Russian Military Intervention and International Society:
What Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine tell us about International Society, institutions, and Russia's divergence from the West.

by
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Abstract

This research aims to increase understanding of Russia's interpretations of the primary and secondary institutions of International Society in the context of Russia's relationship with the West. It uses military intervention case studies which highlight the different visions for global order that Russia and the West have. For Russia, this presents as a civilisationally focused multipolar order in opposition to the West's democratically focused rules-based order; ideological differences that culminated in the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the 24th February 2022. Using principles derived from the English School of international relations, this thesis contributes a mixed-method integrative analytical model to analyse the progress of Russia-West relations between 2003-2022. This is achieved through the study of the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights as well as secondary institutions comprising of international organisations and treaties. It is hypothesised that there is inherent polysemy in the primary institutions of Russia-West International Society and that counter to traditional beliefs, it is not shared values that bind international societies, but the regulating effect of secondary institutions. The three case studies of Russian military intervention in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine provide the foundation for the analysis of Russian narratives concerning institutions across areas that reside inside Russia's areas of civilisational interest (the post-Soviet near abroad) as well as external to them in Syria. This provides a foundation for comparison with Western views on the same events. The research concludes that the Russia-West International Society essentially collapsed at some time between late 2021 and early 2022 as Russia and Ukraine descended into war. It evidences that this is the result of the polysemic nature of primary institutions, reflecting the ideological impasse Russia and the West found themselves in over Ukraine, after which Russia-West international relations have transformed into a combative international system.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction……1
1.1 Introduction & Research Context……1
1.1.1 Introduction to the English School perspective……1
1.1.2 Russia-West Relations……3
1.1.3 Russia's civilisational perspective……5
1.2 Research contributions……8
1.3.1 Empirical contribution……8
1.3.2 Methodological contribution……10
1.3 Why military interventions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine?……13
1.4 Research Objectives Hypothesis & Questions……19
1.4.1 Research Objectives……19
1.4.2 Research Hypothesis & Questions……20
1.5 Project Structure……21

Chapter 2: Existing Analysis of Russia: Theory & Themes *(Literature Review)*……25
2.1 Introduction……24
2.2 Theoretical Approaches……27
2.2.1 Realism and the influence of Polarity……27
2.2.2 Liberalism……31
2.2.3 Neo-revisionism, Constructivism, and the English School……33
2.2.4 Theoretical Approaches Summary……39
2.3 Thematic Approaches……41
2.3.1 Personalisation of Russian Policy……41
2.3.2 Russian Multipolar Policy……44
2.3.3 Russia in its Near Abroad……47
2.3.4 Thematic Approaches Summary……53
2.4 Conclusions……54

Chapter 3: The English School: Theory & Application *(Literature Review)*……56
3.1 Introduction……56
3.2 International Society……57
3.2.1 Defining International Society……57
3.2.2 Western Centrism in International Society……61
3.2.3 Regionalism……63
3.2.4 Summarising International Society……64
3.3 Pluralism & Solidarism……65
3.3.1 Definitions……66
3.3.2 Co-existence & co-dependence……67
3.3.3 The challenge of normative diversity……68
3.3.4 Summarising pluralism & solidarism……70
3.4 Institutions……71

3.4.1 Centrality of institutions……71
3.4.2 Institutional models……75
3.4.3 Summarising institutions……79
3.5 Western interpretations of primary institutions……80
3.5.1 International law……80
3.5.2 Sovereignty and Territoriality……84
3.5.3 Human Rights and Responsibility to Protect (R2P)……87
3.5.4 Summary……88
3.6 Conclusions……89

Chapter 4: Method……91
4.1 Introduction and overview……91
4.2 Why case studies?……94
4.3 Why Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine?……96
4.4 Data selection……97
4.5 Method process……98

Chapter 5: Georgia (2003 – 2008)……101
5.1 Introduction……101
5.2 Russian Narratives During the Conflict……102
5.2.1 International agreements and legal basis for war……103
5.2.2. Human rights, collective sovereignty, and territoriality……109
5.2.3 Use of secondary institutions……113
5.2.4 Summary of Russian narratives during the conflict……115
5.3 Russian Narratives Prior to the Conflict……117
5.3.1 Summary of Russian narratives prior to the conflict……125
5.4 Conclusions……126

Chapter 6: Syria (2015 – 2016)……128
6.1 Introduction……128
6.2 Data Sample, Narratives Identified, and Case Study Comparison……130
6.2.1 Data sample……130
6.2.2 Narratives identified……131
6.2.3 Georgia versus Syria themes comparison……134
6.3 Secondary institutions: prioritisation and frameworks……139
6.3.1 Frameworks and definitions……139
6.3.2 UN Security Council resolutions overview……143
6.3.3 Summary……144
6.4 Primacy of the UN: international law and sovereignty……145
6.4.1 Intervention by invitation……146
6.4.2 Cooperation……149
6.4.3 Political process……152
6.4.4 Summary……155
6.5 Human rights……157

