaluated – as well: From Ukraine, to the former Yugoslavia, to Tibet, Russia and China have demonstrated that the requirements of state sovereignty and regional order can often be in marked tension with national self-determination. And the growing interconnectedness of the world is showing that sovereignty itself, at least to a degree, may have simply been the solution to a seventeenth-century problem.

As Charles Tilly has aptly noted, the state system that we have come to know has not always existed, and therefore there is no reason to assume that it will always exist.<sup>138</sup> What already appears to be emerging – particularly in regions such as the Asia-Pacific where states are becoming increasingly dependent upon China for their economic well-being even as they continue to rely on the United States for their security – is a world in which there are “different hierarchies of authority for different purposes”, just as was the case in the Middle

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<sup>136</sup> Regarding resistance to the economic dimension of hyper-liberalism, this can be witnessed not just through Russia’s failure to complete genuine market reforms throughout its post-Cold War transition but also through China’s refusal to grant many foreign companies access to its market and the growing securitization of US-China economic relations. For more on the tension between the liberal international order and other members of international society on both economic and security matters, see Malcolm Chalmers, “Which Rules? Why There is No Single ‘Rules-Based International System’”, Occasional Paper, RUSI, April 2019, available online at: <https://rusi.org/occasional-papers/Which-Rules-Why-There-Is-No-Single-Rules-Based-International-System> (last accessed 08.08.2019)

<sup>137</sup> Hegemony and anti-hegemonism have co-existed in European international society for centuries, interacting with each other to reach a sort of equilibrium. The post-1648 system that curtailed Habsburg supremacy was so anti-hegemonic that Louis XIV’s ambitions helped to provide a counterbalance, while the Vienna settlement in 1815 represented an equilibrium between Napoleon’s hegemonic ambitions and the Utrecht system’s anti-hegemonism by way of a diffused hegemony. As will be outlined in Chapter 7, the structural dominance of European international society within the global political system helped to infuse the norm of polycentrism into global international society. See Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), pp. 195-6 & 238.

<sup>138</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States: AD 990-1992* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), p. 227.

Ages.<sup>139</sup> Finally, if the relative decline of the West and the rise of the collective rest turns out ultimately to be a valid prediction – and despite the many challenges faced by non-Western states, there nonetheless has been a substantial rise in wealth, population and/or development in recent decades throughout the non-Western world – then the neo-medieval metaphor may prove to be even more accurate: The five-century-long period of Western dominance, beginning with the Age of Exploration that helped to inaugurate the modern era, would be coming to a close. This would hold true even if China’s individual rise were to be constrained by the economic growth and security concerns of its neighbours, as the evolving character of the multi-order world already demonstrates instances in which intra-Asian rivalry is being mitigated by collaboration that excludes Washington, such as Sino-Indian cooperation in the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or the BRICS. Asia may remain multipolar, but this will not necessarily constrain the rise of Chinese regional influence nor the increasing global importance of the wider Eurasian and Asian space,<sup>140</sup> providing further evidence that power and influence are at least partially separate phenomena.

Amid the confusion that characterizes today’s global climate, it is worth noting that some scholars shortly after the Cold War’s conclusion already foresaw the contemporary crisis of international relations:

It is misleading to argue either that what is emerging is world government, at one extreme, or a return to atomized nation-states at the other. Neither is practical: states are not likely, *en masse*, to give up their sovereignty; but nor are the pressures for integration – and consequently for pooling or devolving sovereignty – likely to disappear. The search for a new stable

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<sup>139</sup> Horsman and Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, p. 166.

<sup>140</sup> Recent works discussing these themes include Parag Khanna, *The Future Is Asian: Global Order in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2019), Bruno Maçães, *The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New World Order* (London: Allen Lane, 2018) and Peter Frankopan, *The New Silk Roads: The Present and Future of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

point from which to lead the international system is a fundamentally mistaken one. [...] There is a need to find a new set of principles by which to assess where decisions should be taken, on what basis and by whom.

What we face is not a crisis of power, but a crisis of authority.<sup>141</sup>

This illustrates why advocates of the liberal international order are incorrect in suggesting that the order can be strengthened anew by a return to American international leadership and engagement, “clinging to pillars from the past and rolling back authoritarianism around the globe”.<sup>142</sup> As Graham Allison notes quite aptly,

the U.S. economy, which accounted for half of the world’s GDP after World War II, had fallen to less than a quarter of global GDP by the end of the Cold War and stands at just one-seventh today. For a nation whose core strategy has been to overwhelm challenges with resources, this decline calls into question the terms of U.S. leadership.<sup>143</sup>

As such, Washington will be likely forced to adapt its international engagement to the reality that “other countries have contrary views about governance and seek to establish their own international orders governed by their own rules”.<sup>144</sup> According to former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, in this new international context, “[c]ountries will find it easier to protect their own interests as part of flexible and fluid coalitions dealing with specific issues”, with “these ‘blocs’ [...] later form[ing] the basis of the future world order”.<sup>145</sup> This appears to be very much in line with the emergence of a multi-order world, although it does

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<sup>141</sup> Horsman and Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, p. 167.

<sup>142</sup> Graham Allison, “The Myth of the Liberal Order”, *Foreign Affairs*, 14 June 2018, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/myth-liberal-order> (last accessed 24.06.2019)

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Igor Ivanov, “The Belt and Road Initiative: Towards a New World Order”, *Russian International Affairs Council*, 10 July 2019, available online at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/the-belt-and-road-initiative-towards-a-new-world-order/> (last accessed 14.07.2019)

not necessarily preclude the preservation of a rules-based world order. One scholar contends that illiberal states “have shown the capacity to cooperate when it suits their interests. Importantly, they also will play by the rules, they just want rules that are to their liking as all states do.”<sup>146</sup> Moreover, throughout the post-war period, rules-based mechanisms such as multilateralism have been based on principles that “were hardly owned and operated by liberalism”.<sup>147</sup> However, as will be discussed at length in Chapter 7, drawing on the two-tier conceptualization of the global political system outlined in Chapter 2, the continuation of normative rivalry if left unchecked could cause much of the content of this rules-based order to erode as well. The persistence of the neo-revisionist upward vertical vector would limit the ability of great powers to exercise collective hegemony over the international order, even as the latter shifts under international society’s feet due to substantial horizontal contestation in the sphere of international relations.

This chapter has highlighted how the Western-backed liberal international order failed to achieve global scope in the post-Cold War era, due to the diversity of norms, identities and powerful actors in international society, as well as the double standards and contradictions that arise from the liberal order being rooted in a Western power structure. Michael Barnett underlines the latter fact, noting that “a liberal [world] order is not only a *rule*-based system but also a *consent*-based system [author’s emphasis], and the existence of consent means that order can be maintained without the continued threat and use of force”.<sup>148</sup> A liberal *world* order would effectively reside entirely at the level of international society and thus in the hands of a collective hegemony rooted in mutual consent. But a singular hegemony exercised *over* the rest of international society, if not rooted at the outset in a mixture of coercion and consent at the very least, will see its normative influence wane over time as the balance of

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<sup>146</sup> Barnett, “The End of a Liberal International Order That Never Existed”.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

power evolves and disputes accumulate.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, one should be careful to distinguish between a liberal world order and a “world order created by and for liberal states”.<sup>150</sup> This is what leads Barnett to conclude that in the post-Cold War era, despite efforts “to export the liberal model to non-Western states [...] the international order got closer to having a liberal quality but never quite passed the threshold”.<sup>151</sup> Or as Malcolm Chalmers writes:

Post-Cold War attempts to make the [thicker] Western rules-based system the dominant element in the global system have – at least for now – failed. It therefore continues to live in uneasy coexistence with the [global rules-based security system], episodically pursuing human security over state security, and claiming that the US and its allies have the authority to decide how to pursue the former, rather than the UN Security Council where both Russia and China have a veto.<sup>152</sup>

### 3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the potential for the emergence of a multi-order world has existed for some time, becoming particularly manifest in the post-Cold War era. As will be elaborated upon over the next two chapters, normative disputes concerning fundamental rules over how to govern the wider European space and international relations more broadly have prevented Russia from joining the West, with the onset of the Ukraine crisis marking Moscow’s unambiguous revolt against the liberal order following prior significant expressions of dissatisfaction (e.g., Putin’s Munich Security Conference speech in 2007 and

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<sup>149</sup> Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *The Rise and Fall of World Orders* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 12.

<sup>150</sup> Barnett, “The End of a Liberal International Order That Never Existed”.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Chalmers, “Which Rules?”

Russian criticisms of Western-backed regime change in Libya in 2011).<sup>153</sup> China's process of co-constitution with international society, for its part, remains incomplete.

Rival norms bring with them the potential for rival orders – as norms are deployed over a given geographic space – and rival orders can destabilize the foundations on which contemporary international society rests.<sup>154</sup> At the very least, “there is likely to be a much more diversified environment of several independent players, both competing and collaborating”,<sup>155</sup> suggesting that the alternative to the established order is likely to be, at the very least, increased complexity and disorder. The extent to which these orders – whether individual Russo- and Sino-centric or collaborative pan-Eurasian – will prove robust depends in part on where Russia and China are situated in international society today and how Moscow and Beijing perceive each other. This will be the topic of the next three chapters. It will be shown how Russia's revolt against the Western power base of the liberal international order in response to Western attempts to construct a liberal *world* order has engendered a process that will affect the future shape of international society. The final chapter of this dissertation will then discuss how the future of international society depends on structural challenges related to the liberal order itself.

As discussed in the previous chapter, norms deployed by Moscow have the potential to affect the shape of international society beyond any long-term considerations related to Russia's relative material power. With Russia having been the first major power overtly to reject the legitimacy of Western political leadership – both globally with its intervention in Syria but also regionally with its rejection of the Brussels-centric European model that has

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<sup>153</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Russia as a Disruptor of the Post-Cold War Order: To What Effect?”, in Ritika Passi and Harsh V. Pant (eds.), *Raisina Files: Debating Disruption in the World Order*, Vol. 3 (2018), pp. 18-23.

<sup>154</sup> Sakwa, “External Actors in EU-Russia Relations”.

<sup>155</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Russia, China Are Key and Close Partners”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 5 June 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/2019/06/05/russia-china-are-key-and-close-partners-pub-79262> (last accessed 08.07.2019)



become emblematic of the liberal international order<sup>156</sup> – an analysis of Russia’s place in international society is where the next chapter of this dissertation will begin.

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<sup>156</sup> See Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, pp. 1-49.

## *Chapter 4*

### *Situating Post-Cold War Russia*

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Russia's place in international society has long been a matter of contentious debate, both in Russia itself as well as internationally. In particular, questions surrounding the extent to which Russia is a Western country have preoccupied Russians at least since the reign of Peter the Great – although it is worth noting that Russia's desire to “catch up” with the West was initially motivated by military-strategic concerns rather than a genuine desire to transform its society along a Western model.<sup>1</sup> That said, Europe does not consolidate into a recognizable international society of states until after the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>2</sup> In helping to craft the new order that would follow these cataclysmic events of the early nineteenth century, Tsar Alexander

took the lead in determining that the international society of Europe should not be a free-for-all based on the balance of power but a Holy Alliance of European sovereigns who would together lay down the law and who were pledged to defend the spiritual, religious, and social values of their common European civilization against the destructive revolutionary forces which he saw manifesting themselves in Russia as well as in France and other Western countries.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Watson, “Russia and the European States System”, in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 [1984]), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

From this, two conclusions can be drawn. First, at the outset of modern European international society,<sup>4</sup> Russia saw itself as being one of its integral members. It is worth noting the importance of this point in time, as it marks the beginning of what Ikenberry calls the “liberal ascendancy”,<sup>5</sup> which followed the American and French revolutions and featured a liberal hegemon in the form of Great Britain, one century before the launch of Wilsonian idealism and more formal liberal internationalism. Russia was, of course, one of the conservative states in the Metternich order.<sup>6</sup> This lends support to the notion that the liberal international order and international society are separate phenomena, and that one can be fully committed to one without necessarily being fully committed to the other. Yet despite this, as will be discussed below and in the next chapter, today Russia often appears to be situated in a complex and unstable state of being simultaneously committed to international society but occupying a peripheral or liminal position within it.

Second, dating back at least to the establishment of the Concert of Europe, Russia understood that international society is replete with shared norms and principles (i.e., not unilaterally imposed ones). Russia’s imperial and post-Soviet incarnations differ in many ways, but this centuries-old belief can help one to understand some of the roots of contemporary Russian foreign policy, including its commitment to a procedural logic in international affairs as discussed in Chapter 3. This naturally runs up against the West’s post-1991 prioritization of the pursuit of “sameness” of values across the world ahead of the more

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<sup>4</sup> As mentioned above, many have argued that modern states and a modern international society containing features recognizable to a present-day observer do not emerge until after the Napoleonic wars. See Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso Books, 2003). Also see John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), pp. 311-78.

<sup>5</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order”, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (2009), pp. 71-87.

<sup>6</sup> See Richard Haass, “How a World Order Ends”, *Foreign Affairs*, 11 December 2018, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-12-11/how-world-order-ends> (last accessed 11.07.2019)

traditional competition that has characterized the international system,<sup>7</sup> with Sakwa contending that the Western-based liberal order became “radicalized”, adopting a more unrestrained and universalist foreign policy behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

These conclusions illustrate the need for a more nuanced understanding of Russia’s place in and relationship with international society. This must include an explanation of how Russia’s foreign policy orientation affects the future of the liberal international order as well as international society more broadly. Some have recently speculated that a re-establishment of a clear separation between the liberal sphere of states and their competitors could stand to strengthen the liberal order rather than undermine it, restoring the “exclusive club” structure that served it well during the Cold War period.<sup>9</sup> According to this logic, the rise of Russian neo-revisionism could in fact strengthen the liberal order. However, as was discussed in Chapter 2, there is more to the liberal order than American leadership, even if it remains one of its key features. The liberal order’s Western power base may reside in the realm of international order, but the liberal international order has expanded into the realm of international society as well. The upward vertical vector of Russian neo-revisionism, existing as it does in the “sphere of norms”, is of a different nature to the horizontal challenge that Russia has initiated in the “sphere of international relations”. As such, while the latter may strengthen the cohesiveness of the elements of the liberal order that reside within the realm of international order – namely the Western bloc – the former, which defends international society’s universal character, may serve to expose certain imbalances that have accrued

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<sup>7</sup> Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), p. 207.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Sakwa, “Russia’s 1989 plea for a new world order was rejected, and so Putinism was born”, *The Guardian*, 31 March 2017, available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/31/putinism-russia-1989-world-order-rejected> (last accessed on 07.09.2017)

<sup>9</sup> For example, see G. John Ikenberry, “The end of liberal international order?” and Beate Jahn, “Liberal internationalism: historical trajectory and current prospects”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 94, no. 1 (2018), pp. 7-23 & 43-61.

within the realm of international society as a result of the imprint left on it by the liberal order.<sup>10</sup> This topic will be addressed in greater depth in Chapter 7.

Looking at historical periods in which Russia has chosen either to pursue a Westernizing trend or chart its own course can lead to a binary understanding of the country's views on the historically Western-dominated international order and international society – either supporting them or attempting to join them on the one hand, or on the other, rejecting them outright. The very notion of neo-revisionism, which distinguishes between international order and international society, attempts to overcome this binary, providing a more nuanced understanding of Russia's place in international society. Elaborating and building on this, this chapter will propose an alternative to this binary, outlining some of the central considerations for understanding post-Cold War Russia's place in a global international society that is increasingly less dominated by the West. It will begin with a discussion of Russian foreign policy analysis and a survey of Russian IR schools. The goal at this point is to demonstrate as comprehensively as possible – hence the emphasis on both FPA and IR schools – that attempts to essentialize Russian foreign policy discourse and actions are counterproductive and to make the case for a more conceptual and overarching approach to understanding Russia's place in the global political system. By discrediting efforts to dissect Russia into a series of separable and easily identifiable foreign policy groups, and by exposing the shortcomings and complexities of attempts by the Russian political and scholarly community to interpret their country's foreign policy through the lens of popular IR theories,<sup>11</sup> the

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<sup>10</sup> Since this dissertation's theoretical model allows for agency, it is stated that the horizontal challenge that Russia has initiated *may* strengthen the cohesiveness of the Western bloc. It is always possible that the liberal hegemon – the United States – might choose to abandon its leadership role within the liberal order. That said, Washington has maintained its international forward presence throughout the Trump administration, signalling that a decoupling of American hegemony from the liberal order may simply represent a re-ordering of the pursuit of American hegemony. Horizontal contestation between major powers would still occur in the realm of international relations.

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion on this topic, see Andrey Kortunov, "Between Polycentrism and Bipolarity", *Russian International Affairs Council*, 4 September 2019, available online at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/between-polycentrism-and-bipolarity/> (last accessed 15.03.2020)

groundwork will be laid for the discussion of neo-revisionism that follows, which informs the inner workings of this dissertation's core conceptual model.

#### **4.2. Russian Schools of Foreign Policy: How Accurate?**

Scholars have long attempted to identify the dominant schools of foreign policy thought in Russia. One of the most well-known accounts comes from Andrei Tsygankov, who identifies three such schools: Westernists, Statists and Civilizationists.<sup>12</sup> In his conception, the Statists represent the largest group; they are not inherently anti-Western, but rather “merely seek the West’s recognition by putting the emphasis on economic and military capabilities”.<sup>13</sup>

Tsygankov’s threefold characterization of Russian politics provides more nuance than a mere West-East dichotomy, and also allows for a spectrum within each category. For instance, in his view, while Mikhail Gorbachev argued for convergence with the West, unlike Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Kozyrev he believed that this should not be done at the expense of Russian distinctiveness. Gorbachev attempted to offer his country “a culturally distinct perspective and an opportunity to reformulate its sense of national pride”, whereas Russia’s first wave of post-Soviet leaders provided an “astonishingly unimaginative” vision of Russian national identity than consisted merely of being “part of the West”.<sup>14</sup> Tsygankov’s model also understands that outside actors are capable of altering the balance of domestic influence between these three Russian political visions. For instance, he notes that throughout the 1990s, the West treated Russia “more as a dependent client than as a full participant in a coalition of Western nations” and that “[b]y not extending to Russia’s leadership the sought-

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<sup>12</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

after recognition, the West contributed to the already growing feelings of public alienation from the new Westernist course” in Moscow’s foreign policy.<sup>15</sup>

Another scholar generalizes this notion, by claiming that “events at the level of the international system force changes in the way social reality is constructed inside Russia itself”.<sup>16</sup> Other models provide an even more detailed account of Russian foreign policy visions. For example, Gvosdev and Marsh identify six groups: Liberals and Westernizers, Pragmatic Westernizers (that is, individuals who want Russia to westernize on Russia’s terms), Nationalists and Eurasianists, Sinophiles, Pragmatic Easternizers, and Penultimate Pragmatists (who want Russia to pursue any and all possible foreign policy vectors, depending on what best suits the country’s interests).<sup>17</sup> These characterizations are certainly interesting: They help one to understand who is driving the Russian agenda at any given time and which international theatres have been privileged in the Russian foreign policy throughout history. But whether one chooses to identify two, three or six tendencies in Russian international thought, they remain just that – *tendencies*.

Russia has never seen itself as being fully European or fully Asian.<sup>18</sup> But this does not imply that one can flawlessly identify and distinguish the country’s supposedly European elements from its supposedly Asian ones. For example, the Russian Revolution and the subsequent creation of the USSR resulted in Russia positioning itself in opposition to Europe (or vice versa), but the ideology it imported to pursue its national development – Marxism – originated in the West. Moreover, as Tsygankov notes above, the balance of ideas among Russia’s political elite does not always immediately correspond to the preferences of the Russian population. An additional point is that one cannot simply reduce international affairs

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.

<sup>16</sup> Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, p. 206.

<sup>17</sup> Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2013), p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

to a series of actors: Describing Western policy toward Russia in the post-Cold War era as being neo-imperial glosses over the fact that Westernization has become a quasi-independent “hegemonic force” in international society – one that Russia buys into to at least a certain degree.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, there are two other complications that arise from models that attempt to essentialize Russia’s various political groups, and they flow from the fact that every model seems to have a place for liberals or Westernizers. First, it is difficult to draw an absolute line between Westernizers and Statists. Some Statists could also be described as Westernizers: One need not want to transform Russia into a full-fledged market economy and liberal democracy to desire the adoption of certain Western strengths or characteristics, or a move toward a more cooperative posture vis-à-vis the West. And second, the characteristics that Westerners would broadly ascribe to liberals are not necessarily those that Russian liberals possess. For example, even strong Westernizers from the early days of the Russian Federation such as Boris Yeltsin, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and Finance Minister Yegor Gaidar nonetheless believed that Russia was a great power, that it should broadly be viewed as the leading state among the republics of the former Soviet Union, and that it had a responsibility to protect ethnic Russians situated outside the borders of the Russian Federation.<sup>20</sup> As Kozyrev put it: “Universal democratic values do not mean general unification and the loss of national specificity.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it should be remembered that even some of the most pro-Western voices within Russia still do not want their country to become a subservient member of a Washington-centric order. As was recalled earlier in this

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<sup>19</sup> Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, p. 207.

<sup>20</sup> Astrid S. Tuminez, “Russian Nationalism and the National Interest in Russian Foreign Policy”, in Celeste A. Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> James Richter, “Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity”, in Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy*, p. 78.



dissertation, “liberal ideas cannot succeed when they are not backed by power”.<sup>22</sup> That is, there are two components to today’s liberal international order: a set of ideas, institutions and practices on one hand, and Western political and military leadership, on the other.

As will be elaborated upon in this chapter and in the next one, Russia’s support for the former component can at times be tepid, while it most certainly does not support the latter. In the early post-Cold War years, Moscow did deliberate over the possibility of sending NATO or UN troops, or alternatively having some form of OSCE involvement, in areas where ethnic conflict had broken out in the former USSR.<sup>23</sup> It also broadly supported the West’s international security agenda in theatres ranging from Serbia to Iraq.<sup>24</sup> But liberal idealism quickly lost its appeal. For example, by late 1993, two-thirds of the Russian population believed that the economic advice that the West was providing to Moscow was designed deliberately to weaken Russia.<sup>25</sup> As for the question of Western leadership on political issues, Russia’s call for a more polycentric or multipolar global order has been longstanding – a call that appears to be even more justified to Moscow now that the West appears to be fracturing and as Asia increases its economic vibrancy – making a return to the idealism of the early 1990s extremely unlikely.<sup>26</sup>

Having managed successfully to resist invasions by Poland, Sweden, France and Germany throughout the centuries, Russia at times feels justified in thinking it is on the right side of history. The potential advent of a multi-order world or a new global balance of power featuring a strengthened Russian sphere of influence could represent the continuation of this trend. If Russia is able to construct a series of durable regional orders that either exclude Western states or emphasize non-Western norms and standards, whether it is the more Russo-

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<sup>22</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> Dmitry V. Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017.

centric Eurasian Economic Union or a more inclusive vision of a Greater Eurasia,<sup>27</sup> this would deal a decisive blow to any Western plans to render the liberal international order quasi-synonymous with international society itself. Even if Russia fails in these endeavours, the revival of great power rivalry and the failure to find a place for Russia in Europe's leading institutions – situations which appear likely to persist for several years – exert limitations on the ability of major powers in international society to collaborate and jointly infuse the international order with agreed-upon content by way of the downward vertical vector.<sup>28</sup> The result of this would either be a normative hollowing out of international society or sustained pressure against the harmonization of the realms of international order and international society. In either case, the liberal international order – in its current “thick” form that includes American leadership and a strong emphasis on liberal values – will have failed to transform itself into a world order. As will be further conceptualized below, normative contestation related to fundamental pillars of international society is not without consequence.

### 4.3. Russian IR Schools

The evolution of the international relations schools used by Russian scholars has, in many ways, mirrored changes in Russian foreign policy over the course of the post-Cold War period. It has often been said that, in its criticism of the United States, Russia has made clear what it doesn't want (i.e., abusive American unipolarity) but has not outlined precisely what

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<sup>27</sup> See Sergei Karaganov, “From East to West, or Greater Eurasia”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 25 October 2016, available online at: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/pubcol/From-East-to-West-or-Greater-Eurasia-18440> (last accessed 11.07.2019)

<sup>28</sup> For more on the factors impeding a Russia-West reconciliation over the near term, see Zachary Paikin, “Russia's pivot to the east: Where does it leave the EU?”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 21 February 2019, available online at: [https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_russias\\_pivot\\_to\\_the\\_east\\_where\\_does\\_it\\_leave\\_the\\_eu](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_russias_pivot_to_the_east_where_does_it_leave_the_eu) (last accessed 11.07.2019)

it *does* want. One scholar has likened Russia's impact on international order to a form of "creative destruction".<sup>29</sup> Similarly, on the theoretical side, "Russia [...] decided against Soviet Marxism, but not yet in favour of the next 'great' post-Soviet idea".<sup>30</sup> To a certain extent, Russia began the post-Soviet period with a blank slate with respect to IR – much as international order at the dawn of American unipolarity began with a blank slate of sorts, with the ultimate outcome of a more cooperative or more confrontational international society still to be determined. Russia's post-Soviet evolution possessed a "transitional nature", and was in many ways a "playground of ideological and theoretical competition", having yet to agree on a guiding theoretical notion such as America's "democratic peace" and China's "great harmony".<sup>31</sup> It should be natural that Russian IR schools would take some time to develop, particularly due to the predominance of Marxist historical materialism during the Soviet period. But even today, traditional IR schools such as realism, liberalism and Marxism dominate the field.<sup>32</sup> There is no equivalent to the English School, nor are there big names of a status equivalent to the likes of Waltz, Keohane or Mearsheimer.<sup>33</sup>

At first, discussion of Russian IR was "highly politicized and centred around political and ideological rather than theoretical issues" due in part to the fact that "Russian scholars had to respond to the real challenges posed by the post-Cold War international environment".<sup>34</sup> But as international events progressed and domestic ideas and groups interacted, the discipline had the opportunity to interact with and co-opt more traditional paradigms. It was realism that began to dominate by the mid-1990s, due to the consolidation

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<sup>29</sup> Andrej Krickovic, personal interview, Moscow, 28 September 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov, "New directions in Russian international studies: pluralization, Westernization, and isolationism", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2004), pp. 1-17.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Alexander A. Sergunin, "Discussions of international relations in post-communism Russia", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2004), pp. 19-35.

of three groups: Russia's industrial lobby, its federal civilian and military bureaucracies, and the "democratic" Eurasianists (featuring more openness to the West than their Slavophile counterparts).<sup>35</sup> It was perhaps natural that realism gained the upper hand. Russia's status as a great power (including a "heritage of superpower thinking"<sup>36</sup>) combined with its geographic location straddling both the European and Asian continents leaves it naturally predisposed to questions related to geopolitics and polarity. One scholar admits that realism is used in Russia almost "at an intuitive level".<sup>37</sup> In fact, due to the state-centric approach to international relations that was privileged by Stalin (over the world revolution-type Marxism preferred by Trotsky), particularly after the Second World War, it has been said that Soviet scholars and politicians practiced realism without even knowing it.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, there is in fact a degree of continuity between the USSR and post-communist Russia in how Russian scholars theoretically view the world: On the whole, they tend to favour a realist approach, complemented by a degree of Marxism – with the global North-South debate and participation in fora such as the BRICS playing the role of Marxism for contemporary Russia.<sup>39</sup>

Realism's dominance in Russian IR appears to have increased over the years, following the colour revolutions and Russia-West disagreements over Kosovo and Georgia, but particularly after the start of the current Ukraine crisis. Liberalism was further marginalized due to the fact that economic interdependence between Russia and European Union did not stop the latter from imposing sanctions on the former in the wake of the annexation of Crimea and the Donbas incursion, nor did existing EU-Russia and NATO-

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Marina Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia: Is there a Russian National School of IR Studies?", *Global Society*, Vol. 18, no. 3 (2004), pp. 263-78.

<sup>37</sup> Marina Lebedeva, personal interview, Moscow, 2 October 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Lebedeva, "International Relations Studies in the USSR/Russia".

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Russia fora and institutions find a way to prevent Ukraine from being caught in Russia and the West's crosshairs.<sup>40</sup> It has been claimed that realism today represents 80 to 90 percent of Russian scholarship and 100 percent of the country's foreign policy: Liberalism may occupy a certain place in IR debates, but its influence on Russian foreign policy after nearly three decades of increasingly confrontational Russia-West relations is "almost zero".<sup>41</sup> An opposing view, however, would contend that Russia has been a beneficiary of the liberal international order, at least to some degree, and does accept some of its core concepts. That said, when it comes to free trade – one of the liberal order's key pillars – Russia has tended to be in favour only in instances where it is capable of being competitive.<sup>42</sup> According to this line of thinking, the Eurasian Economic Union is less about economic modernization or the pursuit of free trade and more about questions of international polarity, designed to preserve elements of a Russian sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space in the face of a long-term trend of declining Russian power. If a commitment to gradually increasing free trade represents a key pillar of the liberal order, then the breakdown of the Doha round of WTO multilateral liberalization talks and the continuation of non-negligible elements of protectionism in places like Russia, India and even the United States together suggest that the global scope of the liberal order is being challenged, with a pluralistic international society featuring some elements of convergence remaining in its place.

It is also worth noting that, on top of realism's dominance in Russian IR, there is also a degree of similarity between many of Russia's IR schools, with one scholar claiming that

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<sup>40</sup> Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Moreover, Russia has tended to view trade through the lens of industrial development rather than trade development, in addition to prioritizing security and political concerns in its economic agenda. See Jeffrey Schubert and Dmitry Savkin, "Dubious Economic Partnership: Why a China-Russia Free Trade Agreement Is Hard to Reach", *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 4 (2016), pp. 529-47.

“there are more commonalities than differences”.<sup>43</sup> And indeed, many liberals in Russia even note their country’s distinctiveness from the West, in contrast to those who believe that the world is headed toward perfect economic and cultural convergence. These liberals have exercised for some time a form of scepticism of NATO membership for Russia, emphasized the supremacy of the United Nations, and have noted the importance of Washington taking other countries’ interests into account.<sup>44</sup> In short, they “see the movement toward democratic world order as something much more complex” than the post-Cold War transition envisioned by many Western analysts and politicians.<sup>45</sup>

Although this is not a perfect resemblance (it is perfectly understandable, for instance, that one should see greater ideological or paradigmatic pluralism in the academic IR field than among the foreign policy elite), one can nonetheless identify a common pattern in the evolution of both IR and foreign policy in post-communist Russia. In foreign policy terms, there has been a degree of consolidation between the Westernizing and more nationalist tendencies in the form of practical Putinism; but – as will be elaborated upon below – this synthesis could possibly still be somewhat fragile. Similarly, the development of international political events and the consolidation of political and ideational forces in Russia allowed for more mainstream IR theories – particularly realism – to begin to dominate the field, but Russia’s post-Cold War transformation in this regard is not complete, if such a thing is even possible. For example, considering questions of international polarity can lead to different conclusions: Some realists consider China to be a partner in the quest to resist American hegemony, while others could equally view Beijing as a threat to Russia’s relative position in the global balance of power.<sup>46</sup> As one scholarly article has aptly noted:

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<sup>43</sup> Lebedeva, personal interview, Moscow, 2 October 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Pavel A. Tsygankov and Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Dilemmas and promises of Russian liberalism”, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2004), pp. 53-70.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Sergunin, “Discussions of international relations in post-communism Russia”.

While sharing some original analytical assumptions, the realists often come to entirely different conclusions regarding the structure of the contemporary world. [...] The division between the structural realists and radical geopoliticians is instructive. [...] The structuralists view globalization as an irrevocable global trend, over which US can exert influence through competitive advantage, but cannot be controlled. On the other hand, the geopoliticians directly link global trends to the West's, specifically the US', intentions to destroy the coherence and territorial integrity of Russia. [...] They see globalization, with its potential to undermine the nation-state, merely as an instrument the West is using in its struggle to eliminate Russia, China and, perhaps India as powerful geopolitical competitors.<sup>47</sup>

No wonder, then, that one prominent Russian foreign policy analyst has noted that Russia's conception of world order is "quite vague" and without "theoretical consistency", advanced by the country's politicians "free of intellectual discipline".<sup>48</sup> Russia portrays an "image of confidence" internationally, but substantive details about the type of global order it would like to see implemented are not always forthcoming; this may be due in part to the fact that no conservative theory of world order has been fully developed and propagated,<sup>49</sup> but it may also be the case that Russia's post-communist evolution is still underway and will continue to unfold over the coming years – if not decades.

#### **4.4. Sources and Limits of Russia-West Convergence**

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<sup>47</sup> Tatyana A. Shakleyina and Aleksei D. Bogaturov, "The Russian Realist school of international relations", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2004), pp. 37-51.

<sup>48</sup> Ivan Timofeev, personal interview, Moscow, 3 October 2017.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

In short, whether in the realm of foreign policy or IR, attempts to place Russia into one box or another are inadequate. What is required, then, is a more global understanding of Russia – one that doesn't attempt to dissect it, but rather that tries to establish the nature of its relationship with international society. This is a prerequisite for answering this dissertation's core question: To understand the impact of renewed great power rivalry on international society, one must first discuss how those great powers relate to it.

When it comes to members of international society influencing Russian behaviour, no entity has been able to do so as much as Europe (or later, the West). The result of Russia's inclusion in European international society was that it "divided the intellectual culture" of the country, with a central question becoming to what degree Russia is and should be European or Western.<sup>50</sup> But this dilemma did not imply that Russian society was split along the lines of a simple Westernizing/non-Westernizing binary. For one, as mentioned above, Russia throughout its history has often wanted to emulate the West for its military and technological prowess rather than for its liberal values. The perceived need to catch up with the West required Russia to be centralized and autocratic – in other words, the opposite of Western – to achieve its aims, with disunity and a sense of vulnerability often the result when it strayed from this path.<sup>51</sup> Second, Russia has often thought of itself as representing the "true Europe" at moments when it was most opposed to a Western, liberal path of development, such as in the nineteenth century when it was firmly rooted in the conservative camp with a strong Slavophile tendency present within its intellectual discourse, or in the twentieth century under an egalitarian communism that was viewed as being the salvation of humanity.<sup>52</sup> This is a trend that has continued into the twenty-first century as well, with Western Europe being

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<sup>50</sup> Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, p. 202.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce D. Porter, "Russia and Europe After the Cold War: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policies", in Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 125-7.

<sup>52</sup> Regarding Russia considering itself the "true Europe", see Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, p. 194.



derided in certain Russian circles as “Gayropa” for its embrace of homosexuality and other non-traditional values.

What is worth noting here is that recent descriptions from the likes of Russian thinker Alexander Dugin that Russia represents a distinct Eurasian civilization are not necessarily accurate: According to a view more commonly found within the Russian intellectual elite, European civilization can be viewed as a heterogenous entity, and Russia remains firmly rooted within it – albeit as one of its more conservative-leaning components – while the promotion of Eurasianism should be interpreted as a mere political strategy designed to advance Russian interests in today’s international environment.<sup>53</sup> In other words, it is not contradictory for Russians to believe that their country is both European and distinct at the same time. The notion of Russian distinctiveness can be traced back to Ivan III’s notion that Moscow was the Third Rome, and the Mongol occupation is often cited as one of the primary reasons why Russian political culture differs from that of the rest of Europe.<sup>54</sup> In any event, a rising tide of political and cultural conservatism is hardly alien to contemporary Europe, as recent developments in Poland and Hungary show. What one *can* say, however, is that the idea of Europe has been, throughout its history, the main “Other” against which the idea of Russia has been defined, and that identity – as was previously alluded to – “does not reside in essential and readily identifiable cultural traits but in relations”.<sup>55</sup> This trend has been exhibited throughout Russian history by the fact that, in most cases, a Russian intellectual’s views concerning Asia were determined by his views on Europe.<sup>56</sup> Whether this will continue to be the case if Asia’s economic rise persists and Eurasian integration continues apace

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<sup>53</sup> Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Vera Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2001), p. 151.

remains an open question, although it is difficult to imagine that Russia's centuries of profound interaction with Europe can be entirely undone.<sup>57</sup>

Although a European identity has long been present in Russian society, Russia's views on its Europeanness have fluctuated throughout its history since Peter the Great began the country's process of Westernization. Eighteenth-century Russian nation-builders contended that Russia was firmly European and culturally superior to Asia, nineteenth-century intellectuals often saw Russia as representing more of an east-west hybrid or a "world of its own", while by the end of the Second World War the country was more comfortable asserting its affinities with Asia as communism began to spread.<sup>58</sup> If one imagines Russia's identity and political orientation as a pendulum swinging between greater comfort with either west or east, then one can clearly see why there was a strong desire among many in the Soviet Union to "return to Europe" as the Cold War came to a close. From this it becomes clear that Russia is neither the most eastern part of the West nor the most western part of the East, but indeed both at the same time. Which of these elements it chooses to emphasize and how it does so at any given time varies, but Russia remains a pluralistic society situated in a diverse international environment.

The question remains, though, *to what extent* the West can influence Russia and Russia can shape international society today. In the Soviet period – particularly during the time of perestroika – more pro-European voices and more pro-Asian ones were strongly divided, which helped to generate a confused post-Cold War Russian identity.<sup>59</sup> Even today Russia's intellectual elite has yet to come to terms and truly comprehend the events of 1991,

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<sup>57</sup> Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, p. 210.

<sup>58</sup> Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation*, p. 151.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

failing still to agree on whether the collapse of the Soviet Union was inevitable or desirable.<sup>60</sup> The result of this division, combined with the country's relative weakness throughout its transition away from communism, is that Russia remained particularly vulnerable to outside influence. The 1990s, by necessity, were a period of "institution building in Russian domestic politics" crucial to determining the future of the country's foreign policy, including the way in which "Russian objectives and means to pursue them" and the "rules of the game for that political process" would be evaluated.<sup>61</sup> Under these political circumstances, one scholar in 1996 wrote that

If [nationalists] can couple a broader appeal with the capture of the state, we may yet witness the fusion of nation and state that has for so long eluded the Russians. It is sobering to realize that this fusion in the case of both France and Germany resulted in violent explosions of nationalism and war in each of the past two centuries. This is another reason why the West should not interpret Russia's current travails as being to its strategic advantage or seek to take advantage of its weakness.<sup>62</sup>

This scholar notes that the "new openness of media and speech in Russian life" in the post-communist period could give nationalists the platform they need to consolidate their influence over Russia's international identity and posture, and that a possible cause of their potential rise could be if NATO expanded eastward "too rapidly or too aggressively".<sup>63</sup> Already by May 1994, 70 percent of the Russian Duma and 69 percent of Moscow residents – entities that are known to be more Western-oriented than the rest of the Russian public –

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<sup>60</sup> Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017. Also see Fyodor Lukyanov, "The Lost Twenty-Five Years", *Global Brief*, 19 February 2016, available online at: <http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2016/02/19/the-lost-twenty-five-years/> (last accessed 13.09.2017)

<sup>61</sup> Celeste A. Wallander, "Ideas, Interests, and Institutions in Russian Foreign Policy", in Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 213-4.

<sup>62</sup> Porter, "Russia and Europe After the Cold War", p. 142.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

believed that Russia should follow its own path rather than join the West outright.<sup>64</sup> But by the end of the 1990s, the picture had changed even more dramatically. Although Moscow generally did not interfere in UN-sanctioned Western actions in Bosnia throughout the decade, the bombing of Belgrade – viewed as a clear violation of state sovereignty – had a more significant impact: Against the backdrop of NATO expansion and a controversial war in Chechnya, the “overwhelming majority” of Russia’s foreign policy community thought that the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia was driven by Western hegemonic ambitions, with fully 90 percent of the Russian public opposed to and feeling threatened by the air campaign.<sup>65</sup> If there were any hope of Russia joining the liberal West – in the most complete sense of the term – it had been lost by the end of the 1990s, if not earlier.

Russia possesses a “genuine social base in support of statism”, and with power having been decentralized across the Russian Federation in a seemingly disorderly fashion, as well as Yelstin being under fire for the state of the country’s economy and his failure to protect ethnic Russians living abroad, it became easy for certain political forces within Russia to resort to statism as a way of promising order.<sup>66</sup> Russia could still attempt to pursue cooperative relations with the West, but the idea of Russia becoming a full-fledged liberal democratic market economy in an outer, subservient concentric circle centred on Washington and Brussels was lost. The stark division between geopolitical blocs was rendered even more visible in the mid-2000s, when “colour revolutions” in the post-Soviet space pitted pro-Western and pro-Russian forces against each other in a rivalry that appeared to be zero-sum.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, Russia’s gradual move away from the West throughout the post-Cold War period occurred not just because of the West not meaningfully reciprocating

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>65</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, pp. 104-5.

<sup>66</sup> Tuminez, “Russian Nationalism and the National Interest”, pp. 54-5.

<sup>67</sup> Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 116.

Russia's desire to be recognized as a great power,<sup>68</sup> but also due to Moscow's *perception* that the West was not doing enough to assist it throughout a very difficult time in the country's history.<sup>69</sup> Expectations can prove just as crucial as actual events.

It is worth noting, however, that xenophobic, insular nationalism did not emerge dominant in the wake of these events. Rather, Vladimir Putin ascended to the Russian presidency, and pursued a policy course throughout the 2000s that varied between a more benign "pragmatic geoeconomic realism" and a more hawkish "cultural geostrategic realism".<sup>70</sup> Neo-Soviets failed to capitalize on the humiliation surrounding the Kosovo intervention, with both their economic agenda and the idea of going to war in the dissolving Yugoslavia both proving unpopular among the Russian public.<sup>71</sup> This gives credence to the notion that, despite certain similarities and continuities, the Soviet Union's collapse marks a definitive transition, with Russians identifying more with a "Russian Self" than with pan-Slavic or neo-Soviet sentiments.<sup>72</sup> In a similar vein, Russian military interventions in Georgia and Syria in 2008 and 2015 respectively were followed by a downturn in Putin's approval ratings.<sup>73</sup> That said, the Soviet and imperial legacy has not been entirely discarded, as in addition to there remaining an attachment to both great power status and Soviet mass culture, democracy itself – one of the often professed desires of the Westernizing Russian elite, particularly but not exclusively in the 1990s – was already emergent in the late Soviet era.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, as will be discussed further in the next chapter, Eastern Slavic unity continues

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<sup>68</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, p. 72.

