

**Fundamental Norm Contestation, an English School
Analysis of Revisionism from Within the International
Society**

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Abstract

With the current world order coming under rising pressure due to the increasingly multipolar nature of the international system, the likelihood of revisionist tendencies in states may rise too. However, there seems to be a lack of engagement with literature on revisionist states by the English School. That is why this paper questions whether a state can be revisionist while still operating within the norms of the international society. This paper performing discourse analysis on speeches made by two revisionist leaders in similar situations that produced different outcomes. By analyzing how these two narratives engage with the norms of the international society to justify their revisionist goals, this paper finds that revisionism in states is compatible with a continued membership of the international society. Furthermore, it finds that revisionist states can portray themselves in any number of ways by using the language of the norms of the international society to lend themselves its legitimacy.

Keywords: International Society, Norm Contestation, Revisionist, English School

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1 Introduction

Literature on revisionist actors in global politics has seen an increase in popularity in recent years. This may partly be due to China's increased profile on the international stage in the past years, due to its noticeable and impressive economic growth and frequent high-profile disagreements with the United States (U.S.). The majority of this discourse has been spearheaded by realists focusing on the power dynamics between an incumbent hegemon or great power in global politics and a rising revisionist power. To that end, Schweller presents two categories for states in this case, he defines the difference between a status quo power and a revisionist power as a question of satisfaction with the current state of global politics.¹ A status quo power is content with preserving the existing international order, whereas a revisionist is dissatisfied and seeks to bring about change in the established order with the aim of "increasing their power and prestige in the system."² Of course, since states are rarely ever truly satisfied with the established order, he adds a secondary qualifier, that a revisionist state is one that is willing to expend military power in order to further its aims.³ Within the debate, there are those that believe that there are certain characteristics present in the current international order that are sufficient to classify certain states as revisionist.

These texts focus on the rhetoric of states that may be classified as revisionist, in that that rhetoric might be used to delegitimize the current hegemon of the international order in preparation for the next phase, conflict.⁴ On the other side of the debate there are arguments

¹ Randall Schweller, *Deadly imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's strategy of world conquest* (Columbia University Press, 1998), 24.

² Ibid.

³ Randall L Schweller, "Bandwagoning for profit: Bringing the revisionist state back in." *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994), 105.

⁴ Randall L Schweller, and Pu Xiaoyu. "After unipolarity: China's visions of international order in an era of US decline." *International security* 36, no. 1 (2011): 41-72.

that the label of revisionist power may simply be a failure of diplomacy in improving state image abroad, or that quantitative analysis of foreign policy a trend in the reduction of revisionist actions can be seen in successive generations of leaders of states that integrate into the liberal world order.⁵

The situation of the debate on revisionist powers and their characteristics from some points of view could be seen as underrepresenting the theoretical framework contributions of the English School. With all of the emphasis being placed on the material aspects of revisionist powers such as outright conflict, relative power and military might it seems that valuable concepts such as the international society are not being employed to their full effect. That is why this paper asks the question '*Can a state be a revisionist power while still adhering to the norms of the international society?*' This paper, instead of focusing on the military and economic actions of revisionist states in global politics, focusses on the way they interact with the norms of the international society and the way their arguments are structured to achieve certain goals.

To this end, this paper has selected two case studies of states that contested the norms of the international society, interwar National Socialist Germany, and contemporary Russia under President Putin. The time period that it focusses on is the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938 and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014. This paper analyses the speeches made by the heads of state of the two revisionist actors by using discourse analysis. It does this with the aim of understanding the arguments made by the revisionist states while contesting the norms of their respective international societies through the annexations they pursued. This paper looks at the norms that the actors address in their contestation, the

⁵ Wong Ka-Ho. "ANALYSIS OF CHINESE NARRATIVE OF WORLD ORDER AND FOREIGN POLICY: IS CHINA A REVISIONIST OR REFORMIST POWER?." Сравнительная политика 9, no. 3 (2018), 160; Feng Huiyun. "Is China a revisionist power?." Chinese Journal of International Politics 2, no. 3 (2009): 334. Nicholas Taylor, "China as a status quo or revisionist power? Implications for Australia." Security Challenges 3, no. 1 (2007): 29-32.

structure of the contestation they present in their arguments as well as the narrative that their speeches offer on their view of their own state's role in the international society.

The theoretical framework for this paper draws upon the work of English School authors in order to establish the main concepts that are employed in the analysis of the narratives of the two revisionist states. The paper then further elaborates on its theoretical framework by supplementing it with the Theory of Contestation by Antje Wiener's work on the specific act of norm contestation. The analysis of the speeches made by the revisionist states is done by employing the methods of discourse analysis proposed by Jennifer Milliken.⁶

The paper is structured into five chapters. The first chapter outlines the conceptual framework and methodology. Giving a short background on the English School, outlining its main concepts then explaining the Theory of Contestation and how that will fit into this paper's analysis of the speeches, then ending with an overview of the paper's methodology. The second chapter is the analysis of the speeches given by Hitler in 1938 on the annexation of Austria. It gives a quick overview of the state of the international society as well as Germany at the time to provide context for the analysis. The third chapter is the analysis of the speeches given by Putin on the 2014 annexation of Crimea. It too starts with an overview of the international society in order to better position the background to its analysis. The fourth chapter is the comparative analysis, here the paper compares the two case studies and presents findings on the arguments and methods of the two revisionist actors. Then the fifth and final chapter is the conclusion, it ends the paper by summarizing the findings of the previous three chapters.

⁶ Jennifer Milliken, *The study of discourse in international relations: reflections on research and methodology*. Central European University. International Relations and European Studies, 1998.

2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

2.1 Foundations of The English School

The main accomplishment and the flagship tenet of the English school has always been the idea of an international society. It being the most important of the three concepts that compose the English School view of international relations. The origin of the School and the idea of an international society came about in the aftermath of the Second World War, where between the opposing realist and liberal international relations theories, the international society offered a *via media* which combined elements of both.⁷ This line of thinking found solidity in the form of the foundation of a club named the British Committee.⁸ This club did not include the totality of what could be considered the founding fathers of the English School, as there were several scholars such as Charles Manning and E. H. Carr, who were not members, but who produced content related to the School nonetheless.⁹ Towards the 1970s and 80s the exclusivity of the English School diluted and it moved towards a network of scholars rather than a club with specific membership.¹⁰ Then in 1999, despite failing to re-create any sort of recognizable club, Buzan's call for a reconvening of the English School did manage to increase the recognition of the School outside of it and led to the forming of a more coordinated presence of English School scholars.¹¹

⁷ Barry Buzan, *An introduction to the English school of international relations: the societal approach*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 7; Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Ed. Brian Porter and Gabriele Wight (Leicester: Leicester University Press/Royal Institute of International Affairs), 30-48.

⁸ Buzan, *An introduction to the English school of international relations: the societal approach*, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

2.2 Main Concepts

The English School is composed of three main concepts, the international society, the international system and the world society.¹² These three are based on the three core international relations (IR) concepts put down by Wight in 1991, rationalism, realism and revolutionism.¹³ In addition to that each of the three also finds its roots in the work of one or two prominent scholars, namely Grotius, Hobbes/Machiavelli and Kant respectively.¹⁴ As the School's most prominent tenet, the argument could be made that the concept of an international society is the most important of the three and the most important feature of the English School overall, especially since it provides a middle ground between liberal and realist IR theories. However, Dunne argues that the main benefit of the English School view of global politics is its overall more illuminating and comprehensive nature, especially when compared to more traditional realist or liberal theories.¹⁵ Dunne especially argues that this is the case because the English School does not exclude concepts based on what he calls "false dichotomies."¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, the three main concepts of the School are based on the works of scholars with very divergent views on the global political system, which provides an example of the inclusiveness that Dunne argues for.

In *The Expansion of International Society*, Bull and Watson define the international society as, "a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behavior of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognize their common interest in

¹² Claire Cutler. "The 'Grotian tradition' in international relations." *Review of International Studies* 17, no. 1 (1991): 41-65; Richard Little, "Neorealism and the English School: a methodological, ontological and theoretical reassessment." *European Journal of International Relations* 1 (1995): 15-16.

¹³ Wight. *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, 47.

¹⁴ Buzan, *An introduction to the English school of international relations: the societal approach*, 12.

¹⁵ Tim Dunne. "The English School." (*The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, 2010), 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

maintaining these arrangements.”¹⁷ A key condition for the formation of such a society is the concept of membership.¹⁸ While not sufficient for the creation of an international system, membership does highlight what distinguishes the international society from, say merely an international system. The recognition by a group of political actors of another as a member of their society has an impact on their interactions, it accords certain rights and responsibilities to that actor. These are for example right to sovereignty or the responsibility to adhere to the mutually agreed norms and values. The formation of the international society we know today has been characterized by its spread, out of its cultural origins in Europe, and defined by its exclusions and inclusions.¹⁹ The criteria by which the decision to exclude or include was made were defined in the nineteenth century on a standard of civilization.²⁰ Among other factors, this led to China being denied sovereign statehood by the rest of the international society up until the mid-twentieth century.²¹ Prior to that, both parties did not see themselves as sharing the same values or recognizing the same institutions, meaning that to the West, China was not a member of the international society.²²

Despite that, there had of course been extensive interaction between China and the West, and this is what highlights the difference between the international society and international system. In the period that China was not recognized as a member of the international society, the West’s behavior towards it was nor governed by their shared rules, norms, values and institutions, but rather by “strategic and economic logics.”²³ This highlights the central placement of the realist anarchical international system in the English School

¹⁷ Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, *The expansion of international society*. (Oxford University Press, 1984), 1.

¹⁸ Dunne, *The English School*, 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 6.

concept of the international system.²⁴ In addition, it also shows the way in which both concepts can exist at the same time as well as the way that they interact.