6.6 How Syria highlights Russia's civilisational perspective……158
6.7 Conclusions…… 160

Chapter 7: Ukraine (2021 – 2022)……163
7.1 Introduction…… 163
6.2 Data Sample, Narratives Identified, and Case Study Comparison……165
7.2.1 Data sample……165
7.2.2 Narratives Identified…… 166
7.2.3 Georgia versus Syria versus Ukraine themes comparison……169
7.3 Russia versus the West, competing visions for global order…… 176
7.3.1 Multipolarity and the Rules Based Order…… 177
7.3.2 NATO expansion, the principle of non-interference, and sovereignty.. 182
7.3.3 Anti-Russian agendas and sanctions…… 187
7.3.4 Security guarantees and failure of secondary institutions……..189
7.3.5 Summary…… 193
7.4 Justifications for intervention……195
7.4.1 Treaties and international agreements…… 196
7.4.2 Self-determination, the 2014 'illegal' coup, and Nazism……200
7.4.4 Ukraine as a militarised US vassal……202
7.5 Conclusions…… 204

Chapter 8: Conclusions…… 209
8.1 Introduction…… 209
8.2 Thesis Conclusions…… 210
8.3 Contributions…… 217
8.3.1 Empirical…….217
8.3.2 Methodological…….. 219
8.4 Future research…… 222

Bibliography……224 to 260

Appendices
Appendix A – Datasets 1 & 2 (Georgia MFA References)……A-1 to A-54
Appendix B – Dataset 3 (Syria MFA References)……B-1 to B-21
Appendix C – Dataset 4 (Ukraine MFA References)……C-1 to C-23
Appendix D – Georgia Basic statistical Data……D-1 to D-3
Appendix E – Syria Basic Statistical Data…… E-1
Appendix F – Ukraine Basic Statistical Data……F-1

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Introduction & Research Context

1.1.1 Introduction to the English School perspective

This thesis needs to begin with a concise overview of some key terms and concepts to aid the reader in understanding the perspective it is written from. It contributes a framework (explained in the methodological contribution sub-section of this chapter) derived from the English School (ES) of international relations that posits Russia and the West as part of an International Society regulated by shared primary and secondary institutions. Primary institutions are those that are considered to have evolved over time and are concerned with customs, practices, principles, norms, and rules (see Buzan, 2014; Holsti, 2004; Onuf, 2002; Dunne 1998; Linklater, 2013). The primary institutions identified by the case studies research across chapters 5-7 are international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. By contrast, secondary institutions are designed elements of International Society that manifest as organisations and treaties (Buzan, 2014; Navari, 2018). The most prominent example of a secondary institution within the Russia-West analysis in this thesis is the United Nations (UN) and its various treaties and resolutions. The degree to which values and interests are shared and manifested through institutions by state actors within International Society is understood as a sliding scale between pluralist and solidarist perspectives. In this conceptualisation pure solidarism would equate to normative homogeny between states and pure pluralism would describe opposite normative positions. However, the concepts are not mutually exclusive, and their pure forms as described above cannot adequately describe the vast and nuanced range of overlapping, and context dependent normative positions observable across International Society. This is accepted across the ES literature in general (discussed in chapter 3) and is evidenced by the events of the case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine military interventions analysed in this research. Interstate relations can, and seemingly do, include both pluralist and solidarist traits concurrently with an apt description being that solidarism and pluralism exist as “a spectrum ranging from ‘thick’ to ‘thin’ in terms of values shared”

(Buzan, 2004, p154) where solidarism represents 'thick' and pluralism 'thin' in terms of shared values.

Within the ES framework, it is generally accepted that the shared recognition of primary institutions is what provides the basis for International Society to continue functioning despite a diverse range of normative positions across the global community of states. The research in this thesis, through its main empirical contribution aims to demonstrate that the shared recognition of primary institutions, specifically those identified in the case studies, of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights, does not equate to shared meanings. The concept of polysemy, and its potential to exist in International Society runs at the heart of the analysis. When applied to institutions, polysemy means that two (or more) states can understand an institution in their own particular ways, distinct from each other. What is key, is that the actors involved (in this case Russia and the Western powers) may be assuming a universal understanding of institutions based on their own perspective and any differences in understanding may not be immediately recognised, thereby becoming a potential source of conflict.

A final piece of terminology that is used throughout this thesis that sits distinct from International Society (that refers to global International Society) is Russia-West International Society. This is a specific term used to deliberately distinguish that this research is an investigation of Russian interpretations of primary and secondary institutions, to evidence polysemy in the context of Russia-West relations only. Whilst the method developed in this thesis has clear applications for other contexts, including analysis of other state actors across wider International Society, this research is limited to the Russia-West International Society as described below.