<sup>69</sup> Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy", in Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy*, p. 85.

<sup>70</sup> Christian Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct Towards the West* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 28.

<sup>71</sup> Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 & 1999* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 256-7.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Polina Beliakova, "How Does the Kremlin Kick When It's Down?", *War on the Rocks*, 13 August 2019, available online at: <https://warontherocks.com/2019/08/how-does-the-kremlin-kick-when-its-down/> (last accessed 22.08.2019)

<sup>74</sup> Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, p. 160.

to retain significant appeal in Russia, with Putin pushing back against both Russian and Ukrainian nationalists to claim that Russia and Ukraine together constitute a single people.<sup>75</sup>

Putin has been described as a “synthesis” of the two vectors – European and Asian – of Russian bicontinentalism.<sup>76</sup> At various point throughout its history, Russia has been torn between the idea that it is a “backward” but developing part of Europe and the notion that it is fundamentally different from Europe and must follow its own path.<sup>77</sup> Some have contended that Western societies are fundamentally rooted in the notion of individual liberty and are therefore worth following or imitating, while others have emphasized that the West is prosperous precisely because it exploits other states and that it seeks to weaken Russia through attempts to spread its values and the use of double standards.<sup>78</sup> Putin’s speeches throughout the 2000s contain elements from both of these tendencies.<sup>79</sup> For example, Putin noted in 2000 that “democratic arrangements of the country and openness of the new Russia to the world do not contradict our originality and patriotism, and they do not preclude the search for our own answers to the problems of spirituality and morality”.<sup>80</sup> The parallels with earlier post-Cold War attempts by the Russian elite to find a synthesis between democratization/Europeanization and a distinct identity for Russia are striking, lending credence to the notion that Putin forms a part of a continuously evolving, single post-Soviet Russian political system.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 148.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Sakwa, “Dualism at Home and Abroad: Russian Foreign Policy Neo-revisionism and Bicontinentalism”, in David Cadier and Margot Light (eds.), *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 71.

<sup>77</sup> Olga Malinova, “Russia and ‘the West’ in the 2000s: Redefining Russian identity in official political discourse”, in Ray Taras (ed.), *Russia’s Identity in International Relations: Images, perceptions, misperceptions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 75.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>81</sup> For more, see Tony Wood, *Russia Without Putin: Money, Power and the Myths of the New Cold War* (London: Verso, 2018).

Putin, of course, famously rose to political prominence as a defender of Yeltsin's interests and was selected to succeed him in order to secure his legacy.<sup>82</sup> In other words, one should be interested in an impersonal, systemic understanding of the post-Soviet consolidation of the Russian regime, even if attempting to understand Putin himself and what he represents is also of interest. For example, in the 1990s, Russia "did not balance against the United States in any fundamental way", but also "did not jump on the unipolar bandwagon" like Europe and Japan.<sup>83</sup> In other words, "Russia did not want to lose its great power identity, but it expected to maintain it without balancing against the United States".<sup>84</sup> However, Putin's attempts at synthesizing the principal strains of Russian political thought could run up against established norms in Russian culture and the dominant conceptions of Russia held by other states; therefore, the likelihood that the quasi-nativist Russian "originality" half of his discourse will be accepted by the Russian public is higher.<sup>85</sup>

Dmitri Trenin of the Carnegie Moscow Centre has noted that, faced with the choice early on in his mandate between governing with the support of the elites and the intelligentsia or with that of "the ordinary people", Putin "chose the latter".<sup>86</sup> This has been reinforced since Putin's return to the Kremlin, as Russian neo-revisionism was accompanied by a decision by Putin to begin to espouse more unambiguously the "conservative values of the majority" of the population.<sup>87</sup> Adam Watson goes so far as to note that throughout Russian history, including in Tsarist times and under communism, the Russian people have tended to be more nationalist and suspicious of the West than their country's government and elite,

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<sup>82</sup> Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, p. 19.

<sup>83</sup> Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, p. 211.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>85</sup> Malinova, "Russia and 'the West' in the 2000s", p. 88

<sup>86</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia is the house that Vladimir Putin built – and he'll never abandon it", *The Guardian*, 27 March 2017, available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/27/russia-house-vladimir-putin-built-never-abandon> (last accessed on 13.09.2017)

<sup>87</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 125.

accusing it in one form or another of being “interventionist, and the source of contamination from which Russia, the land of the true faith, must be guarded and insulated”.<sup>88</sup> Recent polling indicates that nearly half of all Russians believe that importing Western-style liberal democracy would bring “chaos and destruction”; 64 percent believe that relations between Russia and the West will always be distrustful with only 24 percent believing that they could ever be friendly.<sup>89</sup> Now, beholden to these “ordinary people” in the wake of Western-imposed sanctions and the reduced price of oil, Putin has been forced to legitimate his rule no longer through economic growth but rather by stressing Russia’s cultural differences with the West (although it is worth noting that Putin’s anti-Western rhetoric already began to strengthen following anti-regime protests in Russia beginning in 2011, which he saw as having been orchestrated by the West).<sup>90</sup>

If the annexation of Crimea marks a major break in the way that Russia-West relations are conducted – a definitive conclusion to efforts to transform the relationship and create a single European space from Lisbon to Vladivostok<sup>91</sup> – then Putin’s reliance on the “ordinary people” could cause Russia to shift even further away from the liberal-Westernizing pole of the country’s political spectrum. This is no guarantee of what might occur after Putin’s current term expires in 2024, but it does suggest that the foundations of Russian neo-revisionism, which will be elaborated upon below and in the next chapter, are relatively sound. This would imply significant consequences for any universalist ambitions that the liberal international order might possess. And, as discussed in Chapter 2, it is possible that the inability of the liberal order to continue expanding could go hand in hand with its

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<sup>88</sup> Watson, “Russia and the European States System”, p. 73.

<sup>89</sup> Valeriy Vizhutovich, “Запрос на перемены”, *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 4 July 2019, available online at: <https://rg.ru/2019/07/04/vyzhutovich-rossiiane-hotiat-peremen-no-ponimaiut-cto-nuzhna-stabilnost.html> (last accessed 11.07.2019)

<sup>90</sup> Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), pp. 24-5.

<sup>91</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 181.



failure to be resilient. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 7 with reference to this dissertation's core model. But by drawing on that model one can already understand that Russia's definitive exclusion for the foreseeable future from the Western political community has created a reality in which the liberal order possesses a foot in both the realm of international order and that of international society without encompassing either. Such a reality, now likely entrenched for some time following the resumption of great power rivalry, naturally portends consequences for the future of both the liberal order and the broader relationship between international order and international society.

#### **4.5. Russia in Contemporary International Society**

Apart from the Cold War period, when the Soviet Union lay at the centre of its own rival order, Russia throughout modern history has found itself at Europe's periphery. It is only natural for the periphery to express an occasional degree of dissatisfaction with the values and practices of the centre.<sup>92</sup> In fact, according to some, this peripheral position vis-à-vis Europe could even have endured during the Cold War, as Stalin's dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 can be said to mark an end to aspirations of a global socialist revolution; in other words, while the USSR was nominally expansionist, its international posture was in fact defensive.<sup>93</sup> The post-Cold War order, according to many, has also only been able to include Russia in a "subaltern" role.<sup>94</sup> The result of this, according to Richard Sakwa, has been the transformation of Russia into a "neo-revisionist" power: simultaneously an "engaged outsider and partial insider".<sup>95</sup> Detailing this idea, Sakwa notes that "Russia does

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<sup>92</sup> Krickovic, personal interview, Moscow, 28 September 2017.

<sup>93</sup> Sergei Karaganov, personal interview, Moscow, 6 December 2017.

<sup>94</sup> For example, see Viatcheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>95</sup> Richard Sakwa, "Russia and Europe: Whose Society?", *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 33, no. 2 (2011), pp. 197-214.

not seek to challenge the existing world order, but only the place accorded to it in that order” – that it is fully engaged in the “thin” dimension of international society (such as great power politics) but “not yet ready for English School solidarism”.<sup>96</sup>

As a “defender of a pluralistic world order based on the norms of international society as they had developed in the post-war years”, neo-revisionist Russia is neither a norm-maker nor a norm-taker, but rather a “norm-enforcer” (emphasis in original).<sup>97</sup> As per Sakwa’s analysis, this is true partly because Moscow has not advanced a “systematic alternative” to the European and global orders.<sup>98</sup> Even the Eurasian Economic Union is inspired by and supposedly complementary to the European Union.<sup>99</sup> That said, as was noted in Chapter 2, one does not have to know what one wants to know what one does *not* want – creative destruction is a force capable of causing change in international order.

Sakwa’s concept places Russia structurally in a position of “permanent liminality”, “defending a vision of international order that does not exist, but critical of the order in which it has to live”.<sup>100</sup> Dmitri Trenin also highlights the ambiguity present here, noting that Russia does not wish to impose its own alternative global order and simply wants to be “a player with a decisive voice”, but also contending that its actions during the Ukraine crisis “essentially took Russia out of the post-Cold War system” and that its campaign in Syria “broke the de facto monopoly of the US and its allies on military interventions”.<sup>101</sup> In light of this complex picture, it is worth re-emphasizing that, while Russia has been excluded from the principal organizations that embody the West-centric liberal international order in the post-Cold War era – such as the EU and NATO – and only gained admission to the WTO in

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 147.

<sup>100</sup> Sakwa, “Russia and Europe”.

<sup>101</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “Russia as a Disruptor of the Post-Cold War Order: To What Effect?”, in Ritika Passi and Harsh V. Pant (eds.), *Raisina Files: Debating Disruption in the World Order*, Vol. 3 (2018), pp. 18-23.

2012, it nonetheless remains a part of international society. Its foreign policy is conditioned by both factors: resentment at being excluded and not being treated as an equal by the West *and* a sense of privilege and responsibility for managing the shape and affairs of international society. Russia's relationship to both the liberal international order and global international society will be outlined in further detail in the next chapter, but it is worth making one point at present: The fact that Russia defends the autonomy of international society implies that the challenge it poses to the contemporary world order is not as great as many Western observers may initially suspect and should be qualified. That said, as will be detailed in Chapter 7, this does not necessarily imply that the liberal international order does not face structural challenges of its own nor does it ignore the potential consequences of the persistence of great power rivalry. But by taking aim at unipolarity – a norm not officially codified in today's world order but intersubjectively understood to be of value to many states – Moscow has managed to discredit it partially as a legitimate way of structuring global order. Russia's intervention in Syria is seen by some as proof that the so-called “unipolar moment” is decisively finished.<sup>102</sup> This, in turn, may strengthen anew the centuries-old norm of polycentrism – present in European international society at least since the Treaty of Utrecht – which shows that contestation can in some ways prove destructive for an order but in others prove integral to it, as recent English School theory suggests.<sup>103</sup>

Regardless of any inconsistencies in Russian foreign policy behaviour, Moscow is still choosing to engage in a normative contest with the West in its defence of the autonomy of international society, positing that both the global and European orders should be polycentric. In fact, any double standards in Russian foreign policy stand only to entrench mutual mistrust and recriminations between Moscow and Western capitals, which would

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<sup>102</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 237.

<sup>103</sup> Christian Reus-Smit and Tim Dunne, “The Globalization of International Society”, in Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit (eds.), *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 26-36.

likely hasten the emergence of a multi-order world in the realm of international order. Indeed, Western double standards are partly what contributed to the emergence of Russian neo-revisionism in the first place. Washington and others have paradoxically violated the rules – as in the cases of Kosovo and Iraq – in the name of upholding the overall rules-based system,<sup>104</sup> with one scholar derisively referring to this practice as US “exemptionalism”.<sup>105</sup>

Due to the nuanced character of Russia’s relationship with the global political system, a supplementary, coherent conceptual model may be of use. For this, this dissertation will turn to Ned Lebow’s “cultural theory” of international relations, which provides some interesting insights into Russia’s relationship with the realms of international order and society. While not forming a part of the core theoretical model of this dissertation, it will serve an important illustrative purpose, while also providing some interesting parallels with – as well as possible contributions to – English School concepts.

Lebow’s theory begins by identifying three fundamental human drives: appetite, spirit and reason, with the first seeking wealth and other material gains, the second pursuing honour or standing, and the third designed to act as a check on the impulses produced by the first two.<sup>106</sup> Each of these generates “distinct forms of hierarchy based on different principles of justice” that sustain order, which in turn breaks down “when the discrepancy between behaviour and the principles of justice on which they rest becomes great and obvious”.<sup>107</sup> He elaborates:

[B]reakdown is the rest of imbalance. Reason loses control of spirit or appetite. The most damaging kind of imbalance is that of an elite. When

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<sup>104</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 219.

<sup>105</sup> See Christopher Coker, *The Improbable War: China, the United States and the Logic of Great Power Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 46.

<sup>106</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 90.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

reason loses control of the spirit among an elite it provokes destructive conflicts within the elite. When reason loses control to appetite, elite overindulgence arouses envy, resentment and emulation by the rest of the population. [...] Elite imbalance in the direction of appetite also leads to violation of *nomos*.<sup>108</sup>

Crucial to Lebow's theory is that it applies at the individual, societal, regional *and* international levels.<sup>109</sup> Think, then, of the above quote with great powers taking the place of the "elite", and one can begin to visualize the events that can lead to the destabilization of an order and the erosion of its *nomos* – the ethical order and customs of a given society. When consensus surrounding the principles of international society diminishes, legitimate authority (*hegemonia*) is transformed into the raw exercise of power (*arche*). Put somewhat differently, "If the rules governing honour are consistently violated, honour becomes a meaningless concept. Competition for honour is transformed into competition for standing, which is more unconstrained and possibly more violent."<sup>110</sup> Secular trends such as the advent of nuclear weapons and a globally integrated economy may act to reduce the "violent" part of the equation, but the disorder that comes from "unconstrained" competition can be very real. And interestingly in the context of contemporary international politics, Lebow notes that the thinner the society in question is, the harder "honour worlds" are to create and sustain.<sup>111</sup>

Lebow's theory appears particularly apt to describe a world in which the spirit is said to be making a comeback, after having been relegated to the sidelines of the political lexicon as materialist liberalism has risen over the past two centuries and particularly since the

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

neoliberal revolution of the past few decades.<sup>112</sup> The return of the spirit is partially the result of shunned powers and so-called “parvenu powers” (late entrants into the international arena), including Russia, making a comeback.<sup>113</sup> He notes that starting in the nineteenth century, “one of the defining characteristics of parvenu powers became the development and wide appeal of discourses that stress their unique spiritual and creative qualities – hence, their superiority – over the alleged rationalism, individualism and crass materialism of the West” and that “[a]ggressive behaviour” on their part is “all the more likely if their leaders or peoples have been previously ostracized or otherwise humiliated by the dominant powers of the system”.<sup>114</sup>

The issue at hand today, then, is not the absence of the right international institutions (as liberals would claim) but rather of the common values and understandings that would help them to work, in addition to the material fact that some states today may be too powerful to accept certain constraints.<sup>115</sup>

As is the case with the pendular model outlined in Chapter 2, there can be no notion of an “end of history” in Lebow’s theory. His is a theory that privileges “process over structure and change over stability”, and progress is defined not by the advancement toward some predetermined telos (e.g., a world composed exclusively of capitalist liberal democracies or of socialist societies, as many liberals and Marxists respectively predict) but rather by an increase in the complexity of the system in question.<sup>116</sup> Lebow goes further than Watson in explaining how norms and behaviour can change thanks to the actions of major

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<sup>112</sup> On the effects of disembedding markets, see Adrian Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics: Civilisational States and Cultural Commonwealths* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 25. Also see “Climate, Justice and a New Canadian Project”, *Global Brief*, June 2019, available online at: <https://globalbrief.ca/2019/06/climate-justice-and-a-new-canadian-project/> (last accessed 12.07.2019)

<sup>113</sup> Lebow, *Cultural Theory*, pp. 28 & 123.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 593-40.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 496-7.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58 & 506.

powers: “When enough powerful actors behave in a novel but similar way, they have the potential to transform the character of their system. If they are powerful and respected actors, they create strong incentives for others to follow their lead.”<sup>117</sup> This new character of the system in question then alters actors’ incentives, which in turn informs their interests, and ultimately their behaviour; conversely, this new behaviour then works back along the chain, producing change in how actors interpret their interests, thus creating new incentives for actors and ultimately changing the nature of the system.<sup>118</sup> Interests and identities are related, as there exists a “propensity of actors to bring their understandings of themselves in line with their behaviour”.<sup>119</sup> And like Watson, Lebow understands that each political “pit-stop” is merely temporary and highly contingent, that there is no universal equilibrium to which a system can return, and that even stable, long-lasting systems evolve over time:

Individuals and societies [...] adapt to changing circumstances by ever-shifting understandings of and accommodations to key polarities. As there are only so many quasi-stable sites along any of these continua, a new accommodation may be quite different from the one it replaces. [...] The system can return to something close to its prior state, but even minor changes can sometimes produce major systemic change by setting off something akin to a chain reaction.<sup>120</sup>

As mentioned above, Lebow’s theory can be applied at the individual, domestic, regional or international level. This is important for the purposes of this dissertation, for two reasons. First, because it provides a critical insight that “orders are more likely to unravel than to be sustained and strengthened”, seeing as imbalance at one level can affect the

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 497-8.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 498.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

balance in other levels.<sup>121</sup> One can find a parallel here with the idea that imbalance at the level of international order can affect the stability of international society, as well as with the connection between conceptions of sovereignty and international order, both of which were outlined in Chapter 2. The concept of inter-level penetration is also not unrelated to Flockhart's contention that "[c]hange can occur in any one of the four component parts" of an international order/society (i.e., power, identity, and primary and secondary institutions), "but change in one component is likely to transplant to other components as all four are interlinked and have at least a degree of mutual constitutiveness".<sup>122</sup> In contrast to a neorealist approach, which would contend that Russian balancing against the West in alignment with China would restore a degree of equilibrium to the international system, Lebow's theory demonstrates how Russian normative neo-revisionism can have a destabilizing effect on the realms of international order and international society, even if this is not Moscow's intention.

Balance, according to Lebow, is achieved when reason succeeds in constraining and educating both the spirit and the appetite.<sup>123</sup> "[T]he principal cause of the breakdown of orders is the unrestricted pursuit by actors – individuals, factions or political units – of their parochial goals. Their behaviour leads other actors to fear for their ability to satisfy their spirit and/or appetites, and perhaps for their survival."<sup>124</sup> Fear ultimately comes to dominate not because of anarchy (as realists claim), but rather because of a breakdown of *nomos*.<sup>125</sup> This is in line with Watson's understanding that a gap between practice and legitimacy can

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>122</sup> Trine Flockhart, "The coming multi-order world", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2016), pp. 3-30. It should be clarified here that Flockhart does not contend that an international order and society are synonymous, but rather that these four components are all present when these two phenomena operate in tandem, whether globally, regionally or transregionally.

<sup>123</sup> Lebow, *Cultural Theory*, pp. 28 & 123, p. 98.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*



lead to the erosion of an order: Lebow himself notes that legitimacy itself is a source of order, and that powerful states must conform to the norms they promote if they want others to follow them.<sup>126</sup> One easily sees how this can apply to American behaviour in the post-Cold War era and its consequences for Washington's evolving relative standing in global affairs.

Second, Lebow's theory provides an insight into the dialectical relationship between conceptions of the self and the condition of society; that is, between ideas concerning state sovereignty and the practices that generate international order, as well as between Russia's foreign policy orientation and international society. This can help to explain how perceived Western abuses of the rules have helped to transform Russia into a neo-revisionist power, as well as how Moscow's neo-revisionist posture can impact how norms infused by international society into the international order (e.g., sovereignty) are understood.

Contrasting international systems with (more complex and populated) domestic societies, Lebow notes:

At the regional and international levels, where there are fewer actors, systems will be more sensitive to unit-level change. When powerful actors violate accepted norms, it can have a more disruptive, even transformative, effect. Changes at the system level create new incentives and constraints for actors, which in turn can accelerate the process of unit-level change.<sup>127</sup>

This ties into this dissertation's discussion of Russian nationhood and how it relates to the country's place in international society, which will be outlined in the next chapter. The central point to retain for now is that the processes driving change within both Russian society and global politics are related and can be thought of, to a certain extent, as mutually reinforcing. This suggests that the cycle of confrontation in great power relations may be

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 560.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 507.

difficult to break, accelerating the process of change at the global level – a process that currently appears to be leading to the erosion of the liberal international order, as will be further detailed in Chapter 7.

Lebow identifies three different processes through which change can occur in a system. The first, and most superficial, takes the form of transitions between worlds rooted in fear and those rooted in reason. A more profound level of change occurs when there is a long-term movement between ideal-type worlds, an example of which would be when the dominant drive of the system shifts from appetite to spirit. More profound still is when the ways in which these drives are expressed evolve.<sup>128</sup> Russia's newfound assertiveness against a materialist, liberal West following two-and-a-half decades of the former gradually discovering that it would not be able to integrate with the latter could be viewed as an example of the second form of change. The likes of Canada and the European Union finding ways to replace standing (hard power) with honour (soft power) in their foreign policies as a means of earning respect in international society is an example of the final, most significant type.

Lebow's second form of change – that of long-term movement between ideal-type worlds – is what is of greatest interest for the purposes of this dissertation, as it deals with powers who conceive of themselves as downtrodden (a Russia that feels reduced and ignored after the Cold War and a China that has emerged from a century of humiliation and disorder) challenging a dominant West fuelled primarily by a liberalism that has its roots in assumptions that humans are driven largely – if not exclusively – by appetite.<sup>129</sup> If the aim is to uncover potential compatibility between Lebow's theory and this dissertation's core

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 97-108.

<sup>129</sup> For more on the distinction between the appetite-driven West and spirit-driven non-democracies, see Richard Ned Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 149.

conceptual model, then Lebow's first, more superficial form of change can produce a short-lived swing in Watson's pendulum, while his second one can produce a longer-lasting swing – a spirit-based world emerging and rebelling against one dominated by appetite is somewhat akin to multiple independencies reasserting themselves against the forces found on the right end of Watson's spectrum.

A rapid pendular swing engendered through Lebow's first form of change would occur largely through coercion, not consent – through *arche*, not *hegemonia* – and is therefore unlikely to have a stable foundation. A more durable shift in the pendulum can occur when hegemonic or counter-hegemonic forces emerge more slowly or less deliberately. However, it is clear that Lebow's second form of change can additionally embody a swing of the second pendulum conceptualized in Chapter 2 as well; that is, the very character, substance and strength of hegemony in international affairs can evolve – either rightward, toward stronger material capabilities and normative rigidity or leftward, toward a more diffused and democratized society. One of the most pertinent conceptual questions facing the contemporary international order and society is whether this process is today constituting a more diffused *hegemonia*, featuring both rival and intersubjectively agreed sets of primary institutions between blocs, or whether the result will be a world governed merely by *arche*.

Lebow's third type of change is clearly epiphenomenal to Watson's pendulum, but may have an impact on the second pendulum. For instance, the rise of soft power could be considered either to strengthen the character of hegemony, as it would help to densify the normative and legal content infused into the international order by international society, or weaken it, as the potential democratization of international relations engendered by this transformation could come at the expense of collective hegemonic freedom of action. The former, however, is perhaps more likely, as such changes would occur within the existing normative framework underpinned by the great power system, rather than in opposition to it.

In any event, it may be premature to discuss those fundamental transformations in the practice of international politics represented by Lebow's third type of change. After all, Russia's recent interventions in Ukraine and Syria show that power politics is still alive and well.

Lebow's theory, much like the conceptual model outlined in Chapter 2, evokes a balance between structure and agency, implying that it is equally possible for the norms, ideas and identities held by states to be real, while also acknowledging the constraints that states face when a collection of others begin to push for change. This can apply equally to the United States today, whose "unipolar moment" has faded, as well as to Russia five years ago, which may have felt that it had no choice but to use force in Ukraine to have its perspectives and interests be considered by the West.<sup>130</sup> Interactions between states and orders in the realm of international order can be – to varying degrees – rooted in genuine agency, even if the results they produce engender structures that shape the content of both international society and order. These structures include the evolving primary and secondary institutions of international society, as well as forces brought about by material and normative contestation (including Russian neo-revisionism).

#### **4.6. Scenarios**

Thus far, this chapter has established that external pressures have been and continue to be able to influence Russia's identity and international posture. Perhaps naturally shifting its own internal East-West pendulum back eastward after Peter's forceful attempts at Westernization, Russia gradually asserted its differences from Europe after it was welcomed into the continent's international family. Just as Adam Watson contends that Napoleon's

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<sup>130</sup> See Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 60.

attempts at expanding his empire across Europe were too rapid, thus producing a natural swing back toward a more decentralized hegemony in the form of the Metternich system,<sup>131</sup> in the case mentioned above, Peter the Great's attempts to emulate the West produced a natural swing back toward a more Western-sceptic approach in a country that had previously been separate from Europe due to the Mongol conquest.<sup>132</sup> A similar process may be underway today, with American post-Cold War attempts at consolidating a unipolar order – including, among other features, a significant expansion of the Atlantic Alliance in both speed and scope – producing a natural backlash by the likes of Russia and China.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia found itself weak and particularly sensitive to international influence. In such a context, an Atlanticist foreign policy line could only succeed in Russia in the event of a low-threat external environment.<sup>133</sup> Such an environment, from Moscow's point of view, was not forthcoming, and the result was an evolution in Moscow's international posture and perception of its future. In turn, Russia's impact on the content and shape of the international order and society will also evolve. The question at hand is how it will do so, and this depends on two factors. The first concerns how other major powers from outside the West – particularly China – choose to adjust their foreign policy strategies now that Russia has politically defied the liberal order's power base – a question that will be dealt with in Chapter 6.

The other concerns Russia itself, and how it will evolve over the near-to-medium term. International society is currently situated in a sort of transition period – its “societal”

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<sup>131</sup> Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p. 233.

<sup>132</sup> A reminder that Watson's pendulum model can function both at the domestic and international levels. See Adam Watson, *The Limits of Independence: Relations Between States in the Modern World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), p. 122.

<sup>133</sup> Porter, “Russia and Europe After the Cold War”, p. 135.

balance of power eroded gradually in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,<sup>134</sup> and its material balance of power disappeared with the fall of the Soviet Union. As Eric Hobsbawm put it: “The dissolution of the U.S.S.R. means that the Great Power system, which governed international relations for almost two centuries and, with obvious exceptions, exercised some control over conflicts between states, no longer exists.”<sup>135</sup> What remains now is a series of distinct major powers, each focused on its own internal issues and possessing varying degrees of different dominant conceptions of international order.<sup>136</sup> Ian Bremmer has famously christened this international political environment as “the G-Zero”, a period in which global leadership is absent possibly lasting up to a decade and a half in duration, if not longer.<sup>137</sup> Another, channelling E.H. Carr, refers to the period since 1991 as “the twenty-five years crisis”, with a “new cold war” taking shape following the Russian annexation of Crimea, the product of which will eventually be a new international order.<sup>138</sup>

That said, it is worth noting that the current standoff between Russia and the West is not a bipolar global confrontation as it was during the original Cold War, and the ideological component of their rivalry is certainly less explicit. In the coming years, one is likely to obtain clearer picture surrounding several central international dynamics, including: whether the move away from American global leadership begun under President Obama and continued under President Trump is “permanent”; what shape the European Union will take and which norms it will project following the outcome of Brexit, attempts to bring a final resolution to the euro crisis, and the development of continent-wide institutions to tackle

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<sup>134</sup> Richard Little, “Revisiting Realism and the Balance of Power”, in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (eds.), *Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 22.

<sup>135</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *On Empire: America, War, and Global Supremacy* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2009), p. 29.

<sup>136</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, personal interview, Skype, 9 August 2016.

<sup>137</sup> Ian Bremmer, *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2012), p. 152.

<sup>138</sup> Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017.

issues related to borders/migration and defence/security; how successful the development of the Eurasian Economic Union will be at allowing Russia and the EU to face one another as equals and perhaps pursue renewed attempts at creating common spaces between Lisbon and Vladivostok; whether China will have succeeded in transitioning its economy from being export-based to relying on domestic consumption and how this will affect Sino-American relations; how Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative affects the politics of Eurasian integration and international politics more broadly; and whether China comes to dominate the South China Sea and becomes able to craft for itself a sizable sphere of influence of sorts in the Asia-Pacific region. In the interim, if leading powers are not careful, rival blocs or integration projects are more likely to run up against one another unrestrained by common understandings or rules, leading to further conflict.

As alluded to previously, it is better not to essentialize Russia by attempting to dissect it into several rigidly defined opinions, but rather to view the country in broader terms along a West-East spectrum (or perhaps better put, a spectrum ranging between more open and more defensive attitudes vis-à-vis the West). Therefore, the question that will need to be considered is, "For the foreseeable future, can one expect Russia to continue to move along this spectrum, or has it reached a relatively stable resting point?" For example, can a change in Western policy toward Russia still affect Moscow's disposition toward the West such that Russia could believe that its future lies broadly with a more Western orientation, or has Russia's political consensus already consolidated around a non-Western approach?<sup>139</sup> In essence, the question is whether Russia will continue to oscillate the way that it has throughout its history, or whether this process has been put on hold at least for the time being – is Russia static or dynamic? It is worth noting that further oscillation could be driven not

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<sup>139</sup> For an additional exploration of this question, see Andrey Kortunov, "Russia's Troubles and Options", *Global Brief*, Fall/Winter 2019, available online at: <https://globalbrief.ca/2018/10/russias-troubles-and-options/> (last accessed 12.07.2019)

just by the continuation of cyclical trends from Russian history, but also from secular ones. For example, the Russian Revolution occurred at a similar developmental point as did the French Revolution: the early stages of industrialization. The resulting tumult from the latter continued for nearly a century until the establishment of the more durable French Third Republic. Is Russia's political revolution similarly incomplete and a more democratizing and Westernizing disposition therefore to be expected at some point in the not-too-distant future, or rather do structural factors such as Russian geography and demographic composition prevent the country from evolving too considerably away from its imperial nature?

These questions may not have answers that can be determined for certain; in fact, it could be the questions themselves that are of greatest importance, as they allow for the construction of a model of possible future scenarios for Russia in international society. One could therefore imagine two axes: one considered the extent to which Russia will continue this oscillation, and another concerning the evolving postures of other rising powers, most importantly China. Together, they will help to paint a picture outlining the direction in which international society is headed. The latter axis will be considered in Chapter 6, in combination with the former axis which will be probed in greater depth in the next chapter.

From the West's perspective, the "dynamic Russia" scenario presents both potential risks and rewards. As noted above, Vladimir Putin does not represent an ardently insular and nationalist tendency in Russian politics, preferring to synthesize various strands of Russian political thought and to sway pragmatically along the West-East spectrum as events necessitate. In other words, no single ideological group dominates Putin's Russia; rather, the country is coloured by varying shades of pragmatism, with the specific emphasis changing as Russia's external and internal environments evolve.<sup>140</sup> If Russia remains mobile along the

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<sup>140</sup> Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017.



West-East spectrum, then it is entirely plausible that a further degradation in Russia-West relations – whether by design or for structural reasons flowing from the international level – results in the rise of veritable nationalist forces within Russia, either gradually or rapidly.

One scholar has noted that nationalism consists of three elements: criteria for membership within the nation, a definition of the self and an image of the other, and a statement of the national mission.<sup>141</sup> For Russia, these elements vary respectively between civic or ethnic criteria for belonging to the Russian nation, between more honest and self-critical views of the self versus more chauvinistic and militaristic ones, and a more defensive posture focused on preserving internal cohesion against a more hegemonic or messianic international outlook.<sup>142</sup> Various nationalist tendencies have been identified within Russia, with even “statist” nationalists preferring a limited partnership with the West at best and treating it as an enemy at worst, and even more ardent nationalists believing in a more ethno-centric conception of the state – including the need to use force to defend ethnic Russians abroad or to expand Russia’s borders to what they once were.<sup>143</sup> Such a radical understanding of a multi-ethnic great power’s future is unlikely to come to pass, but another scholar has identified three possible outcomes of Russia’s post-Cold War development: an authoritarian Russia opposed to Western interests, a Russia with an internationally-minded elite but a more traditional population (with the former dependent on its connectivity with the outside world but the latter denied the benefits of these connections, which could lead to instability), and a pluralist Russia distinct from the West but with the lines of communication with it in operation, with the latter of these three options representing the “most desirable” outcome.<sup>144</sup> According to this viewpoint, even the Russia most favourable to the West is one that is still

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<sup>141</sup> Tuminez, “Russian Nationalism and the National Interest”, p. 42.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42-3.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>144</sup> Richter, “Russia’s Foreign Policy”, p. 89.

distinct from it – a notion that should temper the idealism and optimism of the 1990s, especially as it has now become clear that Moscow has determined that it can only retain great power status by remaining outside the West rather than by joining it.<sup>145</sup>

Of course, the other possibility is that a dynamic Russia could move westward along its west-east axis over the course of the medium-to-long term, although the degree to which it can now do so is significantly limited. For one, as noted above, Russia's post-Cold War development resembles a funnel, in the sense that the potential for greatest movement occurs at the outset in the 1990s, with historical options closing as events occur and the country's political system consolidates. Second, it is doubtful that in the medium term there will be a significant degree of accommodation of Russia's interests by the West.<sup>146</sup> Relations between the U.S. and Russia are at a low as Washington grapples with the aftermath of the Mueller investigation into possible collusion between Donald Trump's presidential campaign and the Kremlin,<sup>147</sup> while the European Union is still in the early stages of finding its own footing on the international stage, having its own internal issues that will consume its attention for the time being ranging from Brexit to migration to the euro. In any event, any genuine reconciliation between Brussels and Moscow will prove considerably difficult so long as the European Union pursues a monist, Brussels-centric approach to continental integration.<sup>148</sup> One analyst has posited that the best-case scenario for EU-Russia relations going forward is a "hybrid" model featuring both confrontation and cooperation, but even this is a far cry from

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<sup>145</sup> Kadri Liik has recently described how the West's and Russia's respective conceptions of what a Russia that is friendly to the West would look like differ, with the former emphasizing normative and political emulation and the latter preferring to operate in the realm of "trading favours". See Kadri Liik, "Two decades of Putin", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 9 August 2019, available online at:

[https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_two\\_decades\\_of\\_putin](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_two_decades_of_putin) (last accessed 21.08.2019)

<sup>146</sup> See Dmitri Trenin, "The Relationship Between the USA and Russia in the Trump Era", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 14 May 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/2019/05/14/relationship-between-usa-and-russia-in-trump-era-pub-79119> (last accessed 07.07.2019)

<sup>147</sup> The redacted text of the Mueller report is available at the following link:

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/5955118-The-Mueller-Report.html>

<sup>148</sup> Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, p. x.

Russia joining the West or developing a genuinely collaborative relationship with it that is largely free of mutual suspicion.<sup>149</sup>

The “dynamic Russia” scenario also comes with consequences for international society more broadly as well. By repelling rapidly expanding empires such as Napoleon’s and Hitler’s, Russia’s geographic strategic depth has helped it to restore “balance” – that is, an anti-hegemonic propensity – to international society on more than one occasion. The country could be thought to be performing a similar function today: By resisting what it perceives as Western attempts at hegemony, Russia is acting as a sort of “sponge” or hegemonic regulator on the international stage, soaking in hegemonic aspirations emanating to its west and forming an anti-hegemonic (but not counter-hegemonic) bloc with others when necessary,<sup>150</sup> but letting water out and returning to its “natural” home in Europe when possible. The upside of this possibility is that Russia is flexible and can act to stabilize the international balance of power when necessary, although its ability to perform this task may have been greater in the European international society of past centuries than it is in today’s truly global international society, not only due to Russia’s greater relative material power at that time, but also because a stronger societal balance of power (i.e., shared notions of legitimacy) existed in the more culturally homogenous European international society than in today’s multicultural world. The downside is that Russia will remain unpredictable, which could send confusing signals to Western countries, who in turn could have difficulty in definitively determining whether Russia is friend or foe.

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<sup>149</sup> Andrey Kortunov, “Hybrid Cooperation: A New Model for Russia-EU Relations”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 7 September 2017, available online at: <http://carnegie.ru/commentary/73030> (last accessed 18.09.2017)

<sup>150</sup> Richard Sakwa, “Russia Against the Rest: Stasis and the Emergence of the Anti-Hegemonic World Order”, *Rising Powers in Global Governance*, 4 October 2017, available online at: <http://risingpowersproject.com/russia-rest-stasis-emergence-anti-hegemonic-world-order/> (last accessed 22.08.2019)

A more “static” Russia, by contrast, in which Putin’s synthesis proves durable or a genuine conservative consolidation in Russian politics is witnessed, brings greater clarity. It is a Russia that – barring a cataclysmic event such as the total collapse of the regime or state – is unambiguously not a part of the West, even though it may believe that it belongs largely to European civilization. Greater clarity, however, does not necessarily imply greater stability. The Putin consensus could be the product, for example, of Russia’s external environment and the current perception that there exists a genuine threat from the West that requires it to devote a considerable amount of resources to military mobilization.<sup>151</sup> This could conceivably prevent Russia from engaging in a grand national rethink for the first time since perestroika – one that could be needed for the country to continue its process of modernization and come to terms with the events surrounding the Soviet Union’s collapse.

A Russia located definitively outside the West is also one that Europe will, simply due to its geographic location, be forced to treat as a challenge at best and a threat at worst. Whether regulatory arrangements between Russia and the European Union will prove stable is an open question, particularly over the coming years as both continue to be concerned primarily with the continuation of their respective (and possibly conflicting) regional integration projects. That said, Adam Watson contends that “a society that goes beyond rules and institutions to shared values and assumptions, has hitherto always developed within a cultural framework”.<sup>152</sup> According to some English School thinking, therefore, if the EU and Russia continue to view each other as being fundamentally separate entities, it remains an open question as to whether the crafting of a new European security order beyond the mere regulatory will be at all possible.

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<sup>151</sup> Mark Galeotti, “Conspiracy theories dominate East-West relations: time for realism”, *Raam op Rusland*, 18 September 2017, available online at: <https://www.raamoprusland.nl/dossiers/militair-beleid/711-conspiracy-theories-dominate-east-west-relations-time-for-realism> (last accessed 19.09.2017)

<sup>152</sup> Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, p. 318.

Furthermore, a Russia outside the West will be forced increasingly to partner with China, but several obstacles stand in the way of a full-fledged alliance with Beijing.<sup>153</sup> This could lead to Moscow feeling isolated, and possibly surrounded if Sino-American relations find a way to stabilize in the coming years and decades. Moreover, there is no guarantee that a static Russia is one that will be more easily understood and whose behaviour will be more reliably predicted by Western states, as mythmaking and preconceptions can determine how states view each other, as alluded to above. At this point, different interpretations surrounding the end of the Cold War, rival conceptions of order and the annexation of Crimea may have produced a critical mass of individuals in both Russia and the West predisposed to view the other with suspicion. A more static Russia could be easier to make deals with if Western states wish to do so, but there is no guarantee that such a desire will be forthcoming or that it will be pronounced enough for Moscow to approach it without a significant degree of apprehension.

Finally, it is worth noting that the “static Russia” scenario bears some resemblance to the period leading up to World War I: An international society with dwindling shared principles, in which the principal actors (who are few in number) are difficult to move and pursue their aims in a seemingly zero-sum fashion. There appears to be a remarkable historical symmetry at work here: Although the French Revolution took place in 1789, France’s consolidation into a single nation did not occur until nearly a century later under the Third Republic, when the French language was spread across the country’s territory. Despite the persistence of quasi-imperial, centre-periphery relations within Russia<sup>154</sup> in addition to the country’s status as a centre of a leading world religion, are we beginning to witness the consolidation of a Russian nation today, a century after the Russian Revolution? This

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<sup>153</sup> For an extensive analysis of this subject, see Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).

<sup>154</sup> Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, pp. 197 & 252.

question and its direct relevance to the static-dynamic equation will be discussed in the next chapter.

In short, both scenarios present significant challenges for Russia's relationship with the liberal international order, suggesting that the foundations of Russian neo-revisionism are relatively sound, which in turn implies consequences for the future of international society due to the persistence of the neo-revisionist upward vertical vector described in Chapter 2. These consequences will be discussed in Chapter 7. Where Russia specifically lies today on the static-dynamic spectrum will help to illustrate the precise nature of the challenge facing great power relations and the future of contemporary international society.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined a few important concepts, concerning Russia as well as regarding the functioning of this dissertation's central conceptual model. Although the specifics of Russia's interaction with the realms of international order and international society will be detailed in the next chapter, for now it has been established that there exists a co-constitutive relationship between the two. As will also be explored in greater depth in the next chapter, the window through which the international level is capable of shaping Russia was widest in the 1990s and had gradually closed ever since, first through Putin's more manifest attempt at synthesizing Russia's differing tendencies and consolidating state power in the early 2000s and then by way of the regime's conservative turn in the early 2010s.

Lebow's cultural theory has also allowed for three key determinations to be made. First, there exists a bi-directional process that allows nationally held norms to shape the international order and society and vice-versa, with the great powers being particularly able to shape the normative content of the international order within and between all its members.

This corresponds neatly to the downward vertical vector of collective hegemony described in Chapter 2 and also shows that there is an existing theoretical precedent in IR literature for the conceptual model that this dissertation is attempting to articulate.

Second, and as will be elaborated upon further over the rest of this dissertation, the world order that the liberal West attempted to establish in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse is inherently transient, as natural processes of state interaction produce change at the normative level. Although many claim that certain secular trends (e.g., international economic integration) appear to mitigate this phenomenon and enhance the resilience of the liberal order, one should not confuse the absence of great power war and the relative stability of some of international society's primary and secondary institutions with the consolidation of a full-fledged liberal world order.

Finally, Russia's actions can affect not just the degree of polycentrism present in the international order in both material and normative terms, which was already well established, but also the operation of the second pendulum which governs the thickness of the content promulgated by international society. In effect, the re-emergence of great power rivalry possesses historical significance on a profound level. Taken together, these three conclusions illustrate not only the likelihood that the liberal order rests on unsolid ground, but also that the ability of the current international society to continue infusing the international order with agreed-upon content is in peril. The relationship between Lebow's theory and the second pendulum put forward in Chapter 2 illustrates this latter fact quite clearly and therefore helps in answering this dissertation's core question. The final three chapters will now proceed to demonstrate this assertion with reference to this dissertation's core revised two-level model, in addition to discussing the role played by Moscow and Beijing in bringing about this change.