The third of the main concepts of the English School is the world society. World society as a concept focusses its attention on the traditionally less examined and less accredited elements of global politics, namely the global societal identity. This is in turn comprised of non-state organizations, individuals and the global population as a whole.²⁵ Of the three main concepts, the world society is noticeably less developed than the rest, prompting Little to call it a problematic part of the English School.²⁶ One of the problems that Buzan highlights is that the world society experiences a dissonance in the conjunction of its associated theory and scholar.²⁷ Whereas realism and Hobbes for the international system correspond well, according to him revolutionism and the current discussion of the works of Kant rings alarm bells.²⁸ Moreover, world society lacks a conceptual counterpart to stand in opposition to, for example the way that the concepts of international system and international society do. This results in a lessening of the world society's clarity and robustness as a concept. A final blow to the clarity of the concept of world society is the unclear nature of its relationship with international society. One view considers world society a cultural prerequisite for the initial formation of an international society on a regional level.²⁹ The other view sees the development of a world society based on the rights of the individual as something that will decrease the dominance of the state's system in global politics.³⁰

²⁴ Buzan, *An introduction to the English school of international relations: the societal approach*, 12.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁶ Richard Little, "The English School's contribution to the study of international relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 6, no. 3 (2000), 411.

²⁷ Barry Buzan, *From international to world society?: English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*. (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Martin Wight, "Systems of States, ed." Hedley Bull (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977). 33; Hedley Bull, "The Anarchical Society: a study of world order." (World Politics, 1977). 16.

³⁰ Andrew Linklater, "Men and citizens in international relations." *Review of International Studies* 7, no. 1 (1981): 23-37; Buzan, *From international to world society?: English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 29.

2.2.1 *Primary and Secondary Institutions*

Within global politics, the English School posits that there are things called primary and secondary institutions. Buzan defines primary institutions as fundamental practices that are durable enough to evolve over time and become embedded in international interactions, as well as that they are “constitutive of actors and their patterns of legitimate activity in relation to each other.”³¹ An example of a primary institution is sovereignty, in the contemporary global politics sovereignty is a fundamental principle that states must respect when dealing with one another. Acting in respect of that lends their actions legitimacy, whereas disregarding the principle can delegitimize their actions. Secondary institutions then are organizations and structures that are formed in support of the primary institutions. In contemporary global politics the United Nations (UN) would be an example.

2.2.2 *The Pluralist – Solidarist Debate*

The main debate within the English School on the operationalization of its three primary tenets takes place in the pluralist – solidarist debate. This debate, started by Hedley Bull, is commonly perceived as being an argument over the nature of the international law that underpins the international society concept of the international school.³² Whether the basis for this law is natural law represented by the works of Grotius, or positivist law represented by Lassa Oppenheim.³³ On the one side, the basic pluralist understanding is that there are indeed shared norms in the international society, however these are limited in scope to only encompass those issues which states find absolutely necessary to agree on.³⁴ On the other side, the solidarist argument is that there is a universal drive for shared norms, and focusses more on the

³¹ Buzan, *From international to world society?: English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 167.

³² *Ibid.*, 45.

³³ Hedley Bull, "The Grotian conception of international society." *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics* 3 (1966): 51-73; Hedley Bull, "The importance of Grotius." *Hugo Grotius and international relations* (1990): 65-73.

³⁴ Buzan, *From international to world society?: English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 45.

importance of the individual in the international society.³⁵ What Buzan argues however, is that the existence of the pluralist – solidarist debate can be called into question depending on the view one takes of the nature of solidarism.³⁶ According to him this possible alternate view stems originally from Bull's work where he leaves an opening as to whether solidarism is really just cosmopolitanism in disguise, in which case the two sides must be mutually exclusive. Or alternatively, if solidarism is simply about the thickness of the shared norms and institutions, in which case pluralism and solidarism are just differences of scale.³⁷

2.2.3 *An Underdeveloped Concept*

One of the underexplored areas of English School scholarship is the issue of challenges posed to the international system and society by dissatisfied states. One paper that does address this is by Newman and Zala, where they examine the challenge that is posed by rising powers in contemporary global politics to the primary and secondary institutions of the international liberal order.³⁸ Their paper is geared towards the examination of the type of challenge that is posed and whether it is existential in nature when it comes to the survival of the current international order, or whether it is a question of changing representation and process.³⁹ Therefore, they differentiate between challenges to the primary institutions that underpin the international order, and challenges to secondary institutions. The difference between the two is not only the aim of the challenge but is heavily impacted by what is realistically possible for a rising power. Contesting the primary institutions of an international order with the aim of overthrowing it and creating a new one would require a powerful state. Therefore, working from within an international order to undermine or work towards changing it is much more

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 58.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Edward Newman, and Zala Benjamin, "Rising powers and order contestation: disaggregating the normative from the representational." *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 5 (2018): 871-888.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.

feasible than challenging it outright.⁴⁰ This would constitute a challenge on the secondary institutions of an international order, which could serve the purpose of, among others, changing one's representation in the order or delegitimizing the order itself.

2.3 Contestation theory

Newman and Zala focus on the broad statements and actions of a group of rising powers in global politics. As a result, their focus is wider than that of this paper, which places the emphasis on a comparison of the narrative proposed by challengers of the international society in two different iterations of that society. Because of the smaller and more detailed focus, this paper needed to supplement the existing English School theory on norms and their contestation. Therefore, this paper broadens its statement on the existence of an international society underpinned by shared norms by expanding it with Antje Wiener's theory of contestation.⁴¹ This expansion is made easier in some ways due to a similarity in the vein of thinking between the two theories. The aim of expanding on the English School by using the theory of contestation is in order to look at the dynamics within the English School's international society when the norms of that society are challenged. Wiener's theory on contestation was developed in response to the rising popularity of contestation as a concept and due to Wiener's personal fear that because of its widening use the concept would lose its precision.⁴² That precision is what this paper hopes to employ by combining the two.

What distinguishes Wiener's theory from others is its dual approach to contestation. On the one hand, there is contestation as a social practice, in which an actor exercises disagreement with norms by rejecting them. On the other hand, there is contestation as a way of critically engaging in discourse with the norms.⁴³ Wiener's theory takes what she calls a "bifocal"

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁴¹ Antje Wiener, *A theory of contestation*. (Springer, 2014), viii.

⁴² Antje Wiener, "A Theory of Contestation—A Concise Summary of Its Argument and Concepts." *Polity* 49, no. 1 (2017): 109-125.

⁴³ Ibid.

approach to these two modes of contestation and attempts to link them.⁴⁴ She then lays out the different types of norms that an actor can engage with. There are, fundamental norms which are the large-scale norms such as human rights or rule of law that are decided at the global level by government representatives and backed up by treaties such as the United Nations Charter.⁴⁵ Organizing principles, these are the norms constituted by policy and political actions at the intermediate level of global society.⁴⁶ Standardized regulations, these are the very specific implementations of norms that mostly take place at the micro levels of global society such as firms.⁴⁷

Both the bifocal approach that Wiener proposes and the differentiation that she makes between the different types of norms to be engaged with may find parallels within the concepts of the English School. The bifocal approach that she takes in examining the social practice of disagreeing with norms and the critical engagement with norms finds a sort of parallel in the differentiation made by Newman and Zala in regard to normative challenges. The critical engagement with the norms could be considered to be in the direction of what they call a representational challenge, an action which is aimed more at changing the unequal representation of actors in the international system or the way in which the established norms function.⁴⁸ Whereas the social practice of rejecting norms might be considered more in line with what they consider challenges to the fundamental normative underpinnings of the international society. Furthermore, among the types of norms for example, what she describes as fundamental norms could be considered similar in nature to the English School concept of a primary institution. Buzan describes some primary institutions as being constitutive or

⁴⁴ Wiener, *A theory of contestation*, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Newman and Zala. "Rising powers and order contestation: disaggregating the normative from the representational", 1.

fundamental, much in the same way that Wiener portrays them as fundamental too.⁴⁹ Of course Wiener elaborates on this by distinguishing this concept from the smaller scale of implementations of a norm.

Wiener further elaborates on her theory by describing the addition of the concept of a legitimacy gap, replacing what other scholars may call a legitimacy deficit.⁵⁰ This legitimacy gap is something that occurs during the second of the three stages of the implementation of a norm, namely the referring stage.⁵¹ Following the initial constituting stage, where the norm's formal validity is established by a political community, the second referring stage is where the norms are labelled as an indicator of desired or appropriate behavior by invested actors.⁵² The final stage is then the implementing stage, where the norms are carried out on the ground by norm-users.⁵³ The reason why the legitimacy gap is situated in the middle of the cycle is because of the increase in the profile of the norm at the stage where it is being transmitted through the global society. Additionally, the intermediate part of the cycle is where contestation happens the most often because of the increased clash of normative acceptance and personal interests as well as the increase in national diversity.⁵⁴

This leads into another important concept of Wiener's work that this paper makes use of, an emphasis on one of the characteristics of the international society which may be somewhat under-examined, its cultural diversity. What she explains is that when one leaves a social group behind, in this case the realm of domestic politics in order to look at the international level, the cultures become more diverse and the normative assumptions that were in play earlier are no longer shared, but they become individual baggage. It is this individual baggage that every

⁴⁹ Buzan, *From international to world society?: English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, 181; Wiener, *A theory of contestation*, 4.

⁵⁰ Wiener, *A theory of contestation*, 81.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

actor in the global society carries that creates its cultural diversity, and this diversity leads to her stating that the default setting of the global society is contestedness.⁵⁵ That there will inevitably be clashes between the different actors in the global society because of the baggage they carry, but that whether these clashes result in conflict or in the finding of shared norms depends on how those encounters are executed.⁵⁶

Wiener's emphasis on the inevitable, contested nature of global politics as well as her emphasis on the importance of the role that states play in determining the outcome of contestations could indicate a similarity between this theory and the pluralist argument in the English School debate. Especially the positivist base of that side of the debate. Moreover, when she says that the cultural diversity in global politics creates a diversity in norms between different actors that don't always overlap with one another, this could be construed as a line of thinking that runs counter to the universalist and cosmopolitan thinking of the solidarist and thereby supports the pluralist argument.