- **Russia-West International Society.** When discussing the Russia-West International Society, this thesis is specifically referring to the relationship that exists between Russia, its near abroad and Western states (specifically those that make up NATO and the EU). This conceptualisation assumes that the global International Society is comprised of multiple sub-global societies or systems that interact and co-exist. The

concept of sub-global, or regional international societies is discussed in Chapter 3, sub-section 3.2.3, 'Regionalism'.

1.1.2 Russia-West Relations

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24th February 2022 marks an era defining shift in the global security landscape. A watershed moment, culminating from two decades of spiralling relations. Russia and the West have incrementally perceived that the other poses an existential threat to the very basis of global order. Western perceptions are based on the notion Russia is belligerent, aggressive, and militarily expansionist (examples include United States (US) Department of State, 2018 & 2021; HM Government, 2018, 2020 & 2021; NATO, 2018 & 2021). Russia, conversely, sees the West as hypocritical, aggressive, and culturally expansionist, using NATO and the EU to destroy Russian influence and status through economic warfare and a persistent military threat (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, 2016, 2019 & 2023).

The decline in relations between Russia and the West over the past two decades was not considered an inevitability in the early years of the new century. Throughout the Yeltsin years of the 1990s and the period immediately surrounding the coming to power of Putin in 2001, Russia overtly displayed a cooperative, pragmatic, and to some degree an overtly "pro-Western" (Kononenko, 2003, p40) foreign policy narrative. Explanations included Russia and the West's key interests having compatibility at the turn of the new millennium (Lynch, 2002). Interests such as counter-terrorism cooperation in the post-9/11 environment (Spechler, 2010; Primakov, 2018) and Russia having no alternative but to move closer to the West due to material resource constraints (Casier, 2006). At the time it was widely assessed that this cooperation would endure (Lynch, 2002, Sakwa, 2008) and that Russia would integrate more into Western (secondary) institutions (Karaganov, 2003; Newton, 2010; Selezneva, 2002). However, the initial hope was short lived and by 2003 the confidence in the idea of a new dawn in Russia-West relations was in steep and irreversible decline. Decline fuelled by a chain of events that include Western intervention in Iraq in 2003, Moscow's perception of foreign assistance in the Beslan terrorist attack in 2004 (Baker & Glasser, 2007), and a series of colour revolutions between 2003-2009 (Solovei, 2015) that Russia interpreted as having direct

Western support. Additionally, NATO and EU expansion continued unabated in what Moscow perceived as a zero-sum play by the West to degrade Russian influence and power in its historical area of interest (Spechler, 2010; Danilov, 2013; Govella & Aggarwal, 2012; Nixey, 2015; Monaghan, 2008) as well as amounting to broken promises on eastward expansion made by the West in the early 1990s (Sakwa, 2017, p195; Stent, 2014, p143).

By the time President Putin delivered his speech to the 43rd Munich Conference in 2007, Russia's distrust of the West had manifested as a re-energised commitment to implementing a multipolar vision of International Society (Russia's multipolar vision is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2) as an alternative to Western liberalism. A vision based on the primacy of state sovereignty (with several caveats on states in the post-Soviet area) as conceptualised within Russia's understanding of international law.

Following the decline in relations, Medvedev, perceived by the West to be a liberalist/Westerniser (Pacer, 2015) was elected and replaced Putin as President in 2008. He pursued policies designed to reset relations, including significant concessions such as abstention over UNSCR 1973 enabling NATO intervention in Libya (Trenin, 2014; Allison, 2013). Trenin (2015) argues that Medvedev was "sent by Putin" (p30) to determine what possibilities remained for cooperation. Essentially seeking an answer to the question, is it the state of Russia itself, or Putin, that the West is unwilling to deal with on an equal basis? From Putin's perspective on his return to the Presidency in 2012, little had been achieved despite Medvedev's outreach and he almost certainly felt he had got his answer, and that Russia had been consistently ignored and its interests disregarded. From Moscow's perspective, the West did not stick to its promises or obligations in international law over Libya and UNSCR 1973. Crucially, this event proved important in reinforcing to Russia's ruling elite that the West's dismissive attitude towards its needs were not personality based, but entrenched anti-Russian sentiment in the collective political psyche of the West. At face value, Medvedev represented a liberal and largely untarnished political figure that the West seemed to initially court. Analysis within the literature of the post-2012 period shows increasing emphasis placed on the divergence of value systems and the "normative challenge" (Averre & Davies, 2015, p827) of Russia-West relations. As Casier (2017, p108) summarises, so began Russia's political commitment to "challenging and contesting" US hegemony.