## *Chapter 5*

### *Russian Dualism: From Empire to Nation?*

#### **5.1. Rivalry and Identity**

Some analysts have noted that the Ukraine crisis was a mere symptom of the collapse of the European security order – an event that had in fact occurred a quarter-century prior with the dissolution of the Soviet empire and the consolidation of the European Union. They point out that the European order embodied in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 was rooted in a balance of power between East and West *and* in strong, capable states on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and that both these facts ceased to exist with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the pursuit of “postmodern” integration in Western Europe that compromised state sovereignty, and the collapse of parts of the post-Soviet space into “premodernity”.<sup>1</sup> Others point to geography and geopolitics as being the drivers of the present-day confrontation, noting for example that the United States’ position as a naval power and Russia’s location in the Eurasian Heartland naturally leave them predisposed to conflict with each other, including over the orientation of states on the European Peninsula.<sup>2</sup>

While these arguments possess a great deal of explanatory power, this dissertation is concerned more with the societal and ideational explanations for shifts in international order

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<sup>1</sup> Ivan Timofeev, “Unbalanced Europe and the New Order in the OSCE Space”, *Russian International Affairs Council*, 3 May 2018, available online at: <http://russiangouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/unbalanced-europe-and-the-new-order-in-the-osce-space/> (last accessed 14.06.2018)

<sup>2</sup> See Camille-Renaud Merlen and Zachary Paikin, “Can the EU Stand Up and Take America’s Place?”, *The American Conservative*, 2 November 2017, available online at: <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/can-the-eu-stand-up-and-take-americas-place/> (last accessed 14.06.2018). Also see Benn Steil, “Russia’s Conflict With the West Is About Geography, Not Ideology”, *Foreign Policy*, 12 February 2018, available online at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/12/russias-clash-with-the-west-is-about-geography-not-ideology/> (last accessed 15.07.2019)



rather than purely material ones. After all, a central argument advanced in prior chapters is that the unambiguous onset of rivalry between Russia and the West that followed the start of Russian neo-revisionism and the annexation of Crimea is having an impact on the global political system, even though the global material balance of power did not shift overnight. This chapter will delve deeper into Russia's conception of its place in the world, its foreign policy, and its position vis-à-vis the West. Russia is an argumentative society – its population and elite are not monolithic and, as outlined in the previous chapter, its orientation is subject to varying domestic and international factors. As such, the interviewees pursued by the author in fieldwork research reflect a diversity of worldviews. This diversity itself leads to certain conclusions about Russia's present and future, as will be shown below, which in turn will inform key dynamics underway regarding the liberal international order and global international society.

## **5.2. The Literature on Russia**

### *5.2.1. A Need for Recognition*

There are several recurring themes present in post-Cold War academic literature on Russia. One of the most recurring ones is Russia's West-centrism, and particularly its desire to obtain recognition from the West. Tsygankov sums this up by broadly claiming that Russian foreign policy is usually determined by whether the West accepts Russia as an "equal and legitimate member of the world":

Western actions serve to reinforce or undermine dominant political forces inside Russia. Extending recognition emboldens Russian liberals insisting on their country's belongingness with the West. Withholding such

recognition strengthens Russia's traditionally strong supporters of greater independence from the West.<sup>3</sup>

In the post-Cold War period, the West "treated Russia more as a dependent client than as a full participant in a coalition of Western nations", which "contributed to the already growing feelings of public alienation from the new Westernist course".<sup>4</sup> Internal events may therefore initiate certain processes in Russian foreign policy formation, but the West's approach in dealing with Russia can play a large role in tempering or exacerbating these trends, particularly, it seems, at times of Russian weakness. And in the post-Cold War period, the Atlantic Alliance appeared most interested in hedging against the potential re-emergence of Russia as a security threat.<sup>5</sup>

Sakwa labels the Western strategy vis-à-vis Russia until the onset of the Ukraine crisis as being one of "soft containment".<sup>6</sup> Liberal arguments in the early post-Cold War period were undermined by instability in Russia's "near abroad" and Moscow's concern with the fate of Russian speakers, and seeing as the West would not provide Russia with the great power recognition it sought to deal decisively with these crisis out of fear of renewed Russian imperialism, Moscow's suspicions of Western intentions were further nourished.<sup>7</sup> Tsygankov concludes that the West should pursue a policy of "engagement, reciprocity, and patience" with Russia, and that punishing or ignoring Russia will only strengthen the country's anti-Western politicians and forces, who require the image of the West as a threat to survive.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), pp. 1 and xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> James Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity", in Celeste A. Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 86-7.

<sup>8</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, pp. 182-4.

Russia's desire for equality with the West goes back to the dawn of modern history and early contacts between Muscovy and the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>9</sup> Russia has sought to emulate the West more than the reverse has been the case, resulting in a "social power differential" that is rarely acknowledged, save for in very specific historical moments such as during the reign of Peter the Great, in the aftermath of the Crimean War, or in the years immediately following the Soviet Union's collapse.<sup>10</sup> This West-centrism may owe its existence to geography as well, as the unattractiveness of the climate in Siberia and the Russian Far East has ensured that the country's centre of gravity and primary concerns have always been located in and directed at Europe.<sup>11</sup> Russia has often tried to obtain recognition as an equal by being assertive, which has had the tendency to backfire, as Western states would view this as an underdeveloped state attempting to punch above its weight.<sup>12</sup> The parallels with today are striking, with President Obama's dismissal of Russia as a "regional power" whose intervention in Ukraine was a sign of its weakness coming to mind.<sup>13</sup>

For centuries now, the primary point of comparison for Russian intellectuals – and to a lesser extent, the government – has been the West, taking the form of a regularly oscillating love-hate relationship.<sup>14</sup> And the major gains in postwar East-West relations – whether political overtures from de Gaulle and Brandt in the 1960s or institutionalized progress in the form of the Basic Treaty, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the

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<sup>9</sup> Iver B. Neumann, "Russia in international society over the *longue durée*: Lessons from early Rus' and early post-Soviet state formation", in Ray Taras (ed.), *Russia's Identity in International Relations: Images, perceptions, misperceptions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Denis J. B. Shaw, "Russia: A Geographic Preface", in Michael L. Bressler (ed.), *Understanding Contemporary Russia* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008), p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Neumann, "Russia in international society", p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> Julian Borger, "Barack Obama: Russia is a regional power showing weakness over Ukraine", *The Guardian*, 25 March 2014, available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/25/barack-obama-russia-regional-power-ukraine-weakness> (last accessed 21.06.2018)

<sup>14</sup> Vera Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), pp. 130-1.

Helsinki Final Act in the 1970s – all occurred in a period of détente.<sup>15</sup> However, the question now is whether it is too late at this point; that is, whether a climbdown from the mounting tensions of the past three decades and the restoration of productive relations between Moscow and Western capitals is something that is only achievable over the medium-to-long term. Answering this question would go a long way in determining the extent to which Russia can now be considered “static” instead of “dynamic”, at least for the foreseeable future. For a country situated on two continents and therefore possessing a multi-vectored set of interests, Russia may not necessarily have to choose in zero-sum fashion between China and the West, but Sakwa does note that reneging on Beijing now would damage Moscow’s image as a trustworthy partner, that Russia-China relations have become an independent “stabilizing factor” in international relations, and that the Sino-Russian relationship has become valuable – and not just instrumental – to Moscow.<sup>16</sup> Although at least one scholar is of the view that, regardless if Russia eventually stabilizes or sees itself as having developed a “fully competitive economic base”, the debate over Europe is so central to the country’s national identity formation that it will not disappear, but simply transform.<sup>17</sup>

### 5.2.2. *A Convergence of Equals*

A second and related theme in post-Cold War Russian foreign policy found across the academic literature is the notion that Russia has desired a convergence of equals between East and West rather than a capitulation to Western terms and structures. Gorbachev’s notion of a “common European home” meant countries finding a middle point between capitalism

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<sup>15</sup> Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2013), p. 243.

<sup>16</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 247.

<sup>17</sup> Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), p. 210.

and communism, perhaps along the lines of European social democracy.<sup>18</sup> Late Soviet New Political Thinking was designed to alter perceptions of the national interest, moving them away from a zero-sum interpretation, for example by viewing the fall of the Berlin Wall as a gain because it created “a favourable international environment” for Russia.<sup>19</sup> This could be seen as being in line with convergence theory, with the Soviet Union appearing to acquiesce to Western societal norms after having completed its process of industrialization.

It is worth noting, however, that the notion of a “Common European Home” advanced by Gorbachev was “a house with several rooms”.<sup>20</sup> The trade-off Gorbachev envisioned was freedom of political choice for Eastern European states in exchange for non-interference in the internal matters of Russia and other Eastern European states.<sup>21</sup> He knew that exercising decisive influence over the Soviet satellite states was a drain on the Russian economy and believed that Eastern Europe could become either neutral or perhaps Finlandized upon the conclusion of the Cold War.<sup>22</sup> Needless to say, the West did not reciprocate, as post-Cold War history has been marked by democracy and human rights promotion campaigns and colour revolutions seemingly backed by Washington. This more zero-sum approach from the West contrasts with the Russian worldview and the view of many Eastern European states, some of whom did not intend for their pursuit of European integration to imply the severing of their historic ties to and good relations with Russia.<sup>23</sup>

Attempts to go beyond this convergence of equals, even by Russia, did not appear to play out well: Yeltsin’s “in many ways unprecedented” project of dismantling Russian imperial institutions, criticizing Russia’s history and abandoning its unique identity began a

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<sup>18</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>20</sup> Tom Casier, “Gorbachev’s ‘Common European Home’ and its relevance for Russian foreign policy today”, *Debater a Europa*, Vol. 18 (2018), pp. 17-34.

<sup>21</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>22</sup> Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 209-10.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

very tumultuous and chaotic 1990s for the Russian state and society.<sup>24</sup> According to Tsygankov, Russia genuinely possesses both a Western and a Eurasian part of its national psyche – embracing one of them alone will never prove satisfying.<sup>25</sup> The attempt to find a middle ground goes back centuries, for example to nineteenth-century fears of being intellectually colonized by the “Romano-Germanic” world.<sup>26</sup> It was renewed most recently under Vladimir Putin’s presidency, who upon entering the Kremlin desired a form of pragmatic cooperation with the West without sacrificing Russian autonomy.<sup>27</sup> Some scholars have made a similar point but from a different perspective, claiming that consistent attempts to draw contrasts between Russia and the West risk assuming the former’s homogeneity.<sup>28</sup> Russia’s need for a multi-vectored orientation is connected to the country’s sense of being a great power, which is “inseparable from national identity”, and was not even challenged by the liberal foreign minister of the 1990s Andrei Kozyrev.<sup>29</sup>

### 5.2.3. *Russian Statism and Pluralism*

A third theme is the history and continued presence of statism in Russia, which allows many to highlight the elements that render the country distinct from the more free-market-friendly West. While not being totally anti-Western, the tradition of statism tends to emphasize the existence of external threats to Russia’s security, rooted in a “psychological complex of insecurity” that has been present in Russia since the Mongols and reinforced by the wars since, emphasizing “power, stability, and sovereignty” over freedom and democracy.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>24</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, p. 60.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> Bo Petersson, “Mirror Mirror... Myth-making, self-images and views of the US ‘Other’ in contemporary Russia”, in Taras (ed.), *Russia’s Identity*, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, p. 171.

<sup>28</sup> Olga Malinova, “Russia and ‘the West’ in the 2000s”, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Petersson, “Mirror Mirror...”, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, pp. 5-6.

reservoir of support for statism is powerful enough that liberal forces lost Russian parliamentary elections to more nationalist forces as early in the post-Cold War period as December 1993, having failed to address “fears of insecurity, instability, and poverty”<sup>31</sup> and having not pre-empted or responded in time to fledgling conflicts in the post-Soviet space, including in Moldova, the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>32</sup> Even many liberals came to view NATO as a threat to Russian security, showing that some of the tenets of the statist tradition enjoy support in several Russian ideological camps.<sup>33</sup> The high prevalence of support for statism could be viewed as a “static” character of the Russian polity ensuring its distinctiveness from the liberal West, although one should be cautious not to take such a conclusion too far due to the modern state’s European origins, coinciding (as mentioned in previous chapters) with the beginning of the so-called “liberal ascendancy”.

Support for statism, however, could also be attributed to a “resigned acceptance” of the status quo by the population, as seemingly no alternatives exist.<sup>34</sup> Following the 1993 legislative elections, the Russian leadership began to question more openly whether a genuine shared East-West vision exists and to emphasize the unpredictable nature of international relations, stressing the importance of the concept of multipolarity not only in response to the global power distribution at the time but also to legitimate competition over spheres of influence.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, statism’s appeal is enhanced by the fact that it is not merely about realism and interests, but also about Russia’s “mission” as a cultural mediator between East and West.<sup>36</sup> One scholar, synthesizing these different elements of statism, claims that there have been three ways of ensuring a united Russia since the rule of Ivan the Terrible: evoking

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> Michael L. Bressler, “Politics”, in Bressler (ed.), *Understanding Contemporary Russia*, p. 123.

<sup>35</sup> Christian Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia’s Conduct Towards the West* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 29-30.

<sup>36</sup> Richter, “Russian Foreign Policy”, p. 81.

external threats, constructing a powerful government and promulgating legitimizing national myths.<sup>37</sup>

Rather than reference statism, Sakwa speaks of “dualism”, noting that Russia features a form of political dualism between constitutionalism and authoritarianism, which in turn has reinforced “numerous structural dualisms in Russia’s foreign policy”, including bicontinentalism and neo-revisionism.<sup>38</sup> This dualism is also visible in the fact that Russia throughout its history is “a profoundly conservative country”, even during Stalin’s rule, “yet masquerades as a revolutionary force”.<sup>39</sup> It is also reflected, according to another scholar, in the historical persistence of two camps in Russia – including in the nineteenth century and after the collapse of the Soviet Union – one of which claims that Russia is a “backward” but developing part of Europe and another of which contends that it is fundamentally different from Europe and thus must follow its own path; the former admires the West for what it has and wishes to follow or emulate it, while the latter believes that the West’s prosperity comes from exploitation and that it seeks to weaken Russia through the promotion of its values and the deployment of double standards.<sup>40</sup>

Vladimir Putin’s speeches, of course, contain imagery and arguments drawn from both these camps.<sup>41</sup> Bruce Porter, in a similar vein, notes that Russia has never been a “fully unified nation-state”, having simultaneously built an “aristocratic, imperial nation and a demotic, ethnic one”.<sup>42</sup> In one way or another, these questions tie into the seemingly eternal and central conundrum of whether Russia is a part of the West – a question from which Putin

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<sup>37</sup> Porter, “Russia and Europe After the Cold War”, p. 124.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Sakwa, “Dualism at Home and Abroad: Russian Foreign Policy Neo-revisionism and Bicontinentalism”, in David Cadier and Margot Light (eds.), *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 65.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Malinova, “Russia and ‘the West’ in the 2000s”, pp. 75-7.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>42</sup> Porter, “Russia and Europe After the Cold War”, p. 125.



attempted to de-ideologize his country in the early years of his presidency.<sup>43</sup> Whether this pragmatism has given way to a renewed ideological approach in recent years is a topic that will be dealt with later in this section.

Iver Neumann claims that Russia's differences from the West have left it "suspended somewhere in the outer tier of international society", although he interestingly attributes this not to its dependence on Europe but rather to the fact that it has failed to let go of its memory of being part of the Mongol suzerain system.<sup>44</sup> Some Russians claim that the Mongols helped to strengthen Russia, enhancing its distinctness from the West.<sup>45</sup> Other scholars trace the divide to an earlier source, claiming that Alexander Nevsky's battles against the Teutonic Order in the thirteenth century engrained the idea of Europe's hostility to Russia in the national consciousness.<sup>46</sup> In any event, Russia's orientation has not been completely West-centric since the end of the Tatar yoke, as Ivan III's conquests in the fifteenth century were directed largely eastward and southward against the remnants of the Mongol Empire.<sup>47</sup> Having been cut off from the West by the Mongols, Russia does not resume full-fledged contact with Europe until the seventeenth century.<sup>48</sup> Unlike European feudalism, which existed for eight hundred years, Russian princes only had roughly two centuries before they had to face Ivan III's centralizing monarchy.<sup>49</sup> The result is the legitimization of central rule to a degree not seen in Western Europe, as evidenced by the caesaropapist (i.e., no institutional separation between spiritual and temporal power) approach to governance employed in Russia. Francis Fukuyama goes so far as to claim that,

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<sup>43</sup> Elana Wilson Rowe and Stina Torjesen, "Key features of Russian multilateralism", in Elana Wilson Rowe and Stina Torjesen (eds.), *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Neumann, "Russia in international society", p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy*, p. 166.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>48</sup> Steven G. Marks, "The Historical Context", in Bressler (ed.), *Understanding Contemporary Russia*, p. 41.

<sup>49</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (London, UK: Profile Books, 2012), pp. 388-9.

unlike France and Spain during their absolute monarchies, the rule of law “simply didn’t exist” in Russia, even for the elite.<sup>50</sup>

More recently, Russia has indeed appeared to be distinct from the West at almost every point in time since the establishment of the modern international state system after the Napoleonic Wars: it maintained indirect imperial rule while Western states consolidated toward direct rule, it continued the practices and the legitimation of a pre-Napoleonic *ancien régime* even as the West modernized, it became a socialist state while the West remained bourgeois capitalist, and it persisted in emphasizing national sovereignty after the Cold War even as the West moved increasingly toward transnationalism.<sup>51</sup> In this vein, one scholar has called Russia a “latecomer” to the process of nation-building.<sup>52</sup>

Many have attributed Russia’s distinctiveness from the rest of Europe to its sprawling and inhospitable geography, claiming that it forced a preference in Russian society for individual or patron-client relationships over institutionalized governance.<sup>53</sup> But others have tied it to the complexities associated with the country’s multinational character. Unlike the empires of the European Peninsula, Russians historically viewed their entire empire as embodying their nation, with its multi-ethnic character proving its superiority over Europe.<sup>54</sup> Even many liberals are of the view that Russia’s national existence, in order to be meaningful, must be situated in a multi-ethnic framework;<sup>55</sup> in a similar vein, even liberal dissidents in the USSR from the 1960s to 1980s upheld the unity of the Eastern Slavic peoples – Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians.<sup>56</sup> The move toward a “civic nation” conception of Russia is opposed not only by many ethnic Russians, but also by the political

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 391-400.

<sup>51</sup> Neumann, “Russia in international society”, p. 36.

<sup>52</sup> Katherine E. Graney, “Ethnicity and Identity”, in Bressler (ed.), *Understanding Contemporary Russia*, p. 197.

<sup>53</sup> Marks, “The Historical Context”, p. 34.

<sup>54</sup> Tolz, *Russia*, p. 189.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

and intellectual elite of the minority communities themselves, who feel as if their recognition and privileges would be threatened by the advent of civic nationhood, even if the idea garners support among the actual ethnic minority populations.<sup>57</sup> It is worth recalling that under Yeltsin's presidency, Moscow signed treaties with more than half of Russia's national republics.<sup>58</sup> Despite periods of Russification during the imperial period and following the Second World War, the tradition of promoting (but also determining) the language and culture of ethnic minorities goes back at least to the Bolshevik policy of indigenization, which has led some to describe early post-revolutionary Russia as an "affirmative action empire", albeit a flawed one.<sup>59</sup>

Unlike many leading European states, Russia has yet to consolidate into a single nation, leaving the state and competing visions of nationhood in its place. In contrast with Britain and France, ethnic Russians were not numerous enough in the imperial and Soviet eras in relative terms to transform their state into a single Russified nation, and in any event, Russification was applied unevenly and was aimed at stabilizing the state rather than building a new nation.<sup>60</sup> The notion, common in the West, of a civic nation with voluntary membership only begins to gather steam in the late 1980s and remains challenged to this day – it is a relative newcomer to the scene. The enduring gap and distrust between the Russian elite and the masses is a factor that has prevented its success.<sup>61</sup> Much as the EU is not yet fully supranational, Russia has not yet fully consolidated into a nation-state, even though both these processes have been initiated. Russia having begun this journey while still using hard power to defend its sovereignty has led one analyst to describe it as a "post-modern

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 267-8.

<sup>58</sup> Graney, "Ethnicity and Identity", p. 205.

<sup>59</sup> See Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>60</sup> Tolz, *Russia*, pp. 270-1.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 272-3.

dictatorship”, further highlighting the dualism and ambiguity that characterize contemporary Russia.<sup>62</sup>

#### 5.2.4. *Russian Solidarism*

In contrast with some of the tendencies discussed above – and providing a further example of Russian dualism – Russia also has a solidarist political tradition that aligns more with norms espoused by the West and conforms to the expectations of international society. The term “solidarism” is used in the English School as the antithesis of “pluralism”. The latter is a philosophical tradition whose emphasis is “limited largely to norms of coexistence” and “concerned with avoiding conflict promoted by the intolerant pursuit of universalist ideologies”, stressing “the instrumental side of international society as a functional counterweight to the threat of excessive disorder”.<sup>63</sup> The solidarist streak in Russian foreign policy, then, is embodied in those instances in which one witnesses the promotion of international cooperation, commonality and even convergence.

Many observers attribute Russia’s foreign policy conduct to its regime type, claiming in typical liberal fashion that an authoritarian state behaves differently from a democratic one. This argument, however, encounters a roadblock when one realizes that there was not absolute continuity in Soviet foreign policy between 1917 and 1991 – far from it.<sup>64</sup> Both during détente and in the Soviet Union’s final years, relations with the West improved, and attempts to adopt positions that would ease East-West ties continued into the post-Cold War

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<sup>62</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 6-7.

<sup>63</sup> Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 89-91.

<sup>64</sup> Celeste A. Wallander, “The Sources of Russian Conduct: Theories, Frameworks, and Approaches”, in Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy*, p. 3.

period – for instance, in contrast with the frozen conflicts that have become entrenched there over time, Moscow’s initial preference was to support the unity of Georgia and Moldova.<sup>65</sup> Russia’s invoking of solidarist principles spans the entire post-Cold War period. Going back to the country’s 1993 Foreign Policy Concept, Moscow has stressed in its public statements “almost invariably” that its foreign policy is rooted in international law.<sup>66</sup> Even at the moment of seemingly peak contestation, Vladimir Putin claimed that Russia’s annexation of Crimea did not represent a breach of international norms; rather, the international normative system had already collapsed due to Western abuses and the absence of an agreed-upon European security system, exemplified by the existence of great power competition over Ukraine.<sup>67</sup>

One area of solidarist or quasi-solidarist behaviour and vocabulary from Russia is in the realm of multilateralism. Both Presidents Yeltsin and Putin have “consistently professed a deep attachment to the principles of multilateralism”, although this perhaps has implied “co-ordinated international action around key issues areas” more so than “dense horizontal co-operation that affects domestic policy”.<sup>68</sup> In fact, the supranational features of the Eurasian Economic Union, even if limited, could be a step away from this latter tendency, showing that Russia can be prepared to cede sovereignty in areas where it is not pressured by the West to do so. As one academic work contends, “the pursuit of great-power status, economic modernization, strategic interests and leadership in the post-Soviet space are seen as goals that can be achieved primarily through involvement in the international community and multilateral settings, rather than in isolation”.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy*, p. 174.

<sup>66</sup> Margot Light, “Russian Foreign Policy Themes in Official Documents and Speeches: Tracing Continuity and Change”, in Cadier and Light (eds.), *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Sakwa, “Dualism at Home and Abroad”, p. 78.

<sup>68</sup> Rowe and Torjesen, “Key features of Russian multilateralism”, pp. 1-3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

However, the rationale for Russia's invoking and pursuit of solidarism is a matter of contention. Moscow talks up multilateralism as being the only means of addressing global problems but also does so because it believes that it will lead to multipolarity.<sup>70</sup> Its invocation of state sovereignty may also be more of a defence mechanism than a genuine attachment to a specific international ordering principle.<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Russia has professed its commitment to multilateralism and the UN Charter despite the evolving global circumstances of past decades, suggesting that its attachment to solidarism is more than just instrumental.<sup>72</sup> Russia's practicing of both instrumental and principled multilateralism is yet more evidence of Russian dualism.<sup>73</sup> Putin, ever the synthesizer, has painted multilateralism as representing the only alternative to a unipolar world, thus speaking simultaneously in terms of international cooperation and competitive polarity.<sup>74</sup> The ambiguous expressions of Russian solidarism reveal the complexity in determining the extent to which Russia has become "static". It could be that much of this tendency toward solidarism was imported from the liberal West at the conclusion of the Cold War, thus indicating the possibility for a "dynamic" return to Europe in the years ahead, although one should not forget that the Soviet Union was present at the creation of secondary institutions such as the United Nations. Moreover, it could be that regardless of what normative content the Russian Federation imported from the West in the 1990s, such content has been imbued with its own meaning by Moscow and now forms part of a distinct and gradually consolidating Russian foreign policy identity. Such a process would be in line with the general logic put forward in *The Globalization of International Society* outlined in Chapter 2, to the effect that contemporary

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<sup>70</sup> Robert Legvold, "The role of multilateralism in Russian foreign policy", in Rowe and Torjesen (eds.), *The Multilateral Dimension*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>73</sup> Andrei Zagorski, "Multilateralism in Russian foreign policy approaches", in Rowe and Torjesen (eds.), *The Multilateral Dimension*, p. 46.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

solidarism owes its existence not only to the normative dominance of the liberal West but also to the elements of genuine normative universalism, transformation and evolution that have developed and occurred alongside the polycentric rise of global international society.<sup>75</sup>

### 5.2.5. *Russia: Pragmatic or Ideological?*

One final theme emerging in the literature, and discussed at length in Chapter 4, is the question of whether Russia has coalesced around a stable political consensus, ending its volatile period of post-Cold War introspection that reflects the oscillation seen in its international posture throughout much of its history. Related to this question is whether this consolidation has occurred around an ideological consensus, a departure from the supposed pragmatism of the early Putin years. The relatedness of this question to the static-dynamic model is evident.

In the post-Cold War period, by necessity, Russia has tried to craft for itself “a new sense of national identity and community”,<sup>76</sup> following the “crisis of identity” that followed the USSR’s collapse.<sup>77</sup> Many competing notions of the Russian nation have jostled for support since the early 1990s: a multi-ethnic imperial identity, a pan-Eastern Slavic nation, a nation of all Russian speakers regardless of state borders, an ethnic Russian conception, and a civic identity based on the contemporary borders of the Russian Federation.<sup>78</sup> Admittedly – with the exception of the civic identity, which is alien to most Russian thinkers since it contains the notion of voluntary membership in a nation – these are all old concepts.<sup>79</sup> This

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<sup>75</sup> For further analysis on the nature of the rise of global solidarism, see Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 99-167.

<sup>76</sup> Graney, “Ethnicity and Identity”, p. 191.

<sup>77</sup> Malinova, “Russia and ‘the West’ in the 2000s”, p. 73.

<sup>78</sup> Tolz, *Russia*, pp. 237-8.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

lends credence to the notion that contemporary debates are a mere continuation of those from past centuries, leading one to believe that Russia's oscillation will continue unabated.

In this context, an initial means of coping with incipient disorder was through a commitment to pragmatic policymaking. Some scholars claimed that the post-Cold War period represented the first time in centuries that Russia did not possess a universal mission, unlike in the tsarist and communist periods<sup>80</sup> – it had become, seemingly, a “normal” country. When he took over, Putin seemed to have “an almost entirely unsentimental, nonideological, pragmatic understanding” of Russia's situation and international relations.<sup>81</sup> This manifested itself, for example, in attempts to balance between maintaining predominance in the post-Soviet space and pursuing good relations with G7 countries,<sup>82</sup> and involved a reactive rather than proactive posture.<sup>83</sup> “Having lost the battle to keep Eastern Europe in a Russian-led political and security union, the Putin administration realized that Russia needed a new approach to maintaining influence in the region, one focused on trade and economic cooperation and grounded in pragmatic considerations.”<sup>84</sup>

Andrew Wilson, an analyst more critical of Russia, concedes that “Russian politics has not been driven ever since 1991 by a burning desire to ‘recover’ territories like Crimea” and that “Putin's moves against Ukraine [in 2014] were in large part opportunistic”, featuring strategic calculations that were “mainly short term”.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, Russia's practice of multilateralism in the post-Soviet space has appeared to be “flexible, regional and [...] free of normative baggage”,<sup>86</sup> although whether this still holds true in a world where the SCO is promoting a sovereignty-conscious form of multilateralism – contrasting with the more post-

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<sup>80</sup> Porter, “Russia and Europe after the Cold War”, p. 131.

<sup>81</sup> Allen C. Lynch, “International Relations”, in Bressler (ed.), *Understanding Contemporary Russia*, p. 177.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>84</sup> Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 226-7.

<sup>85</sup> Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>86</sup> Rowe and Torjesen, “Key features of Russian multilateralism”, p. 19.



national set of norms often espoused by the West – remains subject to debate. That said, normative contestation does not equate to Cold War-esque ideological rivalry.

The question surrounding how long this pragmatism can remain in place is still unanswered. It could be conceivably stated that the decline of economic growth in recent years has forced Putin to search for a new legitimating consensus for his rule, rooted in conservative and spiritual principles. Russia's so-called ideological turn may have begun after the anti-Kremlin protests of 2011,<sup>87</sup> or perhaps the annexation of Crimea.<sup>88</sup> Some have been keen to paint Putin's second stint in the Kremlin as being substantially different from his first,<sup>89</sup> however it is equally possible that Russia's conservative turn was merely situational, failing to displace the liberal tendencies that have existed in Russian politics since the 1990s, including the notion that Russia is a democracy of some sort.

How to characterize Russia's shift in recent years has been the subject of significant debate. Some are of the view that Russia has now finally emerged as an "assertive self-referential state" that knows where its interests lie and how to achieve them.<sup>90</sup> Others are perhaps more sceptical. Ukraine's independence a quarter-century ago was perceived as a "major blow to the very existence of the Russians as a national community"<sup>91</sup> and the idea that the Ukrainians and Belarusians still belong to a single pan-Russian nation still holds water in Russia, even if most Russians remain largely disinterested in other former Soviet republics,<sup>92</sup> with whom their relationship perhaps was more imperial than national. Many in Russia have been keen to treat Ukraine's existence as some sort of historical accident, both in 1991 and in earlier centuries when the Tatars and Poland-Lithuania broke up pan-Russian

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<sup>87</sup> Light, "Russian Foreign Policy Themes", p. 27.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>89</sup> Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Sakwa, "Dualism and Home and Abroad", p. 79.

<sup>91</sup> Tolz, *Russia*, p. 231.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

unity.<sup>93</sup> However, these ideas occasionally run up against limited support among Russians for continually subsidizing the periphery.<sup>94</sup>

The further entrenchment of the split of Ukraine from Russia's sphere of influence in 2014 is a sign that both the political elite and a large swathe of the Russian public have yet to consolidate around a new conception of the Russian nation that differs from those of past decades and centuries. Perhaps this more evident "loss of Ukraine" will force Russia finally to reinvent itself in a Eurasian context and abandon pretensions of "brotherhood" with the Ukrainian nation,<sup>95</sup> thus suggesting that the Maidan protests could be viewed, with hindsight, as a watershed moment in Russian and post-Cold War history.

### 5.3. Fieldwork Interviews

To explore these issues in greater depth, the author undertook a series of interviews with scholars and experts coming from different political traditions over the course of several months in Russia, largely spent in Moscow. The aim is not to predict with absolute certainty which of the scenarios outlined in Chapter 4 will come about, but rather to provide a greater illustration of how Russia currently faces up to questions related to the themes outlined in the previous section, which in turn will inform this dissertation's discussion surrounding the scenarios in question.

Dmitry Suslov of Moscow's Higher School of Economics sees the roots of today's Russia-West conflict as being at least partially structural. While initially open to becoming one of the concentric circles around a Brussels-centric order, the Orange Revolution in

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<sup>93</sup> Taras Kuzio, "The Nation-Building Project in Ukraine and Identity: Toward a Consensus", in Taras Kuzio and Paul D'Anieri (eds.), *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), p. 17.

<sup>94</sup> Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, p. 25.

<sup>95</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia and Ukraine: From Brothers to Neighbors", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 21 March 2018, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/75847> (last accessed 17.06.2018)

Ukraine persuaded Russia of the need for integration to be a “two-way street”, which in turn poses a problem for the EU, whose rigid rules-based order cannot accommodate an integration of equals. The idealism of the 1990s has now been definitively lost, suggesting that both Russia and its relations with the West have ossified at least to a certain extent, the conclusion drawn being that Russia cannot be either West or East but must be both. In this new context, Moscow proposes for other great powers “new rules of the game”, including the ability to block the use of force by the West and achieve de facto recognition of spheres of influence. A sustained status quo today can only be achieved with Russian acquiescence; failure to achieve this risks war. That said, Putin today remains the pragmatist he always was; it is Russia’s external environment that has changed. In the early post-Cold War period, Moscow’s calculation was that power and respect could be achieved through integration with the West; today, great-power status is only achievable for Russia by being outside the West. Russia may be tactically revisionist – it has altered the borders of Ukraine, after all – but is not strategically revisionist: it is averse to regime change, does not wish to expand the Russia-centric order as it believes itself to be on the defensive, and does not seek to revise the West’s institutional makeup in any fundamental fashion. This pragmatism manifests itself also in the continued absence today of a Russian nation – the nature of Russian governance remains very much imperial. To become a nation, Russia would require some sort of ideologically based identity (much like the US), and this is impossible against the backdrop of the legacy of communism. In fact, many in Russia derisively compare the contemporary American political class to the Bolsheviks, who themselves also envisaged a teleological “end of history”. Moreover, the country remains divided when it comes to the legacy of the USSR’s collapse, with still no consensus as to whether the events of 1991 were “necessary, good or avoidable”.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Dmitry Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017.

Andrey Kortunov, Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council, draws a distinction between processes of Westernization and Europeanization in Russian history, noting that it has been possible for Russia to play a role historically in Europe without adopting its values. That said, he contends that the country's population remains decisively European and retains the ability to integrate easily into European societies, regardless of the Russian political elite's plans for pursuing closer ties with Asian states, representing an interesting reversal of the situation in centuries past during which the elite favoured Westernizing reforms while the population retained a degree of scepticism vis-à-vis Europe. For how long this divergence can be maintained is an open question, even if the values of the Russian public remain somewhat malleable. Like any post-imperial state, Russia still possesses "phantoms" and "schizophrenia", which the elite can choose to exploit to mobilize public support among a largely politically apathetic population. The central questions, therefore, remain the purview of the establishment. And on the question of nationhood, the notion of a civic nation and how to distinguish it from the country's imperial past remains problematic for Russia: The country remains multi-ethnic and it is difficult to conceive of a nation in which there is a single criterion for membership. While Russia may very gradually be moving toward civic nationhood, the plurality of identities within the country's borders renders this project a long-term one. Heterogeneous countries such as Russia and Ukraine are at a disadvantage, having not completed this task earlier in history. Russia displays no international ideological fervour in advancing this task either, making common cause with the European left and right as suits its interests on a case-by-case basis.<sup>97</sup>

Andrej Krickovic, also from the Higher School of Economics, contends that Putin's synthesis – between wanting to lay the groundwork for some sort of democracy and not wanting the entire system to come crashing down – is "relatively stable", as there is not

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<sup>97</sup> Andrey Kortunov, personal interview, Moscow, 25 September 2017.

currently much public appetite for revolution and the political elite is gradually growing more competent. Putin's system is a form of "conservative modernization" reliant on the legitimating force of great power nationalism. Indeed, Russia's great-power status provides some glue for the country's national identity and unity. But in this context, Putin remains ever the pragmatist, using Eurasianism merely for tactical purposes. Because it refuses to accept a US-centric order regardless of the nature of its own domestic political system, the Kremlin remains supportive of anti-liberal forces in the West, although it does not agree completely with their values, not least because ethnic minorities provide Russia's national existence with meaning. Russia is getting closer to fusing nation and state, but there remains nothing quite like a pledge of allegiance through which one can voluntarily join the nation. On the international scene, Russia has been turned away from a soft-power role in the post-Soviet space due to the perceived threat from the West, but also because a more realist world plays to Russia's strengths: diplomacy and hard power. Moscow has difficulty competing in an open globalized world, and its limited ability to pursue multilateralism was made clear by its failed attempt to bring Ukraine into the Eurasian Economic Union, thus raising questions concerning the degree to which Russia will be successful in implementing multilateral mechanisms not blatantly rooted in hard power in the Eurasian context, including in Central Asia.<sup>98</sup>

Ivan Timofeev, also from the Russian International Affairs Council, contends that Russia remains "in transition" today, content to adopt certain Western practices if they prove practical but not set on adopting liberal values, which, in any event, are not the only historical

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<sup>98</sup> Andrej Krickovic, personal interview, Moscow, 28 September 2017. On the matter of the Putin regime's relative stability in the face of recent protests in Moscow over opposition candidates being barred from standing in local elections, see Sam Greene, "Violent Crackdowns on Russian Opposition Reveal Dangerous Policy Shift", *The Moscow Times*, 1 August 2019, available online at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/08/01/violent-crackdowns-on-russian-opposition-reveal-dangerous-policy-shift-a66664> (last accessed 23.08.2019)

embodiment of the West. Bureaucratic practices and methods of social control were also imported from the West, and these could be conceived as being at least partially autocratic in character. This nuanced reality meshes well with today's international situation, rooted in rivalry over "norms of international behaviour" rather than ideology. Attempts to essentialize Russia and ascribe to it certain inflexible or even ideological characteristics, such as a propensity toward revisionism, can prove distracting and are a simplification. Rather, Russia should be thought of more broadly as a "discontented power" attempting to "manage its security and security in its neighbourhood". As for Russian nation-building, the territorial attachment of Russia's ethnic minorities represents a complicating factor, and contrasts with the multicultural melting pot present in many Western states.<sup>99</sup>

Mikhail Remizov, a prominent Russian conservative thinker, compares the contemporary United States with the Holy Roman Empire: it claims the right to determine which forms of government are legitimate, acts unilaterally, and does so with quasi-religious fervour. Its more universalist conception of empire is therefore distinct from Russia's, which is rooted in a balance of power and respect for state borders, with Crimea being the exception rather than the rule. Russia's primary desire has been to obtain "absolute recognition" (*reconnaissance absolue*) from European powers more so than to achieve any sort of domination over Eastern Europe. Putin began his presidential tenure in favour of strong ties with the West (*un occidentaliste sans reproche*), including an alliance with Washington in the War on Terror and integrating with Europe in the energy sector, but has become more sovereignty-obsessed with time, not necessarily out of conviction but rather out of necessity (*pas par passion mais par nécessité*). Moscow maintains a defensive strategic posture, even if its tactics may be offensive. For Russia, being European differs from being a part of the West (*être européen n'équivaut pas être occidentaliste*), and because of supposed contradictions in

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<sup>99</sup> Ivan Timofeev, personal interview, Moscow, 3 October 2017.

Western values, Russia feels comfortable picking and choosing from among them. Although he was preoccupied mostly with pragmatic concerns, including “efficiency” (*efficacité*) in his early years, Putin has now gained a greater sense of Russia’s historic mission – this is sincere on his part, but it still depends on the political system and situation in which he finds himself.<sup>100</sup>

In Remizov’s view, an ideological divergence does exist between Russia and the West, seeing as the latter has a progressive and humanist conception of the world and the former does not. However, Russia’s contributions to shaping the international order are not always deliberate. Due to its sprawling geography and significant resources, Russia by definition alters the character of the international order if it becomes more self-sufficient in economic, technological and psychological matters. On the question of nation-building, Remizov contends that Russia has not yet had the chance to consolidate into a nation, and that such a consolidation is ultimately necessarily, as only nations can stand the test of time. The country’s intellectual and political elite remains disunited and lacking in national imagination. A durable Russian national identity must be rooted in a “spirit of participation” (*esprit de participation*), not just patriotism.<sup>101</sup> Remizov’s view shares interesting parallels with Vera Tolz, who claims that the Russian imperial state disintegrated in both 1917 and 1991 because no single nation had been erected in its place.<sup>102</sup>

Another conservative thinker, Boris Mezhuev, believes that Russia has yet to reach a stable point – it wants to be a part of Europe, at least to a degree, but has not yet discovered how to develop a suitable model for itself. Still, each of Russia and Europe “has its own way, and they will never coincide”, particularly after the “tragic and symbolic” events of 1991 that

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<sup>100</sup> Mikhail Remizov, personal interview, Moscow, 4 October 2017. Interview conducted in French.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Tolz, *Russia*, p. 190.

helped to ensure that they would be separated “for a long time”. This represents an interesting twist: Rather than view 1991 as representing Russia’s return to Europe, Mezhuev sees its loss of territory as having rendered it more distant from and therefore more isolated from Europe.<sup>103</sup> There are parallels between this argument and Timofeev’s idea that the 2014 Ukraine crisis did not represent the collapse of the European security system, but rather was a symptom of the collapse that had already occurred in 1991.<sup>104</sup> What Russia rejected in the 1990s, according to Mezhuev, was dependence on the West, not all Western values as the likes of Aleksandr Dugin contend. Moscow is revisionist only when it comes to the so-called “unipolar moment”; it is decidedly not so on items ranging from the UN Charter to the Yalta order. On the question of Putin, he “came to power a pragmatic man and remains pragmatic today”. He is “reactive” and decidedly against ideology – that is, he may invoke “ad hoc ideologies” or a “justification for the moment” but does not think in ideological terms comprehensively or over the *longue durée*. This is unfortunate, in his view, as certain fundamental social questions, such as the degree to which Russia wants to be a secular state and society, cannot be solved through pragmatism alone. Both the US and the EU are more ideological today than Russia is, he contends. Finally, on the question of nationhood, the issue according to Mezhuev is that Russia only began to conceive of itself as a civic nation in the 1990s, at the same time as the post-national world was dawning. This post-national world, arriving at the same time as the foreign policy consequences associated with the “end of history”, encourages an already conservative Russian public to proceed slowly and cautiously with questions of national development.<sup>105</sup>

Aleksei Gusev of Moscow State University emphasizes the consistent trends in Russian foreign policy, with Gorbachev and Yeltsin as notable exceptions. That said, he is of

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<sup>103</sup> Boris Mezhuev, personal interview, Moscow, 10 October 2017.