2.4 Application of Concepts

The case studies of interwar Germany and 21st century Russia that this paper examines are structured against the broad theoretical framework of the English School, supplemented by the theory of contestation. Both of these regimes were situated within a global political situation with elements of an international system, an international society and a world society. Both of the international societies had their own creators, stakeholders and norms, backed up by institutions. Norms which Germany and Russia challenged in their own way. This paper examines in what way their narratives presented those challenges by looking at the type, level and the method of the challenge they posed to the international society. For example, whether fundamental norms, or organizing principles were the target of the challenge. What the aim of

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

the challenge was, to delegitimize the international society, delegitimize specific norms, to change the structure of the society as a whole, or to change the representation of certain actors within that society. By breaking down the arguments made in each of the two narratives and examining them through the theoretical lens described in this chapter, this paper aims to better understand the dynamics of norm contestation in the interwar international society as well as the contemporary one. In addition, this paper frames the challenges made by interwar Germany and contemporary Russia towards their respective international societies in terms of the pluralist – solidarist debate in the English School. It does this by identifying elements in the arguments made in the narratives proposed by each regime and comparing those to the arguments of each side of the pluralist – solidarist debate.

2.5 Methodology

The way this paper employs the concepts laid out in this chapter is through the use of discourse analysis, based on the work of Jennifer Millikan, on the speeches given by the leaders of the two countries presented as case studies.⁵⁷ Both of the regimes in question, interwar Germany and contemporary Russia, were and are considered to be markedly under the control or centered around one person. That is why this paper takes the opinions and reflections that are expressed by those persons in the form of speeches to be representative of the official stance of their regimes towards both the composition and the norms of the international society of their time, as well as their actions within that society as relate to its norms. This is in keeping with Millikan's statement that "the discourses that people use are productive of practices towards the things defined by the discourse."⁵⁸ Furthermore, in analyzing the speeches and the narrative they present, this paper focusses its attention on binary oppositions as well as predications. Binary oppositions are instances where the creator of the discourse being analyzed lays out two

⁵⁷ Milliken, *The study of discourse in international relations: reflections on research and methodology*, 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

thing that are in opposition to each other, and in doing so will imply that one is superior, and one is inferior in a “logic of difference” which establishes the discourses knowledge and opinion of things.⁵⁹ Predications are instances where the creator of the discourse attaches verbs, adverbs and adjectives to nouns that construct the subject of the noun in a specific way.⁶⁰ Analysis of the construction of the noun then reveals in what way the discourse is painting the subject as.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁶¹ Ibid.

3 Norm Contestation in 1938

3.1 International Society in the Interwar Period

Europe in the interwar period had just come out of a devastating conflict of previously unseen proportions. This war ended with the signing of a series of peace treaties that were designed to punish the defeated Central Powers and prevent another global war. Both these treaties and the creation of the League of Nations were spearheaded by the American President Woodrow Wilson who had outlined his ideas for the new international society in fourteen points.⁶² More commonly known as Wilson's fourteen points, they laid out general principles for the conduct of international relations in the first five, the resolution of territorial issues in the interwar period in the next eight and the creation of the league of nations in the last. These points and the treaties that were signed at the end of the war dominated the politics of the international society at the time on a global scale, especially in Europe.

During the implementation of the peace process the victorious powers in charge of constructing the future international society clashed on several issues, among them the question of what to do with a defeated Germany as well as the question of the strength and rigidity of the norms and laws of the new world order.⁶³ The French preferred a harsh punishment for Germany, who it saw as the aggressor in World War One, and a more tightly bound international society to increase security, whereas the British and Americans believed in a less restrictive international society.⁶⁴ Crucially, The German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires were not consulted in the creation of the new international society.⁶⁵ Understandably, excluding not only the all of the non-western nations from the world order building process,

⁶² Luciano Tosi, "The League of Nations: An international relations perspective." *Uniform Law Review* 22, no. 1 (2017): 148-157.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

but also excluding all of losers of the First World War resulted in the members of the international society having a low opinion of the League of Nations to begin with. Adding to the League's already weak legitimacy caused by its exclusive nature, the situation only worsened when its principal member state, the United States, failed to ratify its creation and withdrew into isolationism.⁶⁶

The Versailles treaty, which determined the fate of Germany after the end of the First World War was representative of the strong French desire to punish the German people for their alleged role as aggressors in the war as well as the desire to keep Germany weak in order to prevent it becoming a threat ever again. Under the treaty, Alsace and Lorraine were returned to France, three small provinces were given to Belgium, Poland was resurrected, and it was given most of former German West Prussia and Pozen. Plebiscites territory ownership were held in the Saarland, after League supervision until 1935, as well as in Schleswig, which determined it should be part of Denmark, and Upper Silesia, which voted to join Poland. In addition, all German overseas colonies were given to Great Britain, France and Japan. Moreover, the German military capacity was seriously reduced in terms of what materiel they were allowed to manufacture, and the amount of men allowed in the army.

3.2 Hitler's Narrative on the Anschluss

3.2.1 *Ethnic Unification*

The primary argument that Hitler employed in his quest to create the Greater German Reich was that of pan-Germanism. This was the idea that sought to unify all or most of the Germanic peoples in central Europe. The application of this idea can be seen in the German acquisition, one way or another, of places like Memel, Danzig, the Sudetenland and, most importantly for this paper, Austria. The claim that Austrians and Germans are of the same people, and therefore

⁶⁶ Anca Oltean, "The beginnings of the League of Nations." *Analele Universității din Oradea. Relații Internationale și Studii Europene (RISE)* 10, no. X (2018), 9.

belong together in one nation state constitutes the first and main argument in all of Hitler's speeches concerning the annexation.

Because of the importance of this particular argument, the pan-Germanic theme in Hitler's speeches often takes a very overt and clear form. For example, "an eternal historic bond (...) made Austria a part of the community of race and destiny common to all Germans," or "this land is a German land and its people are German!"⁶⁷ It is clear by these quotes that Hitler had no intention of being coy about his intentions for Austria and its sovereignty. In fact, what he is doing is using predication in order to convey a sense of unity between the German and Austrian people.⁶⁸ This is evident for example when he describes Austrian land as 'German', or then describes the Austrian people as 'German' once again. Somewhat more in depth, he describes Austria as being placed in an "eternal historic bond" with Germany, thereby painting the subject of the noun 'Austria' as clearly part of Germany.

In these quotes Hitler is clearly stating that Austrians and Germans are members of the same ethnic race, and that they should be unified in one German nation state. What he is doing is critically engaging with the norm created by the Great War peace treaties and the subsequent actions of the victorious powers and using it to criticize the use of the victorious powers to hinder the unification of Germany and Austria. The Versailles treaty explicitly banned the political unification of Austria and Germany under any circumstances. But at the same time, that treaties ordered the creation of ethnically homogeneous nation states made all over Europe made from the remnants of the Central European empires. The ninth, eleventh, twelfth and

⁶⁷ Adolf Hitler, "Proclamation for the Anschluss, 12/05/1938." Full Text of "Adolf Hitler Collection Of Speeches 1922-1945". Accessed December 20, 2018.

[https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerCollectionOfSpeeches19221945/Adolf Hitler - Collection of Speeches 1922-1945_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerCollectionOfSpeeches19221945/Adolf%20Hitler%20-%20Collection%20of%20Speeches%201922-1945_djvu.txt); Adolf Hitler, "Speech in Vienna, Vienna, 09/06/1938." Full Text of "Adolf Hitler Collection Of Speeches 1922-1945". Accessed December 20, 2018.

[https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerCollectionOfSpeeches19221945/Adolf Hitler - Collection of Speeches 1922-1945_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerCollectionOfSpeeches19221945/Adolf%20Hitler%20-%20Collection%20of%20Speeches%201922-1945_djvu.txt).

⁶⁸ Milliken, The study of discourse in international relations: reflections on research and methodology, 6.

thirteenth of Wilson's points directly recommend the creation of nation states along the lines of nationalities. So, by critically engaging in discourse with the norm of ethnic unification Hitler is pointing out the hypocrisy of the Allied powers in unfairly applying this norm. Therefore, his aim in contesting this norm is not to refute it in its entirety, but rather criticize its unfair application and defend his own application of the norm in a situation that suits German interests.

The institutionalization of what this paper considers the fundamental norm, or the primary institution of the international society of ethnic unification at the time took the form of The League of Nations. The League as an institution had been created to arbitrate questions of which nation state should comprise which peoples' territory, this meant that the norm supporting the creation of ethnically homogeneous states was well established.⁶⁹ Therefore, by referring to "our volksgenossen (national comrades) in Austria" and the "Volksgemeinschaft (national community)" in his speeches Hitler is filling in the missing piece of the pre-existing argument that results in support for Austria joining the German Reich.⁷⁰ Nation states are good for peace, people of the same ethnic group belong in one nation state, and since Austrians and Germans are of the same ethnic group, they should reside in the same nation state.

3.2.2 *Undemocratic - illegitimate nature of Austria*

In the period leading up to the German annexation of Austria, Hitler put great emphasis on the illegitimate nature of the Austrian regime. Having established that the German and Austrian people were of one ethnic group, and that they belonged together in one nation, he then needed to bring Germany into the spotlight as the state that would unify the Germanic people. In order

⁶⁹ Tosi, "The League of Nations: An international relations perspective." 150.

⁷⁰ Hitler, "Proclamation for the Anschluss, 12/05/1938"; Adolf Hitler, "Proclaims liberation of Austria, Heldenplatz, 15/05/1938." Full Text of "Adolf Hitler Collection Of Speeches 1922 1945". Accessed December 20, 2018. https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerCollectionOfSpeeches19221945/Adolf_Hitler_-_Collection_of_Speeches_1922-1945_djvu.txt.

to paint Germany in a favorable light he attempted to juxtapose Germany and Austria and decrease the legitimacy of Austria and attacking its mandate.