With Russia-West relations at their lowest ebb since the end of the Cold War, the invasion of Ukraine constitutes a culmination of a range of high-profile international incidents. Notably, major policy differences over Libyan and Syrian interventions, alleged US election & Brexit interference, and the 2018 Salisbury Novichok poisoning. Understanding the root causes of the decline in relations, to the point where existential conflict between the Russia and the West is a possibility in a way not seen since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 is critical to developing strategies to prevent, or at least be conscious of, the likely path of further decline. If left unchecked, spiralling Russia-West relations have the potential for nuclear consequences and/or global economic instability. With Russia's historical status, energy resources, military power, and physical size, long term isolation is unlikely to be conducive to enabling global security and stability.

1.1.2 Russia's civilisational perspective

An important concept that recurs throughout this thesis is that of the Russian state framing global order from a civilisational perspective. When referring to the Russian civilisational perspective, this is in relation to the following description that serves as a foundational premise in the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (2023):

> "Russia views itself as a unique civilization with its own special path of development, distinct from both Western and Eastern models. This identity is rooted in our historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage and is central to our strategic vision of shaping a multipolar world order."

Russia's contemporary multipolar vision, and belief that it has a right to dominance over its near abroad are coherent with its position as a unique and great civilisation in the global order (Linde, 2016, pp605-607). At this stage it is important to outline and define what is meant by multipolarity when discussing Russia. The next chapter includes a review of literature concerning Russian multipolarity, defining it as a concept distinct from the realist, Waltzian understanding of polarity that formed during the Cold War, and has dominated the realist literature since. Throughout this research, when discussing or referencing Russian multipolarity, it is done so based on a definition where Russia understands that global order can only be justly governed by those states that derive their pole status from civilisational

greatness, not just material power. As will be discussed below, Russia situates itself as a civilisational great, due to its history, and contribution to the civilised world. Moscow has increasingly codified this position into its official policy as highlighted by the quotation that this section starts with. It is for this reason that in chapter 2, the discussion of Russian multipolarity is categorised as a thematic, not theoretical approach as Russian conceptions do not align with traditional realist conceptualisations of polarity. Multipolarity serves as a term throughout this thesis as both a reinforcement and companion to Russia's civilisational perspective. The two are inextricably linked, with multipolar policy being an overt and official manifestation of the civilisational, normative, and ideological perspective that Russia uses to frame its position at the top table of great powers within global order.

The Russian government's use of civilisational greatness, codified through its official policy, to define its level of status in the global order is supported by a substantial body of existing literature as being the product of centuries of cultural development (Riasanovsky, 2005; Martin, 2007; Prozorova, 2017; Sakwa, 2010; Smith, 2002; Neumann, 2016; Louth, 2015). The literature that analyses the historical origins of the Russian civilisational perspective highlights a significant philosophical split between medieval Russia and Western Europe. Specifically, the different ideological paths of development that occurred with Russia not developing in line with the classical legacy of "Plato, Aristotle, late Greek philosophy, Hellenic science and Roman Law" (Prozorova, 2017, p63) and instead being more heavily influenced by Byzantine culture and philosophy. Only during the imperial period from the 17th Century onwards did Russia progressively attempt to adopt Western European ideals and laws (Worobec, 2009, pp xi-xvii). However, despite superficially adopting increasingly Western European ideals such as individual freedoms and human rights, a dualism remained from earlier influences that focused heavily on an autocratic and highly centralised government model.

There is not the scope to delve into the literature that discusses the different philosophical and cultural paths of development that Russia and the Western European states took during their formations and journey to modernity. However, it is important to have highlighted that Russia and Western European states have substantial differences in the formative ideological development of their societies. This forms an important part of the explanation that has been

consistently used by Russian academics, philosophers, and policy makers in justifying why Russia constitutes a distinct civilisation from the rest of Europe, and is a great civilisation in its own right. The idea of Russia as the centre of a wider civilisation has also been heavily influenced and developed from the 1990s onwards by the likes of the Russian nationalist philosopher Alexander Dugin (Snyder, 2018, p109) and increasingly adopted by the Putin led government since the early 2000s with this perspective embedded in both policy and the education system of the country (Laruelle, 2008, p122). Therefore, what is taken forward throughout this thesis is a concept of Russian civilisation that the current government in Moscow is using to justify the desire for a multipolar International Society that stands as an alternative to the Western liberalist order. This is a concept that codifies Russia's place in the global order in terms of the political doctrine of the Russkiy Mir or Russian world (Wawrzonek, 2021, pp19-25; Zevelev, 2016, pp15-16). A doctrine that reflects, as discussed in chapter 2, that Moscow feels it has both a civilisational obligation and moral right to dominate areas of traditional Russian influence. Most notably in the former Soviet states and areas of former Imperial rule as supported by the data analysed in the case studies of Georgia and Ukraine at chapters 5 and 7.