<sup>104</sup> Timofeev, “Unbalanced Europe and the New Order in the OSCE Space”.

<sup>105</sup> Mezhuev, personal interview, Moscow, 10 October 2017.



the view that the Russian government employs rhetoric but does not possess any veritable ideals or ideology. This rhetoric is littered with contradictory conceptions, employed pragmatically to preserve the ruling elite's hold on power.<sup>106</sup> This is in line with Viatcheslav Morozov's notion that, for Putin, stability is an end in itself, with even investment in economic development primarily serving the purpose of securing future stability.<sup>107</sup> Ideology, in short, is used as a tool, and it may in fact be generous even to call it ideology – what may exist, rather, is just a few key ideas, such as an emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference in the internal matters of states. On the question of nationhood, Gusev sees difficulty in attempts to reconcile the idea of a multinational nation with that of a Russian nation. Russia's imperial legacy and features act as structural inhibitors when it comes to integrating minorities.<sup>108</sup>

Alexander Gabuev of the Carnegie Moscow Centre notes that contemporary Russia “can play a role as disruptor” on the world stage but does not possess a “big strategy” that it wants to see implemented when it comes to international order – it simply wants recognition of its status as a “player”. This need for recognition is likely to endure for at least two more generations, and this is only if the country successfully modernizes over that time frame. Putin, a “skilled operator”, is “driven by his vision of pragmatic national interests”. Although as globalization advances, Russia will continue to be influenced by outside ideas and forces.<sup>109</sup> In contrast to Gabuev's perspective, however, one could argue that the designation of a given state as a spoiler or “disruptor” is a subjective matter.

Alexander Sungurov of the Higher School of Economics' St. Petersburg campus claims that Russian conceptions of international order are subordinated to the country's desire

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<sup>106</sup> Aleksei Gusev, personal interview, Moscow, 11 October 2017.

<sup>107</sup> Viatcheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 160.

<sup>108</sup> Gusev, personal interview, Moscow, 11 October 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Alexander Gabuev, personal interview, Moscow, 30 November 2017.

to preserve its sovereignty. This tendency has only strengthened under Putin, and if it can change at all at this point, it is in the direction of being even more conservative. Some among the Russian political elite truly believe in the international ordering principles advanced by the regime, but others invoke them merely for instrumental purposes. The annexation of Crimea in itself was a primarily pragmatic event, in part because of its effect of having boosted Putin's approval rating and secured Russia's naval base in Sevastopol. Further evidence of Putin's continued pragmatism on the international scene were his attempts to freeze the conflict in Ukraine by preventing the spread of the "Novorossiia" concept beyond the Donbas and turning the attention of the international community toward Syria by way of his intervention there. Post-Crimea, Russia is now closer to fusing nation and state, but has not yet fully completed this task.<sup>110</sup>

Sergei Karaganov, Dean of the Higher School of Economics' Department of Political Science and a foreign policy advisor to both Yeltsin and Putin, contends that Russia thinks in terms of the "international system" of states rather than "international order", the latter of which is an "imported notion", appearing to imply a preference for privileging great-power relations over intersubjectively shared norms in foreign policy analysis. Russia only began to think in terms of order (i.e., more "systematically") during the bipolar Cold War era, and then engaged with the notion of unipolarity in the 1990s before deciding it was ultimately against it. Russian legitimism in this context is not particularly abnormal, as the United States is heavily sovereignist itself, with the EU representing the exception to the global norm of sovereign statehood. Putin will likely prove to be the last president who is "more liberal than the Russian population" – his pursuit of NATO membership was politically risky, as much of the Russian people have been primarily preoccupied with questions of sovereignty and security throughout their history. Apart from the Bolshevik (early Soviet) period in Russian

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<sup>110</sup> Alexander Sungurov, personal interview, St. Petersburg, 23 October 2017.

history – which wasn't truly Russia, according to Karaganov, but rather simply an odd twist of European history – Russia's international posture has always been defensive and therefore reactive, even if the official line often featured an expansionist policy. Contrary to most other interviewees, Karaganov stresses the fact that imperial Russia was built as a nation-state, with ethnic leaders being incorporated in the Russian ruling class – there were “Russian Tatars”, not “Tatars in Russia”. This unity continued during the Soviet period, for example during the period of indigenization during which Moscow led the process of “giving minorities their culture”. Still, Karaganov notes that Russia remains “too big and diverse” today to be a fully consolidated nation-state.<sup>111</sup>

Perhaps Karaganov's most interesting intervention is his interpretation of values and their provenance. Religious and cultural tolerance in Russia, in Karaganov's view, are not inherited from Europe but rather from the Mongols and Russia's quasi-autonomous status under their rule. Peter the Great, a great Westernizer, by contrast, advanced the notion that Russia could not survive without empire – which explains Russia's push to acquire more territory and an enhanced naval capability under his rule. Although the West may be explicitly against empire today, imperialism is no stranger to Western history, which suggests that the content imported by Russia from the West is diverse and not merely post-modern liberal. For Karaganov, Russia remains European regardless of whether its foreign policy is pro- or anti-Europe. Russia's apprehension toward integrating with Europe today comes in part from the fact that Europe has developed social values that are alien to Russia and attempting to export them within Russia's borders. The window for fully uniting with the West was open in the 1990s, but now has closed.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Sergei Karaganov, personal interview, Moscow, 6 December 2017.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

Karaganov's analysis illustrates that Russia should not be essentialized and that Europe remains profoundly pluralistic. Indeed, contemporary Europe's preoccupation with Russia does not appear to be rooted exclusively in traditional security concerns, but also in identity-related ones: Russian illiberalism – defined as contrary to the more zero-sum, solidarist form of liberalism most prevalent in the West today – reminds leading European states of the more conservative forces still present within their own borders today, which emphasize not necessarily traditional principles but at the very least the ties that bind over the emancipation of the individual, representing a worldview rooted in epistemological modesty over the quasi-dehumanizing and socially essentializing technocratic liberalism that believes that structural economic and political reforms can satisfy the human spirit.

Artyom Lukin of Russia's Far Eastern Federal University contends that both the elite and popular consensus is that Russia is neither fully Western nor Asian, and that Putin embodies this middle ground. However, Europe is different from the West, and European elements and heritage are most salient in Russian culture and civilization, hence Russia's current emphasis on traditional Christian values that have supposedly been abandoned by the West. The Asian elements are less clear, perhaps besides Russia's various ethnic minority groups, so this part of Russia's national narrative is "less developed". Regarding its conception of international order, Moscow is content to allow Washington to act as an economic hegemon, perhaps because it knows that it cannot verily compete in this domain, but not as a political one; it conceives of the world as being run by a series of great powers that possess certain privileges, such as a sphere of influence and a veto on global security matters.<sup>113</sup> This last view appears to disregard some of the more solidarist elements of

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<sup>113</sup> Artyom Lukin, personal interview, Vladivostok, 1 May 2018.

Russian foreign policy outlined above, but it is legitimate to criticize such elements on the grounds that they are applied instrumentally.

#### **5.4. Russia and the Globalization of International Society**

The themes and views outlined in the literature and interviews above find expression in two recent works that attempt to provide a more comprehensive and theoretical understanding of Russia's contemporary place in international affairs. Viacheslav Morozov's *Russia's Postcolonial Identity* provides a theory of Russian politics and foreign policy flowing from its dependence on Europe and the broader West, while Richard Sakwa's *Russia Against the Rest* provides an overview of why Russia-West relations deteriorated in the post-Cold War period and develops a model that, building on English School concepts, conceptualizes the nature of Russian foreign policy in an era of renewed great power rivalry. Both works interact with concepts advanced in this dissertation in important ways, and critically examining them can provide a window into conceptualizing Russia-West and Russia-China relations today, which in turn can help to provide answers to the central questions on international order and international society laid out in the first two chapters of this dissertation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, recent English School scholarship asserts that the origins of the global international society that exists today are not singular. International society "globalized" through the interaction of multiple origin points rather than "expanded" from a single European cradle.<sup>114</sup> However, Russia is not listed among these sources,<sup>115</sup> which suggests that it may have been subject to European international society's expansion, which in turn could leave it normatively and psychologically dependent upon Europe and the

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<sup>114</sup> Christian Reus-Smit and Tim Dunne, "The Globalization of International Society", in Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit (eds.), *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 18-38.

<sup>115</sup> Andrew Phillips, "International Systems", in Dunne and Reus-Smit (eds.), *The Globalization*, pp. 43-60.

broader West. As outlined at length above, the pursuit of recognition from and equality with the West is a recurring theme in contemporary academic literature and political thinking on Russia. Morozov appears to advance a parallel argument, albeit one that goes even further, claiming that “Russia has successfully colonized itself on behalf of Europe”.<sup>116</sup> Alexander Etkind, in a similar vein, notes that colonization in imperial Russia was often viewed as being “self-reflexive and internal” rather than “object-directed and external”.<sup>117</sup> According to Morozov, even Russian attempts at distancing itself from Europe are a demonstration of the country’s intractable Europeanness:

[T]he language Russia speaks while challenging Western hegemony is the same Eurocentric language which cements the hegemonic order. [...] The desperate attempts to promote conservative values and to strengthen the ‘spiritual bonds’ holding the nation together are all grounded in European romantic philosophy. [...] While opposing the Western, Russia nevertheless frames its own demands in the Western language of democracy.<sup>118</sup>

This manifests itself, for instance, by Russia attributing its own meaning to Western democratic principles, for example putting a greater emphasis on state sovereignty.<sup>119</sup> Even Russian Eurasianists have a Eurocentric frame of reference, as they are concerned primarily with separating Russia from Europe.<sup>120</sup> The elite debate essentially revolves around whether the country should be civilized “through mimicry or negation” of Europe.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Morozov, *Russia’s Postcolonial Identity*, p. 11.

<sup>117</sup> Alexander Etkind, “How Russia ‘Colonized Itself’. Internal Colonization in Classical Russian Historiography”, *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (2015), pp. 159-72.

<sup>118</sup> Morozov, *Russia’s Postcolonial Identity*, pp. 11 & 22-3.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

The crux of Morozov's argument is that Russia's possesses a "subaltern condition" consisting of "material peripherality and discursive/normative dependency" vis-à-vis Europe,<sup>122</sup> but at the same time wants to civilize its own periphery into this European hegemonic order, thus resulting in an uneasy, hybrid identity in which Russia is simultaneously subaltern and empire.<sup>123</sup> These two components interact in a quasi-cyclical fashion: "[A]ny compromise [between Russia and the West] can only be temporary, because as soon as Russia ceases to antagonize the West, it immediately faces the empty spot in that place where its identity is supposed to be located", resulting in the renewed realization that it is dependent on the West, leading to resentment and antagonism.<sup>124</sup> This description fits neatly with a "dynamic" understanding of Russia. In essence, subalternity has served to reinforce Russia's imperial identity, including in the post-Cold War period, and there exists a tension between Russia's perennial desire to catch up with the West and its will to preserve its own identity.<sup>125</sup> Of course, one could equally argue that merely because the West was only prepared to accord Russia a subordinate role in the post-Cold War liberal order does not necessarily imply that there exists a permanent, structural subaltern relationship between Russia and the West. Many scholars do note that the West remains Russia's primary external "Other" or reference point, with the East playing this role "to a far lesser degree",<sup>126</sup> but this differs from the notion of entrenched subalternity.

Interestingly, and in line with the contention cited above that Russia's desire for equality with the West dates back to early contacts between Muscovy and the Holy Roman Empire, Morozov notes that Russia's subaltern position had been solidified largely by the

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107 & 109.

<sup>126</sup> Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 & 1999* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 169-70.

early sixteenth century, when global trade moved en masse to the high seas from the more traditional river and land routes, thus becoming a commodity rather than a subsistence economy from the very beginning of Muscovy's imperial development.<sup>127</sup> He thus contends that this condition dates back to the dawn of modern history and the rise of the contemporary Russian polity, before Peter the Great's Westernizing reforms; its European orientation is therefore more deeply entrenched – even structurally so, perhaps – than the political desires of any Russian leader. Assuming that Morozov is correct and taking a macro-level view of history, one could note that it would be a fascinating development if the end of modern history and the gradual emergence of a neo-medieval world, as alluded to in Chapter 3, corresponded with the slow shaking off of Russia's supposedly subaltern condition in favour of a more confident place situated firmly at the northern end of Eurasia – a course for which even some mainstream Russian analysts have advocated.<sup>128</sup>

Russia's centuries-long dependence on the West – the power base underpinning the hegemonic order – should set limits on the degree to which it can challenge that order. Owen Worth notes that since Russia is asserting itself largely as a geopolitical force, it is unlikely that it will be able to challenge the existing global hegemonic order rooted in neoliberalism.<sup>129</sup> But Morozov takes things one step further, contending that by framing its own demands using Western concepts, Russia “does not challenge the Western-dominated world order in any radical way – rather, it claims a legitimate voice in the debate about how this world order must evolve”.<sup>130</sup> Since Russia's imperial soft power is a “purely negative exercise” as it is rooted in resentment of the West, it cannot offer a genuine alternative to the existing Western hegemony.<sup>131</sup> As seen in Chapter 2, there does not have to be a clear

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<sup>127</sup> Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity*, pp. 86-90.

<sup>128</sup> For example, see Trenin, “Russia and Ukraine”.

<sup>129</sup> Owen Worth, *Rethinking Hegemony* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 120.

<sup>130</sup> Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.



alternative for an order to erode or collapse, but this would still place limits on the extent to which Russia can consciously challenge the order, at least until it finds a way – perhaps as an integrated “Greater Eurasia” takes shape – to overcome its subaltern condition. However, even this is doubtful, seeing as the Kremlin has been at pains to make clear that its plans to integrate the Eurasian supercontinent remain open to EU participation at a later date,<sup>132</sup> fuelling speculation that this is merely the latest incarnation of Russia turning east in order to strengthen its hand vis-à-vis the West.

Recent research does appear to lend credibility to the assertion that the only plausible alternative to the existing order is varying degrees of increased disorder, rather than an alternative singular hegemony. Focusing on China’s hegemonic prospects considering the global “distribution of identity” among states, a group of three scholars conclude that there remains “strong support for the democratic and neoliberal hegemonic ideology amongst elites and masses across the great powers”, including “strong ideational support for the order outside the core states of the Western alliance”. This ideology “effectively excludes China with its authoritarian national identity from full membership in the present order”, and in any event, China’s “national identity discourse is insular and propagandistic and so is unlikely to form the basis of an ideology or vision that could find support in the distribution of identity”.<sup>133</sup> Per this analysis, China is at least somewhat destined to remain trapped as a partially dissatisfied power. This mirrors Morozov’s contention that Russia cannot verily challenge the supposedly Western-led international order due to the nature of its relationship with European international society, even as the latter guarantees that it will ultimately come to experience resentment due to its dependence.

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<sup>132</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 147.

<sup>133</sup> Bentley B. Allan, Srdjan Vucetic and Ted Hopf, “The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China’s Hegemonic Prospects”, *International Organization*, Vol. 72, no. 4 (2018), pp. 839-69.

As such, if these analyses on Russia and China are correct, then this guarantees the continuation of disruption in international affairs, even if no genuine alternative to the liberal international order is presented. However, to reiterate, what these perspectives do not necessarily incorporate is an understanding that no alternative is necessarily required for the liberal international order and contemporary international society to erode. The conceptual model advanced in Chapter 2 of this dissertation makes this clear. The liberal international order's position in both the realms of international order and international society leave it prone to double standards, as its power base of liberal states may occasionally be forced to engage in illiberal practices in their attempt to provide order in the global political system.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, the liberal order remains trapped between an emerging multi-order world and a diverse global international society, able to encompass neither. Both these realities present the liberal order with structural challenges that it may not be able to overcome. Furthermore, the upward vertical neo-revisionist vector can exert a leftward push on the second pendulum outlined in Chapter 2, hollowing out the collective hegemonic content that the great powers of international society infuse into the international order. In all these instances, there does not have to be a ready-made alternative to the status quo for change to occur. This dissertation's original conceptualization of the liberal international order and the twin vectors linking international order and international society, which represent its core contribution to scholarship, provide theoretical backing for this conclusion which is of relevance to the academic and policy worlds alike. The logic behind both Morozov's analysis and this dissertation's model is ultimately that disorder is more likely than an alternative order, although the reasoning differs in each case.

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<sup>134</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 246. Also see Christopher J. Coyne and Abigail R. Hall-Blanco, "Empire State of Mind: The Illiberal Foundations of Liberal Hegemony", George Mason University working paper, 23 December 2015, available online at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2707697](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2707697) (last accessed 17.07.2019)

Morozov's theory also possesses two key related limitations. First, it appears to rob Russia of veritable agency, as it contends that its political orientation is entirely dependent upon its relationship with Europe and the broader West. And second, it largely eliminates the possibility of secular or "static" trends in Russian politics and foreign policy, seeing the country's evolution as oscillating between instances of Westernization and resentment. Therefore, it remains largely blind to the idea that the consolidation of Russian nationhood could break the supposedly entrenched historical cycle of emulation of and confrontation with Europe. If Russia is a "subaltern empire" that has colonized itself on behalf of Europe, then its transformation from empire into nation stands to supersede this condition. Morozov also does not allow for the possibility that the Eurasian vector of Russian foreign policy – including its strategic partnership with China – has become meaningful to Russia in its own right, a topic which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter. Whether Russia was the object of European international society's expansion or a subject in the globalization of international society, the fundamentals of Russia's relationship with Europe are capable of being altered with time. Just as Western structural dominance in global international society may eventually give way to a post-Western world, so, too, is any possible subaltern condition in Russia's relationship with the West possible to overcome.

Morozov's conceptualization of Russia as a "subaltern empire" is nonetheless an important one, as it makes explicit the idea that there are limits on the extent to which Russia can challenge the Western-led liberal international order. Indeed, this would seem to be even more so the case if – as this dissertation's conceptual model contends – the liberal international order were not just a power structure but also a project that has shaped some of the norms, institutions and language of international society. In this sense, it shares a degree of compatibility with Sakwa's notion of neo-revisionism, in that the degree of Russia's

challenge is limited – or at least qualified – to contesting the liberal order horizontally but defending international society’s autonomy at the same time.

### 5.5. Neo-Revisionism Revisited

Richard Sakwa’s recently published volume *Russia Against the Rest* perhaps represents the most comprehensive work to date attempting to summarize and conceptualize Russian grievances in the period dating from the end of the Cold War in 1989 to the onset of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 – what some have even called the “twenty-five years crisis”, bracketed by two cold wars, much like E.H. Carr’s famous “twenty years crisis” that was situated between the two world wars.<sup>135</sup> For this reason, it is worth examining its major contentions and contributions at length to provide a more detailed look at the notion of neo-revisionism introduced earlier in this dissertation. Moreover, not only are many of Sakwa’s assertions compatible with the themes outlined in the above sections, they also shine light on some of the theoretical concepts put forward in previous chapters.

According to Sakwa, the gradual entrenchment of a post-Cold War rivalry between Russia and the West ensued due to a fundamental difference in worldviews: Russia believed that the form its regime took was ultimately irrelevant and that state interests are trans-historic, while the West believed that the nondemocratic character of the Russian regime would destabilize the normative foundations of Western institutions if it were given permission to join them.<sup>136</sup> Russia did in fact attempt to liberalize economically and politically in the early 1990s, albeit messily, but perhaps Morozov is on point in his claim that it is a country that “has been unable to assimilate” into the West despite attempting to

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<sup>135</sup> Suslov, personal interview, Moscow, 11 September 2017.

<sup>136</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 11.

emulate it at various times in its history.<sup>137</sup> This appeared especially relevant in the early post-Cold War years, when liberal Western states were particularly strenuous in their expectation that democracy and human rights should be universally spread, with Russia itself raising those expectations by making commitments in this regard in the Paris Charter of 1990. Structural factors such as geography and quasi-imperial centre-periphery relations – in addition, of course, to a desire for independent great power status – helped to impede Russia’s ability to emulate and join a Western political community that was not only liberal and democratic but also beginning a process of international political integration.

The West’s goal after the Cold War, according to Sakwa, “was Russia’s adaptation to the stringencies of an existing order, not the creation of an expanded community”.<sup>138</sup> “In the absence of a negotiated end to the Cold War, it was assumed that the solutions of the problem of history devised in one historical context could automatically be applied to another.”<sup>139</sup> There were no institutions or a language of reconciliation after the Cold War,<sup>140</sup> but rather a “liberal historicism” that took the place of the Marxist one, featuring a “new linear teleology” – presumably a world of liberal democratic capitalist states.<sup>141</sup> Europe remained embedded in the Atlantic security system, which had been explicitly designed to contain the USSR, thus leading to the preservation of the West’s Cold War instincts.<sup>142</sup>

Moscow’s expectation had been that international institutions would become more autonomous after the end of the Cold War; instead, the liberal international order rooted in the West attempted to become synonymous with international society itself, with the US-led bloc adopting “some sort of tutelary relationship” with international society.<sup>143</sup> “[T]he West

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<sup>137</sup> Morozov, *Russia’s Postcolonial Identity*, p. 11.

<sup>138</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 18.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40 & 66.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

assumed an unexpectedly immutable quality and became an enduring power system in international relations. The liberal international order appeared set to become generalized as coterminous with the international system in its entirety,” a universalism that is now being challenged by the likes of Moscow and Beijing.<sup>144</sup> Incorporating a country as powerful and complex as Russia fully into Western institutions would transform the West, which could never satisfy the agenda of the triumphalist liberals of the post-Cold War era.<sup>145</sup>

Sakwa astutely notes that after the Cold War, it was globalization rather than international society that became fully autonomous, with profound consequences for how norms surrounding sovereignty were to be interpreted,<sup>146</sup> famously leading to clashes over Kosovo, Iraq, Libya, Ukraine and Syria. He goes on to conclude that

[t]he post-Cold War attempt to maintain the ‘unipolar’ moment and blunt the emergence of a more pluralistic international system meant that a dynamic of hostility with Russia become constitutive of the liberal international order, thus denying its drive towards universality and repudiating its essential liberalism and pluralism.<sup>147</sup>

As mentioned over the course of this dissertation, the primary conceptual claim for which Sakwa may be best known, which he develops at length in *Russia Against the Rest*, is that Russia is a “neo-revisionist” power. Sakwa conceives of the global political system as consisting of two levels – a shared international society on top and a series of states and sub-orders interacting with one another horizontally on the bottom – as described in Chapter 2.<sup>148</sup> Sakwa’s conception of Russian neo-revisionism is one that critiques the liberal international

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

order – according to Sakwa, essentially composed of Western power structures, norms and institutions – horizontally while defending the autonomy of international society vertically.<sup>149</sup> This involves a revisionist set of tactics, but not a revisionist strategy.<sup>150</sup> The goal is to “promote parallel structures to complement, and thus transform” world order.<sup>151</sup> The belief is ultimately that “the rules-based order [...] should be located at the level of international society and not within a specific power system”.<sup>152</sup> Russia does not seek to change the “principles” of international law, merely the “practices” – its aim is to guard against double standards engaged in by the Atlantic powers.<sup>153</sup> And “American dualism – a power system combined with a liberal values order – inevitably generated double standards”.<sup>154</sup>

This suggests that, as mentioned above, the problem facing the contemporary world order is structural – that a hegemon cannot help but commit double standards, seeing as it is responsible for upholding a moral order but remains a great power with a set of interests. Sakwa identifies another of these seemingly systemic issues when he questions how open the liberal order truly is if Russia is required to abandon its “independent strategic concerns” to join it.<sup>155</sup> In effect, no fully autonomous role was found for Russia within Western institutions during the post-Cold War period.<sup>156</sup> Attempts to find one, through visions of common European spaces and a new European security treaty, failed, or at were at least perceived to have failed,<sup>157</sup> resulting in the end of Dmitry Medvedev’s Westernizing course, the consolidation of neo-revisionism in Russia and the return of a sterner Vladimir Putin to the Kremlin in 2012.<sup>158</sup> Before 2012, the Russian aim had been to “revise the system from

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>157</sup> Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 248-51.

<sup>158</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, pp. 113-5.

within”, but now there exists a more entrenched belief that “there can be order without hegemony”.<sup>159</sup> The onset of the Ukraine crisis represents a seminal moment, after which Moscow, while still possibly holding out hope for the amelioration of ties at some point, no longer believed that it would be possible to transform its relations with the United States and the EU in any fundamental fashion.<sup>160</sup> Kadri Liik identifies a similar thematic chronology that followed Russia’s initial (although perhaps “lukewarm”) post-Cold War attempts to join the West, noting that upon his return to the presidency in 2012, Putin “set about reconceptualizing Russia as a (politically) non-Western country and creating the political capacity for autonomous action, in defiance of the West if necessary”, with Moscow’s intervention in Syria in 2015 representing the “first big manifestation of that stance”.<sup>161</sup>

Visible here are elements of a co-constitutive relationship between Russia and the West. If perceived Western excesses in Libya helped convince Putin to return to the Kremlin in 2012 and move Russia away from a Western path, then Putin’s comeback convinced many in the West that Russia had begun to drift toward autocracy. Both events helped to drive Russia and key Western players further apart, giving credence to the notion that normative differences limit the extent to which actors can jointly develop a “thick” social relationship. However, this should not lead one to conclude that Russia’s foreign policy is entirely dependent upon structural factors at the international level. Russian neo-revisionism may have emerged in response to Western actions and norms, but its precise *content* remains subject to Russian agency. It is precisely for this reason that one should not interpret the Russia-West co-constitutive relationship today as representing a force necessarily privileging

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>161</sup> Kadri Liik, “In search of ‘business not as usual’ with Russia”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 29 May 2019, available online at: [https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_business\\_not\\_as\\_usual\\_russia\\_eu\\_us\\_relations](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_business_not_as_usual_russia_eu_us_relations) (last accessed 07.07.2019)



Russia's "dynamic" character. In line with Liik's assertion that the elder generations of today's Russian elite represent the "last of the offended",<sup>162</sup> the ability of the West to influence Russian norms and identity appears to be waning somewhat with time. The failure of Western sanctions to change Moscow's foreign policy behaviour in any appreciable fashion in the years since the Maidan revolution is a testament to this fact.

Noting that any world order combines both pluralist and solidarist principles, Sakwa contends that Moscow's discontent with the West is not merely designed to return to a world of spheres of influence and strengthened Westphalian principles, but also that "resistance to Western hegemony is accompanied by attempts to strengthen the universalism represented by international society".<sup>163</sup> He claims that non-Western powers such as Russia and China want to separate international society from the "structure of Western hegemony", in other words, to "universalize universalism".<sup>164</sup> This is illustrated at several points throughout the book. Putin is claimed not to be a "crude defender of sovereignty", as Russia did not verily resist the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine in 2005.<sup>165</sup> Moscow's main concern is simply that its interests not be ignored; otherwise, its foreign policy is "tempered by an understanding of post-sovereignty trends in international politics", and features support for the institutions of global governance.<sup>166</sup> The Eurasian Economic Union, far from posing a fundamental affront to the principles of the liberal international order, represents a form of "liberal economic institutionalism" and complies with World Trade Organization rules.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Kadri Liik, "The last of the offended: Russia's first post-Putin diplomats", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 19 November 2019, available online at: [https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the\\_last\\_of\\_the\\_offended\\_russias\\_first\\_post\\_putin\\_diplomats](https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_last_of_the_offended_russias_first_post_putin_diplomats) (last accessed 17.03.2020)

<sup>163</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 49.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Russia even invokes WTO principles of multilateralism in its criticisms of the supposedly illegal, unilateral sanctions imposed on it by the West in the years since 2014.<sup>168</sup>

As such, once again it appears as if there are limits to the degree of normative contestation existing between Russia and the West. The end of the Cold War represented a transformative moment not just for the latter but also the former. This reinforces the notion that norms present in international society can seemingly take on a life of their own and become almost independent of the states that promote them – a fact that Western states should recall, seeing as Moscow’s international normative impact post-Maidan may have long-term reverberations even if Russia remains a declining power. That said, the extent to which Russia verily remains committed to liberal or rules-based international governance remains subject to debate. This suggests that Russian neo-revisionism in some ways defends Moscow’s *interpretation* of international society rather than the norms and institutions of international society themselves, providing an added degree of nuance to Sakwa’s characterization of the phenomenon. Russia’s expressions of support for certain liberal principles may be more rhetorical than genuine – an indication of its lingering sense of insecurity and desire to “catch up” with the West. Its violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty certainly appears to contradict its criticism of Western behaviour in places such as Kosovo and Libya, although Sakwa contends that Russia’s actions in the Donbas have been limited, and in any event are subordinate to the larger questions surrounding its relationship with the West.<sup>169</sup> Russian officials claim that their country had no choice but to use force and to repudiate the principles that it normally holds dear because it was faced with a “strategic dead end”, with Western states not taking Russian concerns surrounding Ukraine’s Association

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>169</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 158.

Agreement and potential geopolitical reorientation seriously.<sup>170</sup> The annexation of Crimea, for its part, has been portrayed as a defensive move.<sup>171</sup>

All this leads one to conclude that Moscow believes that its violations of international norms are exceptional and occur in response to more grievous and brazen Western abuses. According to this line of thinking, Russia's often heavy-handed behaviour toward its neighbours and its violating of their sovereignty in certain cases can be attributed to the lack of a broader post-Cold War agreement between Russia and the West on a new pan-European security framework – one that would have put Eastern Europe at the heart of a new continental order rather than at the periphery of two competing spheres of influence. It could also be, however, that Russia views the independence of countries with which it shares longstanding ties (such as Ukraine) as being a historical accident, and that certain states in its so-called “near abroad” are therefore not fully sovereign.<sup>172</sup> Russia's assertiveness toward its neighbours in its “sphere of privileged interests” bears a similarity to the idea of American “exemptionalism” mentioned in the previous chapter.<sup>173</sup> This phenomenon may even extend into the country's domestic affairs to a degree. Sakwa notes that, just as American neoconservatives claim that the United States is above international law so that it can actively maintain the rules-based global order, so, too, is the Russian regime above the national constitution since it plays an indispensable role in managing the stability of the country's political system and achieving its development goals.<sup>174</sup>

Sakwa does claim that Russia has been unable to articulate fully a non-reactive foreign policy approach in the post-Cold War era, noting that its defence of international

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<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>172</sup> Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), p. 127.

<sup>173</sup> Christopher Coker, *The Improbable War: China, the United States and the Logic of Great Power Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 46.

<sup>174</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 219.

pluralism occurs in reaction to American hegemony.<sup>175</sup> However, contra Morozov, reactivity does not necessarily imply an entrenched normative and discursive subaltern relationship between Russia and the West. This may simply reflect the incoherence of Russia's international engagements, having emerged weakened from an extremely tumultuous twentieth century that featured two sieges of St. Petersburg, three revolutions, a bloody civil war and an even more costly Second World War. Being unable to articulate an independent foreign policy approach – or alternative economic development model – places limits on the extent to which Russia can challenge the contemporary international order in any substantive fashion, thus leaving the liberal international order more prone to its own internal contradictions, which will be outlined in further depth in Chapter 7.

Russia's policy incoherence is further enhanced by the fact that Putin needs to balance between different domestic political groups with vastly different worldviews, ranging from liberals, to statist-*siloviki*, to Eurasianists who stress a “fundamental incompatibility” between Russia and the West, to neo-traditionalist neo-Stalinists and Russian nationalists.<sup>176</sup> The constrained nature of the Russian challenge to the West could lead one to conclude that the liberal order is quite resilient, but the perceived lack of a veritable alternative could in fact increase the level of frustration of the order's critics if their concerns are not met. In such a situation, the dominance of the global neoliberal consensus – in addition to norms and primary institutions such as state sovereignty, diplomacy and the balance of power – may remain strong, which suggests that non-negligible parts of international society in Sakwa's “top level” may survive the current period of turbulence in some form. But the liberal international order may not completely preserve its normative and political cohesion. This is only natural, as the segment of international society currently synonymous with the post-Cold

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

War liberal order is relatively recent, whereas other elements of international society have had more time to become entrenched and are therefore more likely to be resilient.

Lebow's "cultural theory" of international relations, outlined in the previous chapter, offers an interesting parallel here. As alluded to before, just as Lebow claims that instability at one level (individual, national, regional or global) can affect the stability of another, so, too, can competing orders in the realm of international order affect the robustness of international society within the two-level conception of the global political system, depending on the degree of contestation that is occurring. He contends that one of the three fundamental human drives – the "spirit", which emphasizes immaterial over material desire – largely disappeared from the European political lexicon after the Enlightenment and the French Revolution,<sup>177</sup> but that contemporary events are producing the return of a "spirit-based world".<sup>178</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, this has the potential to produce a swing not only in Watson's pendulum but also in the second pendulum described in Chapter 2. In other words, not only can Russia's contesting of the liberal order produce an international order closer to being characterized by "multiple independencies" – leading to the emergence of a multi-order world in an era of rival norms and institutions – it can also cause a lasting erosion of the content of collective hegemony. Lebow writes that hierarchies sustain order, and that the latter can break down "when the discrepancy between behaviour and the principles of justice on which [hierarchies] rest becomes great and obvious".<sup>179</sup> This very much reflects the model put forward in Chapter 2, which notes that a hierarchy of great powers infuses an

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<sup>177</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 123.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28. This theme and the insufficiency of dominant ideologies that largely privilege material appetite have also recently been explored in John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2016).

<sup>179</sup> Lebow, *Cultural Theory*, p. 26.

international order with content, and that normative disputes over key events and principles can lead to the breakdown of that hierarchy and the transformation of international order.

As such, although he does not say so explicitly, Sakwa's theory of neo-revisionism lays the groundwork for important contributions to the English School canon. His conceptualization of the partial nature of Russia's challenge to the international order lends credence to the notion that the post-Cold War status quo will ultimately give way to greater disorder rather than a clearly defined alternative order. The partial nature of the Russian challenge manifests itself not only through Moscow's defence of the autonomy of international society, but also through the fact that the realm of international order itself is composed of multiple orders, with the liberal order being only one among them.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, the two-level conceptualization of the global political system contributes to the understanding of how international society and international order interact, in line with *The Globalization of International Society's* contention that a close connection exists between the two. However, one requires the downward vertical vector posited in Chapter 2, which – reflecting Lebow's analysis – has a basis in existing literature, to provide a fuller understanding of this interaction. The positing of this downward vector not only represents one of this dissertation's core contributions to the field, it also provides a richer conceptual illustration – with the backing of existing IR theory and literature – of the complex and multifaceted nature of Russia's current place in the global political system. As mentioned in Chapter 1, if the aim of studying of resilience in the international order is to find new ways to approach international governance in an age of increasing complexity, then this represents a meaningful contribution toward that end.

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<sup>180</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, p. 44.

Neo-revisionism embodies Russian dualism in many ways. It simultaneously reflects contestation with the liberal order's power base and a defence of international society. Its occurrence alongside Russia's conservative turn earlier this decade represented a partial consolidation of post-Soviet Russian nationhood after many years marked by pragmatism, even as Moscow did not fully abandon its imperial pretensions in its "near abroad" nor the idea that the Russian nation transcends the borders of the Russian Federation, thus bridging the static-dynamic pairing which is itself an expression of dualism. And yet, paradoxically, it threatens to undermine the dualism of international society symbolized by the twin vertical vectors. The longer and more forcefully the upward vector of Russian neo-revisionism is exerted alongside horizontal contestation, the less great powers are able to exert downward collective hegemony and the greater the level of international disorder. Just as the consolidation of Third Republic France and Bismarck's Germany into nations in the late nineteenth century was followed by significant violence and disorder in the first half of the twentieth century,<sup>181</sup> the gradual and perhaps disorienting fusion of nation and state in Russia in the early twenty-first century is accompanied by increasing levels of great power contestation. The paradox is that an imperial Russian posture leaves the country predisposed to conflict with the West over Ukraine, but the process of transition toward nationhood can have a deleterious impact on great power relations as well.

## **5.6. Rethinking Russian Dualism**

In much of the literature and expert opinion – ranging from pragmatic statist to conservatives to Marxists such as Gusev – there appears to be a rough consensus around the state in which Russia presently finds itself. It appears to be in somewhat of a hybrid state

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<sup>181</sup> Porter, "Russia and Europe After the Cold War", p. 142.

between the static and dynamic models outlined in Chapter 4. On the one hand, the window for a genuine entente with the West – possibly embodied in the idea of a Greater Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok that includes a single economic, cultural and security space – has closed. That is, the West has largely reached the terminus of its geographic expansion, ultimately having failed to incorporate Russia into its political community. As Dmitri Trenin concisely puts it, “Russia’s overall geopolitical posture has changed fundamentally over recent years. Russia’s attempted integration with the West is history.”<sup>182</sup> Any future substantive integration between Russia and the West, if it happens at all, will occur at the earliest over the medium term after the consolidation of differing regional integration projects, thus taking the form of finding areas of compatibility between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union – the integration of integrations, as it were, or an integration of equals.<sup>183</sup> Russia has made it clear that it is not willing to sacrifice its independent foreign policy interests and social values in order to conform to the standards necessary to become a genuine and institutionalized member of the West.

On the other hand, Moscow’s obsession with preserving a sphere of influence of some sort in Eastern Europe – rather than attempting to reinvent itself as an independent nation-state at the northern end of Eurasia – is an indication of the trauma Russia continues to experience from its tumultuous twentieth century and goes beyond the country’s vulnerability to attack from the west. It remains preoccupied with questions of who belongs to the Russian nation, including Ukrainians and Belarusians. While some progress has been made toward

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<sup>182</sup> Dmitri Trenin, “China, Russia and the United States Contest a New World Order”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 7 May 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/2019/05/07/china-russia-and-united-states-contest-new-world-order-pub-79078> (last accessed 07.07.2019)

<sup>183</sup> Regarding US-Russia relations, some also see domestic factors in both countries driving both sides apart for the next several years as well, through the upcoming Russian political transition in 2024. As such, Trenin contends that it “will be a long time before America and Russia will reach a new normal in their relationship”. See Dmitri Trenin, “The Relationship Between the USA and Russia in the Trump Era”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 14 May 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/2019/05/14/relationship-between-usa-and-russia-in-trump-era-pub-79119> (last accessed 07.07.2019)



civic nationhood, the idea remains relatively new and is impeded by certain structural factors, including the country's imperial legacy, continued imperial tendencies in governance between centre and periphery (including but not limited to Moscow's relationship with ethnic minority groups), and the fact that, unlike other European great powers such as France, Russia remains the centre of a major world religion.

Russia has become static in the sense that, at least over the medium term if not beyond as China's Belt and Road Initiative draws Russia into its economic orbit, it is definitively not a part of the West. But the unresolved nature of its nationhood, operating in tandem with a continued deliberation over the European part of its identity, imply that it remains open to inside and outside influence and is thus partially dynamic. This combination appears to be the worst of both worlds: hostile and only partially managed relations with the West but still volatile and insecure in normative terms, certain of what it is *not* but still uncertain about what it *is*. This reality coincides quite well with the argument put forward by Ian Bremmer, that the medium term represents a transition period in which major players from the US to the EU to Russia to China remain preoccupied with domestic concerns even as there remains no agreed-upon or stable framework for managing international relations.<sup>184</sup>

There is an inherent contradiction present in contemporary Russian dualism. On the one hand, Putin's synthesis is an attempt at rendering Russia static, providing stability after a decade of chaos and charting a distinct path for Russia on the world stage that is neither Eastern nor Western. In this, there is natural agreement with Eurasianists, who contend that Russia represents a distinct civilization that is neither European nor Asian. But Putin came to power two decades ago on a pledge to continue Russia's European path, thus revealing a tension between Europeanness and the desire to remain distinct. The very attempt at synthesis

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<sup>184</sup> See Ian Bremmer, *Every Nation for Itself: What Happens When No One Leads the World* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2013).

is a recognition of the existence of both elements and a tacit admission that the relative strength of each can potentially change over time, thus ensuring at least a degree of continued dynamism. Put differently, there are both cyclical and secular trends at work in Russia – elements of continuity and elements of change. This can be observed, for example, in the consensus that Russia has begun a journey toward nation-statehood but has yet to complete it.

Morozov's theory, which will be discussed further in the next chapter, is therefore both right and wrong at the same time. There are indeed elements of continued dependence on Europe – whether subaltern or merely strongly co-constitutive – that Russia has proven unable to eliminate, but also new dimensions of Russian identity that have at least partially consolidated and are imbued with their own meaning, including evolving interpretations of Russian nationhood and Eurasianism. In other words, the static component has increased without completely eliminating the dynamic one. Therefore, even within Russian dualism, one can observe further examples of dualism, demonstrating a degree of complexity which further warns against the risk of essentializing the country.

Sakwa's notion of neo-revisionism embraces Russian dualism and bicontinentalism – challenging the West but not rejecting participation in international society, while accepting a foreign policy outlook that is not unidirectional. What it misses is the downward vertical vector of cooperatively exercised hegemony in international society outlined in Chapter 2, in addition to the fact that Russia not only challenges the power base of the liberal international order but also participates in some of its mechanisms and processes – those that have become a part of international society. The downward vertical vector has existed – albeit in varying degrees of intensity – for centuries and Russia's participation in it is nothing novel. As such, analyses that contend that Russia “does not believe there is any such thing as a liberal international order” and that the current international order is “simply a system built around

American unipolarity” miss the point.<sup>185</sup> Although Moscow challenges the liberal order horizontally in the sphere of international relations, this does not imply a belief that global politics are strictly Hobbesian.<sup>186</sup> The horizontal and vertical vectors represent phenomena of different natures.

What *is* novel, at least in the post-Cold War era, is the upward vertical vector – that of neo-revisionism – which seeks to defend international society from the West. Its emergence coincided with the conservative turn that occurred along with Putin’s return to the Kremlin. As alluded to above, this was a *turn*, not a consolidation. It has helped to advance Russia’s static component, furthering the country’s national discussion concerning its post-Cold War (and post-traumatic) identity, but without eliminating the possibility of substantive change in the future. Even the consolidation of a Russian nation-state would not necessarily imply a return to Europe, even though nationalism was a Western import. The loss of Ukraine, while entrenching the rivalry between Russia and the West over the short-to-medium term, could result in Russia charting a new Eurasian course as a nation-state over the medium-to-long term as it is gradually forced to deemphasize Eastern Slavic unity.<sup>187</sup> Depending on how relations between China and the West evolve, this could serve to render Russia’s upward vertical vector more permanent.