In terms of specific characteristics that Hitler focusses on, he uses the upcoming, very suddenly announced plebiscite on the Austrian – German political union as an example. He states “a referendum was devised with the purpose of completely depriving the majority of this country of its rights,” and that this referendum would take place in “A country that had had no elections whatsoever for many years, which did not even possess any documentation for determining who was eligible to vote.”⁷¹ Here we can see that he is very focused on the matter of the upcoming referendum as a symbol of the undemocratic character of the Austrian state. In addition to the symbol of the referendum, Hitler also makes broader accusations on the nature of the way that the Austrian Chancellor of the time came into power, “Herr Schuschnigg, who was perfectly aware that only a minority of the population was behind him, attempted to procure for himself, (...) a mandate for continuing to oppress (...) the overwhelming majority of the German-Austrian Volk.”⁷²

What Hitler is referring to here is the international society of the time’s accepted link between democratic governance and legitimacy of a state. This was a fundamental norm that found its source in several places. Primarily, France, Britain and the U.S., all victorious powers at the end of the Great War were democracies, increasing its prestige as a political system. In addition, the principle of self-determination that dominated the interwar period often (at least in Europe) found itself taking the form of nominally democratic states or referendums. Finally, and most importantly, the propagation of democracy as a political system was a principal aim of President Wilson. While the European powers joined the Great War because of alliances or

⁷¹ Hitler, “Proclamation for the Anschluss, 12/05/1938”.

⁷² Adolf Hitler, " Speech before the Reichstag, Kroll Opera, 18/05/1938." Full Text of "Adolf Hitler Collection Of Speeches 1922 1945". Accessed December 20, 2018. [https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerCollectionOfSpeeches19221945/Adolf Hitler - Collection of Speeches 1922-1945_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerCollectionOfSpeeches19221945/Adolf%20Hitler%20-%20Collection%20of%20Speeches%201922-1945_djvu.txt).

to preserve the balance of power on the European continent, for Wilson and the American people the U.S.'s entry into the war was portrayed as a crusade for democracy.⁷³ And as perhaps the country that emerged most intact and even invigorated from the war, the U.S.'s opinions on the norms of the international society would have carried considerable weight. Therefore, the importance of democracy as the only way of obtaining a legitimate mandate from the people would have been a well-established norm, making it not only a fundamental norm agreed upon by states at a high level, but also an organizational practice, reinforced by political actions undertaken by the founders of the international society.

If we look at Hitler's comments on Austria in this broader context of the internationally recognized norms of the time, we can see that rather than contesting the norm of democratically reinforced legitimacy with the aim of removing it entirely, his aim is to critically engage with it due to its hypocritical nature. Hitler considers the founders of the international society to be applying the democratic legitimacy norm unfairly in that they are supporting what he sees as an illegitimate and undemocratic regime in Austria, while simultaneously condemning his own regime, which he portrays as democratic.

Germany, in turn, is presented as the counter to Austria's illegitimacy in Hitler's speeches. In a speech held after the entry of German troops into Austria on the 12th of March 1938 Hitler states, "I do not believe there is a state in existence whose regime is more firmly established than ours and which yet has so often turned to the Volk and had its mandate verified."⁷⁴ Here we can see that he is expressing absolute confidence in the democratic mandate that his administration has received from the German people. This confidence in Germany's democratic nature is used in Hitler's creation of a binary opposition between

⁷³ Henig, Ruth. *Versailles and after, 1919-1933*. (Routledge, 2006), 10.

⁷⁴ Adolf Hitler, "Speech in Königsberg, Schlageterhalle, 25/05/1938." Full Text of "Adolf Hitler Collection Of Speeches 1922 1945". Accessed December 20, 2018. https://archive.org/stream/AdolfHitlerCollectionOfSpeeches19221945/Adolf_Hitler_-_Collection_of_Speeches_1922-1945_djvu.txt.

Austria and Germany. By placing the democratic nature of the two opposite each other, Hitler is implicitly and explicitly indicating that the legitimacy of one of the two states is superior to the other.⁷⁵

3.2.3 *Austrian self-determination vs German self-determination*

In the majority of his speeches Hitler's use of the fundamental norm and primary institution of democratic legitimacy is accompanied by its sister norm, the principle of self-determination. The importance of self-determination in Hitler's speeches serves a similar purpose as that of democratic legitimacy. He constructs a binary opposition between self-determination in Austria and in Germany in order to critically engage with the norm of self-determination. He does this because once again his argument is that there has been an unequal application of norms and that the founders of the international society and The League of Nations are violating the true spirit of the society they created. His accusation that Austria and the League of Nations are denying the Austrian people the right of self-determination goes along with his aim of delegitimizing the Austrian state. Whereas, he can point to Germany's past successes in delivering self-determination to the people in several instances.⁷⁶ This initially legitimized his demand for a referendum to be held in Austria on the annexation. And once German troops had entered Austria, it legitimized his claim of delivering a genuine referendum to the Austrians.

By the way he structures his arguments, it is clear that Hitler recognizes the important role that self-determination played in the international society at the time, "In an age in which it is self-evident that all the peoples of the earth are accorded the right of self-determination, one has denied this right of self-determination to the members of a great civilized volk and robbed them of it."⁷⁷ However, it is clear that the purpose of emphasizing this right is to

⁷⁵ Milliken. *The study of discourse in international relations: reflections on research and methodology*, 4.

⁷⁶ Jörg Fisch, *The right of self-determination of peoples: the domestication of an illusion*. (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 160 – 164.

⁷⁷ Hitler, "Proclamation for the Anschluss, 12/05/1938."

highlight the fact that Austrians have been denied it. Moreover, he associates the withholding of this right not only with the Austrian state, but sees the Allied powers, and the League of Nations as an extension of them, as responsible as well, “Wilson's right of self-determination of the peoples, which was used in part to persuade our Volk to lay down its arms, was replaced by the most brutal national violation of countless millions of German Volksgenossen.”⁷⁸ His admission of the self-evidence of the norm of self-determination demonstrates that he is critically engaging with the application of the norm rather than refuting its legitimacy entirely. Furthermore, his attribution of the norm to Wilson as a representative of the victorious powers of World War One and the founders of the current international society shows that he considers them to be responsible for its uneven application.

As an example of the uneven application of the norm, Hitler appears to perceive added insult in the fact that Wilson's Fourteen Points and the Treaty of Versailles instruct that the right of self-determination should be given to colonial nations as well. In a continuation of the previous quote he states, “Rights which were self-evidently accorded to the most primitive colonial tribes were withheld from one of this world's old civilized nations for reasons as unacceptable as they were insulting.”⁷⁹ Besides the injustice of one people being accorded the right of self-determination, while it is being withheld from another, Hitler is additionally making a reference to the difference in developmental and racial status between the two peoples in comparison. The National Socialist regime's racial theories and connections to Social Darwinism and Eugenics are well documented.⁸⁰ The common acceptance of the idea that one race could be superior to another is one of the main differences between the international society in the interwar period and the international society in the twenty first century.

⁷⁸ Hitler, "Speech before the Reichstag, Kroll Opera, 18/05/1938."

⁷⁹ Hitler, "Proclamation for the Anschluss, 12/05/1938."

⁸⁰ Egbert Klautke, "'The Germans are beating us at our own game' American eugenics and the German sterilization law of 1933." *History of the Human Sciences* 29, no. 3 (2016): 25-43.

Therefore, Hitler's indignant reaction to colonial self-determination would have been widely shared, even outside National Socialist circles.⁸¹

As Hitler correctly identifies, the principle of self-determination was indeed one of the primary points pushed by president Wilson together with his promotion of democracy and the creation of the League of Nations. This principle is represented strongly in the way he worded his famous fourteen points, "guarantees of political independence," as well as in the Treaty of Versailles.⁸² Moreover, both Wilson's points and the Versailles treaty include explicit reference to the granting of self-determination to colonial peoples, "the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined."⁸³ As mentioned earlier, this principle of self-determination would have been seen as a way of reducing the likelihood of conflict in Europe, since the desire for self-determination in the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the spark that set off the war. We can see that the international society in Europe especially took the application of this norm to heart in the numerous plebiscites that were conducted and scheduled to take place in the interwar period.⁸⁴ Regarding German territory in Europe for example, referenda were held in multiple provinces, in respective cases these provinces were given the choice of remaining German or becoming French, Belgian, Danish or Polish.⁸⁵ This established the norm of self-determination not only as a fundamental norm through it being agreed upon by the victorious powers and institutionalized via The League of Nations, but also as an organizing principle through the precedent created by political actions implementing the norm in various states. Of course, being

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² W Wilson, Woodrow. *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President*. (NYU Press, 2006), 403-6; Treaty of Versailles. "Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles), June, 1919.", 96.

⁸³ Treaty of Versailles. 1919, 55; Wilson. "Fourteen points."

⁸⁴ Treaty of Versailles. 1919.

⁸⁵ Fisch. *The right of self-determination of peoples: the domestication of an illusion*. 160 – 164.

a creation and an instrument of the victorious powers, the U.S. especially, the League of Nations was often called to arbitrate on issues of self-determination.⁸⁶

In the spirit of this norm, the logical assumption would be that if there were a dispute on the nationality of a people, that the state in question, or the League of Nations would be obligated to hold a referendum that was in keeping with internationally accepted standards in order to resolve that dispute. However, the Austrian state failed to do so until the last moment, only declaring a referendum at very short notice when it became clear that the consequences of failing to do so would be military in nature.⁸⁷ Hitler recognizes that this is one of the rules that the international society would expect Austria to abide by, failing that, the expectation would be that the League would apply pressure. Therefore, he makes a point of emphasizing in his speeches that neither of these things have happened. The Austrian people have not been given the opportunity to announce their wishes in the way that the people in the Rhineland, Saarland, Silesia and Schleswig-Holstein had.