Overt examples of the manifestation of Russia's civilisational perspective as a factor in the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West can be observed through the considerable normative differences highlighted during military interventions (to be discussed in section 1.4 of this chapter). Western disapproval of Russia using military force to implement its foreign policy predates its recent intervention and invasion in Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 respectively, the latter being the most significant driver for the almost total collapse of diplomatic relations. Russian wars are consistently presented in Western narratives as the actions of an aggressor operating out-with international law (de Hoop Scheffer, 2008; Obama, 2014; May, 2018). Russia conversely sees the West as hypocritical and reciprocates with narratives of Western interventions from Kosovo to Syria as the actions of a US-led alliance determined to impose Western, democratic cultural expansion through aggressive regime change policies (Bellamy, 2010; Barry, 2011; Radin & Reach, 2017). The result is that Russia and the West each perceive the other as flexible with interpretations of the primary institutions that are generally credited with holding International Society together (international law, sovereignty, and territoriality) when it suits their strategic interests.

Allison's (2013b) book *Russia, the West and Military Intervention* requires specific mention on the subject of military interventions providing insight on Russia's civilisational perspective on International Society. Superficially this thesis shares many similarities with Allison's work and some of the minor empirical contributions in the conclusions chapter (chapter 8, section 8.3.1) reinforce his analysis. The main similarities being the use of military interventions, including the three case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine, against an English School (ES) framework to enhance understanding of the wider normative drivers of Russian foreign policy. Many of the same issues that Allison covers are addressed in this thesis. Specifically, normative, legal, and political justifications that help explain the state level behaviour of Russia as it interacts with International Society. However, the important distinction is that where Allison assumes a commonality in understanding of the primary institutions of International Society such as international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights between Russia and the West, this research does not. The next section of this chapter will outline the empirical and methodological contributions of this chapter which are both focused on enabling the analysis of polysemy in the primary institutions of Russia-West International Society.

1.2 Research Contributions

1.2.1 Empirical Contribution

The primary contribution this research makes is to evidence the polysemic nature of the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights in the context of Russia-West International Society. The methodological contribution (detailed in the next sub-section) identifies through extensive primary source research that these are the most prevalent and prominent primary institution narratives espoused by Russia. By analysing these identified institutions in the context of Russia-West International Society, the empirical contribution adds to the small body of work that theorises polysemy. Buranelli (2013), building on Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez (2009), develops the concept in two ways. The first being the premise that actors within an International Society will not necessarily have or

prioritise the same primary institutions. Second, he discusses the polysemic nature of primary institutions as creating a circumstance where two (or more) states have different interpretations of the same institution, but communicate matters related to that institution with the same terminology. This leads to a situation where multiple actors believe they have the same interpretation but can mean very different things. This thesis seeks not just to gain greater insight into the theoretical potential of the idea of polysemy, but evidences that it manifests (at least between Russia and the West) as a key reason for enduring competition, conflict, and mistrust. It follows that to demonstrate polysemy, comparison with Western interpretations of the same events is an important part of the analysis. As such a baseline of how the West is interpreting these primary institutions in the context of Russia-West relations is included at the end of chapter 3. This baseline is a composite of the Western primary source policy documentation used throughout the case studies for direct comparison of individual events, as well as analysis taken from the existing academic literature.

The case studies from Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine all demonstrate that the various states of competition and conflict observed between Russia and the West during these events have roots in different interpretations of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. The way these primary institutions manifest in the three case studies demonstrates the presence of polysemy in the interpretation of primary institutions in Russia-West International Society. The most extreme manifestation being how different understandings of international law, based on interpretations of the UN Charter have led to a circumstance where both sides believe they are in direct competition for the nature of future global order. In essence a zero-sum choice between Russia's multipolar vision and the West's liberal Rules Based Order (RBO). What the West sees as the democracies versus the autocracies (Raab, HM Government, Press Release, 24th March 2021; Blinken, US Department of State Remarks, 18th February 2022).

A final point to make is that the concept of polysemic primary institutions has great future potential to aid in conceptualising the possibility of multiple global and sub-global international societies. There is not scope within this research to address multiple international societies as it analyses one relationship example, that of Russia and the West, with the express objective of evidencing polysemy. However, this thesis does open the door

to future investigation through applying its analytical process (to be discussed next as the methodological contribution) to any number of other state level relationships which can then be cross compared for institutions' coherence and divergence. This provides potential in the future to give insight into where sub-global international societies converge and diverge at the global level (the concept of sub-global and global international societies is outlined within chapter 3).

This research also has three minor empirical contributions that reinforce existing literature. These are firstly to provide evidence to support the body of literature that argues that the Russian civilisational perspective and Moscow's conceptualisation of multipolarity are important in explaining Russian state level behaviour. The second concerns being able to better predict Russian foreign policy behaviour based on its approach to human rights in areas that Moscow perceives as within its civilisational remit. The final minor contribution is that the high levels of consistency in how Russia is interpreting primary institutions reinforces the body of work that proposes that Russian state level behaviour is not accurately reduced and synonymous to the actions of one man (President Putin).