In the absence of a gradual reconciliation between Russia and the West, this situation could result in what remains of Russian dynamism consolidating around the static elements that have already solidified along anti-Western lines. Failure to nudge Moscow away from

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<sup>185</sup> Michael Kofman, “Raiding and international Brigandry: Russia’s Strategy for Great Power Competition”, *War on the Rocks*, 14 June 2018, available online at: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/raiding-and-international-brigandry-russias-strategy-for-great-power-competition/> (last accessed 31.01.2019)

<sup>186</sup> One scholar has classified Putin’s foreign policy as “conservative institutionalist” in international terms rather than realist. See Nikolai Sokov, “The Putin-Trump Summit: In Helsinki, Three Worldviews Will Clash”, *The National Interest*, 15 July 2018, available online at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/putin-trump-summit-helsinki-three-worldviews-will-clash-25766> (last accessed 09.07.2019)

<sup>187</sup> Trenin, “Russia and Ukraine”.

neo-revisionism would lead to the continued hollowing out of international society and the entrenchment of rigidity and rivalry between blocs in the multi-order world,<sup>188</sup> thus undermining the stability of the foundation on which international society rests – the realm of international order – by way of the downward vertical vector and posing a direct challenge to the liberal international order’s universalist aims. The final two chapters of this dissertation will discuss this matter in greater depth, with Chapter 7 dwelling in particular on whether the liberal order is capable of altering its core goals and transforming its structure to enhance its resilience and what consequences this portends for international society.

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<sup>188</sup> It has been suggested that some sort of Yalta order – whether cooperative or rivalrous – could emerge from the ashes of this outcome, following the erosion of the liberal international order (and therefore of some of international society’s content). See Bobo Lo, “Greater Eurasia: The Emperor’s New Clothes or an Idea whose Time Has Come?”, *Russie.Nei.Reports*, No. 27, Ifri, July 2019, available online at: <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/etudes-de-lifri/russieneireports/greater-eurasia-emperors-new-clothes-or-idea-whose> (last accessed 23.08.2018)

## *Chapter 6*

### *Russia and China: Toward a New Eurasian Age?*

#### **6.1. Eurasia Emerging?**

Following the onset of the Ukraine crisis and the resulting Western-imposed economic sanctions against Russia, Moscow has accelerated its declared pivot to the East (which in fact predates the current standoff between Russia and the West) and has been pushed to deepen its relations with Beijing.<sup>1</sup> According to Alexander Lukin, the year 2014 was a “pivotal” one for Russian foreign policy, with its eastward pivot becoming “actual” instead of merely “verbal”.<sup>2</sup> These developments have resulted in much discussion concerning the nature of Sino-Russian relations and the durability of the strategic partnership between the two countries, in addition to the impact that these will have on the future of global order. Questions surrounding China’s rise have preoccupied Western thinkers for some time already, with some more sceptical about Beijing’s ability to project power at the global level.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, others claim that the Middle Kingdom is set to remake the world in dominant fashion.<sup>4</sup>

Relevant to all of this are Beijing’s intentions, whether they are likely to change, and whether Russia’s renewed focus on Eurasia instead of Europe will tilt the balance in favour

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<sup>1</sup> Paul J. Bolt and Sharyl N. Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Lukin, *China and Russia: The New Rapprochement* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Penguin, 2012 [2009]).

of post-Westernism in global affairs. As has been shown in past chapters, change is the norm in international society – but this still begs the question of what the nature of change might be in the contemporary era. A neorealist analysis in this context would prove to be counterproductive: in addition to failing to address questions surrounding rules and institutions, this theory would contend that Russia’s increasing perception of the West as a threat and its growing realignment with China serve to stabilize the international system, rather than bring about a form of change that manages to “fundamentally shape world order”.<sup>5</sup> China’s attempts to increase its material power could be designed to upset the existing regional balance of power in the Asia-Pacific, but they equally could have the aim of preserving the status quo against perceived attempts to cut China off from the international order from which it has benefitted so greatly.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter will provide an overview of scholarly claims surrounding China’s intentions vis-à-vis the contemporary order before delving into an analysis of Russian Eurasianism, the state of Sino-Russia relations and the resulting implications for the international order and society. This dissertation’s probing of China is for supplementary purposes and does not take away from the core focus on Russia – the first great power to challenge the Western-led liberal international order overtly in the post-Cold War period.<sup>7</sup> The goal is to provide a deeper illustration of the similarities and differences between Russia’s and China’s respective foreign policies and conceptions of international order, to highlight the evolving nature of Sino-Russian relations and the extent to which Moscow is able to use its ties with Beijing to advance its core aims, both of which can impact the future of the liberal international order and global international society.

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<sup>5</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, p. 301.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Hays Gries, “Nationalism and Chinese Foreign Policy”, in Yong Deng and Fei-Ling Wang (eds.), *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> See Dmitri Trenin, “Russia as a Disruptor of the Post-Cold War Order: To What Effect?”, in Ritika Passi and Harsh V. Pant (eds.), *Raisina Files: Debating Disruption in the World Order*, Vol. 3 (2018), pp. 18-23.

## 6.2. What China Wants

The extent to which a rising China wishes to “remake the existing world order” has been a central subject of debate in Western academic and policy circles for some time. Many have argued that China’s economic liberalization will inevitably lead to political liberalization,<sup>8</sup> and thus that China’s integration into international institutions poses no danger. Of course, Brazil and India are both democratic states that have not always been completely aligned with the West. Both are members of the BRICS grouping of developing states that aims to increase the clout of the Global South in international affairs, Brazil’s concept of Responsibility While Protecting (RWP) has been critical of Western excesses in the context of humanitarian interventions, and India’s relationship with Russia remains strong despite Western-imposed sanctions. Moreover, the leadership of a democratic China would have much greater difficulty than its current technocratic government in suppressing nationalist impulses from the population. The point, however, appears to be moot: The Chinese Communist Party remains entrenched in power, leaving Western officials and observers forced to confront difficult questions with uncertain answers regarding what to do about this rising illiberal colossus.<sup>9</sup> The co-constitutive relationship between China and international society aside, it was perhaps always unreasonable to expect a millennia-old distinct society that suffered for a century under Western imperialism to want to modernize in line with Western ideals, and within the span of a few short decades at that.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, see Hahm Chaibong, “China’s Future Is South Korea’s Present”, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2018 issue, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2018-08-13/chinas-future-south-koreas-present> (last accessed 05.12.2018)

<sup>9</sup> See Howard W. French, “What America’s China Debate Gets Right and Wrong – and What It’s Missing”, *World Politics Review*, 31 July 2019, available online at: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28082/what-america-s-china-debate-gets-right-and-wrong-and-what-it-s-missing> (last accessed 31.09.2019)

The West is now faced with the question of whether to continue to engage with China in the hopes that it may gradually continue to be transformed by its interactions with the rest of the world, or confront it with the expectation that more pressure is what is required to get China to reform and verily open up its market, provide a level playing field for Western businesses and crack down on instances of intellectual property theft. A mixed approach featuring Western “hedging” toward China – selective engagement but with the threat of cutting it off should it refuse to play by the rules – has failed thus far to deliver adequate results from the perspective of the West. It could be argued that China has followed Deng Xiaoping’s maxim of keeping a low profile and biding its time until it has become economically powerful enough and sufficiently integrated into the global economy that it cannot be cut off, and that its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is designed to complete this process so that it can never be isolated the way Russia has been since 2014. This is crucial for Beijing’s ability to pursue its longer-term aspirations: It views Taiwan and the South China Sea as core interests, much as Russia considers Ukraine’s orientation as being vital to its security. In any event, despite China having come a long way since it first began opening up under Deng in 1978, its integration into the seemingly more stringent norms of post-Cold War international society is viewed as “at best superficial and insufficient”.<sup>10</sup>

Here, there is an interesting parallel with Russia, a country that for centuries has made catching up with the West its central goal, only to fall regularly short of Western standards and capabilities. Following the eviction of Polish troops from Moscow in the Time of Troubles in the seventeenth century, Russia finally managed to join the ranks of European great powers in the eighteenth century and had its troops march on Paris early in the nineteenth. But by the time of the Crimean War, Western countries had already advanced in

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<sup>10</sup> Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society Since 1949: Alienation and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 248.



their process of industrialization, leading to a Russian defeat at the hands of Britain and France. Russia then embarked on its own campaign of industrialization, which gained speed under Stalin and ended with Soviet troops in Berlin. And yet just as the Soviet Union was transitioning from revolutionary to modern power, the West underwent a neoliberal economic revolution that transformed the foundations of its own material and normative clout. Russia, according to some, remains a modern country while the West has become post-modern,<sup>11</sup> leaving Russia still lagging behind and resentful about its inability to modernize economically and politically to the fullest extent.

A more confrontational approach toward Beijing, embodied by the tariff war, appears to have emerged over the course of the second year of Donald Trump's presidency, with suggestions now emerging that avoiding a new cold war rests on China's shoulders.<sup>12</sup> It has become clearer that the Trump administration may have abandoned the notion of American leadership in many respects, but it is not isolationist as many first anticipated and still believes very much in the preservation of American pre-eminence. Initial analyses, particularly following the first Davos conference after Trump's election at which Xi was praised as the new defender of multilateralism and globalization,<sup>13</sup> suggested that Washington's abdication from its leadership role could force Beijing to pick up the slack on issues such as defending free trade and combatting climate change, thus easing its further integration into international society. However, although both the liberal trading order and multilateral and bilateral attempts to strengthen the global commitment to environmentalism

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<sup>11</sup> Boris Mezhyuev, "Modern Russia and Postmodern Europe", *Russia in Global Affairs*, 2 March 2008, available online at: [https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_10362](https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_10362) (last accessed on 05.12.2018)

<sup>12</sup> Josh Rogin, "Pence: It's up to China to avoid a cold war", *The Washington Post*, 13 November 2018, available online at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2018/11/13/pence-its-up-to-china-to-avoid-a-cold-war/> (last accessed 05.12.2018)

<sup>13</sup> Noah Barkin and Elizabeth Piper, "In Davos, Xi makes case for Chinese leadership role", *Reuters*, 17 January 2017, available online at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-davos-meeting-china/in-davos-xi-makes-case-for-chinese-leadership-role-idUSKBN15118V> (last accessed 23.08.2019)

are norms of today's international society, China's commitment to them does not necessarily exclusively imply rising internationalism from Beijing. In both cases, these could merely be examples of China pursuing narrow self-interest, with access to global markets being a necessary requirement of its economic modernization and getting serious about climate change representing the only viable response to smog-filled skies across the country.<sup>14</sup>

China's ambiguity in this regard can be found in other domains as well, with some analysts conjecturing that Beijing's professed commitment to bringing about a "New Type of Great Power Relations" could be a genuine attempt to contribute to the shaping of world order and an earnest response to Washington's desire for it to become a more responsible stakeholder in international affairs, but could also merely be a concept deployed tactically to ensure that the US respects its core interests.<sup>15</sup>

This, in turn, leads to another dilemma for Beijing, which appears to be structural in nature. Failure to assume more global responsibility despite having become the world's second-largest economy can lead to allegations of free riding. But China must increase its capabilities if it wants to contribute more on issues such as global security, which in turn could generate angst, particularly among but not limited to its neighbours.<sup>16</sup> In China, there is still apprehension in some corners about "taking on too much too soon".<sup>17</sup> At the same time, others believe that China's more open ambition on display over the past several years could prove to be a self-defeating "premature bid for hegemony" that could unite forces against it.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Haenle, personal interview, Beijing, 24 April 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, p. 15. For more on Xi Jinping's conception of a "New Type of Great Power Relations", see Cheng Li and Lucy Xu, "Chinese Enthusiasm and American Cynicism Over the 'New Type of Great Power Relations'", *Brookings Institution*, 4 December 2014, available online at: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinese-enthusiasm-and-american-cynicism-over-the-new-type-of-great-power-relations/> (last accessed 04.08.2019)

<sup>16</sup> Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, p. 272.

<sup>17</sup> Haenle, personal interview, Beijing, 24 April 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Kori Schake, "Managing American Decline", *The Atlantic*, 24 October 2018, available online at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/how-bad-americas-decline-relative-china/576319/> (last accessed on 05.12.2018)

How best, then, to understand Beijing's desires and the historical-political context in which it presently finds itself?

### *6.2.1. Middle Kingdom No More?*

As a civilization that dates back millennia, there exists a tendency for some to look for supposed continuities in Chinese governance throughout its various historical emanations. David Shambaugh notes that both the Chinese Empire and the modern-day People's Republic of China possessed a "single guiding ideology" and claimed to rule in a "moral", "virtuous" and "benevolent" fashion despite "hierarchical" characteristics.<sup>19</sup> Some leading Chinese scholars, including Yan Xuetong, look even to the pre-Qin period, before China became a consolidated empire. A pre-Qin maxim claims that "when norms are established, one can attain humane authority", which supposedly helps to explain why China references contemporary democratic norms to buttress its case for the greater democratization of international relations (i.e., the case against American hegemony and for greater pluralism).<sup>20</sup> However, despite these similarities, there are other indications that China began to change substantially once it came into contact with Western civilization in the nineteenth century. Zhao Suisheng notes that China's political elite began to embrace Europe's "modern nationalist doctrines and institutions" following the First Opium War.<sup>21</sup> China's loss to Britain in that war, combined with its defeat at the hands of Japan in 1894-95, led to a

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<sup>19</sup> David Shambaugh, "The Post-Mao State", in David Shambaugh (ed.), *The Modern Chinese State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 182.

<sup>20</sup> Yan Xuetong, "Pre-Qin Philosophy and China's Rise Today", in Daniel A. Bell and Sun Zhe (eds.), *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 219.

<sup>21</sup> Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 12.

genuine sense that China might in fact be lost, which in turn helped it to shift its focus from universalism to nationalism and from the cultural to the political.<sup>22</sup>

The realization of no longer being the “Middle Kingdom” with claims to cultural universalism and *Tianxia* (All under Heaven) has produced a China whose aims are, by definition, more limited in nature. This goes well beyond the establishment, for example, of the Zongli Yamen in late imperial times to acknowledge the need to manage foreign relations with other states as peers, extending into the aims of Chinese foreign policy. Yan notes that since the late Qing period, when by virtue of its contact with the West it developed a “modern scientific understanding of geography”, China has not made the obtaining of world hegemony its goal.<sup>23</sup> China, at least for now, is cognizant of the fact that it is merely a regional power that should focus on fixing domestic problems,<sup>24</sup> a view shared both by Chinese officials and analysts.<sup>25</sup> As a developing power, it is more concerned about securing the foundations of its own development than pursuing international leadership.<sup>26</sup> In other words, its desire to contribute to global public goods appears to be mostly limited to what can help it to fulfil the requirements of its modernization and solve internal challenges.<sup>27</sup> In addition to its preoccupation with domestic development, factors such as geography and recent history may also be constraining China’s global security role, such as its focus on Taiwan, Tibet and the South China Sea, in addition to Beijing’s “ambivalence over international involvements”, which will be returned to below.<sup>28</sup> China’s conservative and cautious foreign policy, focused almost exclusively on aims designed to preserve the Chinese Communist Party’s hold on

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-7.

<sup>23</sup> Yan, “Pre-Qin Philosophy and China’s Rise Today”, p. 218.

<sup>24</sup> Liu Xu, personal interview, Beijing, 13 April 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Yong Deng, “Better Than Power: ‘International Status’ in Chinese Foreign Policy”, in Deng and Wang (eds.), *China Rising*, p. 66.

<sup>26</sup> Chen Xinming, personal interview, Beijing, 19 April 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Haenle, personal interview, Beijing, 24 April 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, p. 306.

power, can also be attributed to a siege mentality or fear of being singled out,<sup>29</sup> although this could also be the result of a desire to maintain order after China's "century of humiliation". Indeed, China's fear of encirclement is an oft-referenced theme,<sup>30</sup> although it has produced varying foreign policy outcomes throughout the decades, including a failed war against Vietnam in 1979.

Related to the limited scope of China's aims is the question of how much it has changed through its interactions with European international society. Such a process should be expected to be slow – despite China's interactions with Europe dating back to the nineteenth century, its opening up more fully only genuinely began in 1978 under Deng.<sup>31</sup> The Soviet Union's "accommodation" with European international society only occurred after its revolutionary tendencies were tempered through "Socialism in One Country" and the Second World War, and its full integration only began after communism's collapse – and even this has encountered roadblocks.<sup>32</sup> In the early 2000s, Beijing began to acknowledge that security is now a globalized phenomenon – not zero-sum or limited to military issues – and now "assigns independent weight to interdependence" as a foreign policy goal.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, in addition to moving toward a cooperative approach on issues such as peacekeeping and arms control, a 1991 Chinese government human rights white paper did not challenge the idea of human rights nor its "universality in principle", representing a "significant" development as this differs from traditional Chinese philosophy.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Fei-Ling Wang, "Beijing's Incentive Structure: The Pursuit of Preservation, Prosperity, and Power", in Deng and Wang (eds.), *China Rising*, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> For example, see Charles E. Ziegler, "Russia and China in Central Asia", in James Bellacqua (ed.), *The Future of China-Russia Relations* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), pp. 244-5.

<sup>31</sup> Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, p. 309.

<sup>32</sup> Zhang, *China in International Society Since 1949*, p. 46.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas G. Moore, "Chinese Foreign Policy in the Age of Globalization", in Deng and Wang (eds.), *China Rising*, pp. 135-6 & 152.

<sup>34</sup> Zhang, *China in International Society Since 1949*, pp. 127 & 183-4.

That said, China's interpretation of human rights differs from the belief that individuals have legitimate claims on society or the state; rather, these rights are granted by the state itself.<sup>35</sup> Some contend that Beijing has engaged in human rights diplomacy "not because it believes in democracy and human rights per se but because the United States and the West have confronted China over the issue" and it "is motivated by regime survival".<sup>36</sup> In other words, "[h]uman rights and democracy have not become national aspirations, but they have become legitimate topics for legal and policy debates."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, China's pursuit of economic globalization may not be to integrate with the rest of international society, but rather to pursue multipolarization, per the logic that increased economic development brings with it the ability to resist hegemony and safeguard one's independence.<sup>38</sup> However, China's aims in this regard could be said to be more concerned with the supposed "democratization" of IR, including questions of global pluralism and the manner in which diplomatic relations are conducted rather than with power polarity as such, referring "more to the nature of international decision making than to the distribution of material power" and often citing support for multilateralism instead of multipolarity.<sup>39</sup> It also appears that "China has gradually moved from traditional history-embedded and national interest driven approaches to a co-management paradigm in its policies toward great powers".<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, some Chinese scholars profess their belief that Beijing is in fact most comfortable dealing with other states bilaterally: Rather than view multilateralism as a genuine institutional

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>36</sup> Ming Wan, "Democracy and Human Rights in Chinese Foreign Policy: Motivation and Behavior", in Deng and Wang (eds.), *China Rising*, p. 279.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>38</sup> Moore, "Chinese Foreign Policy in the Age of Globalization", p. 134.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-5.

<sup>40</sup> Quansheng Zhao, "Managing the challenge: Power shift in US-China relations", in Quansheng Zhao and Guoli Liu (eds.), *Managing the China Challenge: Global perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 246.

arrangement, it is seen at best as merely a tool or tactic and at worst a Western trap to tie China down.<sup>41</sup>

As for the question of Chinese conceptions of sovereignty, some scholars trace differences between the West and China in this regard to key historical events, with the decline of universal empire in favour of the state witnessed in the former resulting in negotiated political authority and thus, in effect, limited sovereignty and leaders who were accountable to God.<sup>42</sup> “The political fragmentation and the lack of a single hegemonic empire in Europe enabled it to invent institutions of freedom from political authority that in later centuries were understood as ‘universal values’: democracy and human rights.”<sup>43</sup> Conditions were fundamentally different in China, with empire remaining the norm and religious leaders not challenging the authority of the emperor, all of which strengthened the perceived sacrosanct nature of its sovereignty, which underpins its contemporary commitment to the norm of non-intervention. Moreover, “China’s historical experiences tend to emphasize that the greatest threat to human rights takes place during periods of instability, regime change, and threats to the authority of the ruling polity.”<sup>44</sup> Fukuyama notes that there have scarcely been any sort of judicial checks on the power of the emperor in Chinese history,<sup>45</sup> and unlike in Europe where social modernization preceded the growth of the modern state, in China it was political modernization that came first.<sup>46</sup> That China was able to reunify after the fall of the Han dynasty is a testament to the durability of the appeal of the emperor’s Mandate of Heaven.<sup>47</sup> However, other scholars are quick to caution that a “difference of opinion within

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<sup>41</sup> Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> See Andrew Coleman and Jackson Nyamuya Maogoto, “‘Westphalian’ Meets ‘Eastphalian’ Sovereignty: China in a Globalized World”, *Asian Journal of International Law*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (2013), pp. 237-69.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2012), p. 290.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-9.

the international system” is not necessarily akin to a “difference of cultural perspective”, noting that upholding the principle of non-interference is a form of professing one’s equality with Western powers within the existing system rather than an expression of one’s fundamental cultural difference.<sup>48</sup>

The picture painted above is one that features a “quite risk-averse and narrowly self-interested” power.<sup>49</sup> Since its coming into contact with Europe in the nineteenth century, China has wanted to be “prosperous, secure, respected” but still “left alone in its own geocultural orbit”, and it remains a “confused and conflicted rising power undergoing an identity crisis of significant proportions” that possesses “contradictory attitudes”.<sup>50</sup> China views itself both as too small and too big – as still poor and developing but also as the next superpower – simultaneously.<sup>51</sup> In its mind, its century of humiliation continues as “new enemies generate new humiliations”,<sup>52</sup> even as its economic rise persists and it moves toward primacy in its own region. One cannot help but see yet another parallel with Russia, which helps to explain the convergence of worldviews between the two powers. As discussed in previous chapters, it, too, remains confused between whether to pursue a European or Eurasian future – torn between an image of itself as an equal great power and a centuries-old inferiority complex vis-à-vis the West. If China remains trapped between conflicting images of itself seventy years after the end of its century of humiliation, then one can expect Russia’s soul-searching to continue for some time as well, after having suffered a humiliating loss of superpower status not three decades ago.

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<sup>48</sup> Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 34.

<sup>49</sup> Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, p. 309.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 316-7.

<sup>51</sup> William A. Callahan, *China: The Pessimist Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 196.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.



### 6.2.2. *China and World Order*

When it comes to the international order from which China has benefitted so greatly over the past four decades, one is also faced with a mixed picture. Following China's isolation under Mao, it joined under Deng an international order that was "grudgingly regarded as acceptable, though not desirable and fully justifiable".<sup>53</sup> If much of today's order and society date their origins to the aftermath of World War II, then Beijing did not have much of a say over what rules they would feature, as China was engulfed in a civil war until 1949 and then largely alienated from international society throughout the 1950s and 60s.<sup>54</sup> The Chinese political elite tend to believe that "the cost-benefits balance clearly favours the path of responsible power over a confrontational strategy",<sup>55</sup> but at the same time Beijing "appears to desire a gradual revision of the existing world order as a consequence of its rising capacity relative to other powers",<sup>56</sup> even if it hasn't advanced a comprehensive new values system to challenge the existing order.<sup>57</sup> Even when it comes to China's signature project – the BRI – it is possible to interpret it in different fashions. On the one hand, it could merely be a plan to foster greater international integration that embraces the existing global neoliberal economic consensus – thus complementing the existing order rather than challenging it – and remaining too conceptually unclear to represent a serious alternative.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, it could be interpreted as an alternative to the Western order that respects state sovereignty and contends that security is achieved through development rather than democratization.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Zhang, *China in International Society Since 1949*, p. 126.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Deng, "Better Than Power", p. 66.

<sup>56</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, p. 155.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>58</sup> Bilahari Kausikan, personal interview, Singapore, 23 May 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, p. 19.

According to one analyst, this dualism expresses itself in the contrast between regional and global Chinese conceptions of order.<sup>60</sup> At the global level, Beijing cannot be thought of as being purely revisionist – although it has often been a free rider, it “has no reason to kick over the table” as it has benefitted substantially from existing arrangements, and the institutions it has proposed such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank complement the prevailing order. In any event, China cannot hope to assume the role played by the United States, not only because of the latter’s continued presence in global affairs but also because it has led on the basis of economic openness. China, by contrast, remains a closed market in many ways, due in part to the dilemma of needing to pursue policies designed to keep the Chinese Communist Party in power. Yet at the regional level in East Asia, Beijing can be considered as a revanchist power, aiming for primacy as a means of preserving its ability to pursue its interests and security over the long term. Its more hard-line attitude toward its core interests – Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang and maritime claims in the South China Sea – differs manifestly from the more constructive image it seeks to project globally. One scholar sums up China’s view of the contemporary world order by noting that Beijing’s “relatively cooperative behaviour in world affairs, and its de facto validation of the international economic system in particular, reflects the apparent conviction of China’s leaders that the existing interstate system is a viable one for meeting China’s central goals” related to continuing its economic development and enhancing its power, which shows that while China may be dissatisfied with “various inequities in the international economic system, it seeks neither to undermine specific regimes nor to weaken their norms in any substantial way”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Kausikan, personal interview, Singapore, 23 May 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Moore, “Chinese Foreign Policy in the Age of Globalization”, p. 145.

Another notes that China's foreign policy discourse since the mid-1990s has privileged international status over power.<sup>62</sup> While this may appear to render Beijing's treatment of the contemporary order more inflexible as "social denigration" may be tougher to overcome than power issues,<sup>63</sup> the fact that Beijing has sought "international identification" and status implies an acceptance of established patterns of global interactions, implying an inherent degree of non-revisionism in Chinese foreign policy.<sup>64</sup>

A potential wild card in all of this, however, is Chinese nationalism, which according to one scholar appears to be contained for now.<sup>65</sup> From 1949, the legitimacy underpinning the communists' victory in the country's civil war and its subsequent construction of a Leninist state has not been Marxism but rather nationalism – a promise to right historical wrongs and end China's century of humiliation.<sup>66</sup> Mao's experiment of using Marxism as a means of social cohesion "ended in total failure", with nationalism being rekindled for this purpose in the post-Mao era, even if the Chinese Communist Party uses it pragmatically, instrumentally, and in a way that is "without [...] eternally defined content".<sup>67</sup> Zhao notes that as long as China remains pragmatic in its international dealings, its nationalism will be directed more toward preserving national unity during its complicated process of modernization rather than toward others, and that to that end the international community should help China to "reduce its feelings of insecurity".<sup>68</sup>

As this entire section has indicated, China's relationship with the contemporary global order is a complex one. Although a theoretical perspective rooted in norms (and, to a lesser extent, identities) might have difficulty contending that an obvious "national interest" exists,

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<sup>62</sup> Deng, "Better Than Power", p. 51.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>65</sup> Artyom Lukin, personal interview, Vladivostok, 1 May 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction*, p. 209.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

the picture painted here is of a China that appears largely self-interested, leaving it with an ambiguous relationship with the order – not psychologically invested in its survival but benefitting enough from it not to want to overthrow it. There may be a desire to revise certain principles, including a push for stronger respect for state sovereignty and a gradual redefinition of the concept of human rights, but these do not represent a comprehensive alternative to the existing order. To reiterate once again what has been mentioned earlier in this dissertation, this does not guarantee that the contemporary order will not erode – indeed, more disorder or a more informal order could be what lies ahead rather than an alternative order. But China has indeed been altered by its interactions with European international society, and its aims appear to be limited to displacing the United States in the South China Sea and the broader Asia-Pacific region rather than replacing it as the global political hegemon.<sup>69</sup> That said, China's ambiguous relationship with the liberal order nonetheless places some form of restrictions on the latter's expansion. Although Moscow's and Beijing's respective core aims may differ, they nonetheless share an ability to check the liberal order's particular interpretation of universalism.

One further conclusion to draw at this point is that China's foreign policy appears to be aimed primarily at securing the necessary international conditions for it to pursue its domestic development goals and retain its territorial integrity. This is true regarding both its immediate neighbourhood – where it fears encirclement by Washington and its friends and allies – as well as in its less confrontational approach to the wider world. In fact, recent years have even witnessed a lighter touch in Beijing's interactions with regional players, following the US withdrawal from the seemingly anti-China Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Trump administration's trade policies that have confronted allies and adversaries alike, and the

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<sup>69</sup> Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 142.

gradual finessing of the BRI.<sup>70</sup> China's privileging of domestic challenges is important to note because, although it supports international norms such as polycentrism and non-interference, it does so not as an end in itself but rather as a means to an end. Beijing may ultimately inherit an empire of sorts by accident due to the BRI, but this is not the same thing as having specific pretensions toward hegemonic status. This differs from Russia, for whom recognition as an equal great power is a key foreign policy aim in itself.<sup>71</sup> As such, there are non-negligible differences between Russia's and China's respective conceptions of international order – a theme which will be returned to below.

### 6.3. Russian Eurasianism

Having established the parameters of China's interaction with international society, it makes sense to re-evaluate Russia's place in a Eurasian supercontinent where Beijing is growing increasingly influential, particularly in the context of a declared Russian "pivot to the East".

Russia does not necessarily face an all-or-nothing choice between Eurocentric and Eurasian foreign policy approaches. As noted in the preceding chapter, the Greater Eurasia framework that Moscow has advanced remains open to European participation, while some recent analyses have attempted to advance a Russian foreign policy strategy that embraces normal relations with all of Russia's neighbours.<sup>72</sup> That said, as previously discussed, Russia's centuries-long interaction with European international society and the resulting prominence of its national discourse on Europe make it difficult to imagine a situation – certainly over the medium term at the very least – in which the question of Russia's European

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<sup>70</sup> Feng Zhang, "China's Curious Nonchalance Towards the Indo-Pacific", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol. 61, no. 3 (2019), pp. 187-211.

<sup>71</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "It's Time to Rethink Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 25 April 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/78990> (last accessed 13.05.2019)

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

future is no longer germane.<sup>73</sup> Some consider there to be a possibility in which Russia's current Eurasian turn is merely temporary, with some sort of return to the European fold likely to occur over the medium term.<sup>74</sup> Yet although Russia's geography ensures that it will, by necessity, continue to interact with both Europe and Asia, it is nonetheless still possible to identify periods in history in which Russia privileges a Eurocentric or a Eurasian strategy.

Periodic declarations by political leaders that Russia should never choose between East and West more so reflect statements of identity and national destiny of varying vagueness, rather than guiding foreign policy strategies. Despite moments of tension and occasional references by some to the need to strike closer ties with Asian powers, the period between 1991 and 2014 can broadly be seen as a time in which Russia nonetheless privileged a Eurocentric strategy. Since the Maidan revolution and the de-normalization of relations between Russia and the EU, Moscow's guiding paradigm has shifted from Greater Europe to Greater Eurasia. As detailed in the previous chapter, Morozov may contend that this does nothing to alter Russia's Eurocentrism, but his point relates to Russian discursive and psychological traits rather than overt foreign policy strategy. Various visible indicators can be identified and associated with a Eurocentric or Eurasian approach to order-building, ranging from macro-level initiatives (e.g., Greater Europe and "common spaces") to more specific institutions (e.g., the Eurasian Economic Union or Shanghai Cooperation Organization) to the general cultivation of bilateral relationships.

Eurasianism in Russian foreign policy can take several forms: as a partnership with China or as the defence of a distinct Eurasian space separate from the rest of Asia from China, as an embrace of Russia's multi-ethnic character or as a rejection of it in favour of

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<sup>73</sup> Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), p. 210.

<sup>74</sup> Andrey Kortunov, "Russia's Troubles and Options", *Global Brief*, Fall/Winter 2019, available online at: <https://globalbrief.ca/2018/10/russias-troubles-and-options/> (last accessed 12.07.2019)

more explicit leadership by ethnic Russians.<sup>75</sup> The need to coordinate the integration process of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) with China's BRI may represent an admission from Moscow that in its current incarnation, "small" Eurasianism focused exclusively on the post-Soviet space is an insufficient means of helping Russia to emerge as a significant power pole in today's world. With Belarus and Kazakhstan somewhat alienated by the Russian annexation of Crimea and intra-EEU trade damaged by Western sanctions, the supercontinent-wide Greater Eurasia paradigm is designed to breathe new life into Moscow's Eurasian foreign policy vector and position Russia at the centre of Eurasian integration.<sup>76</sup> The question, however, is the extent to which the Kremlin's Eurasianism under Vladimir Putin's presidency represents a rejection of Europe.

Classical Eurasianists tend to be opponents of Russian nationalism, seeing as – like communism – they believe it to be imported from the West.<sup>77</sup> Nationalists can often be of the view that Russia's ethnic minorities and a commitment to the country's quasi-imperial, multi-ethnic fabric help to keep Russia conservative and authoritarian, rather than "European".<sup>78</sup> Because of their Nordic appearance, many nationalists in Russia even view Russians as being the most typical Europeans,<sup>79</sup> but this appears to echo the view that Russia is the "true Europe" rather than the West which has become decadent and whose values have become corrupted, thus indicating the existence of overlap between Russian conservatives and nationalists. Similarly, Eurasianism appears to embody a commitment to statism – to a belief

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<sup>75</sup> See Marlene Laruelle, "When Eurasia Looks East: Is Eurasianism Sinophile or Sinophobe?", in Mark Bassin and Gonzalo Pozo (eds.), *The Politics of Eurasianism: Identity, Popular Culture and Russia's Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), p. 156.

<sup>76</sup> Bobo Lo, "Greater Eurasia: The Emperor's New Clothes or an Idea whose Time Has Come?", *Russie.Nei.Reports*, No. 27, Ifri, July 2019, available online at: <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/etudes-de-lifri/russieneireports/greater-eurasia-emperors-new-clothes-or-idea-whose> (last accessed 23.08.2018)

<sup>77</sup> Richard Sakwa, "The Age of Eurasia?", in Bassin and Pozo (eds.), *The Politics of Eurasianism*, p. 208.

<sup>78</sup> Igor Torbakov, "Defining the 'True' Nationalism: Russian Ethnic Nationalists versus Eurasianists" in Bassin and Pozo (eds.), *The Politics of Eurasianism*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>79</sup> Mark Bassin, "What Is More Important: Blood or Soil? *Rasologija* Contra Eurasianism", in Bassin and Pozo (eds.), *The Politics of Eurasianism*, p. 49.

that the state embodies Russia and that its power must be restored – which would therefore appear to place it at odds with liberalism and Westernization.<sup>80</sup> That said, “the norms of a democratic state still resonate” in Russia, and continued attempts to pursue the “reconstruction of national identity” there remain complex due to the weight of liberalism’s ongoing presence in post-Cold War Russian society, even if China’s appetite for natural resources is allowing Russia to break from the West and reassert state primacy to a certain extent.<sup>81</sup> Russian political life therefore contains a complex mixture of liberalism, nationalism and Eurasianism. Putin appears to draw both from nationalists and Eurasianists,<sup>82</sup> while simultaneously attempting to tame a mixture of “[Duginite] New Eurasianism, Russian nationalism, neo-Soviet nostalgia and a strain of democratic exceptionalism” that he helped to unleash.<sup>83</sup> The varying interpretations of Eurasianism and nationalism in Russia combined with the delicate but evolving synthesis that Putin is constructing between them provide evidence for the complex and mixed position in which Russia currently finds itself on the static-dynamic spectrum.

As was outlined in the previous chapter, Russia has long encountered difficulty with the question of nation-building. Both late-imperial Russia and Gorbachev strove for some form of it rather than engage in state-building or the construction of an “affirmative-action empire”, resulting in both cases in state collapse in 1917 and 1991 respectively.<sup>84</sup> However, both of these instances represented Russian nationalist revolts against empire but under cosmopolitan slogans, which made it easier for some form of imperial rule ultimately to be restored.<sup>85</sup> Putin, for his part, claims that he seeks to mend the harm done to Russia’s

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<sup>80</sup> Laruelle, “When Eurasia Looks East”, p. 145.

<sup>81</sup> Gilbert Rozman, *The Sino-Russian Challenge to the World Order: National Identities, Bilateral Relations, and East vs. West in the 2010s* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 202 & 205.

<sup>82</sup> Torbakov, “Defining the ‘True’ Nationalism”, p. 33.

<sup>83</sup> Sakwa, “The Age of Eurasia?”, p. 214.

<sup>84</sup> Torbakov, “Defining the ‘True’ Nationalism”, p. 33.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.



wellbeing as a multi-ethnic polity caused by the country's collapse twice in a single century.<sup>86</sup> From the above, despite the occasional overlap between political visions and movements – important if one is not to essentialize Russia – one of the most central thematic emphases of Eurasianism is Russia's distinctness from Europe, and by extension from any Western-led international order. This is perhaps what leads Alexander Baunov to conclude that the Russian regime has “found that it's not only impossible to catch up with the West but also impossible to overtake it” and therefore that Putin and his supporters in the Russian elite “want to build an alternative”.<sup>87</sup> However, despite its at least partially illiberal statist character and its emphasis on a form of multi-ethnic quasi-imperialism, the Kremlin's form of Eurasianism in the twenty-first century appears to possess greater compatibility with the West than one might initially expect.

Though Russia may periodically turn to the East, these efforts are thought by some simply to represent attempts to balance against the West, with the latter remaining the key focus of a traditionally Western-centric Russian foreign policy.<sup>88</sup> Many in the Russian political elite believe that “challenges to Russia's leading status [as a great power] always originate from the West”.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps in line with Morozov's analysis of Russia's subaltern character vis-à-vis Europe, Sakwa contends that Putin's Eurasianism consists of an effort at enhancing “Russia's position in the European and West-centred global order”.<sup>90</sup> The Eurasian Economic Union, according to Putin, is designed to help Russia negotiate with the EU on better terms rather than oppose it outright.<sup>91</sup> In fact, the EEU's initial focus was on advancing

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<sup>86</sup> Irina Kotkina, “Geopolitical Imagination and Popular Geopolitics between the Eurasian Union and *Ruskii Mir*”, in Bassin and Pozo (eds.), *The Politics of Eurasianism*, p. 62.

<sup>87</sup> Alexander Baunov, “What Drives the Russian State”, *The New York Times*, 22 November 2018, available online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/22/opinion/russia-putin-pension-reform.html> (last accessed 12.12.2018)

<sup>88</sup> Lo, “Greater Eurasia”.

<sup>89</sup> Laruelle, “When Eurasia Looks East”, p. 157.

<sup>90</sup> Sakwa, “The Age of Eurasia?”, p. 217.

<sup>91</sup> Kotkina, “Geopolitical Imagination and Popular Geopolitics”, p. 62.

the project of a Greater European integration of equals by providing Ukraine with an alternative to the Association Agreement offered by the EU, with the enhanced focus on Sino-Russian relations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) emerging only after this attempt resulted in unambiguous failure.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, unlike China's Belt and Road Initiative, which focuses "on bilateral trade and investment, and eschews institution building", the EEU has taken a formally supranational and institutional shape, much like the European Union.<sup>93</sup>

Buttressing the case for Russian Eurasianism not being fundamentally opposed to the West is the fact that Moscow's "pivot to the East" predates the current conflict over Ukraine.<sup>94</sup> As such, thinking of it as occurring exclusively in response to the Russia-West confrontation would be inaccurate, as it also flows from Russia's need to strengthen ties with an economically dynamic Asia and develop its Far Eastern and Siberian regions.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, any eastward pivot by Russia will have to be gradual, as the country – in which most inhabitants feel European and whose entry into European international society occurred centuries ago – is generally less familiar with the East than it is with the West.<sup>96</sup> As Timofei Bordachev puts it, "Despite the historically unprecedented case of political trust [between Russia and China], the point of no return has not yet been passed."<sup>97</sup>

The previous chapter dwelled on a possible structural factor that inherently places limits on Russia's ability to challenge the Western-centric international order, namely the inherent West-centrism that some scholars – Viacheslav Morozov most articulate among

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<sup>92</sup> Sakwa, "The Age of Eurasia?", pp. 206-7.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-4.

<sup>94</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, pp. 176-7.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69 & 176-7.

<sup>97</sup> Timofei Bordachev, "Russia's Eurasia Moment: Politics, Economics, Business", in Piotr Dutkiewicz, Richard Sakwa and Fyodor Lukyanov (eds.), *Eurasia on the Edge: Managing Complexity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), p. 77.

them – characterize as being the country’s natural, “subaltern” disposition. As previously mentioned, this notion is buttressed by *The Globalization of International Society*’s failure to list Russia as one of the points of origin of international society’s polycentric historical formation process. But there is equally a case to be made that characterizing Russia as a “subaltern empire” in relation to Europe ultimately orientalizes and de-normalizes Russia’s foreign policy. Per this narrative, Russia’s oscillations between East and West should not be understood as consequences of the evolution of Moscow’s relationship with a normatively hegemonic actor, but rather as instrumental and tactical manoeuvres to support the country’s overall strategy of cementing its status as an independent great power. In other words, Russia could be pursuing deeper ties with the East as a good in itself, rather than simply as a means of securing its strategic rear and hedging against a West that occupies the entirety of its psychological focus. If true, this would be in line with the “static” characterization of Russia rather than the “dynamic” one. Furthermore, the intense nature of Russia’s current struggle with the West may not necessarily be exclusively due to Russia’s naturally West-centric disposition, nor even to the normative dependency that it felt and the expectations that it possessed following its “return to Europe” after the fall of the Iron Curtain, but rather to the seemingly ideological goals and zero-sum interactions in Russia’s “near abroad” that have characterized much of the post-Cold War relationship between Moscow and leading Western capitals. This renders the Russia-West dispute more existential in nature, which is not the case for Sino-Russian relations, as Beijing does not challenge the legitimacy of Russia’s presence in their shared Central Asian neighbourhood.<sup>98</sup>

If this latter characterization of the growth of Russia’s ties with the East holds, then could it be asserted that Moscow’s challenge to the international order is in fact more

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<sup>98</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, p. 190.

substantial that initially thought? This requires an analysis of the contemporary nature and aims of the evolving Sino-Russian relationship.