In the speeches after the German troops entered Austria on March 12th, Hitler presents Germany as a state that has internalized the international norm of self-determination and is ready to offer the same opportunity to the Austrian people, “ Tank troops, infantry divisions, and the SS formations on the ground (...), shall guarantee that the Austrian Volk will now be given, (...) the opportunity to shape its future and thus its own fate in a genuine referendum of the people”⁸⁸. Here he uses predication to present the Austrian people as less privileged and in need of protection and especially in need of a guarantor of their rights. He does this by presenting the German army as the instrument of the state that will “guarantee” the Austrian people their rights.⁸⁹ His aim in so boldly presenting the Austrian people with an opportunity

⁸⁶ Tosi, Luciano. "The League of Nations: An international relations perspective." 150.

⁸⁷ Wright, Herbert. "The legality of the annexation of Austria by Germany." *Am. J. Int'l L.* 38 (1944), 624.

⁸⁸ Hitler, "Proclamation for the Anschluss, 12/05/1938."

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

for self-determination is to use the existing norm to lend legitimacy to what is essentially a naked violation of Austria's sovereignty and the Versailles Treaty.⁹⁰ However, his claim of delivering self-determination is not entirely unsubstantiated. He makes clear reference to previous occasions in which the nationality of a people was called into question and the outcome of the subsequent referendum was in favor of remaining German, "by virtue of this referendum in the Saar, we have been given the trust of the German Volk in such an indisputable fashion."⁹¹ Once again he is using predication in order to present the German side of the binary opposition as superior when it comes to guaranteeing the chance for self-determination. He does this by using words such as "virtue" and "trust" to describe the German referendum in the Saar and its outcome.⁹² This quote serves to point out that there is a precedent for Germany providing and abiding by the outcome of a referendum, as well as to show that there is a precedent of self-determination which is not being met in the case of Austria.

3.2.4 *Economic Woes of Austria*

Hitler's criticism of Austria extended further than just its undemocratic and illegitimate practices. His speeches on the Anschluss also placed a noticeable emphasis on the lackluster performance of the Austrian economy at the time of the annexation, but also its performance in general since its creation, "This tiny country is incapable of solving the problems of its 300,000 unemployed and hundreds of thousands of dispossessed. And this proves that so small a country is not a viable unit."⁹³ Hitler's claim that the creation of Austria was not economically viable is more than just a material point. He is referring to the creation of Austria as a state by the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the Great War as well as Wilson's tenth point.⁹⁴ This is the point that states that the peoples of Austria-Hungary should be accorded the

⁹⁰ Herbert. "The legality of the annexation of Austria by Germany."

⁹¹ Hitler, "Proclamation for the Anschluss, 12/05/1938."

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Hitler. "Speech in Vienna, Vienna, 09/06/1938."

⁹⁴ Treaty of Versailles. 1919; Wilson. "Fourteen points."

“opportunity of autonomous development.”⁹⁵ His criticism of the creation of Austria leading to its economic ruin refers back to the fundamental norm of ethnic unification that his argument of Austrians being Germans referred to as well. Once again Hitler is engaging in critical discourse with the norm with the aim of changing its application rather than refuting it. Only this time he takes a different angle than with the previous argument. Rather than argue that the League and the founders of the international society have been applying this norm unfairly and unevenly, he is criticizing the League’s right to be the one in charge of applying at all. That he considers the victorious powers guilty of this is demonstrated when he states, “the perpetrators of the peace Diktats succeeded, by the simple fact of establishing this inviable figment of state, in passing a sentence of slow but sure death for millions of people.”⁹⁶

At the time, most of Europe was still recovering from the damage that the Great War had caused on each state’s economies. Both the devastation caused by the fighting itself as well as the strain of keeping the military supplied had had serious negative effects on each state’s economy. In addition to this the recent Black Friday market crash had affected the global economy negatively as well. Therefore, the idea of development and economic strength being an indicator of a state’s success would have been well established in the international society at the time. This all means that when Hitler speaks of Austria’s “economic deterioration which stood in crass contrast to the flourishing new life in Germany.”⁹⁷ He is creating a juxtaposition of the Austrian economic weakness, allegedly originating at its creation by the treaty of Versailles, with German economic strength. The idea behind that being that his arguments present Germany as the economically superior one and undermine the decision by the

⁹⁵ Treaty of Versailles. 1919, 87; Wilson. “Fourteen points.”

⁹⁶ Hitler. "Speech before the Reichstag, Kroll Opera, 18/05/1938."

⁹⁷ Hitler. "Proclamation for the Anschluss, 12/05/1938."

victorious powers to establish Austria as a separate state that cannot fend for itself economically.

3.2.5 *Civil War Brewing*

In Hitler's narrative, the culmination of all of the previous factors that ailed Austria had built up into a situation which presented only two solutions "either a structured settlement or an unstructured outbreak of revolution."⁹⁸ What Hitler is referring to here is the civil war that had broken out in Spain two years earlier, made clear when he states "to ensure that Austria could be spared the fate of Spain."⁹⁹ By associating the situation in Austria with what happened in Spain as well as using words such as "terrible bloodshed" and "permanent state of injustice," he is painting a picture of Austria as a country on the brink of a complete breakdown. Thereby, he is exacerbating the image of the League's inaction in Austria regarding the tension building there and its inability to fulfill its main purpose in Spain, namely to prevent aggressive war.¹⁰⁰ Prevention of aggressive war had been established as something that was detrimental to humanity as a whole by the victors of World War One and the League of Nations had been charged with contributing to its prevention.

3.2.6 *Chapter Conclusion*

In conclusion, we can see that the arguments that Hitler makes in his speeches regarding the annexation of Austria all fall within the normative discourse framework of the international society as it stood in the interwar period. His arguments are strengthened by their reference to the precedents and narratives set by the founders of the international society as well as secondary institutions that were created in support of the primary institutions. Furthermore, Hitler's contestation of the fundamental norms of the international society takes the form of a

⁹⁸ Hitler. "Speech in Koningsberg, Schlageterhalle, 25/05/1938."

⁹⁹ Hitler. "Speech before the Reichstag, Kroll Opera, 18/05/1938."

¹⁰⁰ Tosi, Luciano. "The League of Nations: An international relations perspective." 150.

critical engagement in discourse with those norms. On the surface, the analysis by this paper reveals that Hitler's arguments are structured in a way that does not suggest they are designed to pose a fundamental threat to the international society by rejecting its norms outright. Rather, at that moment it seems that his contestation is structured around the idea of arguing for a balanced application of the norms of the international society by its custodians.

Regarding the pluralist – solidarist debate of the English School this paper would argue that Hitler's narrative takes a more pluralist perspective on the international society than it does a solidarist one. While it is true that at the time of the speeches that this paper analyses it seems that his arguments are not designed to topple the international society as it stood. Rather, he argued from within its normative framework and critically engaged in discourse about the norms it stood for. This in theory would make Hitler a proponent of the solidarist side as he seemed to be working to improve or at least work within the international society's universalist views. However, this paper would make the argument that his narrative as analyzed here was formed in such a way that they delegitimized the nascent interwar international society. This argument is supported by the knowledge in hindsight of the events that followed 1938. Therefore, his actions in criticizing and delegitimizing the international society from within have to be taken into consideration together with knowledge of the events that followed. Leading this paper to support the argument that Hitler's narrative was more in line with the pluralist argument which emphasizes the primacy of the nation state in choosing which norms to follow, something that his narrative as analyzed here, and later actions are an example of.

4 Norm Contestation in 2014

4.1 International Society in the Liberal World Order

Russia's place in the contemporary international society could in many ways be described as one that contains a mix of both privileged inclusion and unfortunate exclusion. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Russia has as high a position as possible in the multilateral decision-making process of the liberal international society. This gives it an advantage in global politics and makes it a major stakeholder in the current form of the international society. However, at the same time the argument could be made that Russia faces exclusion. As the main successor state to the Soviet Union, an actor that filled the role of bogeyman to most western states throughout the latter half of the 20th century, Russia has struggled to maintain good relations with western states. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar world order Russia has often expressed that it feels that its traditional interests and security have been infringed upon by the United States and its allies. Presenting itself as a strong proponent of multilateralism, particularly the kind that involves the Security Council, Russia has voiced objections to the NATO bombing of Serbia, western support for the independence of Kosovo, EU and NATO expansion eastward into what is traditionally Russia's sphere of influence as well as several instances of U.S. and allied intervention in Middle Eastern and North African countries.¹⁰¹

The Crimean Peninsula was annexed by the Russian Federation in 2014. The events that led to this start in November of 2013 when the President Yanukovych of Ukraine, under

¹⁰¹ Bernard Gwertzman, "Kupchan: Russian Opposition to Kosovo Independence 'Perplexing'." Council on Foreign Relations. December 18, 2007. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/interview/kupchan-russian-opposition-kosovo-independence-perplexing>; Garcevic Vesko, "NATO's Intervention Changed Western-Russian Relations Forever." Balkan Insight. March 25, 2019. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/03/22/natos-intervention-changed-western-russian-relations-forever/>; Chris Wallace, "NATO Expansion Further East Viewed Very Negatively, Putin Tells Interviewer." ERR. July 17, 2018. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://news.err.ee/847164/nato-expansion-further-east-viewed-very-negatively-putin-tells-interviewer>; Jill Dougherty, "Putin Warns on Iraq War." CNN. March 28, 2003. Accessed May 29, 2019. <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/03/28/sprj.irq.putin/>.

economic and political pressure from Putin decided to abandon an agreement that would foster closer ties between Ukraine and the EU in favor of closer co-operation with Russia.¹⁰² This sparked massive protests across the country by citizens that disagreed with the decision.¹⁰³ By February of 2014 the political unrest and violence in Ukraine had gotten bad enough for parliament to name a more pro-western oriented interim President to replace President Yanukovich.¹⁰⁴ Several days later unidentified pro-Russian gunmen seize key government buildings in Crimea. In March the Russian parliament signed a bill approving the use of force by Russian troops in Crimea to protect Russian interests.¹⁰⁵ A referendum is subsequently held in Crimea and Sevastopol under heavy western criticism on whether to declare independence from Ukraine and become a part of the Russian Federation. The referendum is backed by 97% of voters and on the 18th of March President Putin signed a bill absorbing Crimea into the Federation.¹⁰⁶

4.2 Putin's Narrative on the Crimean Annexation

4.2.1 *Responsibility to Protect*

The arguments that Putin makes in his reasoning for the 2014 annexation of Crimea rely heavily on the norms that are institutionalized in the liberal world order that the successor states of the Soviet Union became a part of after the dissolution of the Union. Overall, his discourse includes a strong sense of East – West difference, hinting strongly at a rivalry that has continued post 1991.¹⁰⁷ Putin often refers to the behavior of what he labels as western countries, mainly North American and European states, within the international order. The narrative that he creates within his speeches often includes arguments that are geared towards criticism of the western

¹⁰² BBC, "Ukraine Crisis: Timeline." BBC News. November 13, 2014. Accessed May 30, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Wallace. "NATO Expansion Further East Viewed Very Negatively, Putin Tells Interviewer."

states. Especially focusing on their actions within the liberal international society that they had a major role in creating and that the entire world now finds themselves in.