1.2.2 Methodological Contribution

The methodological contribution this research makes is through the development of a mixed-method analytical process that uses quantitative data analysis to lead a qualitative assessment framed against ES principles (full method is detailed at chapter 4). The two aims being to provide a framework which is efficient in analysing polysemy in primary institutions (enable the empirical contribution) as well as a process that enables the strengths of the ES whilst mitigating against its weaknesses. Multiple ES scholars, such as Acharya (2000, 2014, 2014b & 2019) and Kayaoglu (2010) identify that due to the way the ES traditionally links the basis of primary institutions to assumed shared values, that Western centrism has become embedded in mainstream analysis. This is due to both the limited allowances for non-Western normative interpretations of primary institutions and which institutions matter to International Society (see Chapter 3). As this method is specifically designed to account for the possibility of polysemy in institutions, it sits at odds with the traditional position of universality of institutions and instead builds on the work of those ES scholars that seek to

minimise Western centrism in their analysis. This method responds to a problem that is usefully articulated by the constructivist academic Nicholas Onuf (2002, p211) in that "The best theory would tell us when institutions necessarily matter to states, and why". It draws on the concepts found in the work of progressive ES scholars such as Holsti, Buzan, Knudsen, Spandler, Parrat and Buranelli to make an attempt at this 'best theory'. It does so through providing not only insight into which institutions matter and why, but critically how they are being interpreted (polysemy) by different actors in International Society. Whilst this is specifically against the context of Russia-West relations in the case of this thesis, the method is designed to have wider applicability in the future.

The literature reviewed across the next two chapters highlights both the values gap between Russia and the West that this research contends manifests as polysemy in primary institutions, and the necessity to be able to incorporate multiple theoretical and analytical perspectives to comprehensively analyse polysemy manifesting. This methodological contribution seeks to take advantage of the ES's ability to afford huge scope to incorporate multiple perspectives that allow for a wide range of normative and material factors to be analysed through the study of primary and secondary institutions. Institutions being the components that allow or prevent the functioning of inter-state relationships, both from a normative/values perspective (primary institutions) and functional, more material perspective (secondary institutions in the form of treaties and international organisations).

Figure 1 (below) is a graphical representation of the methodological contribution. It shows how the method flows from an inductive, quantitative element that creates datasets, through to qualitative analysis of identified narratives against the principles of International Society, institutions, and pluralism and solidarism.