#### **6.4. Russia-China Relations Today**

Much like the study of Russia specifically that this dissertation has undertaken thus far, Sino-Russian relations also reveal a mixed and complicated picture. That said, there are still two major trends that can be identified, which flow both from existing academic literature and from expert interviews. First, we are currently situated in a period of transition in great power relations. Although certain windows of opportunity have narrowed and watershed moments have already occurred – with the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 marking the rough terminus of the West’s expansion and the end of any hope for a fully fledged Greater Europe – the precise contours of both Russia-West and Russia-China relations are still malleable to a degree. And second, while Russia wishes to prove itself as a reliable partner for China and there exists genuine momentum for deeper Sino-Russian cooperation, their partnership faces certain challenges that will be difficult to overcome. Further academic research on this front could study the extent to which Russia and China can transform their Greater Eurasian partnership into a genuinely thick Eurasian regional international society, on a par with the transatlantic alliance.

It is useful to address the second point first, as it helps to provide a greater understanding of the nature of contemporary great power relations, in addition to Russia’s overall foreign policy strategy. In the wake of the acceleration of Russia’s eastward pivot and the onset of unambiguously rivalrous relations between Moscow and Western capitals, much attention has been paid – by scholars, journalists and policy analysts alike – to the evolving nature of Sino-Russian relations. While the two states have not formed a full-fledged alliance

– despite calls for one in some intellectual and policy circles – they maintain a strategic partnership that continues to deepen and has managed to overcome several possible irritants in the bilateral relationship. It is the current nature of that partnership that is of interest to this dissertation.

Chinese scholars interviewed for this research were generally optimistic about the long-term sustainability of the Sino-Russian relationship. Liu Xu of Beijing's Renmin University highlights the shared interests and views on how international relations should be conducted between Moscow and Beijing, noting that there is a natural complementarity between Russia's status as the world's second-most important military power and China's position as the second-largest economy on the planet. Moreover, Putin and other Russian leaders have already internalized the fact of China's rise and Russia's relative decline in their shared neighbourhood.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, despite the common refrain that Moscow fears Beijing's rising clout in its Central Asian "sphere of influence", there is actually more complementarity between the two powers in the region than initially meets the eye, beyond the fact that China does not challenge the legitimacy of Russia's presence there and keeps its regional aims mostly limited to the economic sphere and direct threats to China's security (such as terrorism or drug trafficking).<sup>100</sup> China's fear of encirclement by the United States makes it more likely to welcome the reassertion of Russian influence in Central Asia as a means of evicting Washington from the region. Russia, for its part, sees China's economic presence in the region as a stabilizing force,<sup>101</sup> providing the development necessary to strengthen the foundations supporting the authoritarian regimes of Central Asian states. Moreover, in

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<sup>99</sup> Liu, personal interview, Beijing, 13 April 2018.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Stronski and Nicole Ng, "Cooperation and Competition: Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 28 February 2018, available online at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/28/cooperation-and-competition-russia-and-china-in-central-asia-russian-far-east-and-arctic-pub-75673> (last accessed 01.01.2019)

<sup>101</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, pp. 86-7.

addition to Moscow's acceptance of the inevitability of China's increasing economic footprint, "[d]eeper Chinese penetration into the region actually reduces incentives for these countries to seek export routes to Europe that might bypass Russia and create additional pressure on Russian exporters in its core market".<sup>102</sup>

Chen Xinming notes that the strategic part of the Russia-China relationship has become the most beneficial, and in fact it is the relative unimportance of the commercial part of the relationship that will help to ensure that relations will not sour as Moscow potentially becomes Beijing's junior partner.<sup>103</sup> This sentiment is echoed somewhat by Paul Haenle, who directs the Carnegie Tsinghua Centre in Beijing: The fact that Sino-Russian relations have already survived a power transition, with China having now replaced Russia as the "bigger brother" and larger of the two economies, demonstrates the extent to which both countries value their relationship.<sup>104</sup> Yong Deng further highlights this point, claiming that the pace of Sino-Russian cooperation in the 1990s was "remarkable" in light of problems related to the demarcation of the Russia-China border, mutual security suspicion, and issues associated with the presence of Chinese immigrants in Russia.<sup>105</sup> The distinct nature of economic and political relations as a factor buttressing the foundations of Moscow-Beijing ties despite the growing power gap between them has also been noted by Artyom Lukin of Vladivostok's Far Eastern Federal University, who points out that Australia's increasing economic dependence on China has not changed its status as an American ally, nor has North Korea's reliance on

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<sup>102</sup> Alexander Gabuev, "Why Russia and China Are Strengthening Security Ties", *Foreign Affairs*, 24 September 2018, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-09-24/why-russia-and-china-are-strengthening-security-ties?cid=int-fls&pgtype=hpg> (last accessed 01.01.2019)

<sup>103</sup> Chen Xinming, personal interview, Beijing, 19 April 2018.

<sup>104</sup> Paul Haenle, personal interview, Beijing, 24 April 2018.

<sup>105</sup> Yong Deng, "Beyond alliance? China's strategic partnerships with Russia and India", in Zhao and Liu (eds.), *Managing the China Challenge*, p. 153.

China been an insurmountable obstacle to it conducting a foreign policy that Beijing often finds irritating.<sup>106</sup>

Other scholars, however, are more circumspect when it comes to the likely level of Sino-Russian cooperation likely to be witnessed over the medium-to-long term. According to Li Lifan, Russia's desire to entrench a multipolar logic in Eurasia (evidenced by its desire for a wider SCO membership), combined with the continued lack of mutual trust between India – now a full SCO member – and China on high-order strategic issues, means that Beijing will be likely to focus on advancing the BRI independently as its main strategic project, reducing the SCO to secondary importance.<sup>107</sup> Parag Khanna goes even further and highlights the secondary nature of the EEU as well, as Central Asian states are more interested in having multiple competing benefactors rather than submit themselves entirely to Russia over the long term.<sup>108</sup> This may represent a blow to Russia's self image as an independent great power, although Khanna also notes that – with the exception of the Mongol period – Asia has never truly been unipolar, and the existence of nuclear weapons guarantees the continued multipolar nature of its power political configuration, which could assuage Russian concerns.<sup>109</sup>

Marcin Kaczmarek has added his voice to the list of scholars who remain sceptical about the extent to which Russia and China can maintain a deep partnership over the long term. While acknowledging the existence of several points of normative convergence between Moscow and Beijing on questions of international order, institutions and cooperation, he reminds us that “Moscow sees itself first and foremost as a great power and as a bulwark against US dominance and unipolarity”, while China “focuses more on the

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<sup>106</sup> Artyom Lukin, personal interview, Vladivostok, 1 May 2018.

<sup>107</sup> Li Lifan, personal interview, Shanghai, 7 May 2018.

<sup>108</sup> Parag Khanna, personal interview, Singapore, 24 May 2018.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

economic sphere and depicts itself as the locomotor of globalization”.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps more crucially,

[w]hile Beijing remains dissatisfied with some elements of the existing order, in particular US primacy, it recognizes the benefits that the post-Cold War period has brought to China. As a result, China prefers an incremental shift in status hierarchies and inter-national arrangements that will empower Beijing. [...] The political elite in Moscow, on the other hand, does not consider the current arrangements of international order as beneficial to Russia’s great-power interests. Moscow appears determined to regain its privileged position in a rather short period, including with the use of its renewed military capabilities.<sup>111</sup>

Gilbert Rozman focuses on the identity dimension to reach a similar conclusion. In his view, Russia and China focused on narrower objectives in the 1990s “to keep the international order from impinging” at a time of significant volatility.<sup>112</sup> However, signs of progress in their ties were visible as early as Yeltsin’s trip to Beijing in December 1992.<sup>113</sup> The countries have been brought together normatively by incidents surrounding Chechnya and Taiwan in the mid-1990s, Kosovo in 1999, Iraq and the colour revolutions in the mid-2000s, and most recently the Arab Spring at the outset of this decade,<sup>114</sup> and Medvedev’s attempt at a reset in relations with Washington only “delayed forces that were gathering steam” in helping to advance a Sino-Russian rapprochement.<sup>115</sup> Their shared normative vision has taken institutional form, with the SCO repudiating universal values and aiming to

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<sup>110</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, “Convergence or divergence? Visions of world order and the Russian-Chinese relationship”, *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2019), pp. 207-24.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Rozman, *The Sino-Russian Challenge to the World Order*, p. 197.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.



serve as a “model for international organizations”.<sup>116</sup> That said, “Eurasianism is faulty as a cultural ideal for Russia”, thus casting doubt on its durability.<sup>117</sup> But more crucially, the current identity-related phenomenon pushing Russia and China together is transitional in nature, and could be undermined by rising Sino- or Russo-centrism, leading Rozman to conclude that the two countries will not form ties as close as the United States shares with its allies.<sup>118</sup> As he puts it, “the overall identity gap [between Russia and China] is not large, but the nature of the divide leaves relations unlikely to draw much closer and in a state of perpetual fragility”, owing in part to Russia’s multipolar view of the world versus China’s dualistic one.<sup>119</sup>

All of the above raises questions as to whether Sino-Russian relations are, at least for the time being, in an optimal condition: The deepened strategic partnership between them in recent years could, in a sense, represent the most flexible type of relationship, in which both countries are not always with each other but never against each other. By contrast, mutual suspicion between Moscow and Beijing nearly led to war in the 1960s, while a full-fledged alliance between them would divide the world rigidly into blocs once again. In fact, one could draw a parallel between the limited nature of the Sino-Russian partnership and the merely partial fashion in which both powers are challenging the existing world order.<sup>120</sup> However, it is worth noting that the question of identities is somewhat distinct from that of norms. While the identity-related convergence described by Rozman may be a temporary phenomenon, pressure from the West may continue to push them together, resulting in them

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 258-9.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 276-7.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>120</sup> The Sino-Russian partnership is now said to have reached the level of an “entente”, implying “basic compatibility of worldviews supported by practical collaboration in a large number of areas”. See Dmitri Trenin, “Russia, China are key and close partners”, *China Daily*, 5 June 2019, available online at: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201906/05/WS5cf6f85da3105191427010c6.html> (last accessed 23.08.2019)

continuing to uphold similar norms for how global politics should be organized which have the potential to become autonomous. This, in turn, will affect the normative character of international society and thus its relationship with the realm of international order, in addition to providing additional pushback against the liberal order. The intersection between identity and norm promotion in Sino-Russian relations and the Moscow-Beijing axis' relationship with the rest of the global political system is worthy of continued attention and presents opportunities for further research.

There have been significant efforts by both Moscow and Beijing to frame the Russo-Chinese partnership as not being about questions of polarity or geopolitics, condemning these as relics of the twentieth century. Yong Deng claims that since the Sino-Russian partnership is not an alliance – no commitment exists from either country to defend the other – then it cannot be about bringing about multipolarity, representing instead a new kind of international relationship.<sup>121</sup> This is buttressed by Russia's claims about wanting to bring about a more "polycentric" world – a term that appears less threatening and less concerned with the less constrained great power rivalry of centuries past than "multipolar". Post-Cold War ties between the two countries have been dominated mostly by "pragmatic considerations" and has seen a gradual "thickening of the relationship".<sup>122</sup> The resulting cooperation between the two countries have thus far allowed both to benefit from peaceful development, win-win diplomacy and an increasing "democratization" (i.e., de-unipolarization) of international relations, all of which are "key tents of Chinese foreign policy".<sup>123</sup> Beijing therefore clearly benefits from maintaining the status quo in Russia-China relations, which also helps it avoid encirclement by American friends and allies in the Asia-Pacific region, in addition to the

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<sup>121</sup> Deng, "Beyond alliance?", p. 159.

<sup>122</sup> Andrew Kuchins, "Russian Perspectives of China: Strategic Ambivalence", in Bellacqua (ed.), *The Future of China-Russia Relations*, p. 33.

<sup>123</sup> Elizabeth Wishnick, "Why a 'Strategic Partnership'? The View from China", in Bellacqua (ed.), *The Future of China-Russia Relations*, p. 56.

(admittedly waning) US military presence in Afghanistan. But from Moscow's perspective, are the long-term foundations of the bilateral relationship sound?

### **6.5. Foundations of the Sino-Russian Relationship: How Strong?**

China may be a rising power, but its foreign policy – save for perhaps on core issues such as Taiwan and Tibet – is designed largely to preserve the status quo which has ensured its development at a meteoric pace over the past four decades.<sup>124</sup> Yan recently writes that under normal circumstances, China over the coming decade should be expected to maintain as its primary foreign policy objective the preservation of the international conditions necessary to foster its development.<sup>125</sup> Russia, however, has been more explicit in its desire to challenge Western leadership – although this may partly be due to questions related to its belonging to European civilization and Europe's security system, with Russian disinformation and election meddling in the West being perceived as an existential threat to the liberal order due to the idea that the EU is one of the central embodiments of that order. Furthermore, there exists genuine concern in Moscow regarding the possibility of gradually becoming Beijing's junior partner, although some are confident that this can be avoided by creating a Greater Eurasian space rooted in shared norms and by maintaining overwhelming nuclear superiority over China, among other things.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ziegler, "Russia and China in Central Asia", p. 233. Also see Andrey Kortunov, "Who Will Build the New World Order?", *Russian International Affairs Council*, 6 June 2019, available online at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/who-will-build-the-new-world-order/> (last accessed 23.08.2019)

<sup>125</sup> Yan Xuetong, "The Age of Uneasy Peace", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February Issue, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-12-11/age-uneasy-peace> (last accessed 28.01.2019)

<sup>126</sup> See Zachary Paikin, Kaneshko Sangar and Camille-Renaud Merlen, "Russia's Eurasian past, present and future: rival international societies and Moscow's place in the post-cold war world", *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2019), pp. 225-43.

However, there continues to be speculation as to whether the long-term foundations of Russo-Chinese relations are in fact stable. There has been a genuine convergence of norms between the two states over the course of the past two decades,<sup>127</sup> but a changing balance of power between them and the consequences that flow from this could mean that the status quo will only suit both parties over the medium term.<sup>128</sup> Leonid Bershidsky contends that Russia has three macro-level foreign policy options following Putin's presidency – pursuing closer ties with Europe, attempting to remain an independent great power, or becoming increasingly dependent on China – with the second option likely to lead to the third, as Russia is unlikely to be able to modernize sufficiently in economic terms to stand on its own two feet so long as its relations with Europe remain frosty.<sup>129</sup> Mark Galeotti fails to see any “clear, compelling and above all credible strategy” from the Kremlin to secure Russia's long-term development, leaving a “vacuum at the heart of current policy” and the Putin regime in an insular, inflexible and final stage of its development.<sup>130</sup> And Andrey Kortunov notes that although Russia's natural synergies lie with Europe, normative contestation between Moscow and European capitals prevents Russia's full integration into the West, while Russia's participation in any Asian order over the long term will inevitably be as a secondary player to the likes of China, Japan and India.<sup>131</sup>

A Russia that is increasingly dependent upon China may grow resentful as the reality of it no longer being an equal great power able to exert itself within its sphere of influence begins to sink in. Russia's failure to intervene in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 already reveals a gap

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Lukin, personal interview, Vladivostok, 1 May 2018.

<sup>129</sup> Leonid Bershidsky, “Europe Should Woo Russia When Putin's Gone”, *Bloomberg*, 27 December 2018, available online at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-12-27/russia-after-putin-could-be-peaceful-with-europe-s-help> (last accessed 29.01.2019)

<sup>130</sup> Mark Galeotti, “Is Late Putinism Dead or only Resting?”, *Raam op Rusland*, 28 January 2019, available online at: <https://www.raamoprusland.nl/dossiers/kremlin/1190-is-late-putinism-dead-or-only-resting> (last accessed 29.01.2019)

<sup>131</sup> Kortunov, “Russia's Troubles and Options”.

between Moscow's declarations concerning its "sphere of privileged interests" and its actual capabilities or desires. One could make the claim that Russia is less concerned with wanting to preserve its sphere of influence than it is with being treated as an equal partner. In other words, it is enough for Russia to know that China does not challenge the legitimacy of its presence in Central Asia the way that NATO and the EU deny Moscow a say over Ukraine's foreign policy orientation. This would suggest a Russia that is content to construct a Greater Eurasia rooted in shared norms, a degree of respect for one another's national interests, an element of foreign policy coordination and the absence of a zero-sum logic to Sino-Russian relations. Still, Russia's laying out of a Greater Eurasian free trade zone in response to the BRI could be interpreted as an attempt to scramble for time in a desperate attempt to create an image of itself as an equal co-architect of an emerging Eurasian order.<sup>132</sup>

Moreover, despite the genuine normative convergence between Russia and China that has gradually occurred over the course of the post-Cold War period, there remain gaps between Russian foreign policy and the character of the international order that is emerging in Eurasia. For example, the SCO – which supports the norm of territorial integrity – did not recognize the independence of the Georgian breakaway territories South Ossetia and Abkhazia as Moscow did.<sup>133</sup> In fact, many Chinese experts are pessimistic about the ability of the SCO to function effectively, considering it merely to be a "supplementary tool", with most cooperation between China and Russia occurring outside its framework.<sup>134</sup> Nor do any of Russia's partners in the EEU or the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) officially recognize its claim to Crimea.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, while Moscow does provide Beijing with some support when it comes to its claims in the South China Sea by positioning itself

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<sup>132</sup> Paikin *et al.*, "Russia's Eurasian past, present and future".

<sup>133</sup> Ziegler, "Russia and China in Central Asia", p. 246.

<sup>134</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, p. 58.

<sup>135</sup> Trenin, "It's Time to Rethink Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy".

against the internationalization of the dispute, it also supports freedom of navigation and attempts to maintain good ties with all states in the region, notably with China's traditional Southeast Asian rival Vietnam.<sup>136</sup> China, for its part, does not wish to get entangled in the Ukraine conflict, which has in fact disrupted some of its Belt and Road-related plans to connect European markets to Asia.<sup>137</sup>

Despite these differences, scholars such as Alexander Lukin consider the Sino-Russian convergence of worldviews to be not just sound but profound. It was not just Russia but also China that attributed the Ukraine crisis to Western overreach.<sup>138</sup> The prevailing view among Chinese policy experts is that the Russia-China rapprochement is rooted not merely in shared short-term interests but in “a common understanding of global processes and a similar vision of the future of world order”, although on the extremes one can find views that consider Russia useless or conversely that call for a full-fledged alliance (the official government position is that of an “equal partnership”).<sup>139</sup> According to Lukin, Beijing needs partners that broadly believe in multipolarity due to its lack of formal allies, and thus views Moscow as a guarantor of an independent Chinese foreign policy in global affairs.<sup>140</sup> In addition to the reasons listed above why Moscow may not be so averse to a Chinese presence in Central Asia, Beijing is grateful for the role that Russia plays in countering the United States' presence in the region, which helps China to avoid encirclement.<sup>141</sup> Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi calls the Sino-Russian partnership a “strategic decision” by both sides, emphasizing that it is not merely a relationship of convenience.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, pp. 127-8.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, p. 52.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Paul Bolt and Sharyl Cross provide a more mixed account. On the one hand, there is genuine convergence and complementarity between the two states. Both view democracy and human rights promotions as a threat to the stability of their regimes, and indeed to the world order more generally.<sup>143</sup> The EEU and the BRI do not compete with each other, as the former is concerned with regulation while latter is more about “logistics” and transport.<sup>144</sup> Both of them remain open to good relations with the West, but only on the basis of equality and mutual respect.<sup>145</sup> There visibly is momentum driving their bilateral relationship and a willingness by both to compromise.<sup>146</sup> Both sides are committed to deepening economic ties, and there remains much potential to increase bilateral trade and investment, including trade conducted in roubles and yuan.<sup>147</sup> Although a deeper economic relationship between them is advancing slowly, a fully developed link between the EEU and BRI has the potential to reshape the global economic order, helping to shift its centre of gravity eastward.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, the Sino-Russian partnership has also proven to be politically effective, as it “limits the capacity of the United States and Western nations to decisively manage outcomes in such regional conflict situations [as Ukraine and Syria]”.<sup>149</sup>

However, non-negligible obstacles remain in the path of further Sino-Russian convergence. Vladimir Putin allegedly needed to overcome some bureaucratic resistance in Russia to get his country to sign up to China’s Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank – a sign that there exists greater Sino-scepticism in the Russian government than is present in the Kremlin’s official line.<sup>150</sup> Although Russia has necessarily been influenced by the East

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<sup>143</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, p. 157.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

throughout its history – coming into contact with Turkic and Mongolic peoples as it expanded eastward – it has also at times looked to it with a degree of ambivalence and a sense of superiority, if not outright fear.<sup>151</sup> This puts the country in an ambiguous and constantly self-questioning position, as many also claim that Russia – despite being a part of European civilization – never spiritually merged with the West.<sup>152</sup> Uncontrollable nationalism or perceived unequal gains could undo the progress made in recent years and drive Russia and China apart.<sup>153</sup> And the two countries’ differing fundamental desires – Russia yearning for recognition of its great-power status while China remaining more preoccupied with preserving the conditions necessary for economic growth – suggest that a full-fledged alliance is unlikely,<sup>154</sup> implying that there are limits to how close a relationship they can forge. In fact, China proposed the BRI in part because Moscow resisted putting economic issues – include trade policy, energy, and even the idea of a free trade agreement – on the SCO agenda.<sup>155</sup> The result of this is the pursuit of different (albeit nominally coordinated) economic projects in Eurasia, a divergence of opinion regarding the role of the SCO, the loss of the SCO as a possible platform for harmonizing the EEU and the BRI (a reality further entrenched by the organization’s dilution following its admission of India and Pakistan as full members in 2017),<sup>156</sup> and a tacit admission that Russia is not willing to enmesh its economy entirely into a fully integrated Eurasian supercontinent for fear of not being able to compete.

Beyond these limitations, however, lies a more significant obstacle: Russia may in fact still be hedging its bets. As was discussed earlier, the point of no return in Russia-West

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>156</sup> See Natasha Kuhrt, “An expanded Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: reinvigorated, or on the road to redundancy?”, in Elena Korosteleva, Zachary Paikin and Stephen Paduano (eds.), *Five years after Maidan: Toward a Greater Eurasia?*, LSE IDEAS, May 2019, pp. 26-32, available online at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/reports/LSE-IDEAS-COMPASS-UPTAKE-Greater-Eurasia.pdf> (last accessed 22.08.2019)



relations was passed in 2014 – the vision of a “Greater Europe” from Lisbon to Vladivostok is effectively dead, and the mutual trust no longer exists for some sort of “reverse Kissinger” in which Russia forges an alliance with the West against China,<sup>157</sup> even if trust-building is still a work in progress in Sino-Russian relations as well. Moscow’s failure to accept US leadership “necessarily closes the door to its integration into Western-led structures”,<sup>158</sup> at least until there is some fundamental transformation of the nature and structure of the transatlantic community. The Yeltsin, Putin and Medvedev presidencies all opened with what were perceived as unilateral concessions to the West, only to be rebuffed.<sup>159</sup> The Ukraine crisis, in which Western governments reneged on an agreement negotiated between the Yanukovich government and the Maidan protestors to establish a transition period and hold early elections, appears to have been the last straw for Moscow. Further unilateral concessions on Russia’s part are now seen as pointless, as they would not change the West’s overarching disposition and its perceived foreign policy strategy geared toward regime change and democratism.<sup>160</sup> The belief in Moscow now is that Russia “cannot establish friendly relations with [the United States and Europe] without its complete political submission”.<sup>161</sup> Regardless of any current disagreements or potential long-term irritants in the Sino-Russian relationship, this fact is certain to buttress the foundations of their partnership for some time and guarantee a significant degree of hostility in Russia-West relations, which in turn will constrain the liberal international order and damage the cohesion of global international society’s collective great power hegemony.

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<sup>157</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, p. 298.

<sup>158</sup> Trenin, “It’s Time to Rethink Russia’s Foreign Policy Strategy”.

<sup>159</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, p. 12.

<sup>160</sup> See Andrey Kortunov, “A Letter to John: Where Are U.S.-Russia Relations Headed?”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 17 May 2018, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/76336> (last accessed 30.01.2019)

<sup>161</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, p. 15.

That said, although the point of no return *preventing* full convergence has been passed in Russia-West relations, this does not necessarily imply that the point of no return *ensuring* full convergence has been reached in Russia-China relations. The economic component of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership is perceived as crucial to preventing the two sides from drifting apart.<sup>162</sup> Bolt and Cross contend that economic ties between the two countries have yet to reach the strategic level – citing the decline of the Altai pipeline project and the failure of a Chinese firm to buy a stake in Rosneft – even if China has become the dominant force in the bilateral relationship.<sup>163</sup> Crucially, this may change if Western sanctions against Russia endure,<sup>164</sup> suggesting that the future shape of Sino-Russian relations and the wider Eurasian supercontinent can still be determined by Western capitals, even if the initial post-Cold War visions for Russo-Western convergence can no longer be realized. The slow pace of progress in securing stronger Russia-China economic ties can partially be explained by the fact that negotiations involving state-owned enterprises inevitably take time.<sup>165</sup> But a more significant explanation also exists: Russia's relations with China have become meaningful in the sense that Moscow's primary (if not near-exclusive) foreign policy focus is no longer its relationship with the West, but they are nonetheless still being used instrumentally in some ways. These twin truths, when paired with the assumptions embedded within this dissertation's core model, generate important conclusions concerning the future of the Eurasian supercontinent and international order more broadly.

As mentioned above, Russia's core foreign policy aim in the post-Crimean annexation international environment is to enhance post-Westernism and secure independent great power status, whereas China's invocations of post-Westernism serve a more instrumental purpose of

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<sup>162</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, p. 74.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

providing political breathing room to continue its economic development. This is further evidenced by Russia's use of the Greater Eurasia paradigm to balance not only against American hegemony by attempting to exclude it from Eurasian affairs, but also against *all* potential hegemony by enmeshing China in a series of multilateral institutions and equilibria.<sup>166</sup> One could therefore initially conclude that while the Sino-Russian strategic partnership may serve both parties' interests for the time being, the two countries' conceptions of international order differ in ways substantial enough to cause them to drift apart at some point in the future. For this reason, Bobo Lo suggests that the possible re-election of Donald Trump in 2020 would obviate the need for Russia to employ an inclusive Greater Eurasia paradigm to balance against the liberal international order and therefore potentially lead to the emergence of a Yalta-type arrangement between Washington, Moscow and Beijing.<sup>167</sup> However, this dissertation contends that norms matter and are quasi-autonomous. Driven by shared concerns over the excesses of the liberal international order and a common scepticism of Western democracy promotion, Russia and China have undergone a normative convergence in recent years.<sup>168</sup> Just as norms backed by Moscow emphasizing post-Westernism and polycentrism may survive Russia's gradual decline, so, too, can elements of the Sino-Russian normative convergence, including the norm of a Eurasian space rooted in equality, non-interference and mutual respect.

But even more crucially, the Russian and Chinese core aims outlined above are not as different as they initially seem, because they are in fact of a different nature. Both countries challenge the liberal order horizontally while defending international society's autonomy vertically. But Russia's core aim of multipolarity is related to the question of what sort of international *order* should prevail within an international society that it defends, while

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<sup>166</sup> Lo, "Greater Eurasia".

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Paikin *et al.*, "Russia's Eurasian past, present and future".

China's desire for breathing space is not predicated on any specific global power arrangement or distribution and is therefore designed to allow it to continue its accommodation with international *society* on its own terms.<sup>169</sup> As such, while Russia and China's differing aims may lead them at times to interact differently with the wider international order and society, the extent to which these will inhibit the deepening of their bilateral relationship should be qualified. It is possible that irritants may emerge as the power gap between the two continues to increase, but they are unlikely to acquire the zero-sum character that has defined Russia-West relations on questions related to the geopolitical orientation of countries in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. This is likely to remain the case so long as China continues to treat Russia as an equal great power – something that is manifestly in the former's interest if it is to avoid encirclement and secure its borders.<sup>170</sup> As Michael Cox notes, although Moscow and Beijing may not always share identical interests, “China which has so few serious friends in the world today appears to have found something close to one in Russia, and [...] Russia – increasingly isolated from the West and in need of as much support as it can muster – has clearly discovered one in China”.<sup>171</sup>

Even if the liberal order were to tame its post-Cold War overreach or the EU to reduce its economic sanctions directed against Russia, this would perhaps mitigate but not eliminate a process that has already been initiated in the sphere of norms that connects the realms of

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<sup>169</sup> That said, the deterioration of China-West relations in recent years has increased the degree of confrontation between Beijing and aspects of the US-led liberal international order, which could stand to strengthen the Russo-Chinese entente even further. See Dmitri Trenin, “US Obsession With Containment Driving China and Russia Closer”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 31 July 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/2019/07/31/us-obsession-with-containment-driving-china-and-russia-closer-pub-79609> (last accessed 23.08.2019)

<sup>170</sup> For more on what a Sino-Russian bilateral relationship in which Russia is increasingly dependent on China might resemble and how it might endure, see Alexander Gabuev, “Future approaches to China”, in Hiski Haukkala and Nicu Popescu (eds.), *Russian futures: Horizon 2025*, Report no. 26, EU Institute for Security Studies, March 2016, pp. 47-54.

<sup>171</sup> Michael Cox, “China and Russia: Axis of Convenience or Strategic Partnership”, in Yu Jie (ed.), *From Deng to Xi: Economic Reform, the Silk Road, and the Return of the Middle Kingdom*, Special Report 23, LSE IDEAS, May 2017, pp. 19-25.

international order and international society. As will be discussed at length in the final chapter, with the post-Cold War project of creating a Greater Europe having failed and the Eurasian vector of Russian foreign policy having consolidated, the trend toward a post-Western international society has been strengthened. It is possible that if the world were to move increasingly toward a G2 configuration between Washington and Beijing over the medium term and this were to increase Moscow's sense of insecurity, this could prompt a Russian repivot toward Europe (albeit unlikely in the form of a return to visions of a deeply integrated Greater Europe). But this would merely indicate a shift in polarity and a realignment of the orders present in the multi-order world, and would not prompt an end to change in international society or the re-stabilization of the liberal international order – which, as will be elaborated upon in the next chapter, faces its own structural dilemmas.

The mixed character of Sino-Russian relations detailed in this chapter guarantees further uncertainty in Russian foreign policy in the years ahead. The extent to which Russia wishes to pursue integration with China remains unclear, as is the degree to which the Sino-Russian partnership can generate recognition of Russia's and China's equal great power status from the liberal order's Western power base. This lack of clarity concerning outcomes implies that Moscow is unlikely to capitulate in its desire to earn recognition of its great power status and its right to a "sphere of privileged interests", likely ensuring that relations with the West will remain difficult for some time. This, in turn, indicates that the forces driving Russian neo-revisionism are unlikely to disappear in the near future, which suggests that the foundations on which the contemporary international society rests – the downward vertical vector of great power collaboration and a sturdy international order beneath it – will remain unstable for now.

## 6.6. Russian Independence and Hybridity

In 2010, Dmitri Trenin characterized the Putin-Medvedev tandem's national vision as one of "conservative modernization" – not denying the necessity of economic modernization and reform but pursuing them in a slow and periodic fashion, in a way that does not significantly threaten the political stability of the governing regime.<sup>172</sup> The oligarchic nature of much of the Russian regime guarantees that economic reform often comes with political consequences. This strategy is not necessarily a distinct Russian model for economic development on a par with Western neoliberalism and democratism or China's BRI, nor does it represent a guarantee that Russia will not ultimately drift into China's economic orbit if prolonged Western sanctions deny Russia the ability to modernize effectively and rapidly enough. Indeed, Trenin notes that "without radical reform, Russia's oil-dependent economy cannot hope to take its place among the modern great powers".<sup>173</sup> And just as Moscow's post-Cold War contradictory aims of nurturing good ties with the West while reintegrating the former Soviet republics could not simultaneously be sustained,<sup>174</sup> this strategy may collapse on its contradictions as well.

The term "conservative" in this context should be thought of more as a synonym for "cautious" than as being indicative of a more profound shift in Russian political and social norms. Russia remains open to relations with the liberal West (albeit on its own terms). Putin came to power as a pragmatist, and as discussed in previous chapters, his style of governance still fails to satisfy conservative ideologues entirely. As the former Canadian ambassador to Russia Jeremy Kinsman writes, Westerners call Putin "right-wing and autocratic. Most

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<sup>172</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Conservative Modernization: A Mission Impossible?", *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 25 May 2010, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/2010/05/25/russia-s-conservative-modernization-mission-impossible-pub-41108> (last accessed 31.01.2019)

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Stephen Kotkin, "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016 Issue, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/russias-perpetual-geopolitics> (last accessed 31.01.2019)

Russians would peg him as a relative liberal because they know there are more lethal potential tyrants in the wings that Putin fends off.”<sup>175</sup> On issues ranging from abortion to capital punishment, Putin’s regime has failed to placate the desires of the Russian Orthodox Church, while the discourse of “Gayropa” designed to criticize a supposedly morally decadent West is used more instrumentally, designed to advance a narrative rather than reflect “inherent culture, values, or ideology”.<sup>176</sup> It is true that following the 2008 recession – and particularly after the 2011 protests in Russia and the sanctions that followed the Crimean annexation in 2014 – it appeared as if many pillars of legitimacy on which the Kremlin had hitherto relied (including economic growth) were “crumbling”, and thus that “new sources of legitimacy would have to be found”.<sup>177</sup> However, the conservative turn that accompanied this trend can be thought of as situational rather than profound, and has yet to overtake the more profoundly entrenched Soviet and liberal legacies in Russian society. The Russian state remains young, and according to some has not yet created a *rossiski chelovek* where a *sovietski chelovek* once existed.<sup>178</sup> The desire to “return to Europe”, for its part, represents the formative event of the current Russian state,<sup>179</sup> and liberals remain one of several (often diametrically opposing) groups in Russia from which Putin draws his rhetoric, governing agenda and political coalition.<sup>180</sup> This suggests that the “dynamic” element continues to influence Russia today to a certain extent.

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<sup>175</sup> Jeremy Kinsman, “Letter from Moscow”, *Policy Magazine*, 24 July 2019, available online at: <https://policymagazine.ca/letter-from-moscow/> (last accessed 04.08.2019)

<sup>176</sup> Peter Pomerantsev, “Europe, Putin, and the ‘Gayropa’ Bait”, *Coda*, 18 January 2016, available online at: <https://codastory.com/lgbt-crisis/putin-wants-to-confuse-you> (last accessed 31.01.2019)

<sup>177</sup> Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), pp. 24-5.

<sup>178</sup> For example, see Irvin Studin, “Ten Theses on Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, *Global Brief*, 27 November 2017, available online at: <http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2017/11/27/chapter-1-%E2%80%93-ten-theses-on-russia-in-the-21st-century/> (last accessed 31.01.2019)

<sup>179</sup> As mentioned earlier, Seymour Martin Lipset’s formative events theory contends that key events that occurred when a country was founded will have a long-lasting impact on its political culture. See for example Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>180</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 119.

Trenin's concept of "conservative modernization" is mostly focused, however, on domestic economic and political questions. Crucially, it possesses a foreign policy analogue, which can be identified as the desire to remain an independent great power – a *velikaya derzhava*. This allows for a partnership with Beijing on normative issues to beat back perceived Western excesses, while simultaneously maintaining a semi-closed (and only gradually opening) economy vis-à-vis China to buy time and remain an independent power pole. Writing recently, Trenin puts it thus:

Moscow is not competing for global primacy with Washington, nor for continental predominance with Beijing. Rather, Russia seeks to maintain its geopolitical and security sovereignty vis-à-vis both the United States and China. For the foreseeable future, Moscow regards Washington as its principal adversary, and Beijing as its main partner. But it is careful not to become overly dependent on the latter.<sup>181</sup>

In a similar vein, Michael Kofman has characterized Russia's contemporary strategy as one of raiding – deploying unconventional tactics against a more powerful West and attempting to hold out until a more powerful China ultimately forces the United States to acquiesce to a multipolar great power condominium.<sup>182</sup> This should not, however, be confused with a revisionist foreign policy tendency, as it is designed to preserve something that Russia already has, namely great-power status. As was discussed in previous chapters, the Russian desire for a more polycentric world is directed at Western democratism and the perceived excesses of the liberal international order, not at international society as a whole.

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<sup>181</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "China, Russia and the United States Contest a New World Order", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 7 May 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/2019/05/07/china-russia-and-united-states-contest-new-world-order-pub-79078> (last accessed 07.07.2019)

<sup>182</sup> Michael Kofman, "Raiding and International Brigandry: Russia's Strategy for Great Power Competition", *War on the Rocks*, 14 June 2018, available online at: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/raiding-and-international-brigandry-russias-strategy-for-great-power-competition/> (last accessed 31.01.2019)



Moscow's desire to maintain great-power status is the Russian foreign policy equivalent to Washington's pursuit of American unipolarity. It is therefore related but still of a somewhat different nature to the rivalry between the liberal international order and the Sino-Russian pushback that occurs within the multi-order world. This characterization is illustrative, as it indicates that Russia is less interested in shifting global norms as part of an ideologically cohesive grouping of states than it is in using that grouping as a means of protecting its great-power status and enforcing existing norms (outside its near abroad, where it remains more sensitive about maintaining its privileged position) – very much in line with Sakwa's characterization of Russia as a “neo-revisionist” power. Indeed, in all the aforementioned categories, whether domestic or international, one finds hybridity: Putin's synthesis between Russia's Westernizing tendency and its more distinctive character, conservative modernization's desire for development but cautiously and on Russia's terms, and a search for great-power status that attempts with difficulty to resolve the perennial national question of where Russia should lie between East and West. All these tendencies are geared toward preserving stability, which lends credence to one of Morozov's arguments on Russia's subaltern character outlined in the previous chapter. But crucially, contra Morozov, it is not stability for stability's sake,<sup>183</sup> lending credence to the existence of a rising “static” component in Russian foreign policy and national identity.

Putin's presidency is a continuation of the system – begun as a Western-oriented one – inherited from Yeltsin.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, Putin's arrival in the Kremlin began with an attempt to reopen Russia's doors to economic and security cooperation with the West following Yevgeny Primakov's more West-sceptic tenure. This, combined with Russia's centuries-long

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<sup>183</sup> Viatcheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 160.

<sup>184</sup> See Tony Wood, *Russia Without Putin: Money, Power and the Myths of the New Cold War* (London: Verso, 2018), pp. 4-5.

presence in European civilization, ensures the continued presence of a liberalizing tendency in Russian political discourse, even though its strength may wax and wane. Russian history is replete with instances of liberalizing overtures and conservative backlashes, although occasionally an overture does succeed in permanently moving society's "yardsticks", evidenced by the far more modern, urbanized, educated, Westernized and indeed liberal society that exists in Russia today when compared with a mere century ago. One would be tempted to ask whether this secular trend will ultimately supersede the cyclical trend of periodic liberal-conservative oscillation. Putin, however, aims to transcend the divide by fusing the two tendencies. Whether this endeavour will prove successful and durable beyond his presidency is an open question. The "loss" of Ukraine, however, does suggest that Russia will have to embark on a possibly lengthy journey that aims to redefine the contours of its political and national community. This suggests that Russia's dynamism has not reached an end, even if remnants of the country's imperial and bicontinental legacy act to slow this process.

## **6.7. Conclusion**

In the 1990s, Russia largely ignored Central Asia, prioritizing relations with the West instead. This is also true of China, which had only just begun its period of substantial economic growth and whose focus remained fixed on Taiwan and the West Pacific.<sup>185</sup> The reorientation of both major powers' foreign policies toward the Eurasian Heartland is symbolic of an important shift in global affairs: Both have begun, in effect, to become greater stakeholders in the management of order on the Eurasian supercontinent, and thus of world order more broadly – confirming Bolt and Cross's contention that the Sino-Russian partnership does

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<sup>185</sup> Ziegler, "Russia and China in Central Asia", pp. 234-5.

indeed shape world order.<sup>186</sup> Just as the independence of *Mitteleuropa* – historically threatened by its German and Russian neighbours – has come to be thought of as emblematic of the American-led liberal international order since the end of World War I, so, too, can the Sino-Russian consolidation of *Mitteleurasien* to Washington's exclusion be seen as a symbol of that order's decline, even if the precise shape of that consolidation remains unclear for now.

Alexander Lukin contends that Europe is welcome to join the Greater Eurasia that is being formed, so long as it agrees to uphold the fledgling configuration's pluralistic principles.<sup>187</sup> One would be tempted to claim that this is an example of attempting to shift the strength of global norms, thus representing a direct challenge to the existing world order. But ultimately this merely challenges the universalism and democratism of the liberal international order and not the legitimacy of the rules-based world order. The advancement of good relations between Russia and China – two giants with a history of mutual antagonism – is normally something to be welcomed and has the potential to contribute to global stability. The problem is that the United States and many of its allies appear to believe that Moscow and Beijing are challenging the rules-based world order itself, rather than simply the overreach of the liberal international order.<sup>188</sup> Therefore, rivalry is likely to continue to plague the emerging multi-order world, which in turn has the potential to destabilize international society itself. The further entrenchment of antagonism may result from growing frustrations from all parties owing to the persistence of rival norms, as was the case in 2014 between Russia and the West, rather than outright decisions to initiate a new cold war. This, combined with China's mere partial challenge to the liberal order, once again indicates that the order's erosion is likely to engender greater disorder rather than offer a full-fledged

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<sup>186</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, p. 301.

<sup>187</sup> Lukin, *China and Russia*, p. 187.

<sup>188</sup> Bolt and Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics*, p. 297.

alternative before the dust settles and a new *modus vivendi* is potentially reached. What this implies for the specific resilience of the liberal international order and for the future capacity of today's international society to imbue the wider international order with content will be the conceptual focus of the final chapter of this dissertation.