One of Putin's arguments centers around a controversial principle that was agreed upon mainly by Western powers and formalized in the 2005 World Summit, the Responsibility to Protect.¹⁰⁸ The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) could be considered a fundamental norm, since it was agreed upon at a high level by states and in that it derives from the previously existing primary institutions of human rights and sovereignty. Which was then institutionalized in the secondary institution, that is the United Nations. The aim of the policy was to prevent human rights abuses that happened at the scale of Rwanda and the Balkans while still upholding the sovereignty of states. Therefore, it makes the argument that sovereignty not only constitutes a state's right to protection from outside interference, but also constitutes that state's responsibility to protect its citizens' welfare.¹⁰⁹ However, the controversial part of the norm is that there is a residual part of the responsibility that lies with the broader community of states, one that becomes relevant when a state is "clearly either unwilling or unable to fulfil its responsibility to protect."¹¹⁰

Under the umbrella of this fundamental norm institutionalized by the United Nations, Putin argues that the population of Crimea was under threat by its government. He does not specify the type of threat, the actions that the Crimean or Ukrainian state undertook against its people, but he certainly does emphasize its importance. He states, "the Russian speaking population was threatened and that the threats were absolutely specific and tangible," he then gives a more general idea of what was happening, "Time and time again attempts were made

¹⁰⁸ General Assembly resolution 60/1, 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (A/RES/60/1) (16 September 2005), available from [undocs.org/ A/RES/60/1](https://undocs.org/A/RES/60/1).

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect." United Nations. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

to deprive Russians of their historical memory, even of their language and to subject them to forced assimilation,” “The new so-called authorities began by introducing a draft law to revise the language policy, which was a direct infringement on the rights of ethnic minorities.”¹¹¹ In these quotes we can see that Putin is making an allusion to the presence of crimes against humanity due to the persecution of the Russian minority (as well as others) in Crimea, due to their racial and ethnic background.¹¹² He does this through predication, for example by associating the noun designating the ethnically Russian people living in Crimea with verbs such as “deprive,” “forced assimilation” or “threatened.”¹¹³ He is thereby constructing an image of a grave threat levied against the ethnically Russian people in Crimea, consequently implying that the Ukrainian state was neglecting its sovereign duties to its citizens.

The argument that Putin is building up to then is that he perceives this to be a case that falls under the Responsibility to Protect. The legality of this can be debated on the grounds that R2P does not concern the protection of nationals outside state borders as well as the weakness of his argument that there was a credible threat to the Crimean citizens, but it is still the argument that he is making. Therefore, this means that according to his argument Ukrainian state’s inability or unwillingness to shoulder the burden of protecting its citizens’ rights and in fact its action to the contrary, activates the residual responsibility that falls to the community of states.¹¹⁴ In this case it is possible that since there are Russian nationals at stake and because of the historical relationship between the two states, Putin believes that Russia has a particular responsibility to intervene.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Vladimir Putin, "Direct Line with Vladimir Putin." President Of Russia. April 17, 2014. Accessed May 29, 2019. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796>; Vladimir Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation." President Of Russia. March 18, 2014. Accessed May 29, 2019. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

¹¹² United Nations, "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect."

¹¹³ Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

¹¹⁴ ICISS. The Responsibility to Protect. Report. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001. Accessed May 29, 2019. <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

Taking into account the narrative that Putin has presented on this argument in his speeches, as well as the broader geopolitical context of the Crimean annexation concerning the Ukrainian shift westwards this paper would argue that Putin's contestation of the fundamental norm of Responsibility to Protect in this case would fall into the category of a social practice of rejecting the part of the R2P norm which involves interventionism. What he is doing by referencing the R2P norm in this situation is delegitimizing it and demonstrating to the rest of the international society, especially the west, that R2P is a seriously flawed argument that can lead to misuse, just as the west misused it in the intervention in Libya in 2011. This paper would argue that Putin sees R2P as a western vehicle for imposing its views and interests on third party countries on pretexts of human rights abuses, something which in his eyes poses a threat to Russia.

4.2.2 *Unsanctioned use of Force*

Continuing on in the vein of R2P, it is important to note that neither the 2001 nor the 2005 documents on the Responsibility to Protect allow for the use of force in a situation where a state is neglecting its duties towards its population, with the exception of it being done with the permission of the Security Council or in the case of genocide or other serious international crimes. This establishes it as an organizing principle¹¹⁶ Putin addresses this aspect of it as well, he admits that while he has been given authorization to use armed forces in Ukraine by the Russian Federation's upper house, "however, strictly speaking, nobody has acted on this permission yet. Russia's Armed Forces never entered Crimea; they were there already in line with an international agreement."¹¹⁷ His deflection of the accusation of force is a controversial one, due to the appearance of 'little green men' in Crimea prior to the annexation.¹¹⁸ By

¹¹⁶ "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect."

¹¹⁷ Putin. "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

¹¹⁸ Vitaly Shevchenko, "'Little Green Men' or 'Russian Invaders'?" BBC News. March 11, 2014. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26532154>.

explicitly mentioning that the Russian interference in Ukraine was non-violent and thereby in line with R2P, Putin could be making a reference to the violence that occurred during the U.S. invasion of Iraq. And while the invasion of Iraq was not explicitly about R2P was still rationalized through humanitarian arguments and incurred thousands of Iraqi civilian deaths, as well as the more explicitly R2P intervention in Libya by western forces. This is especially true considering the U.S. failure to get a Security Council resolution sanctioning its invasion of Iraq and then its subsequent use of force regardless. This being placed in contrast with the Russian adherence of non-violence.

By making this distinction Putin is creating an implicit binary opposition between Russia and “Western Europe and North America.”¹¹⁹ By placing the two opposite one another regarding the question of violence in interventions, he is implying the superiority of Russia in this regard, since in his view it did not commit violence. Since Putin is engaging with the organizing principle of R2P in this case, and the specifics of what the Western states did wrong and he did not, this argument would fall into the category of a critical engagement with the R2P norm. The aim of his contestation in this case is not to reject it in its entirety, but rather to criticize the western application of the organizing principle in the cases where they intervened in a country and that intervention resulted in civilian casualties.

4.2.3 *Independence of Kosovo*

Putin then draws a parallel between his annexation of Crimea and the declaration of independence by Kosovo in 2008 and the International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) subsequent ruling that it’s declaration did not violate international law.¹²⁰ He quotes the written statement of the United States to the UN international court “I quote: ‘Declarations of independence may,

¹¹⁹ Putin. "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

¹²⁰ International Court of Justice, *Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo*, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2010, p. 403.

and often do, violate domestic legislation. However, this does not make them violations of international law.’ End of quote. They wrote this, disseminated it all over the world, had everyone agree and now they are outraged. Over what? The actions of Crimean people completely fit in with these instructions, as it were. For some reason, things that Kosovo Albanians (and we have full respect for them) were permitted to do, Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in Crimea are not allowed.”¹²¹ What Putin is doing by arguing for the similarities between the Crimean case and the Kosovo case is drawing a direct parallel between the declarations of independence in order to draw legitimacy for Crimean independence from the Kosovo precedent.

Because of the precedent that was established through the western states’ and secondary institutions of the international society’s support of the independence of Kosovo, the norm that Putin is drawing on here to make his argument can be considered an organizational principle. The political actions that the western states and the UN and ICJ executed on the international stage are what legitimized and normalized the manner in which Kosovo declared independence. Therefore, what Putin is pointing out here is the hypocrisy of the U.S. and the western countries in applying this exception from international law to the case of Kosovo because it suited them, and then protesting when that precedent is invoked in a similar case, but by a different state actor. The ICJ and UN processes and adjudications on the question of the legality of Kosovo’s declaration of independence had the dual effect of making its status as a state legitimate and more palatable to the international society which at the time suited the west, but at the same time it institutionalized a precedent which Putin is using against them now.¹²² It established a gap in the previously firm stance of the international society’s opinion on state sovereignty that allowed for separatist movements to declare their independence within the bounds of legality.

¹²¹ Putin. "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

¹²² Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2010, p. 403.

Leading Putin to point out in his narrative the injustice of the west accepting the declaration of independence of Kosovo, but then not accepting the declaration of independence of Crimea. Putin's argument being that these two are similar enough that they should be treated the same.

Further building on his case for the comparison, Putin points to the comment made by the UN International Court concerning Kosovo, "I quote: 'No general prohibition may be inferred from the practice of the Security Council with regard to declarations of independence,' and 'General international law contains no prohibition on declarations of independence.' Crystal clear, as they say."¹²³ As opposed to the last quote, in which Putin highlighted the U.S.'s insistence on an exception being made for Kosovo, in this case he is demonstrating that the international society accepted this deviance from the norm and proclaimed it as legitimate. The argument that Putin is making here is that through this statement, the UN as the principal institution of the liberal international order is making the Kosovo exception into a norm of international law. Meaning that when Putin points this out in response to accusations of Russia "violating norms of international law," he is in reality demonstrating that he is the one adhering to international norms, and that the west is hypocritical for saying otherwise simply because the result of his actions don't suit them.¹²⁴

The argument that Putin makes regarding the similarities between Kosovo and Crimea is one that is focused on the unequal application of the norm of declarations of independence. He is critically engaging in discourse with the norm with the aim of changing the way in which it is applied in the international society. The problem at the moment where Putin is making his arguments is not necessarily the existence of the norm or the application of it, but the representation of actors applying the norm in the international system. He is contesting the

¹²³ Putin. "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

¹²⁴ Ibid.

norm because his argument is that it is being used as a tool by the west and being denied to other actors.