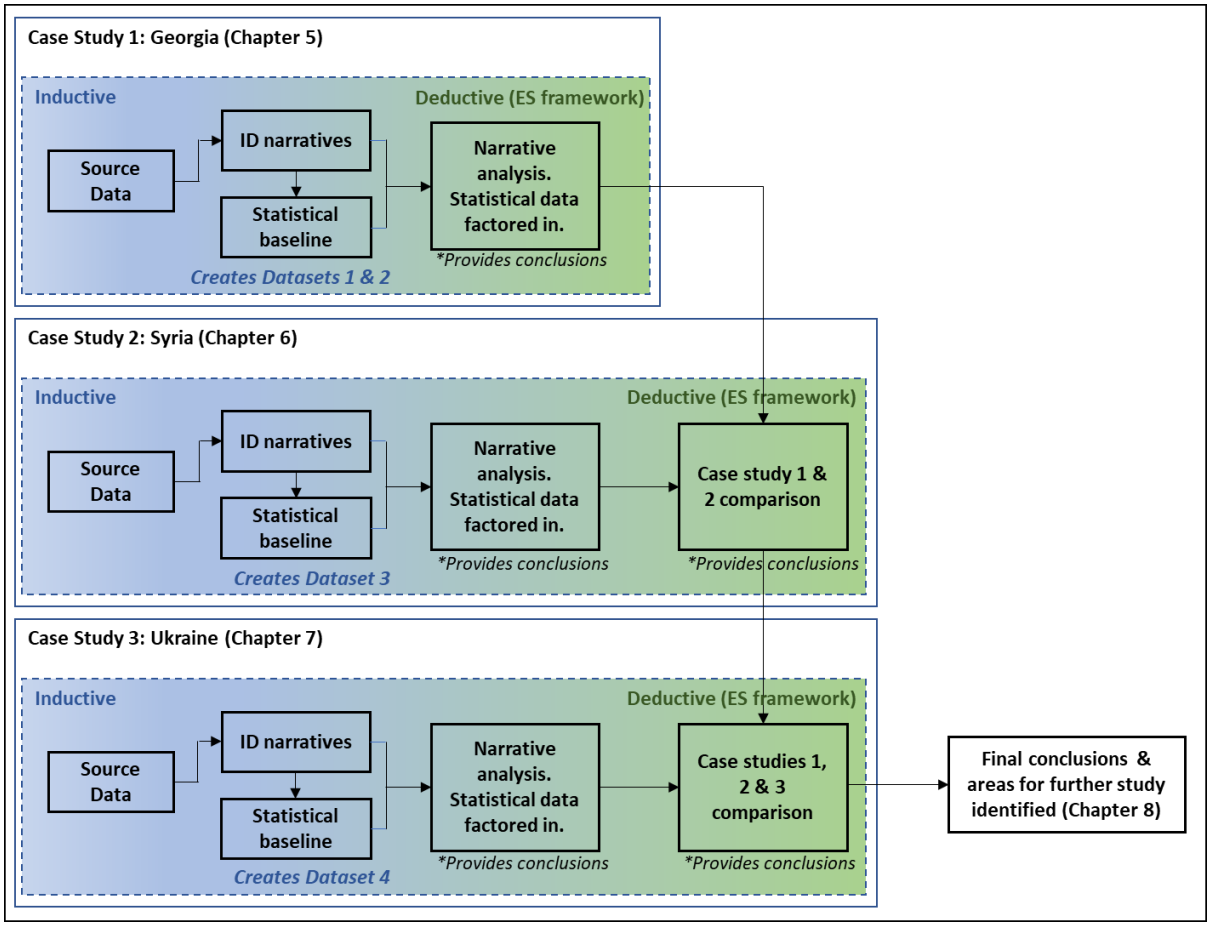

Figure 1. Analytical Method Graphic

The datasets of this thesis are constituted of all available Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) documents published during defined case study periods. The MFA publications that comprise the datasets are referenced at Annexes A-D, with basic statistical data presented at Annexes E-F. A section on why MFA data was selected as a primary source baseline is included in chapter 4, section 4.4.

The method is only fully outlined at chapter 4, because it is problematic to do so at this early stage prior to the literature review across chapters 2 and 3. This is due to those chapters providing the justification for the analytically integrative mixed-method approach, and greater discussion on why the method has been derived from the principles of the ES. To demonstrate the credibility and usefulness of the methodological contribution three important questions need to be answered. These are, why are case studies chosen as the vehicle for analysis? Why use the military interventions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine? And, why choose MFA publications for the baseline source for Datasets? Two of these questions

are better answered, and are done so in chapter 4 following the context provided by chapters 2 and 3. However, the second question concerning why military interventions for the context of the case studies is best addressed next.

1.3 Why Military Interventions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine?

Military interventions have been chosen to study Russia's interpretations of institutions in the context of Russia-West International Society as they provide the opportunity to observe the interplay of primary and secondary institutions when under high pressure, and enable comparison with Western perceptions for the same events. This provides a stress test that highlights similarities, differences, and divergence in interpretations and therefore enables the evidencing of polysemy. However, at least within the context of the first two case studies of Georgia and Syria (non-existential wars of choice) they have not caused serious destruction of the Russia-West International Society so consequently also provide insight into what factors keep an International Society functional, at least to some degree. The selection of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine allows for analysis of Russia's interaction with institutions both inside and outside its traditional area of civilisational influence/near abroad (concepts discussed in sub-section 1.1.2 above and in chapter 2). Ultimately, the ability to observe and analyse the application and interpretation of the institutions of International Society is accentuated during conflict as the domestic governments and international organisations of the actors involved engage in escalation and/or diplomacy. Therefore, military interventions provide an excellent opportunity to study the uncompromised normative position of state actors when under the pressure of the extreme circumstances of armed conflict. What follows is a concise representative selection of the vast literature on military interventions to illustrate why the cases used in this thesis, Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine have been selected to study the polysemic nature of the primary institutions of international society.

Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008 set some significant precedents for later conflicts. These included legal arguments surrounding humanitarian intervention, self-determination (related to sovereignty), and protection of ethnic Russians (see Cheterian, 2009; Deyermond, 2016; Karagiannis, 2014). Arguments that rely on citing what Moscow perceived as similar

Western precedents in Kosovo to provide legitimacy (Lyne, 2015). Georgia also provided important insight into Russia's application of collective or republic sovereignty in its near abroad, including where its "red lines against NATO enlargement" territorially manifest (Dannreuther, 2015 p7). Russian arguments regarding the inviolability of sovereignty and territorial integrity seemed to have been overtly discarded by the Russian government in favour of a self-interested intervention in Georgia to retain dominance over the post-Soviet space. Deyermond (2016, p28) describes this as "hard balancing" against Western expansion. Allison (2008) and Fischer (2016) describe this period as an important stage in the militarisation of Russian policy. In a later article, Allison (2009) offers a perspective that frames this behaviour as an attempt to contest the established norms of International Society to achieve the same ends.