## *Chapter 7*

### *Post-Westernism, Hegemony and the Future of the Liberal Order*

#### **7.1. Introduction: Global Politics at a Crossroads**

As was discussed in previous chapters, Russia is attempting a strategy – if one can call it that – of preserving the stability of its domestic order while refusing to choose definitively between East and West. The emphasis on order at home is, of course, most often attributed to the economic and political chaos that prevailed within Russia's borders throughout the 1990s, but also to the centuries-long fear of the consequences of disorder dating back to the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century. On the international front, the aim is to secure long-term recognition as an independent great power. The emphasis on both sets of factors flows from the fact that the form that an international order takes at any given time depends on “the interplay between domestic and international conditions”.<sup>1</sup>

This second aim may prove difficult to achieve in light of the first, as failing to integrate with the West and pursue adequate economic reform – combined with a soft power reservoir that has limited appeal outside the post-Soviet space – could limit Russia's long-term ability to maintain its place in the top tier of global powers. Although Russia has at least de facto managed to gain recognition of its great power status for now when it comes to other states' strategic calculations, Moscow's influence in the Russian “near abroad” has shrunk since it demonstrated a willingness to annex one of its neighbour's territory, even among traditional allies such as Belarus and Kazakhstan which have begun to pursue hedging

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<sup>1</sup> Georg Sørensen, *Rethinking the New World Order* (London: Palgrave, 2016), p. 216.

strategies.<sup>2</sup> But the question of Russia's status as an independent great power also intersects with the question of its growing normative convergence with China. Norms and ideas are quasi-autonomous forces in international society, and it is possible that Russia's growing dependence on China and the absence of viable foreign policy alternatives will combine with this convergence of norms to secure a close strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing that can survive the irritants present in their bilateral relationship (e.g., threat perceptions or the consequences of power transition).

China, for its part, may profess a commitment to anti-hegemonialism today, but its Belt and Road Initiative may produce an international empire of sorts by default that could exert a gravitational pull on Russia and its surrounding neighbourhood. Others argue, by contrast, that the BRI is destined to empower those states in which investments are made, ultimately securing the multipolarization of the Eurasia-Pacific region.<sup>3</sup> That said, with tensions ratcheting up between China and the United States, it is unlikely that Washington will allow Beijing to move toward dominance in the Asia-Pacific region,<sup>4</sup> if only not to set a precedent that Moscow can take advantage of in its quest to earn recognition of its "sphere of privileged interests". The conditions under which China will seek to preserve good relations with Russia, if only not to be encircled by US-friendly states, are therefore likely to endure.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the contours of the future shape of the international order are therefore visible, while some have yet to be revealed. With this in mind, this chapter will proceed to

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<sup>2</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "It's Time to Rethink Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 25 April 2019, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/78990> (last accessed 27.05.2019)

<sup>3</sup> Parag Khanna, "China Couldn't Dominate Asia if It Wanted to", *Foreign Policy*, 3 February 2019, available online at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/03/china-couldnt-dominate-asia-if-it-wanted-to/> (last accessed 27.05.2019)

<sup>4</sup> See Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Also see Paul J. Bolt and Sharyl N. Cross, *China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 301.

evaluate the context in which the global political system is now situated along three vectors: practical, theoretical and conceptual.

## 7.2. Post-Westernism Reconsidered

One of the principal tasks of this dissertation has been to survey and evaluate the principal academic literature on the question of to what extent Russia and China are challenging the contemporary international order. Part of the answer to that question is derived from the conceptual model developed in Chapter 2, which will be returned to below. While that model is what will help address this dissertation's core task, this chapter will dwell first on the potential impact of Russian and Chinese desires on the international order on a more elementary level.

Two of the most well-known recent works evaluating the future shape of international order are the quite succinctly named *The End of American World Order* by Amitav Acharya and *Post-Western World* by Oliver Stuenkel. Both reach conclusions that are broadly in line with this dissertation's central precepts, although stated in different terms.

First, both authors confirm that there exists a distinction between the American-led liberal international order and the broader, rules-based world order that prevails today. Acharya contends that “[t]he end of US hegemony does not necessarily mean the end of global cooperation”<sup>6</sup> and that a “pragmatic globalism” could take the place of today’s “ideologically charged liberal internationalism”,<sup>7</sup> additionally noting that “not being able to challenge American power frontally does not mean accepting American values and leadership. China can surely help thwart the preservation of the US liberal hegemony”.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Policy Press, 2018 [2014]), p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Stuenkel, in line with the idea laid out in Chapter 2 that the commitment of rising powers to globalism and the lack of a genuine alternative to it does not necessarily imply that we will not see contemporary international society erode beyond repair, echoes this by writing that “The rise of a parallel order is [...] unlikely to be a threat to the rules and norms of today’s order. Yet that does not mean that institutions will succeed in addressing all the dangers of power transition.”<sup>9</sup> Washington’s opposition to China’s Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is an example of its preoccupation with not losing hegemony, rather than with the separate phenomenon and question of upholding certain international rules and norms.<sup>10</sup>

Second, both put forward conceptual models that roughly reflect Flockhart’s notion of a multi-order world. Acharya speaks of a “multiplex world” that will feature a “more diverse, complex, and fragmented multilateralism”<sup>11</sup> and “parallel and intersecting orders”.<sup>12</sup> This is also in line with the assertion put forward by Lebow, described in Chapter 4, that international orders over time evolve toward greater complexity. This has paralleled the general strengthening of the character and content of hegemony throughout modern history, although the advent of a multi-order world appears to be one instance in which these two trends – greater complexity and greater hegemony – are finally diverging, an idea which will be further probed below. Stuenkel’s terminology focuses on a new era of “competitive multilateralism” and the rise of a “parallel order” among non-Western countries that will “initially complement today’s international institutions”.<sup>13</sup> Or as Georg Sørensen puts it, since successful modernization will not always lead in a distinctly liberal direction, regions are bound to increase in importance almost by default. It

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<sup>9</sup> Oliver Stuenkel, *Post-Western World: How Emerging Powers Are Remaking Global Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), p. 196.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>11</sup> Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>13</sup> Stuenkel, *Post-Western World*, pp. 187-94 & 203.



will not be a ‘world of regions’ because globalization, global institutions and common global problems ties us all together, but it will be a more decentred world.<sup>14</sup>

This mirrors Flockhart’s assessment that “what seems to be emerging is several different ‘orders’ (or international societies) nested within an overall international system [...] characterized by diversity in power, principles and institutions”.<sup>15</sup> The question, therefore, is not whether the world is headed toward multiple international orders but rather what form these orders will take, how messy the transition to a multi-order world will be, and whether it will ultimately engender a situation that ultimately stabilizes itself or rather that leads to greater conflict.

Third come the desires of rising powers such as China. Notably, Stuenkel observes that “fears about a post-Western order are misguided partly because the past and present system are far less Western than is generally assumed”.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, he takes time to note that non-Western states played a significant role throughout the second half of the twentieth century in establishing and universalizing norms that are now considered to be part and parcel of the contemporary international order, such as national self-determination, universal state sovereignty and respect for human rights.<sup>17</sup> As such, these should be thought of as norms that are now constitutive of international society as a whole, rather than the non-universal, Western-centred liberal international order. Reinforcing this idea, Christian Reus-Smit writes that this process occurred by newly independent postcolonial states “grafting a reconstituted right to self-determination to emergent human rights norms, arguing that self-determination

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<sup>14</sup> Sørensen, *Rethinking the New World Order*, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Trine Flockhart, “The coming multi-order world”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2016), pp. 3-30.

<sup>16</sup> Stuenkel, *Post-Western World*, p. 205.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

was a necessary prerequisite for enjoyment of basic human rights”, thus “delegitimat[ing] the institution of empire” on a global scale.<sup>18</sup>

Stuenkel also goes to some lengths to expose the nuance behind China’s views on the contemporary international order. Beijing will not respond to US values promotion with “an explicit ideological counter-narrative or alternative model”, which led figures such as Lee Kuan Yew to conclude that we are likely to witness Sino-American competition but not conflict.<sup>19</sup> Stuenkel goes on to write that China’s international strategy “defies the all-or-nothing choice of either rejecting the liberal international order or upholding it”, with BRICS declarations regularly indicating support for the UN, the WTO and newly created multilateral institutions.<sup>20</sup> Beijing’s criticism is not of “today’s rule-based system”, essential to China’s economic modernization plans, but is “rather a criticism of the hegemon’s behaviour in it”.<sup>21</sup> China does not appear to be “proposing new rules”, even supporting norms such as the Responsibility to Protect in principle,<sup>22</sup> and is keenly aware that it can only turn its growing power into veritable international influence if its “hard power sources” are “bound by agreed-upon rules and norms”.<sup>23</sup> Of course, this analysis does somewhat gloss over the instances in which the Chinese leadership have determined that it is worth suffering international criticism in order to secure a core interest, such as securing the long-term foundation of Chinese control over Xinjiang – partly by way of internment and re-education camps for Uighurs – as a means of circumventing American encirclement. But, as discussed in the previous chapter, China’s behaviour when it comes to its perceived core interests differs from its approach to engaging with international society more broadly.

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<sup>18</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, “Power, Legitimacy, and Order”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (2014), pp. 341-59.

<sup>19</sup> Stuenkel, *Post-Western World*, p. 82-3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Acharya similarly notes that Moscow and Beijing support elements of the liberal order such as free trade and institutions, but oppose others such as excessive human rights and democracy promotion that could prove destabilizing.<sup>24</sup> Of course, both countries' support for free trade is partial – Russia has often proven more interested in walling itself off to varying degrees from economies with which it cannot compete, with the non-preferential trade agreement signed between the EEU and China being a case in point,<sup>25</sup> while China has not always opened its market up to foreign companies despite benefitting from an integrated global economic order. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say simply that neither Russia nor China challenges the global hegemony of the neoliberal economic system outright.<sup>26</sup>

Noting the limited nature of the Chinese challenge, Acharya additionally contends that China is unlikely to assume global leadership in the same way that the United States has done, and that the BRI will not be able to produce global Chinese hegemony.<sup>27</sup> China will never represent the same share of the global economy as that held by the United States after World War II when it emerged as a dominant power. And as Joseph Nye puts it, “If the US maintains its alliances in the region, there is little prospect of China being able to drive America from the western Pacific, much less to dominate the world”.<sup>28</sup> These claims echo the writings of Nuno Monteiro, who notes that thus far China has only opted for a modest nuclear capability sufficient to ensure its own security and aims to increase its capacity to challenge

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<sup>24</sup> Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> Chris Devonshire-Ellis, “China-Russia Great Eurasian Partnership on Development Track as EAEU Agree to Regional Free Trade”, *Silk Road Briefing*, 12 February 2019, available online at: <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2019/02/12/china-russia-great-eurasian-partnership-development-track-eaeu-agree-regional-free-trade/> (last accessed 28.05.2019)

<sup>26</sup> Some may view China as presenting an alternative to the hyperglobalism that has prevailed over the past several decades, while others view it as representing merely a different variety of neoliberalism. See Owen Worth, *Rethinking Hegemony* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 145. Also see Dani Rodrik, “Peaceful Coexistence 2.0”, *Project Syndicate*, 10 April 2019, available online at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/sino-american-peaceful-economic-coexistence-by-dani-rodrik-2019-04> (last accessed 29.05.2019)

<sup>27</sup> Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “The rise and fall of American hegemony from Wilson to Trump”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 95, no. 1 (2019), pp. 63-80.

the United States exclusively in the Asia-Pacific region, in both instances shunning the opportunity to balance against Washington on a global scale.<sup>29</sup> Monteiro affirms that China could continue refusing to embrace the logic of the American-led liberal international order in its entirety while simultaneously opting not to challenge the status of the United States as the “global preponderant power”.<sup>30</sup> Conversely, it is also true that Beijing may want to displace the United States as the regional hegemon in the Asia-Pacific while continuing to buy in to elements of the liberal order. Questions of polarity and order are intertwined but nonetheless distinct phenomena.

Interestingly, however, Acharya also writes that China and India are “neither status-quo nor revisionist powers, but reformist ones” that are committed to “peaceful change in world order”.<sup>31</sup> Once again curiously absent from this list is Russia. This could be a non-consequential omission, but on the other hand it could reveal something important not only regarding Moscow’s aims but also concerning the nature of its position in international society.

As has been outlined in previous chapters, although its endpoint remains unclear, China is currently undergoing a co-constitutive process of gradual accommodation to international society, having been introduced to it by way of a “century of humiliation” and then experiencing full-blown alienation from it under Mao.<sup>32</sup> As such, the question of the extent to which China is challenging the contemporary international order on which that society rests is somewhat more straightforward from a conceptual perspective. China may disapprove of certain elements of the liberal international order, but a continuing process of

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<sup>29</sup> Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 142.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> For more on the process of China’s entry into contemporary international society, see Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan’s Encounter with European International Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

interaction with a global international society that is progressively less Western-dominated provides a solid foundation for Beijing to become increasingly comfortable with its place on an international scene that is genuinely novel, featuring powers from across the world interacting “on a regular and sustained basis”.<sup>33</sup> This does not mean that many of China’s intentions will not remain opaque, nor does it preclude the possibility of continued interstate rivalry within the Asia-Pacific region, be it headed toward Chinese dominance or continued multipolarity. But the transition to a multi-order world that eschews much of the universalism that Beijing opposes, combined with China being forced to shoulder at least some additional global public goods as the United States redefines the contours of its international strategy, means that, *ceteris paribus*, it is likely that China will be able to find a place for itself both within the realms of international society and international order, shaping both in the process. Indeed, as Acharya notes, even the act of co-opting emerging powers into a “liberal hegemonic order” would have required “fundamental changes” to that order,<sup>34</sup> to say nothing of the emergence of a multi-order world.

Russia’s situation is more complex, seeing as it had already been fully welcomed into European international society in the mid-eighteenth century, even if there remained a degree of mutual suspicion between the respective leaderships and societies of peninsular Europe and Russia. In addition to Russia not being a rising power, this is why the bi-vectoral model outlining scenarios in Chapter 4 does not focus on Moscow’s degree of accommodation with international society. Rather, it is easier to conceive of it as a conservative power within international society,<sup>35</sup> defending established institutions and norms, much in line with Sakwa’s notion of neo-revisionism. This is why one sees references by Vladimir Putin to the

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<sup>33</sup> Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, p. 134.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>35</sup> See Nikolai Sokov, “The Putin-Trump Summit: In Helsinki, Three Worldviews Will Clash”, *The National Interest*, 15 July 2018, available online at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/putin-trump-summit-helsinki-three-worldviews-will-clash-25766> (last accessed 28.05.2019)

West's "democratic fundamentalism" having created an arc of instability from North Africa to Afghanistan, or why it has been claimed that Russia's newfound assertiveness is about restoring "the viability of national sovereignty".<sup>36</sup> Of course, it is more likely that this is a reference to restoring Russia's sovereign decision-making ability in international affairs, as Moscow's assertiveness has paradoxically resulted in the territorial integrity of Ukraine being compromised. The degree to which several post-Soviet states are viewed by Moscow as being fully sovereign is very much in question,<sup>37</sup> to say nothing of the existing belief among many Russians that they along with Ukrainians form a single Eastern Slavic people.

In this task, Russia has found an ally in China, albeit somewhat by chance. China's apprehension toward perceived Western overreach flows from the caution associated from its recent entry into and slow accommodation with European international society. Russia's, by contrast, is due to its conservative predisposition as a full member of that society – a position it held even during the Soviet period when it effectively helped to spread European international society by way of the universalization of the sovereign state across the globe, a process driven in part by the bipolar Cold War rivalry. Russia's conservative disposition was only briefly overcome during the early Bolshevik period, but this was due to a phenomenon that was emblematic of European history as a whole rather than something particular to Russian political culture.<sup>38</sup> As such, although there has been a genuine normative convergence between Moscow and Beijing in response to perceived Western abuse of established international norms,<sup>39</sup> the reason for their respective responses differs. This represents a further reason why their strategic partnership rests on mixed foundations and

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<sup>36</sup> Christopher Coker, *The Rise of the Civilizational State* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), pp. 184-5.

<sup>37</sup> See Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), pp. 100-31.

<sup>38</sup> Sergei Karaganov, personal interview, Moscow, 6 December 2017.

<sup>39</sup> See Zachary Paikin, Kaneshko Sangar and Camille-Renaud Merlen, "Russia's Eurasian past, present and future: rival international societies and Moscow's place in the post-cold war world", *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2019) pp. 225-43.

places some limits on the extent to which they will be able to shape international order jointly over a sustained period, even as both will be able to shape it individually. This stands to entrench even further the complex form taken by the emerging multi-order world.<sup>40</sup>

Russia's conservative disposition is just that – conservative. It is not necessarily anti-liberal, nor is it opposed to the existence of a liberal international order or Russia's participation in certain elements of it.<sup>41</sup> However, the danger remains that the current rivalry between Russia and the West will spin out of control to the point where amoral neorealist concerns concerning the balance of power prevail in the Kremlin's mind over the need to defend the formal and informal institutions of international society. Such a situation would mark the further erosion of the ties that bind states together in international society, symbolized by the international political system containing a societal balance of power that largely collapsed in the twentieth century (as described in Chapter 3) but whose remains continue to inform international norms and institutions such as sovereignty. In a sign of how much things have already changed, high-level Russian politicians after the American-led invasion of Iraq were still more preoccupied with shaping Euro-Atlantic decision-making so as to provide their country with the security it required to pursue economic development, rather than playing Washington and European capitals off against each other or establishing

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<sup>40</sup> For more, see Zachary Paikin, "Orders Within Orders: A New Paradigm for Greater Eurasia", *Russian International Affairs Council*, 24 April 2019, available online at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/orders-within-orders-a-new-paradigm-for-greater-eurasia/> (last accessed 29.05.2019)

<sup>41</sup> Vladimir Putin's recent interview with the *Financial Times* in which he declared liberalism to be obsolete appears to militate against this assertion. This could be an instance in which, backed by a feeling of being on the right side of history after repelling several invasions in modern history, Russian leaders feel vindicated by the rise of populism in Western democracies, with Russia's own consolidation of "sovereign democracy" presaging the eventual rise of "illiberal democracy" in countries such as Poland and Hungary. However, as was discussed in previous chapters, a liberal thread exists post-Soviet Russian politics and Putin's presidency in particular, the result of Russia's post-Cold War attempts to "return to Europe" at a historical moment in which the hegemony of Washington and the liberal international order appeared particularly acute. In this context, Putin's comment can in part be understood as a tactical move by a relatively weak power (when compared with the combined forces of NATO) to sow disunity and spark debate in Western societies, in the context of a Russia-West rivalry that has only recently unambiguously emerged. See Lionel Barber, Henry Foy and Alex Barker, "Vladimir Putin says that liberalism has 'become obsolete'", *Financial Times*, 27 June 2019, available online at: <https://www.ft.com/content/670039ec-98f3-11e9-9573-ee5cbb98ed36> (last accessed 05.08.2019)

Russia as an independent pole in a multipolar world.<sup>42</sup> It is difficult to say that this still holds true today, with Russian neo-revisionism since 2012 marking a departure from Moscow's initial post-Cold War foreign policy that aimed to "revise the system from within".<sup>43</sup>

It is for these reasons why the frame of reference chosen for Russia in Chapter 4 revolved around the question of the extent to which it was "static" or "dynamic", rather than the extent to which it was reconciled to participating in international society. The collapse of the Soviet Union dealt a blow to the notion of Russia as a land of fraternal peoples, with the share of the ethnic Russian population increasing from just over 50 percent to roughly 80 percent. The onset of outright enmity between Ukrainian and Russian political elites earlier this decade, combined with the granting of autocephaly to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, further damages this notion and encourages Russia to conceive of itself more as a separate nation.<sup>44</sup> This process will advance slowly, due to the size of Russia's geography, continued elements of centre-periphery relations with Russia's ethnic minorities and regions, and the Russian Orthodox Church's appeal beyond the country's borders. But Putin's attempts at synthesis described in previous chapters, effectively attempting to preserve the multi-ethnic and imperial dimension of the Russian identity while simultaneously engaging in nation-building, acknowledge the existence of a divide and are therefore going to have difficulty permanently papering over it.

The possible eventual normalization of relations between Moscow and Kyiv as two nominally equal polities would deal a further blow to Putin's synthesis.<sup>45</sup> The election of Volodymyr Zelensky in Ukraine may represent a reversal of the ethnonationalism embodied

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<sup>42</sup> Martin A. Smith, *Power in the Changing Global Order: The US, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), p. 145.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 128.

<sup>44</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "Russia and Ukraine: From Brothers to Neighbors", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 21 March 2018, available online at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/75847> (last accessed 29.05.2019)

<sup>45</sup> Trenin, "It's Time to Rethink Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy".



by the campaign of his presidential predecessor Petro Poroshenko, thus reinforcing the notion of unity between the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, but the democratic and peaceful transfer of power from one president to another could also serve as a soft power example to the Russian public that could further undermine Putin's efforts to stabilize Russian political life. Perhaps, as has been suggested, whoever controls Kyiv (the homeland of the historical Kievan Rus') holds the key to determining the identity of both Russians and Ukrainians.<sup>46</sup>

The cyclical forces powering Russian East-West oscillation thus remain quite potent, as secular nation-building dynamics in Russia, although real, are both slow-moving and partial, based upon the cyclical factors themselves. Further evidence to look for over the coming years as to whether Russia is progressing toward nationhood could be found in whether Moscow demonstrates a willingness merely to be recognized by China as an equal great power with legitimate interests in Central Asia or whether, by contrast, it remains preoccupied with preserving a sphere of influence in that region as the power imbalance in Sino-Russian relations grows. That said, as previously noted, it should be recalled that great power status itself is also a discursive tool used to advance Russian national unity by imbuing a disparate grouping of ethnicities across the country's territory with a semblance of common national purpose.<sup>47</sup> As such, efforts to overcome the imperial-national binary often reinforce that very binary, a process somewhat similar to what Morozov argues in *Russia's Postcolonial Identity*.

Russia might therefore "return to Europe", as it were, over the medium-to-long term, a process that could be facilitated by the continued fraying of transatlantic ties. But this does not necessarily imply Russian structural dependence upon the West in normative and

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<sup>46</sup> Taras Kuzio, "The Nation-Building Project in Ukraine and Identity: Toward a Consensus", in Taras Kuzio and Paul D'Anieri (eds.), *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> Andrej Krickovic, personal interview, Moscow, 28 September 2017.

discursive terms, as claimed by Morozov. This dissertation's conceptual and theoretical model, while allowing for the possibility that structural processes can flow from inter-state and intra-state activities, contends that states have agency. When Russia appropriates Western terms such as "democracy" and employs them for its own ends, for instance highlighting the supposed hybrid "sovereign democracy" of its political system or calling for a more "polycentric" or "democratic" world in which liberal democratic norms lack universal scope, it imbues them with its own meaning. These then become norms and understandings that are projected by Russia into the realms of international order and international society. Another example of this is cited by Constance Duncombe and Tim Dunne, who note that a "close reading of Russia's justifications for its military assertiveness reveals a strategy of emulating NATO's interventions in its own 'near abroad'", citing Kosovo and Libya as examples of when Western actions were effectively able to set precedents that Russia would go on to exploit.<sup>48</sup>

Just as liberal internationalism is a quasi-independent force in the global political system – a philosophy for how to order the international space – so, too, will the norms projected by Russia ultimately become independent from their origin, implying that they will have an impact on the shape of international order and society even if Russia remains a declining power. Those norms depend to a significant extent on where and in what way Russia lies on the static-dynamic spectrum, as success or failure in finding a stable point along that spectrum will inform the nature of Russia's relationship with a liberal international order rooted in both a Western power base and the assumption that the world is composed of appetite-driven nation-states. Russia's difficulties with nationhood have been established in previous chapters, while it has been claimed that oligarchies tend to prevail in societies ruled

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<sup>48</sup> Constance Duncombe and Tim Dunne, "After liberal world order", *International Affairs*, Vol. 94, no. 1 (2018), pp. 25-42.

by spirit (as conceived of by Lebow) and appetite dominates in the democratic world.<sup>49</sup> The resulting continued difficulty of finding a place for Russia in Europe, combined with the revenge of the spirit against appetite, will thus continue to drive change in the realm of international order, nudging it in the direction of a multi-order world, while solidifying the neo-revisionist foundations of Russia's relationship with international society.

All these factors will impose contours and constraints on the nature of Moscow's contestation of the liberal international order, but crucially, they will not completely determine it. Russia's geographic location on two continents implies that its ability to influence the process of the West-East global power transition remains strong, and its decision to highlight high-order issues such as sovereignty and polycentrism when challenging the West has been a matter of choice. As was the case in 1815, 1917 and 1945, Russia retains the ability to have an outsized impact on the shape and content of international order. That said, while not detracting from the realness of Russian normative pronouncements, its neo-revisionism has emerged in response to perceived American overreach, as detailed in Chapter 3. That neo-revisionist dynamic may have now taken on a life of its own, as it were, shaping international order, international society and the relationship between them in the process, but its genesis is owed to the nature of post-Cold War Western foreign policy. This calls for a reflection on the nature of hegemony in contemporary international society.

### **7.3. Hegemony Reconsidered**

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 149.

Questions surrounding the durability of a given hegemony are relevant not just to the policy world but to the academic one as well. Clark notes that “any negotiation of the institution of hegemony would be permanently conditional, and subject to ongoing contestation in terms of its degree of legitimacy”.<sup>50</sup> Reus-Smit argues in a similar vein that international orders “require constant reproduction”,<sup>51</sup> while Lebow writes that the “cycle of challenge and response” is “critical” to order.<sup>52</sup> This is very much in line with one of the central tenets laid out in *The Globalization of International Society* noted earlier, to the effect that contestation is an inherent feature of international society. Contestation drives change and results in greater complexity taking root, but a question remains as to whether too much contestation can prove detrimental to the preservation of an international society. This question may appear somewhat paradoxical, seeing as war has often been cited as an institution serving international society going back to some of the earliest English School scholars.<sup>53</sup> The answer lies partly in the model laid out in Chapter 2.

As mentioned, great powers in international society exercise collective hegemony by way of the downward vertical vector onto the international order. These vectors can in fact be thought of as pillars: International society rests upon the international order that prevails at a given moment in history. In line with the close relationship between order and society conceived of in *The Globalization*, the destabilization of international order, if significant enough, can lead to a crisis of international society. The task that lies before members of international society today is to ensure that those pillars remain strong and the foundations on which they rest – namely the realm of international order – remains sound. In today’s terms, this means that elements of cooperation between great powers need to be restored, even if

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<sup>50</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*, p. 49.

<sup>51</sup> Reus-Smit, “Power, Legitimacy, and Order”.

<sup>52</sup> Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders*, p. 310.

<sup>53</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*, p. 36.

only partially and gradually, and the transition to a multi-order world needs to occur in as conflict-free a fashion as possible – a task which smaller powers can also facilitate.

When the gap between nominal legitimacy and actual great power behaviour grows too large, whether in absolute terms or with respect to expectations surrounding behaviour, states outside the international order's power base but still residing within international society can resort to defending the autonomy of the latter. The result is the exertion of leftward pressure on the second pendulum outlined in Chapter 2 that measures the strength of hegemony in international society. The international order of the post-Cold War era, coming as it did after the collapse of what remained of the modern material and societal balance of power system,<sup>54</sup> was open to being formed. What is crystallizing now is a multi-order world with patterns of neo-revisionist foreign policies that are becoming self-sustaining and cyclically reproduced. Great powers maintain their agency and can act to halt this vicious cycle, but in the absence of action, the result will be that unrestrained horizontal contestation within the realm of international order will combine with the upward vector of neo-revisionism to destabilize both the foundations and pillars of international society, thus hollowing it out or bringing it closer to “collapse”, as it were. The pertinent question to ask is which elements of rubble will survive and form the basis of the international society of the future, which will infuse the emerging multi-order world with content.

Some look to the resilience of the norm of sovereignty to claim that international society remains robust.<sup>55</sup> Buzan and Little write that “[i]nternational society may be unevenly developed, but it is not fragile,” having been strong enough even to create states before they

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<sup>54</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *On Empire: America, War, and Global Supremacy* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2009), p. 29.

<sup>55</sup> For example, see Michael N. Barnett, “The End of a Liberal International Order That Never Existed”, *The Global*, 16 April 2019, available online at: <https://theglobal.blog/2019/04/16/the-end-of-a-liberal-international-order-that-never-existed/> (last accessed 23.04.2019)

demonstrated “empirical sovereignty”.<sup>56</sup> But as noted above, that international society was rooted at least partly in the modern system of international relations that relied on a balance of material and societal power, both of which had collapsed by the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. What remains today are merely elements of that society – including the norm of sovereignty – rather than the society in its entirety, in addition to the content that flows from the “pluridirectional interaction” that has shaped the international scene over the centuries.<sup>57</sup> The European international society that formed throughout modern history exists today largely as a power structure that has embedded itself within the globalized international society described by Reus-Smit and Dunne, having left behind some residual norms.

The world is entering a period in which “the foundations of international society no longer depend on Western power”,<sup>58</sup> even as the foundations of the liberal international order continue to rely on a Western power base. As mentioned in Chapter 2, that liberal order has left an imprint on international society – as Christopher Coker puts it, certain Western values with “cross-cultural appeal” have “become part of a world culture”.<sup>59</sup> As such, the Western power base of the liberal order – a hegemonic order that is effectively the historical outcome of European international society – has penetrated the realm of international society, even as that society is moving away from a need for Western hegemony. The liberal international order failed in the wake of the Cold War’s end to become synonymous with international society itself, but the imprint it left on the latter has created a structural imbalance. This is exemplified (or perhaps compounded) by the confusion flowing from the fact that “it has become difficult to make a clear distinction between institutions that can be attributed to the

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<sup>56</sup> Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 365.

<sup>57</sup> Stuenkel, *Post-Western World*, p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*, p. 365.

<sup>59</sup> Coker, *The Rise of the Civilizational State*, p. 168. Some more constructivist-oriented scholars are quick to note that the liberal order is a “culturally specific construct and not ‘just’ a way of organizing the world”. See Flockhart, “The coming multi-order world”.

liberal international order/society or institutions that are systemic attributes”.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, while there certainly remain elements of resilience in the global political system, which will be further probed below, there is also significant potential for instability and rivalry of society-impacting proportion.

Monteiro’s *Theory of Unipolar Politics* posits that while not necessarily peaceful, unipolar international systems are in fact quite durable, so long as the unipole pursues a strategy of what he calls “defensive accommodation”.<sup>61</sup> His analysis is broadly rooted in a neorealist approach, but when paired with the more societal framework of this dissertation it generates some important conclusions. Monteiro contends that in an age of nuclear weapons, it is not necessary to match the conventional power of a unipole to guarantee one’s security, which militates against the emergence of a full-blown balance of power system.<sup>62</sup> He would therefore assume that the re-emergence of great power rivalry today would be due largely to overstretch by Washington, which has aimed to maintain primacy in both Russia and China’s respective “backyards”.

This dissertation, however, distinguishes between material and social processes. The global balance of power did not shift overnight in 2014, but the state of international order along with Washington’s political authority did.<sup>63</sup> In the ensuing years, Russia and China shifted from being recognized by Washington as partners and stakeholders to being designated as rival powers.<sup>64</sup> In other words, the world could remain materially unipolar while simultaneously witnessing the decline of the liberal international order. The United States will likely remain powerful enough to shape much of the content of hegemony for

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<sup>60</sup> Flockhart, “The coming multi-order world”.

<sup>61</sup> Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, p. 102-3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>63</sup> Bobo Lo, “Greater Eurasia: The Emperor’s New Clothes or an Idea whose Time Has Come?”, *Russie.Nei.Reports*, No. 27, Ifri, July 2019.

<sup>64</sup> “Trump: Russia and China ‘rival powers’ in new security plan”, *BBC News*, 18 December 2017, available online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-42401170> (last accessed 11.06.2019)

some time,<sup>65</sup> in a co-constitutive fashion with other great powers and the rest of international society. But the international context in which the liberal order exists has changed, which comes with certain consequences. As previously stated, the order, while being linked to its Western power base, exists as a quasi-independent force as well.

American overreach has helped to expedite the advent of a crisis of liberal order. As mentioned earlier, international society is too diverse ever to become synonymous with a Western-led liberal world order, even if a rules-based global order enjoys broad support. William R. Thompson notes that “global system leaders” such as the United States appear quite formidable when it comes to their “power projection capacity”, but much less so when it comes to “financing the maintenance of the global structure that they build to frame the type of global order they most prefer”.<sup>66</sup> But part of the difficulty lies with the existence of a liberal international order in the context of American unipolarity itself. Monteiro contends that even if the unipole adopts a defensive posture designed to maintain the international status quo, unipolarity itself renders the uncertainty regarding other states’ intentions worse.<sup>67</sup> This is what has helped produce wars between the United States and minor powers such as Iraq and Libya, in addition to the possibility of future conflict with Iran and North Korea. These wars have brought with them normative consequences in the realm of great power relations, as detailed in Chapter 3. Disputes over the nature of state sovereignty and the rules of conduct in international affairs ensured the fragmentation of the realm of international order gradually into a multi-order world, with consequences for the stability of international

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<sup>65</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*, p. 243.

<sup>66</sup> William R. Thompson, “The United States as Global Leader, Global Power, and Status-Consistent Power?”, in Thomas J. Volgy, Renato Corbetta, Keith A. Grant and Ryan G. Baird (eds.), *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 28.

<sup>67</sup> Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, p. 159.



society as these multiple orders coalesce and great power neo-revisionism crystallizes. In short, the liberal international order was bound to encounter a crisis for structural reasons.

Lebow reaches a similar conclusion, albeit for different reasons, noting that since utopias are unrealizable in the real world, any order's conception of justice is bound to contain the seeds of its own destruction.<sup>68</sup> Whether the liberal order can reinvent itself and in what form is a topic that will be discussed below. It is worth reiterating, though, that this fact does not preclude great power agency. It is the *order* that faces and has faced structural constraints; state intentions are genuine, even if they are formed partly in response to the actions of other states. Russia's neo-revisionist posture may have partly emerged in response to Western actions, but the precise content of that neo-revisionism is Russia's to determine. The quasi-independence of hegemonic orders from the states that promote them has been further highlighted by Owen Worth, who notes that the United States did not develop or articulate neoliberalism per se, but Washington having been the sole great power remaining after the end of the Cold War "allowed [a hegemonic neoliberal order] to flourish".<sup>69</sup>

Realists such as Stephen Walt claim that the United States would have been better off focusing on getting tough on China from the early post-Cold War years rather than remain preoccupied with Europe and the Middle East.<sup>70</sup> Failure to do so allowed China to rise largely unchecked, becoming powerful enough to challenge certain elements of American material and normative power. Monteiro notes that the more Russia and China grow economically, the easier it will be for them to undermine unipolarity and restore a balance of power system if they determine that the United States is pursuing an overly hostile strategy.<sup>71</sup> This rise in

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<sup>68</sup> Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders*, p. 133.

<sup>69</sup> Worth, *Rethinking Hegemony*, p. 107.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The Death of Global Order Was Caused by Clinton, Bush, and Obama", *Foreign Policy*, 10 December 2018, available online at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/12/10/the-death-of-global-order-was-caused-by-clinton-bush-and-obama/> (last accessed 30.05.2019)

<sup>71</sup> Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, p. 228.

material power has also allowed them to challenge American normative hegemony more frontally as well, even if it is not the source of the current crisis. Liberals, for their part,

attribute disorder to the absence or decline of a hegemon and its ability to sustain and enforce institutions and practices it has established. [But t]here is little empirical support for these claims. There has never been a hegemon in the modern era, and the orders established in the aftermath of major wars – 1648, 1713, 1815, 1919, and 1945 – were not imposed by a dominant power but the product of negotiation and compromise among multiple parties. [...] The current crisis of the Western order has nothing to do with the balance of power.<sup>72</sup>

The claim that no order since 1648 has been hegemonic is a contestable one, with Lebow writing that the postwar comeback of Western Europe and Japan ensured that any fleetingly established American hegemony had evaporated by the 1960s or 70s, while also noting that hegemonic tasks such as managing the global economy, shaping the agendas of international institutions and enforcing global initiatives are now performed by multiple states as well as by NGOs.<sup>73</sup> But the point is that the liberal belief that the renewal of American leadership is all that is required to salvage the liberal international order and restore its potential to become a liberal *world* order at some point in the future is false. Liberal hubris, encouraged by unipolarity, *is* the problem. The fundamental contradiction of a liberal order simultaneously containing a self-interested power base as well as a set of principles led to Western states invoking double standards, exempting themselves from the rules in the name of “act[ing] against threats to the system as a whole”, including threats to its “liberal

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<sup>72</sup> Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders*, pp. 145-6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

character”.<sup>74</sup> This inevitably led to a decline in the legitimacy of Western hegemony, causing the contemporary crisis of the liberal order. This has long been a concern of English School theorists, who have worried that “a rogue hegemon would not feel [bound by shared values and interests], and the ties of society would accordingly unravel for all”.<sup>75</sup>

Liberals advocating for a reassertion of the liberal order as a remedy to it having stalled fail to recognize that the “most stable orders are those that evolve through a process of gradual change”.<sup>76</sup> Resilience is a function of change and flexibility, which has proven difficult in the case of a liberal order that has sought in the post-Cold War environment to expand rather than transform.<sup>77</sup> This may be due in part to the imposing nature of liberalism itself, which for example seeks to socialize all actors into a desire to compete, which in fact violates freedom of choice.<sup>78</sup> Part of the difficulty may further lie in the fact that it is very difficult in practice to draw a clear line between inducing states to conform to certain societal rules and institutions and interfering outright in their internal affairs.<sup>79</sup> What Western states may perceive as the benign promotion of democracy and human rights may be interpreted by other states as a ploy to undermine the stability of their regimes and a revisionist attempt to rewrite international norms such as non-interference.<sup>80</sup> Confusion and misunderstanding breeds resentment, which in turn can undermine the foundations of collective hegemony – the downward vertical vector through which international society’s great powers infuse the realm of international order with content. Perpetuating the perception that an international order is legitimate depends in part on the state of great power relations, for if great powers “are to accept their collective rights and responsibilities, they also must agree upon norms for their

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<sup>74</sup> Worth, *Rethinking Hegemony*, p. 53.

<sup>75</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*, p. 38.

<sup>76</sup> Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders*, p. 68.

<sup>77</sup> Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest*, pp. 18 & 42.

<sup>78</sup> Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders*, p. 333.

<sup>79</sup> Adam Watson, *Hegemony & History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 59.

<sup>80</sup> See Paikin *et al.*, “Russia’s Eurasian past, present and future”.

joint exercise”.<sup>81</sup> With the aim of establishing a liberal *world* order having now definitively failed, the pertinent questions are what shape the liberal international order should now take in order to maximize its resilience, as well as what role or place there is for liberal states and liberal order in an international society featuring diverse but overlapping interests and a mostly thin agreement on values-related content.

There are, nonetheless, elements of resilience present in international society today. Adam Watson claims that the advance of international integration in the post-Cold War era has generated a “tightening system” that increasingly leaves states *de facto* deprived of independence.<sup>82</sup> He suggests that international practice has moved from the Westphalian concept of sovereignty so substantially that ultimately the rules of international society will have to adjust.<sup>83</sup> However, what we have seen in recent years appears, in many ways, to be a reassertion of the norm of sovereignty in reaction to perceived attempts by the West to trample on it. Crucially, this manifests itself not only through attempts by Russia and China to defend their own regimes from external interference, but also through instances in which Moscow and Beijing project the norm of non-interference internationally. The BRI, for example, engages with countries regardless of their regime type, privileging development over democratization as a guiding principle for ensuring security. Moscow, for its part, stresses mutual respect and equality with Beijing in its stated efforts to harmonize the Eurasian Economic Union with the BRI. This is a testament to the power and survival capacity of nominal norms, as China still claims that it respects Russia as an equal despite the growing power imbalance between them and the possibility that the latter could eventually drift into the former’s sphere of influence over the coming decades.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in international Society*, p. 63.

<sup>82</sup> Watson, *Hegemony & History*, p. 63.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>84</sup> Nadège Rolland, “A China-Russia Condominium Over Eurasia”, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol. 61, no. 1 (2019), pp. 7-22.

Watson does qualify his view by noting that economic liberalism does not necessarily imply the complete hollowing-out of states, which remain active in the socio-political realm.<sup>85</sup> Paradoxically, the leftward push currently being exerted on the second pendulum, while hollowing out international society as a whole, may strengthen some of the residual primary institutions that survive the process. The extent to which sovereignty will prove resilient as a norm in international society will depend on the nature of the progression toward a multi-order world. In other words, how encompassing and dominant will these orders be? Will they be strong enough to change the “scale, interaction capacity, and dominant unit” of international society, which Buzan and Little consider to be a prerequisite for the end of modern history and the inauguration of a post-modern era?<sup>86</sup> To quote Flockhart, is it true that the “primary dynamics [in international affairs] are likely to be within and between different orders, rather than between multiple sovereign states?”<sup>87</sup> Or rather, will these orders largely serve instrumental purposes and fail to achieve substantial cohesion, as many critics contend is the case with the EEU?<sup>88</sup> It should be noted nonetheless that if the former instance ultimately comes more so to reflect reality, this will still not necessarily militate against great powers jealously guarding the norm of sovereignty for themselves, even as they occasionally curtail it for weaker states within the orders that constitute the multi-order world.

Another element of resilience could paradoxically be American retrenchment from its overextended international posture. What appears to be occurring under the Trump administration is the beginning of the decoupling of liberal internationalism from American

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<sup>85</sup> Watson, *Hegemony & History*, p. 77.

<sup>86</sup> Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*, p. 368.

<sup>87</sup> Flockhart, “The coming multi-order world”.

<sup>88</sup> See Elena Korosteleva, Zachary Paikin and Stephen Paduano (eds.), *Five Years After Maidan: Toward a Greater Eurasia?*, LSE IDEAS, May 2019, available online at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/reports/LSE-IDEAS-COMPASS-UPTAKE-Greater-Eurasia.pdf> (last accessed 30.05.2019)

hegemony.<sup>89</sup> As will be discussed below, some have suggested that this might not only stabilize international society to an extent but in fact also strengthen the foundations of the liberal order as well. Some scholars have posited that system leadership involves the creation of cooperative institutions but not necessarily a hegemon's continued participation in them once it loses control over their direction.<sup>90</sup> Clark conceptualizes four ideal types of hegemony, varying between whether it is exercised by one power or by a collection of powers on the one hand, and whether it relies on an inclusive logic or an exclusionary coalition of states (e.g., NATO) to buttress its legitimacy on the other hand.<sup>91</sup> Attempts to construct a single-power, society-wide hegemony represent "evidently the most exacting of political goals, and the least attainable in practice".<sup>92</sup> As Flockhart notes, "the current (near) global scope" of the US-led liberal international order "must be assumed to be the exception rather than the rule".<sup>93</sup> Each of these ideal types is unstable, and a mixture of all four is required to be "respectful of the diversity in international society, its traditional nervousness about too much concentration of power, and its already existing expressions within the highly developed Western system".<sup>94</sup> This does appear to reflect what a multi-order world would look like, with the American-centred liberal order having varying degrees of appeal and participation across the globe, coexisting with instances of collective hegemony.