4.2.4 *Self-Determination and the Crimean Referendum*

Following the events of the real world, Putin's narrative, having established an argument for the legitimacy of its independence from Ukraine, goes on to argue for the normative legitimacy of Crimea's decision to join the Russian Federation. After their secession from Ukraine, both the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the local government of Sevastopol held a referendum on whether they should join the Russian Federation or not. As President Putin puts it, "A referendum was held in Crimea on March 16 in full compliance with democratic procedures and international norms."¹²⁵ As he states, at the conclusion of the referendum the "voter turnout reached 83 percent, and more than 96 percent supported Crimea's inclusion in the Russian Federation."¹²⁶

The legality and legitimacy of the Crimean referendum have been questioned by both western states and non-governmental organizations that act as electoral watchdogs.¹²⁷ However, in response to this Putin refers to a fundamental norm of the liberal international society, that of the right to self-determination. In doing so, he even points at the institutionalization of the norm in the United Nations Charter, the secondary institution in the contemporary international society which supports the norm of self-determination. He states, "it declared independence and decided to hold a referendum, the Supreme Council of Crimea referred to the United Nations Charter, which speaks of the right of nations to self-determination."¹²⁸ As one of the pillars of the international order of our time, the United Nations Charter is a clear example of the institutionalization of norms that the English school

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Putin. "Direct Line with Vladimir Putin."

¹²⁷ Halimah Abdullah, "Crimea's Vote: Was It Legal?" CNN. March 19, 2014. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/17/world/europe/ukraine-vote-legality/index.html>.

¹²⁸ Putin. "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

proposes. By referring to it, Putin is pointing out Crimea's to decision change its political loyalty from either Ukraine or an independent status, to the Russian Federation, is in line with international norms.

In order to strengthen his argument on the legitimacy of Crimean independence and subsequent self-determination, Putin refers to two recent historical precedents. That of the Ukrainian separation from the Soviet Union and that of the unification of East and West Germany. In support of Crimean independence, he states, "I would like to remind you that when Ukraine seceded from the USSR it did exactly the same thing, almost word for word. Ukraine used this right, yet the residents of Crimea are denied it."¹²⁹ He then further refers to history in support of the Crimean unification with what he perceives as its rightful state by saying, "Our nation, however, unequivocally supported the sincere, unstoppable desire of the Germans for national unity. I am confident that you have not forgotten this, and I expect that the citizens of Germany will also support the aspiration of the Russians, of historical Russia, to restore unity."¹³⁰ By emphasizing the use of the word unity in his narrative on the link between German unification in the wake of the Cold War and the annexation of Crimea, Putin is drawing attention away from the word 'annexation' and towards the historical similarity of the unification of two parts of one whole. Because he laid the groundwork in his narrative by highlighting the cultural, ethnic and historical bond between Russia and Crimea, Putin feels confident drawing upon the historical organizing principle of the international society as a precedent to bolster his argument for the legitimacy of the Crimean annexation.

His contestation of the norm of self-determination in this narrative takes aim at both the fundamental norm at the level of the United Nations Charter signed by all UN members, but also at the organizing principles of the norm by referencing the possibility of a precedent in the

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

form of German reunification and the Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union. Putin engages in critical discourse with the multi-levelled norm in this narrative with the aim of changing the use of the norm in the international society. Despite the fact that the referendums held in Crimea and Sevastopol are heavily disputed, in his eyes the outcome of the referendum represents the will of the Crimean citizens, to join the Russian Federation. Therefore, he feels justified in arguing that they are exercising their right to self-determination and that the western powers that are critical of the referendum are hypocritical in their application of the norm.

4.2.5 *Chapter Conclusion*

In conclusion, Putin's narrative regarding the annexation of Crimea provides a mixed batch of arguments and types of contestation. The majority of the arguments he makes are critical engagements that contest the application of the norm in question, usually by the creators of the liberal international society. However, this does not apply for all of them as we see that in the case of R2P Putin takes issue with the existence of the norm itself and seems to be contesting it by making arguments for its rejection. His doing so makes sense and is supported by Russia's reaction to western R2P cases in the past through common diplomatic channels as well as through the use of veto powers in the security council.¹³¹ Furthermore, because the creation and development of the liberal international society that encompasses the world today took place primarily during the Cold War, a period of considerable tension between the west and Russia, that creation and development may have excluded Russia and the rest of the Soviet bloc. As a result, it is possible that Russia as well as other states that became part of the liberal world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union may feel some resentment due to the fact that they were underrepresented during its founding and development. Thereby leading to contestation of certain controversial and less equally applied fundamental norms.

¹³¹ Derek Averre, and Davies Lance, "Russia, humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect: the case of Syria." *International Affairs* 91, no. 4 (2015): 813.

The contemporary liberal international society's emphasis on the primacy of universal human rights and the protection of those rights, sometimes at the expense of state sovereignty, would firmly place it into the solidarist camp of the English School debate. This is especially true considering the decision of the leaders of the international society not to adapt its methods in any major way to accommodate its expansion once the cold war had ended. This decision dovetails with the solidarist view that the norms of the international society are based on natural law and that they are present everywhere, only leaving states with the task of establishing and adhering to them. Furthermore, this argument would place Russia and the narrative that Putin presents here as proponents of the pluralist camp of the debate. This too fits well, as Putin's arguments in this paper have all been in support of the rights and primacy of states in the international society and arguments against the universal nature of the norms of the international liberal order.

5 Comparative Analysis

The historical differences between the norm contestation that took place in the interwar international society and the contemporary liberal international society find many of their sources in the structure of the society that they are contesting. As states before, this paper has found that there are significant parallels that can be drawn between the interwar and contemporary international societies. The narratives that were used as case studies in this paper both originated from regimes situated in international societies that, to a greater or lesser degree, they did not have as much of a hand in making as they would have liked. Both of the regimes had recently emerged from a significant, globe spanning conflict with the founders, and now principal members, of the society that they are situated in. Furthermore, both of the regimes emerged, again to a greater or lesser degree, from that conflict in a less advantageous position than their adversaries did. And finally, the narratives under examination were both constructed around the annexation by the regimes of territory without the approval of the wider international society. Territory in both cases that historically had strong ethnic, cultural and political ties to the contesting state.

Despite noting these superficial similarities in both cases, this paper's analysis of the narratives presented by Putin and Hitler in their norm-based rationalizations for their respective annexations differ at crucial points. An initial look at the arguments made by both actors seems to highlight more similarities than differences, both of them primarily contest fundamental norms, though they often support those arguments with examples of organizational principles from the past. In addition, both of the narratives focus on engaging in critical discourse with the norms of their time, often focusing on the alleged hypocrisy of the founders of their respective international societies in unevenly applying the norms that they themselves created, in a way forgoing the true spirit of the international society. They point these things out using

the framework of the international society, using the legitimacy of an existing structure to make their arguments. However, this paper would argue that those similarities are deceptive in nature and hide a critical difference in the narratives, the aim.

By engaging in critical discourse with the norms of the international system Hitler's narrative attempts to intentionally point out the unequal nature of the norms that condition the interwar international society. He highlights the way in which the norms that have been applied to third party states and the founders of the international society and the way that differs from the way they have been applied to Germany. However, this paper holds that the manner in which Hitler mobilized the norms of the international society in order to contest those same norms, with the benefit of hindsight, can be characterized as concealing a more radical attack on the international society than is evident on the surface. Without getting into a discussion on whether the events that followed the annexation in 1938 were Hitler's intention previously or whether the annexation was a catalyst for those events. What this paper takes away from its analysis of the narratives of its two case studies is the fact that a contestation of the norms of an international society comes from inside that society is no guarantee that that contestation will not evolve into a more fundamental challenge to the society. Furthermore, this paper's analysis suggests that even without the benefit of hindsight, that careful contextual analysis of what a revisionist challenger to the international society is gaining in terms of material advantages through its contestation may help in determining the nature of that challenge, fundamental or otherwise.

This brings us to the difference between the two annexations. If we look at the physical goal of the 2014 contestation by Putin, we see that in terms of relative benefit to the revisionist state, Crimea is much less profitable to Russia than Austria was to Germany. There is no significant heavy industry that Russia stands to gain by annexing the peninsula, there are no

natural resources there that Russia does not already own.¹³² Besides its lease on the naval base at Sevastopol, not to underestimate its significance, and domestic popularity Putin's regime stood little to gain by annexing Crimea. A naval base and domestic popularity, two things that Putin's regime already had before the annexation but may have been in danger of losing.¹³³ To this paper, these two things do not constitute anywhere near the same symbolic or actual threat to the international society that the annexation of Austria did. Therefore, this paper holds the material gains that the revisionist power in the Russian case study stood to gain is not sufficient to constitute an indicator towards an evolution of the contestation into a more fundamental one. And that therefore the Russian contestation of the international societies norms is most likely what it seems to be, a critical engagement in discourse with certain trends within the international society. The western insistence on drawing Ukraine is a clear one, imperiling Russia's influence on what it traditionally considers its backyard as well as robbing it of a valuable warm water port in Sevastopol.¹³⁴ In a similar vein, western circumvention of the security council and interventionism are two others.¹³⁵

A possible contributor to the stated difference in overall nature of the contestations of the two case studies are the, as of yet unstated, differences in structure of their respective international societies. The international society in the interwar period was constructed by the western victorious powers of the First World War. The settlements that were reached with the post-war treaties had to balance the intense French desire to punish the Germans and the more idealist views of the United States.¹³⁶ The defeated German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman

¹³² Jason Bush, "Factbox - Costs and Benefits from Russia's Annexation of Crimea." Reuters. April 08, 2014. Accessed May 29, 2019.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-crimea-costs-factbox-idUKBREA370NY20140408>.