Additionally, Clark notes that America's postwar hegemony fell victim to détente, as attempts to bring about more cooperative international leadership undermined the basic legitimacy of American hegemony, which was rooted in containing the Soviet threat.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Zachary Paikin, "World Order Revisited: Resilience and Challenges", *Minsk Dialogue*, 9 January 2019, available online at: <http://minskdialogue.by/en/research/opinions/world-order-revisited-resilience-and-challenges> (last accessed 31.05.2019)

<sup>90</sup> Thompson, "The United States as Global Leader, Global Power, and Status-Consistent Power?", p. 51.

<sup>91</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*, p. 60.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>93</sup> Flockhart, "The coming multi-order world".

<sup>94</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*, p. 68.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-6.

However, containment was not the basis of legitimating American pre-eminence after the Cold War. It is, by contrast, American overstretch that has acted as a catalyst to the current crisis. It therefore stands to reason that the United States could preserve a significant amount of its singular hegemony by pursuing a modest retrenchment and establishing more cooperative relations with other great powers in certain domains, while continuing to compete with them in others. In the material realm as well, there is a case to be made that an American foreign policy rooted in restraint would avoid wastefulness and allow for the reallocation of important resources to other sources of national power, thus strengthening the long-term foundations of American global pre-eminence without having to pursue outright primacy in every significant geopolitical theatre across the globe.<sup>96</sup> Such a retrenchment would not eliminate the processes of global transformation that are already underway, but it could help to ensure that the transition to a multi-order world is both less messy and less consequential, thus enhancing the resilience capacity of the current international society.

Watson notes that the norm of polycentrism in international society traces its origins to the dawn of modern history at Westphalia and Utrecht, but that “the cultural and administrative traditions of the great Asian civilizations are more hierarchical and suzerain than European practice since Westphalia”.<sup>97</sup> As such, per the “globalization” narrative of international society’s history, Europe’s norm of polycentrism has been tempered by its interaction with non-European civilizations. However, per the “expansion” narrative, which finds expression through Russia’s incorporation into European international society and the continuation of Western structural dominance of global international society, the norm of polycentrism has spread, and now earns support from the likes of Russia and China. The

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<sup>96</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Case for Offshore Balancing”, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2016, pp. 70-83.

<sup>97</sup> Watson, *Hegemony & History*, pp. 54 & 69.

coexistence of these two facts suggests that the potential for a multi-order character has been baked into international society for some time.

That said, core-periphery relations have been on the rise in European international society for several centuries, contra the official legitimacy of Westphalia. As Reus-Smit notes,

For at least three centuries before [post-1945 decolonization] a bifurcated principle prevailed, one in which sovereignty was conjoined to empire.

Within the ‘civilized’ European core, power and authority were structured according to the principle of sovereignty. Relations between this world and the increasingly subordinated non-European world were organizing on the principle of empire, however.<sup>98</sup>

Hierarchy in international society is therefore not just an Asian phenomenon. One can therefore identify three separate phenomena guiding the movement of the second pendulum laid out in Chapter 2: regional hegemonies, which are effectively the historical successor to the core-periphery relations initiated by the imperial great powers of past centuries, as well as resilient elements of global collective hegemony and great power normative competition. Although one can conceive of hegemony as an institution of international society, it is best in this context to think of these forces as guiding the relationship in the two-tiered global political system between international society (top level) and international order (bottom level). Elements of global collective hegemony move down the vertical to push the second pendulum rightward and strengthen the hegemonic content present in the order and society, while competition in the sphere of norms involving neo-revisionism against a singular hegemon exerts the opposite effect. Regional hegemonies, therefore, tilt the balance between

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<sup>98</sup> Reus-Smit, “Power, Legitimacy, and Order”.



these two forces. The course that international relations take over the coming years and decades will help to determine the strength of those regional hegemonies and the nature of their horizontal interaction – the former determining the degree of significance of the transition to a multi-order world and the latter evaluating how cooperative or competitive the relationship between orders will be.

When plugged into this dissertation's model, both will dictate the stability of the realm of international order upon which international society rests. Rivalry rather than synergy between orders clearly renders the international society's foundation less sturdy. As for the matter concerning the strength (or perhaps "thickness") of these orders, one would initially assume that stronger orders would imply a greater departure from the norm of sovereign statehood, thus encouraging the further erosion of the contemporary international society and the erection of a newer, possibly hollower one built from its ashes. That said, if stronger orders develop against a backdrop of inter-subjective legitimation by both major powers and the minor ones residing within their respective orders, then this assumption could be undermined, qualifying the way in which "new primary and secondary institutions for managing complex and composite relationships" are established.<sup>99</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that, regardless of the state of great power relations, it is likely that orders will be overlapping, with states belonging to multiple orders simultaneously – for example belonging to a Chinese-led economic order but an American-led security order. This is one reason why Flockhart notes that "identity, rather than region, is likely to be the major defining feature of new orders".<sup>100</sup> The questions raised by these facts present avenues for further research.

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<sup>99</sup> Flockhart, "The coming multi-order world".

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 7.4. Liberal Order Reconsidered

For years, one of the most prominent, concise and articulate defenders of liberal internationalism in the academic world has been John Ikenberry. Many of his earlier statements were cited and critiqued in Chapter 2, but it is worth reflecting upon some of his more recent writing as well, as this will help to show how liberal thinkers are responding to the developments of the past several years. As the relative power of the West shrunk through the post-Cold War era, it was easier for liberals to claim that any crisis of the international order was one of success. With great power rivalry now appearing to have returned in full force, such statements may be more difficult to make. Ikenberry does at times appear to walk back some of his earlier enthusiasm and outright optimism.

Ikenberry writes in a 2018 article that for seventy years, “the liberal international order has been tied to American power” but that because of the current global transition of power the world is possibly headed toward “some sort of post-American and post-western order that remains relatively open and rules-based. [...] The American hegemonic organization of liberal order is weakening, but the more general organizing ideas and impulses of liberal internationalism run deep in world politics”.<sup>101</sup> The notion that liberal internationalism is a philosophical tradition that exists at least somewhat independently of states is accounted for by this dissertation’s theoretical model. But what this model grasps that a more conventional liberal perspective might gloss over is the structural tension brought about by a liberal order that has become partially universal but that nonetheless remains rooted in its Western power base, even as global power and influence shift. Ikenberry’s contention that a crisis of rules-based order only serves to breed more rules-based order may or may not be accurate, but it ultimately misses the larger point.

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<sup>101</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “The end of liberal international order?”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 94, no. 1 (2018), pp. 7-23.

Although American hegemony and liberal internationalism may have been mere allies of convenience over the past several decades, it remains to be seen whether the liberal order can survive such a power transition. The past seven decades have effectively caused the liberal order to become so wrapped up in American power that if Washington were to abandon the order, its foundations would likely collapse. That is certainly what this dissertation's model appears to suggest – the parts of the liberal order that reside in the realm of international order would effectively be disconnected from those found in international society. What would remain is an international society with perhaps some liberal characteristics but without the momentum necessarily to preserve them over the long term. Adrian Pabst underlines this fundamental dilemma, noting that liberal hegemony today faces an “existential crisis”, not just a “systemic” one (e.g., from a revisionist state).<sup>102</sup>

Both liberals and their critics now appear to grasp the structural difficulties brought about by the end of the Cold War, with “all mainstream theories concur[ring] that the hegemony of the liberal world order is over”.<sup>103</sup> As Ikenberry writes, “With new states entering the system, the old bargains and institutions that provided the sources of stability and governance were overrun” and “the globalization of the liberal order also led to a loss of capacity to function as a security community”.<sup>104</sup> Pabst takes this even further, noting that

[w]hat started off as a rules-based system organized around cooperation between sovereign states and the embedding of markets in institutions morphed after 1989 into a US-led world order, which promotes free-market

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<sup>102</sup> Adrian Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics: Civilisational States and Cultural Commonwealths* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 31.

<sup>103</sup> Duncombe and Dunne, “After liberal world order”.

<sup>104</sup> Ikenberry, “The end of liberal international order?”

globalization, mass migration and military intervention in the name of supposedly universal but in reality Western, narrowly liberal values.<sup>105</sup>

Ikenberry himself highlights the tension between universalism and particularism that dates to the order's founding after World War II: "The core underlying principles and norms of the liberal order could be construed as 'universal'. [...] But the order itself was organized around the United States and its liberal democratic allies and clients."<sup>106</sup> Or as Nye succinctly puts it, the "American order was a combination of Wilsonian liberalism and balance of power realism".<sup>107</sup> But as noted in Chapter 2, part of the problem lies in how to define what constitutes a liberal order in the first place. Sørensen allows for a wider definition, saying that an integrated global economy and institutionalized cooperation have produced a "liberal order in basic terms" and that "the liberal political and economic model is not a fixed entity, but a set of principles that develop and change over time and may not always be in harmony".<sup>108</sup> But the fact that liberal internationalism is a broad tradition is not in question – what is of interest are the structural and theoretical shortcomings of the *contemporary* liberal order, and what consequences this brings for international order and society more broadly.

Ikenberry's recently expressed view is that "there is an expectation that a liberal international order will move states in a progressive direction, defined in terms of liberal democracy".<sup>109</sup> This clearly militates against the notion that all an order requires to be considered liberal is to be open and rules-based. Although China may have appeared to move toward greater openness in the late 1990s and 2000s, the late Hu years and now Xi's presidency mark a change of direction.<sup>110</sup> Such a development would represent a fundamental

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<sup>105</sup> Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics*, p. 25.

<sup>106</sup> Ikenberry, "The end of liberal international order?"

<sup>107</sup> Nye, "The rise and fall of American hegemony from Wilson to Trump".

<sup>108</sup> Sørensen, *Rethinking the New World Order*, pp. 208 & 215.

<sup>109</sup> Ikenberry, "The end of liberal international order?"

<sup>110</sup> Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders*, p. 167.

threat to any liberal order of global scale, as defined by Ikenberry. This is perhaps why he suggests that the “liberal international project” will have to choose between structuring itself as either “small and thick” or “large and thin”.<sup>111</sup>

The latter option, as discussed, may represent a rules-based order but not necessarily a liberal one. The rise of rules-based practices in international affairs may have coincided with – and even been significantly driven by – the ascendancy of liberalism over the past two centuries, but once elements enter the realm of international society through universalization, they take on a life of their own. It is therefore easy to imagine how rules-based practices could be maintained even if the liberal order were to cease to exist. Multipolarity and multilateralism are not necessarily incompatible; whether an American-centred liberal order can survive a transition to multipolarity is an entirely different question.<sup>112</sup> The former option, for its part, is akin to what Clark describes as a transition from a more inclusive hegemony to a coalitional one, in which the hegemon seeks to “retain its own monopoly” but “seek social sanction within a more limited constituency”.<sup>113</sup> Whether this option remains credible is also debatable, as it would likely require the identification of a clear adversary. It is difficult to imagine Russia playing this role over the long term as it continues its decline, while China would also have trouble assuming the role played by the Soviet Union. For one, the ideological contours of today’s global disputes are far less clear than they were during the Cold War. The non-West boasts several democracies such as Brazil and India that are often critical of Western excesses and partner with Moscow and Beijing in fora such as the BRICS and SCO, while it is far from clear that China wants to impose its domestic political model on

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<sup>111</sup> Ikenberry, “The end of liberal international order?”

<sup>112</sup> Nathalie Tocci, “The Demise of the International Liberal Order and the Future of the European Project”, *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, 19 November 2018, available online at: <https://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/demise-international-liberal-order-and-future-european-project> (last accessed 22.03.2019)

<sup>113</sup> Clark, *Hegemony in International Society*, p. 66.

other states, preferring to garb itself in the norm of non-interference. Furthermore, China has to contend with a rising India and a sprawling Russia that boasts a nuclear arsenal larger than its own. It therefore is unlikely to reach the hegemonic status on the Eurasian supercontinent enjoyed by the Soviet Union, which in turn implies that it will not represent the same geopolitical threat to the United States as that posed by Moscow during the Cold War years.

Sørensen's definition of liberal order is looser than Ikenberry's, rooted not in any convergence of ideals but rather the global appeal of the norms of both independence and interdependence.<sup>114</sup> Why an integrated world or a world of states that jealously guard their sovereignty are necessarily liberal ones is not entirely clear. But he notes that the tension between these two principles "will continue to produce problems and setbacks which will impede the emergence of a stable and effective liberal world order".<sup>115</sup> These contradictory impulses are a further reason why Ikenberry's suggestion of a "small and thick" liberal order is unlikely to represent a realistic option. Simply put, it is not possible to erase the structural processes already underway that have taken root over the past three decades. Further economic globalization may proceed in a more stunted and uneven fashion, even receding in some places, but the mere refusal of China to grant foreign companies full access to its market or other examples of renewed protectionism around the world will not be able to turn back the clocks.

Although it remains to be seen "what will remain as the 1945 package is unpacked",<sup>116</sup> thirty years of this "1945 package" attempting to expand and construct a liberal world order have created structural problems that will affect the future of international order and international society. Having left an imprint on the realm of international society, parts of

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<sup>114</sup> Sørensen, *Rethinking the New World Order*, pp. 200-5.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>116</sup> Nye, "The rise and fall of American hegemony from Wilson to Trump".

the liberal order have become autonomous and are therefore unable simply to retreat into the realm of international order upon Washington's command. International society may still erode over the coming years but having been infused with a specific dynamic it will not simply transport itself back in time. Furthermore, Ikenberry's "small and thick" option depends not only on states willing to pursue "thick" cooperation, but also upon the survival of the "small" grouping as a liberal entity. If Pabst is correct that liberalism ultimately "hollows out the social bonds and civic ties on which democracy and a market economy depend [...] and erodes the cultural foundations on which [liberalism] rests",<sup>117</sup> then this should not be taken for granted.

This tension between the domestic and international can be thought of in different fashions. Sørensen attributes the problem to liberalism's birthplace, noting that it was "always designed for the nation-state" and has not been "sufficiently developed when it comes to governance across borders".<sup>118</sup> Although this dissertation does account for the fact that links – both conceptual and structural – exist between the domestic and international realms, difficulties emerge when one takes assumptions that are meant to guide a largely culturally homogenous society and applies them to a diverse world. In this vein, Pabst writes that liberals came to view national states as "liberal egos writ large", and in attempting to impose its vision on the world since 1919 the United States has created a liberal order that "tends towards hubris and is thus by nature unstable".<sup>119</sup>

But the problem may in fact be even more profound than this, owing to the requirements imposed by liberal theory itself. Drawing on Locke, Beate Jahn contends that "the constitution of domestic liberalism required a sharp distinction between two different

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<sup>117</sup> Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>118</sup> Sørensen, *Rethinking the New World Order*, p. 187.

<sup>119</sup> Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics*, p. 23.

political spheres”, domestic and international, and that the “establishment of a liberal world order [...] undermined the crucial distinction between a liberal and a non-liberal camp that had informed, and was used to justify, liberal foreign policies.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, one set of standards applies to liberal states and another to illiberal ones, with “contradictory behaviour” on the part of liberal states being “an integral feature of liberalism”.<sup>121</sup> With the restoration of a clear domestic-international divide unlikely in a world that remains stubbornly stuck between efforts to pursue international integration while preserving key elements of state sovereignty, liberal internationalism may face bleak prospects.

The liberal order contains important elements of resilience, albeit qualified ones. The early post-Cold War years can be said to have partly embodied a collective hegemony, with neo-revisionism absent from great power relations and normative disagreement less explicit despite the beginnings of attempts by the liberal international order at entrenching its structural dominance in international society. In collective hegemonies, “the lines of anti-hegemonial resistance are [...] weaker and less coordinated”.<sup>122</sup> From this, one could contend that the advancements made by the liberal international order before the onset of neo-revisionism and the retreat of collective hegemony will be difficult to reverse. But although this may be true, which would strengthen the trend toward international integration and rules-based cooperation over the long term and perhaps preserve at least a nominal commitment to some liberal principles, these advancements now reside within the realm of international society. As such, they would represent elements of international society’s resilience rather than those of the liberal order. A retreat by the liberal order into the realm of international order as an act of self-preservation is not verily possible, while a decoupling of American

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<sup>120</sup> Beate Jahn, “Liberal internationalism: historical trajectory and current prospects”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 94, no. 1 (2018), pp. 43-61.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Watson, *Hegemony & History*, p. 111.



hegemony from the liberal order – if it is even possible – would convince non-liberal states that Washington has had realist rather than liberal intentions all along, strengthening the forces that are catalysing the development of a multi-order world. The liberal order may be quasi-independent, but if disconnected from its historical source point its future remains uncertain.

Some may take comfort in Watson’s claim that “history suggests that the structural lines and the general pattern of a system are likely to remain more or less the same when one state replaces another in the hegemonial position”.<sup>123</sup> This may be the case in the context of a single system that is largely culturally homogeneous, but may not necessarily hold true in a world featuring competing orders and normative rivalry rooted in neo-revisionism. The continued reality of the requirement to provide global public goods may be one thing, but the precise shape and content of the realms of international order and international society, in addition to the nature of the relationship between them, is another matter. And, as discussed earlier, it does not appear as if one state is in the process of replacing another in the hegemonial position – what seems to be occurring is a more complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

It has been claimed that in collective hegemonies, even unilateral actions by great powers contain elements of *raison de système*, taking potential disagreement into account.<sup>124</sup> We have seen this play out to a degree throughout the post-Cold War period, for example with the United States attempting to garner support at the UN Security Council for its policies toward Iraq and Iran, or with Russia’s attempts to couch its assertiveness toward its neighbours and its unilateral recognition of breakaway territories in legal language. Again, however, global multilateral institutions and international law have strong appeal among

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

states because they belong to the universal international society, an entity that differs from the liberal order, in which non-liberal states only partially participate. As the model of this dissertation makes clear, the collective hegemony exerted after 1989 was one *rooted in* international society and *exercised over* the international order. For the coalitional hegemony that underpinned the liberal order in the post-Cold War period, however, the opposite was true. The liberal order, present as it is today in the realm of international society, may use instruments and institutions of international society to advance its aims, with varying techniques and degrees of success. But the liberal international order and global international society remain distinct phenomena, even if they occasionally overlap.

The very logic underpinning international society differs from that which guides the liberal order. While the former may demonstrate examples of *raison de système*, the latter is more concerned with deviance from its norms and influence. An order's tolerance of deviance can vary through time, but it seems to be that uncertainty over truth and perceptions of fragility can lead to greater concern with deviance.<sup>125</sup> It is perhaps not coincidental, therefore, that the world has witnessed a return of great power rivalry precisely at the moment when liberalism's hegemony – both domestically and internationally – is being challenged, raising questions about how genuinely universal and robust it can be. Moreover, the discussion above has made clear why the liberal order's incomplete expansion has proven to be a source of structural instability in the global political system, which is further evidence of its fragility. If this therefore implies that it is unlikely to deviate from its current and (at times) seemingly growing rigidity, then this does not bode well for its long-term resilience – which is dependent on its ability to change – nor for great power relations.

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<sup>125</sup> Lebow, *The Rise and Fall of Political Orders*, pp. 321-4.

## 7.5. Conclusion

After the Soviet Union's collapse, Western states came to believe that the model for German unification could become a model for European unification, pushing for the universal adoption of a single set of standards.<sup>126</sup> This was effectively an impossible task in a world filled with diverse cultures and political systems.<sup>127</sup> One scholar contends that no "coherent set of common values and norms" emerged after the end of the Cold War, despite the fact that international society did clearly undergo a significant transformation, which implied that all states needed to socialize into the new international reality rather than have any one bloc contend that the rules, norms and values it promoted should remain fixed.<sup>128</sup>

But what is clear from this dissertation's survey and analysis is that Russia does believe that international society is replete with content. It may selectively apply the notion of civilizational statehood – taking the form of the *russkii mir* concept for example – in order to justify its periodic interference in its so-called "near abroad",<sup>129</sup> but it does not question the notion that there exists an international society of global scope to which it belongs, even if its commitment to defending its autonomy is often haphazard and selective. Indeed, all global great powers, including the United States, are selective when it comes to the application of international rules and norms.<sup>130</sup> But as Pabst succinctly puts it, "The Kremlin has not rejected the entire post-1945 or post-1989 order (with its territorial arrangements and normative premises), but it seeks a balance of power that recognizes Russia's claim to be an equal in that system and a country with legitimate national interests".<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Alexander Lukin, *China and Russia: The New Rapprochement* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), p. 5.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>128</sup> Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society Since 1949: Alienation and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 179.

<sup>129</sup> Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics*, p. 69.

<sup>130</sup> Stuenkel, *Post-Western World*, p. 187.

<sup>131</sup> Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics*, p. 53.

As such, the trend toward universalism continues in international society despite the return of great power rivalry, although one should not take this to imply that the liberal order is particularly resilient. This is very much in line with Martin Wight's famous claim that most systems of states throughout history – Chinese, Hellenistic-Roman, Mughal – have ended in universal empire.<sup>132</sup> It is just that the form of universalism emerging today takes the form of an increasingly more democratized international society, whose global scope is not challenged and where normative agreement may be thin but not totally absent. Indeed, empires throughout history have been similarly decentralized entities – for example, the Achaemenid Persian Empire ruled with Aramaic as its official language. Therefore, it can be concluded that in international society, one can have universalism without hegemony – be it singular or collective. The *contemporary* international society may hollow out or transform as a result of the re-emergence of great power rivalry, but so long as there is mutual recognition of some sort among polities, the social will continue to exist at the international level. Reus-Smit writes that “[u]niversal sovereignty mandates hierarchy without empire”,<sup>133</sup> implying that the degree and form of hegemony in the postwar, decolonized world has already been constrained. This new understanding of the contours and limits of hegemony is an important source of Russia's neo-revisionism – which claims to defend the norm of sovereignty – and is thus an example of the quasi-autonomy of norms in international society. Going forward, these facts should inform how the English School thinks about hegemony and contestation, specifically with respect to the extent to which both can serve as institutions of international society.

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<sup>132</sup> Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), p. 43.

<sup>133</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, “The Liberal International Order Reconsidered”, in Rebekka Friedman, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (eds.), *After Liberalism?: The Future of Liberalism in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 184.

Regarding the content of the current international society, its durability is dependent upon two factors, as suggested by this dissertation's model. First, international society needs strong pillars of support. That is to say, the downward vertical vectors through which the society infuses the realm of order with content need to be strengthened. These vectors may run both through the liberal order or outside it, meaning that multiple forms of cooperation between great powers would prove beneficial. Those that run through the liberal order would have the added benefit of stabilizing that order to a degree, helping to build sturdy pillars that could gradually take its place as it declines.<sup>134</sup> Second, international society requires stable ground on which to stand. Managing the degree of inter-bloc competition in the realm of international order – a task that can be facilitated both by great powers and by smaller states that lie between them – would ease the transition to a multi-order world. Neither Russia nor the West may want the content of international society to erode significantly, but they have become locked in a cycle of confrontation that threatens to do just that. Many means could be employed to reverse this trend but doing so will require conscious decision-making by both sides.

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<sup>134</sup> Flockhart reaches a similar conclusion, claiming that preparing for the coming multi-order world must involve "taking steps to strengthen the core of the liberal order [...] with special attention to re-establishing internal cohesion and reforming the existing primary and secondary institutions". See Flockhart, "The coming multi-order world".

### *Conclusion*

Most conventional narratives concerning change in international order are unidimensional, focusing either on how the rise of an authoritarian China could challenge the liberal order and bring the era of American unipolarity to an end, or on how the emergence of a Greater Eurasia could return the world's geopolitical centre of gravity back to the Eurasian Heartland and challenge American naval power. This dissertation has sought a more multifaceted approach, analyzing how the liberal order's expansionist aims helped to spawn Russian neo-revisionism. The former has generated structural instability within a diverse global political system, while the latter – if the cycle of confrontation is not broken – threatens to hollow out international society, or at the very least temper its ability to infuse the international order with agreed-upon content.

These conclusions were reached based on new conceptualizations of the liberal international order and of the functioning of the two-level global political system, with the second pendulum proposed in Chapter 2 playing a supplementary role. In some respects, these would not have been possible without concepts that rest upon the existing English School-influenced literature. For example, while notions surrounding the liberal order's rootedness in Western leadership or supposed global scope have long existed, the specific definition advanced in this dissertation could not have been advanced without the two-level model put forward by Sakwa, which lays out some of the workings of the relationship between international order and international society. On the other hand, as discussed in previous chapters, earlier English School accounts viewed one of the greatest threats to international society as emanating from a potential rogue hegemon, whereas more recent scholarship has emphasized that contestation is a natural feature of international society. This dissertation does not necessarily take issue with these notions, as it has highlighted the perils associated the Western-led liberal order's dominant position in global politics and

acknowledged the reality that change is the norm in international society rather than the exception. However, it has contributed to the English School canon by highlighting the precise nature of change that can be generated not just by a hegemonic state (or order) but also by its challengers.

Sakwa's two-level model played a key role in allowing for this determination to be made, but it was only by rejecting his characterization of the vertical dimension – the so-called “sphere of norms” – as being related to questions of polarity that this was achieved. Rather, this vertical dimension affects the degree of collective great power hegemony. Far from tempering the trend toward polycentrism, neo-revisionism is accelerating the formation of a multi-order world. Thus far throughout modern history, the thickening content infused into the international order has been accompanied by the strengthening of relative power of a singular hegemon – even if none of modern history's orders were perfectly unipolar or purely hegemonic. However, the conclusions reached in this dissertation now suggest that any further development of international society's norms in a collective and cooperative fashion will need to account for its increasingly disparate distribution of normative influence. In other words, the very nature of collective great power hegemony will need to change if the downward vertical vector is to remain robust. Great powers will need to learn how to interact with one another within the novel context of a multi-order world. This is in line with the assertion put forward in Chapter 1 regarding the quasi-autonomous nature of neo-revisionism: While its origins lie firmly in Russian agency, its consequences have generated a novel global context into which all states (including Russia) will need to socialize.

One should therefore partially qualify this dissertation's analysis of the nature of change in international society by noting that it is somewhat historically contingent. While the notion that the primary institutions of international society erode when there is fundamental contestation over them appears trans-historic, the process of change currently

underway is facilitated by the cumulative impact of events concerning the nature of sovereignty and order that have occurred over the course of several centuries (hence the need to illustrate this with the help of the second pendulum). As Parag Khanna notes, the international order only became “truly global” in the 1990s,<sup>1</sup> in line with the dissertation’s contention that this period represented the first genuine attempt to construct a liberal world order. As such, while certain structural processes associated with contestation can be identified across historical periods, the forging of a truly global international society that has cast away the formal institution of empire leads to a specific form of change. This dissertation represents an initial attempt to illustrate the nature of consequences of that change.

As for Russian neo-revisionism, on which this dissertation has also sought to shed additional light: While it may express itself regionally through Moscow’s attempts to solidify a partnership of equals with Beijing and challenge the Brussels-centric model for European order, its consequences are global, as this dissertation’s model makes clear. As such, Russia’s nominal plans to construct a supercontinent-wide Greater Eurasian partnership may be a manifestation of the decline of the liberal order and the emergence of a multi-order world, but these developments do not depend on the success of Russia’s foreign policy initiatives.<sup>2</sup> Rather, they rely simply on the existence of rivalry and neo-revisionism in the “sphere of norms”, which, as this dissertation has demonstrated, is likely to endure in some form for a considerable period of time. This point is reinforced by the discussion that this dissertation

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<sup>1</sup> Parag Khanna, *The Future Is Asian: Global Order in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2019), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> In a recently published report, Bobo Lo argues that competing international agendas, in addition to limited Russian power and political will, all present obstacles to the success of Moscow’s Greater Eurasian paradigm. For example, Russia and its partners in the post-Soviet space do not agree on the logic of Eurasian integration, with Nursultan (Astana) prioritizing close economic ties and market access to both Russia and China but Moscow emphasizing policy coordination between states and therefore acting to secure a sphere of influence of sorts. Moreover, only eight percent of Russian trade is done with its EEU partners. See Bobo Lo, “Greater Eurasia: The Emperor’s New Clothes or an Idea whose Time Has Come?”, *Russie.Nei.Reports*, No. 27, Ifri, July 2019, available online at: <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/etudes-de-lifri/russieneireports/greater-eurasia-emperors-new-clothes-or-idea-whose> (last accessed 23.08.2018)



has undertaken on Russia and China, characterizing them both largely as possessing status quo-type aims despite their occasional resorting to spoiler tactics,<sup>3</sup> with Moscow wishing to preserve a sphere of influence and great power status that it believes it already possesses and Beijing largely benefiting from the existing set of global economic arrangements. As such, the decline of the liberal international order does not require Russia and China first to become fully revisionist powers.

It is possible that identity-related phenomena could drive Moscow and Beijing apart over the medium-to-long term, even if the status quo of a gradually deepening strategic partnership rooted in normative convergence suits both parties for the time being. Some scholars even see the emergence of the “civilizational state” as a new unit actor on the global scene, leaving open the possibility that a Russian “European-Eurasian civilizational state” could clash with a Chinese “Neo-Confucian civilizational state” at some point in the future.<sup>4</sup> This would occur because civilizationism as a precept rejects universalism.<sup>5</sup> As such, while civilizationism is certainly incompatible with the liberal order, its level of compatibility with universal international society is also in question. Theorizing and conceptualizing the extent of that compatibility against the backdrop of contemporary national and international developments could represent an interesting intellectual path to chart. This dissertation has therefore established a connection not only between the nature of Russia’s self-conception and Russian foreign policy, but also between these two phenomena and the structure of international society.

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<sup>3</sup> On the characterization of Russia and China as status quo powers, see for example Andrey Kortunov, “Who Will Build the New World Order?”, *Russian International Affairs Council*, 6 June 2019, available online at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/who-will-build-the-new-world-order/> (last accessed 23.08.2019)

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Pabst, *Liberal World Order and Its Critics: Civilisational States and Cultural Commonwealths* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 76-7.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Coker, *The Rise of the Civilizational State* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), p. 167.

This dissertation has focused heavily on conceptualizing the actual workings of the close relationship between international society and international order, as contended by Reus-Smit and Dunne, with the help of a historical overview as well as by delving into the nature of contemporary great power contestation. The conclusions reached lend themselves to further questions and observations. First, it is clear that two separate phenomena are simultaneously occurring: the transformation of the realm of international order into a multi-order world and the impact of neo-revisionism on the institutions of international society. One might question which of these two phenomena is the most significant. This dissertation's model would suggest that it is the former, as the transformation of the realm of international order affects the foundation on which the downward vertical vector rests. In other words, the emergence of a multi-order world directly affects the shape of both international order and international society, while neo-revisionism is merely one process in which a leading power projects its preferred normative vision into international discourse.

An implication to be drawn from this is that non-consensual change produces a more significant transformation than consensual change. The emergence of a multi-order world represents a more significant departure in terms of the organizing principles and units of international society than a theoretical alternate reality in which a more cooperative Greater West comprising Russia was able to emerge, as much as the latter option would have altered the power structures of the Washington-led liberal order. As international society rests upon the realm of international order, as discussed in Chapter 2, great power normative contestation has caused both realms to transform, whereas a more collaborative post-Cold War outcome featuring a liberal order with less universalist aims would have only affected the configurations of the latter realm – and less substantially at that. As mentioned above, the normative disputes of the post-Cold War era have occurred against the backdrop of the existing contradictions of liberalism and the cumulative impact of historical events. If the

advent of universal sovereignty in the post-war era did indeed produce a form of “hierarchy without empire” as noted by Reus-Smit,<sup>6</sup> then any singular hegemony had already been constrained in formal terms well before the onset of the events of the post-Cold War period. This occurred in spite of the fact that increases in the power of the singular hegemon have largely been accompanied by a strengthening of the thickness of the content embodied in the downward vertical vector, as outlined in Chapter 2. The advent of a multi-order world may represent the natural next step in a process that has gradually been inhibiting any one power from exerting a singular hegemony over international society, regardless of questions of polarity and material power distribution. This further points to the importance of ideas in understanding contemporary international relations.

This dissertation has also drawn on concepts advanced by both early and more recent English School theorists, attempting to find ways for them to operate in tandem. The conclusions reached by the dissertation’s overall investigation provide further suggestions as to how these differing theoretical accounts can be melded, on top of the similarities between Lebow’s “cultural theory” and Watson’s pendulum outlined in Chapter 4 and the parallels between English School normative theory and Monteiro’s neorealist account of unipolarity explored in Chapter 7. For example, Russia and China’s defence of the norms of sovereignty, non-interference and anti-hegemonism against the perceived excesses of a European-Western political community that birthed these principles centuries ago illustrates a fashion in which norms “expand”. Yet this “transference” of norms from the Western to the non-Western world also demonstrates how norms can be reinterpreted or repurposed in the context of

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<sup>6</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, “The Liberal International Order Reconsidered”, in Rebekka Friedman, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (eds.), *After Liberalism?: The Future of Liberalism in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 184.

contestation, in line with the more recent English School notion that contestation is constitutive of international society even though it may also drive change.

Moreover, contrary to those who may contend that earlier English School scholars are overly pluralist and more recent ones tend toward solidarism, each account contains elements of both. The “expansion” account notes that Europe exported pluralist norms such as anti-hegemonism and perhaps sovereign statehood, but also solidarist ones such as national self-determination.<sup>7</sup> The “globalization” narrative places emphasis on contestation (and therefore a degree of pluralism) but is also replete with solidarist content, including the role played by the non-West in advancing the norms of human rights and universal sovereignty, as well as the involvement of world society or the “world political system” in shaping the content of the contemporary international society of states.<sup>8</sup> If Sakwa is correct in his assertion that any world order features both pluralist and solidarist principles,<sup>9</sup> then continued exploration of the way in which these two English School accounts interact could help to illuminate further characteristics of the first truly global international society, which through fits and bursts is gradually attempting to agree on elements of universalism against the backdrop of the waning of hegemony.

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<sup>7</sup> Buzan contends that a link between pluralism and solidarism exists thanks in part to nationalism’s impact on the nineteenth-century states that Europe exported to the rest of the world. He also notes that sovereign statehood now contains elements of solidarism as it has been extended across the globe on the basis of human equality. See Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 99-100 & 141.

<sup>8</sup> Christian Reus-Smit and Tim Dunne, “The Globalization of International Society”, in Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit (eds.), *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 33-4.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 49.

**Appendix 1: Questions asked of interviewees in the United States, Summer 2016**

Are there divisions within the West as to how to interpret sovereignty?

Is it possible to speak of a united West in today's international environment?

Is the West aware of liberalism's contradictions?

How committed is the West to the Responsibility to Protect doctrine?

Is the West preparing for a post-liberal order or trying to preserve the current one at almost any cost?

Does liberal order always breed more liberal order?

Does there have to be power structure underwriting a liberal international order? Or a liberal hegemon?

Does there need to be grand alternative for liberal order to erode?

What are the major threats to the liberal order today?

Does the return of inter-state competition necessarily imply the decline of the liberal order?

How would you characterize the current world order? What are the ideas and institutions that govern international relations today?

On what does the current liberal order rest? Commons rules? Institutions? The postwar legacy? A liberal hegemon?

How do conceptions of sovereignty relate to international order?

Does the West have a single conception of sovereignty, and if not, what are the points of contention?

Has R2P changed anything about sovereignty? Does it represent a major shift in how sovereignty is interpreted internationally? How committed is the West to R2P and what does that commitment tell us?

## **Appendix 2: Questions asked of interviewees in Russia, Autumn 2017 (plus Artyom Lukin interview in Spring 2018)**

What is the dominant conception of international order in Russia? What are its sources? Can it evolve?

Which conception of international order aligns most with the preferences of the Russian people? To what extent are these preferences reflected in government policy?

Is the dominant conception of state sovereignty different in Russia than in the West, to the extent that we can speak of the West as a united entity? Or is this difference exaggerated?

To what degree has Russia been changed, both materially and ideologically, by its interactions with the world over the centuries? Conversely, to what degree is Russia capable of altering the contemporary international order?

What have been the continuities and discontinuities in Russian foreign policy throughout the centuries? Does it make more sense to think of Russian history as being linear or cyclical?

Has Russia under Putin reached a stable point between its Westernizing and "Easternizing" tendencies, or will it eventually continue to oscillate between these two poles as it has throughout history? Is Russia now finally able to pursue a material and ideological development pattern of its own, or will it continue to be influenced by comparisons with major outside actors?

Can geopolitical realities and ideological differences be overcome, or are the West and Russia destined to remain adversaries? That is, is it now "too late" for Russia to take an Atlanticist turn one day?

Are a Eurasian identity and the pursuit of Eurasian integration viable options for Russia, or will Russia always remain economically, politically and psychologically oriented toward the West? Whether it embraces or rejects a Western path of development, will the West always remain the "significant Other" in the Russian mind?

Can Russia veritably transform itself into a bridge between East and West and help to craft a Eurasian order on its terms, or is it destined to be the junior partner of either the US or China? If the latter, what are the consequences for Russian foreign policy and international stability more broadly?

Does Russia possess veritable agency? For instance, does it espouse certain norms because it truly believes them, or rather does it do so in response to and because of its weakness vis-a-vis the West?

Vladimir Putin's presidency was originally characterized by a strong degree of non-ideological pragmatism. Following the annexation of Crimea, have we now entered a new era of ideological rivalry? If so, to what extent is Russia an ideological power today? Is this actually a return to normal for Russia, which has historically interacted with the West along ideological/universalist lines (both in imperial and communist times)?

Has Russia become gradually more revisionist over the course of post-Cold War history, or is this a mischaracterization?

Throughout its history, Russia has had difficulty fusing nation and state. Is it coming close to succeeding at this task today? If so, what are the consequences for Russian foreign policy and international stability?

### **Appendix 3: Questions asked of interviewees in China, Singapore and the Russian Far East, Spring 2018**

What is the Chinese conception of world order in theory? What are its sources and influences? Is there one conception or are there several competing ones?

How does China view the idea of a “liberal” world order? How does it conceptualize the contemporary order – to what extent does it believe that the order is rooted in American power?

To what extent does China want to alter the character of the contemporary world order?

Is China’s relationship with Brussels different in a substantive fashion that the one it has with Washington? If so, what are the consequences for liberal world order?

Is China’s conception of world order evolving, and has it evolved? Is international society shaping China’s views of itself and of the world, and has it already done so?

Does China desire merely leadership in the Asia-Pacific region, or are its ambitions greater than that?

Can China ever assume the role that the United States has played since 1945? Does it want to?

Is China fundamentally committed to an anti-hegemonic worldview, or will this change as its relative power increases?

How does Beijing truly view Russia? As an appendage? As a sensitive neighbour to manage? Or as a genuine partner with a shared worldview? Are there more commonalities between their respective worldviews than differences?

How does Beijing think its rising power will influence its relationship with Moscow over the coming years and decades? Is it planning for the possibility that relations could sour as it dawns on Russia that it has become the junior partner in the relationship?

What are the prospects of harmonizing the EEU with the BRI? How about with the RCEP trading bloc? What are the consequences of success or failure in this regard?

Will this be the Eurasian century or the Pacific century? What are the consequences of each for the future of the liberal international order?



#### Appendix 4: List of Personal Interviews Conducted

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
Robert D. Kaplan	Managing Director, Eurasia Group	9 August 2016	Skype
Richard Gowan	UN Director, International Crisis Group	16 August 2016	New York
Simon Adams	Executive Director, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect	16 August 2016	New York
Serhii Plokyh	Professor of Ukrainian History, Harvard University	12 September 2016	Boston
William Keylor	Professor of International Relations and History, Boston University	13 September 2016	Boston
Vesko Garcevic	Professor of the Practice of International Relations, Boston University	13 September 2016	Boston
Mark Kramer	Director, Cold War Studies Program, Harvard University	15 September 2016	Skype
Dmitry V. Suslov	Senior Lecturer, Dept. of World Economy and International Affairs, Higher School of Economics	11 September 2017	Moscow
Andrey Kortunov	Director General, Russian International Affairs Council	25 September 2017	Moscow
Andrej Krickovic	Assistant Professor, Dept. of World Economy and International Affairs, Higher School of Economics	28 September 2017	Moscow
Marina Lebedeva	Head of Department of World Politics, MGIMO	2 October 2017	Moscow
Ivan Timofeev	Director of Programs, Russian International Affairs Council	3 October 2017	Moscow
Mikhail Remizov	President, Institute of National Strategy	4 October 2017	Moscow
Boris Mezhev	Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Moscow State University	10 October 2017	Moscow
Alexei Gusev	Professor of History, Moscow State University	11 October 2017	Moscow
Alexander Sungurov	Professor of Political Science, Higher School of Economics	23 October 2017	St. Petersburg
Alexander Gabuev	Senior Fellow, Carnegie Moscow Center	30 November 2017	Moscow

Sergey Karaganov	Dean, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, Higher School of Economics	6 December 2017	Moscow
Liu Xu	Assistant Professor, School of International Studies, Renmin University	13 April 2018	Beijing
Chen Xinming	Professor, School of International Studies, Renmin University	19 April 2018	Beijing
Zhang Wei	Co-Director, Institute for Human Rights, China University of Political Science and Law	20 April 2018	Beijing
Paul Haenle	Director, Carnegie Tsinghua Center	24 April 2018	Beijing
Artyom Lukin	Deputy Director for Research, School of Regional and International Studies, Far Eastern Federal University	1 May 2018	Vladivostok
Jin Canrong	Professor and Associate Dean, School of International Studies, Renmin University	3 May 2018	Beijing
Li Lifan	Associate Research Professor, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences	7 May 2018	Shanghai
Bilahari Kausikan	Ambassador-at-Large (ret'd.), Republic of Singapore	23 May 2018	Singapore
Parag Khanna	Managing Partner, FutureMap	24 May 2018	Singapore
Kanti Bajpai	Professor of Asian Studies, Lew Kuan Yew School of Public Policy	25 May 2018	Singapore

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