¹³³ Bush. "Factbox - Costs and Benefits from Russia's Annexation of Crimea."; Wallace. "NATO Expansion Further East Viewed Very Negatively, Putin Tells Interviewer."

¹³⁴ Sergey Sukhankin, "Ukraine's Thorny Path to NATO Membership: Mission (im)possible?" ICDS. April 22, 2019. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://icds.ee/ukraines-stony-path-to-nato-membership-mission-impossible/>.

¹³⁵ Dougherty. "Putin Warns on Iraq War."

¹³⁶ Tosi. "The League of Nations: An international relations perspective," 150.

empires were not consulted. The result of this compromise was an international society that attempted to be just and fair yet fell short and produced a deeply unequal society geared especially towards punishing the losers of the war. This targeted inequality may have contributed to the radical approach that the Third Reich took to their contestation of the international society. The situation is not the same in the case of the contemporary international society. Since its creation at the end of the Second World War, and throughout its development during the cold war and after, the contemporary international society has represented and been shaped by western powers more than others. However, it is clear that the level of Russia's inclusion in the creation and development process of the society has been significantly higher than that of Germany's in the interwar period. Russia's permanent seat at the security council being an example of this. Furthermore, neither has the international society since the end of the Second World War included anywhere near the level of targeted punishment that was levelled against Germany in the interwar period. Thereby adding to the argument that Putin's contestation of the contemporary international society's norms was to criticize and engage with the norms, rather than to reject.

6 Conclusion

This paper's analysis of the narrative presented by Hitler concerning the annexation of Austria in 1938 revealed that the primary method of his contestation of the norms of the international society at the time was by engaging with the norms in critical discourse. His arguments are presented within the framework of the interwar international system. He refers to the norms while making his arguments implicitly and explicitly in an effort to lend them legitimacy by associating them with the already existing and, to a certain extent legitimate, norms and values of the international system. The alternative to this would have been to contest the norms of the international society outright and reject them. Legitimacy-wise this would have required the Hitler's narrative to be convincing enough to overthrow the existing and nominally legitimate norms using only the strength of his own legitimacy at the time, something that would logically require a very powerful state. When Hitler refers to the international system in his arguments as to the legitimacy of the annexation of Austria what he makes a point to do in several instances is to point out the injustice of construction of the international society and the application of its norms. One example is the norm of self-determination. Emphasis is put on this norm by the creators of the interwar international society, but Hitler argues that when it comes to a situation where the norm doesn't work to their advantage, they are content to ignore it.

In particular he often points out the failures of the custodians of the interwar international society in creating and maintaining their vision of a stable and ordered society. He does this by painting them as actors who either make arbitrary decisions, in which case they are not fit to govern. Or by arguing that the international society was designed to hinder Germany, which supports Hitler's argument that it is illegitimate and unjust. In his arguments Hitler often paints Germany as the victim in the international society by referring to the

aforementioned injustice.¹³⁷ And through his victimization of Germany, he paints himself as the defender of its rights in global politics. As mentioned before that considering what followed after the annexation of Austria and the structure of Hitler's narrative of contestation, that this paper holds that the structure of his contestation was designed to delegitimize the norms of the international society at the time of the annexation, mainly through the highlighting of the injustice of the structure of the interwar world order.

This differs from the paper's analysis of the narrative that was presented by President Putin regarding Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. Putin's contestation of the norms of the international society primarily takes the form of engagements in critical discourse with the norms. One outlier that this paper recorded was the contestation when it comes to the issue of the Responsibility to Protect. While the principle of R2P covers a range of different reactions by the members of the international society which feel obliged to act. The one that Putin is referring to in his narrative is the specific type of reaction that involves any kind of military intervention in a sovereign state that is deemed to be neglecting its responsibilities towards its citizens. In that particular case this paper believes that there is an argument to be made that President Putin is actively rejecting particular part of the norm. Besides that, critical engagements in discourse with the norms in question are what this paper has recorded. Most of these engagements are with norms that have been highlighted in the recent history of the international society, and Putin reflects this by referencing those. Examples of these are when he refers to the declaration of independence by Crimea being similar to the one made by Kosovo, or when he references the unification of German. Thereby implying that Crime and the Russian Federation are two parts of one whole that were separated by historical circumstance much like Germany was in 1945, and consequently making the

¹³⁷ Tosi. "The League of Nations: An international relations perspective," 150.

argument that because Germany's division was rectified, that Russia and Crimea's one can and should be as well.

The way Putin portrays his regime and Russia as a state is not as a victim of the predations of the international society of any of its actors. When reading his speeches and constructing his narrative he gives the audience the impression that there has been a shift in the behavior of some of the members of the international society in recent years. To Putin the western states have been attempting to shift the norms of the international society towards less uniform application and a generally more accepting of interventionism. With this in mind, Putin portrays himself and Russia as a defender of the old norms of the international society, referencing often his adherence to international law for example, and contrasting that to the behavior of the western states.¹³⁸ This paper holds that Putin's narrative is geared towards halting recent trends in the international society which he sees as detrimental to Russia's interests and sovereignty. Trends that the western states have started and supported. He does this by pointing out instances in recent history where the western states have gone against the spirit of the international society and demanded exceptions from the commonly accepted norms. For example, by pointing out the Iraq war and the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia neither of which received security council authorization, or the western support for the independence of Kosovo. These are cases where Putin sees the western powers acting unilaterally in ways that countermand the idea of a multilateral, inclusive international society that is supposed to respect the sovereignty and opinions of its members.

Putin's contestation of the norms in his time differs from Hitler's in the structure of the international society that it was situated in, the approach of the contestation to the perceived shortcomings of the society and the overall method of engagement. The international society

¹³⁸ Putin. "Address by President of the Russian Federation."

in the interwar period was one that had been constructed less than twenty years earlier, it was still fragile due to its youth and inexperience. Its situation was aggravated by the lack of support it received from its founders and the blow to its legitimacy it suffered due to the resulting inaction of the League in the face of critical international crises. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Great War, with the process of decolonization only slowly getting underway, the international society was sparsely populated by states and most of those in were weakened, with only a handful of custodian states possessing the capabilities needed to pose a genuine threat to a resurgent Germany. By comparison, the liberal world order that existed in 2014 had learned from its past mistakes, its institutions much more robust. And perhaps most importantly, the structure of the international society in 2014 was, and is, relatively more considerate of the goals and needs of non-western states than the one in the interwar period. The post-war settlement that governed the world in 1938 was designed to punish Germany for its role in the First World War and limit its ability to ever threaten the victors again, something that is not the case with the contemporary one.

The structure of the international society that the two revisionist regimes under analysis in this paper attempted to contest contributed to the approach that their contestation took. This paper believes that the relative normative weakness of the interwar international society, coupled with its built-in bias against Germany made it more susceptible to the type of delegitimizing narrative presented by Hitler. The youth of the League of Nations as an institution and the lack of support from its most influential members resulted in a remarkably low legitimacy.¹³⁹ Furthermore, if we accept that Hitler saw the League as a tool of the victorious powers of World War One in keeping Germany weak and powerless, then it stands to reason that there would be considerable antagonism towards the League and the international society it represented. Arguing for the illegitimate nature of the international society by

¹³⁹ Tosi. "The League of Nations: An international relations perspective," 150.

exposing the alleged hypocrisy of its custodians when they intentionally shaped it to keep Germany weak, and followed up by further discriminating against Germany in the application of its idealist norms. This contrasts to the structure of the contestation this paper perceives the contemporary international society as having provided to Putin. Due to the more inclusive nature of the liberal world order, coupled with Russia's active engagement in forming the norms that govern the society, Putin's narrative is not nearly as aggressive in its aims as Hitler's was. Because Russia has been involved in the shaping of the international system from the beginning its norms are much more in line with what it can accept. As a result of this, Putin's narrative in contesting the norms of the international society seems rather to be a critical engagement with recent trends in the international society. It is possible that the narrative surrounding the annexation of Crimea was structured in such a way as to highlight certain actions undertaken by western states since the end of the cold war and the end of the bipolar international system. These actions, in Putin's eyes may be of a nature that countermands the ideal of what the international society and its norms should be, and therefore are a trend that need countering.

In both of the case studies that this paper analyzed, the argument can be made that the revisionist states that are in the process of contesting the norms of the international society are the ones that are more in line with the pluralist side of the pluralist – solidarist debate in the English School. This tendency towards pluralism manifests itself in the interwar period with Hitler's rejection of the norms that are being imposed on Germany and through the evolution of his contestation into a fundamental one, attempting to topple the nascent interwar international society which was structurally limiting to Germany in terms of its rights as a state. Similarly, this paper argues that Putin's argument against, for example, the universal human rights argument of the contemporary international order dovetails strongly with the pluralist argument that the only norms that a state will agree to are the ones it wants to agree to,

especially in that it rejects the cosmopolitanist element of solidarist arguments. Furthermore, Putin's stance as a champion of the old sovereign status of nation states points in the pluralist direction as well.

In short, this paper finds that it is indeed possible to be a revisionist state while still operating from within the bounds of the international society. In fact, operating from within the international society while contesting it lends legitimacy to a revisionist state's arguments. The added legitimacy is drawn from the fact that the revisionist state's arguments are based on the existing norms which of course already contain some form of legitimacy due to their established nature. This paper finds two examples of the many ways that revisionist states can present themselves inside of an international society while still being revisionist. In the case of interwar Germany, Hitler's narrative presents his state as a defender against the structural injustice of the international society. In the case of contemporary Russia, Putin's narrative presents itself as a bulwark of respect for the international society, its traditions and the rights of states as actors in global politics.

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