This thesis reaches some different conclusions in the case studies that show this need for dominance in the post-Soviet space as related to Russia's civilisational understanding of global order and its intra-civilisational obligation and right to intervene. However, at this stage it is important to explain that the civilisational perspective the case study data (chapters 5-7) suggests Russia is applying to international society is a direct reflection of the way in which Moscow perceives and applies international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights in areas of Russian traditional influence. This is as part of a wider Russian civilisation that they are obligated to protect. As discussed further in the review of the literature that covers Russia in their near abroad (chapter 2), the framing of Russia's need to dominate their near abroad has other ways of being explained. However, the depth of a civilisational link, where Moscow feels other culturally or historically aligned states are inherently bound to Russia comes through strongly in the case study material and helps to explain the manifestation of Russian policies in applying international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights in both areas it considers part of its civilisation, and those which are not. The Russian military action in Georgia highlights a conflict in which Russia felt it could legitimately intervene on civilisational grounds. In this conflict, Moscow's justifications centre on self-defence of Russian peoples, interests, and culture in South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgian aggression, largely on humanitarian grounds using interpretations of responsibility to protect (R2P). Interpretations centred on Russia's obligation through its laws to protect the ethnic and culturally Russian populations.

The Syrian intervention demonstrates the complex nature of Russian objectives and motivations, highlighting the differences in its approach to international law when operating outside of its traditional civilisational area of interest. Allison (2013) argues it is not the long historical ties, bilateral security, or economic links between the two states that Russian alignment with Syria is based on. Instead, it is Russian normative concerns related to perceived Western regime change policy, against the wider context of the Arab Spring (Dannreuther, 2015) that drove Russia to defend the Assad regime against the will of the wider international community rather than any sense of real solidarity (Allison, 2013). Although the historical ties should not be totally dismissed, with Russia, via the Soviet Union, linked to the modern state of Syria through support of their independence in 1946 (Lawson, 2013 pp160-164) the prevention of creeping Western influence in Syria is undoubtedly a key reason for Russia's staunch defence of Syrian sovereignty. This is specifically relevant in the context of Syria providing Moscow with strategic access to the Eastern Mediterranean and ability to challenge NATO dominance there.

Averre & Davies (2015) contribute to the understanding of Russia's actions in Syria through analysis of Moscow's position on, and use of, R2P during the intervention. They argue that R2P has become interwoven into the fabric of Russian foreign policy as part of its wider strategy of building both regional and global influence based on its own interpretation of international law that "repudiates forced democratization" (p824). An interpretation which the case study chapters of this project demonstrate has significant differences to Western understanding. Charap (2013) also recognises the complex nature of Russia's position over the Syrian conflict, but ultimately assesses its primary driver as being to stop regime change. For Charap, this is part of a wider principled Russian position, driven by its "buyer's remorse" (p37) over its abstention to UNSCR 1973 (concerning Western intervention in Libya). Borshchevskaya (2017) echoes Allison's and Charap's conclusions, albeit in a much more emotive way. Her argument centres on retaining power and influence through overtly aggressive policies in Syria as part of a wider Middle Eastern strategy designed to reduce Western influence.

Allison (2014) argues that the 2014 Ukraine intervention has posed the most serious threat to the established European security order since the end of the Cold War. His argument centres on the need for the international community to refute Russia's bogus legal arguments that include: the uprising was a Western backed coup; it was for the protection of ethnic Russians and Russian military personnel; prevention of a refugee crisis; invitation from President Yanukovych; and arguments based on self-determination specifically pertaining to Crimea. Allison argues that tolerance of these claims, which he individually refutes in his article, sets dangerous precedents for Russia, and will embolden them to repeat this strategy.

This analysis is another example of the mistake this thesis argues is regularly made in the analysis of Russia's intent and rationale. There is an overarching tone of overlaying a fundamental dishonesty in Russia's justifications, whilst conversely implying Western justifications have moral primacy in adhering to the norms of the global order. In contrast, this thesis contends this is evidence of polysemy, with Russia and the West using the same language of primary institutions (sovereignty and international law in this case) whilst understanding them to have significantly different meanings and applications. The dismissal of Russia's actions in Ukraine in 2014 as that of a simple materially focused aggressor seeking territorial gains misunderstands the values based civilisational perspective that is causing its actions. To frame the parallels between Russia's actions across Georgia and Ukraine as the acts of a belligerent actor, seeking only to dominate the space undersells the scale of the potential threat from the decline in Russia-West relations. The dismissal of Russia's concerns in Ukraine as cynical and disingenuous, instead of being based primarily on differing interpretations of international law and sovereignty has almost certainly contributed to the unmanaged escalation of the frozen conflict in 2014 to full out war in 2022. Marten (2015) gives interesting insight into an exacerbating factor to these differences in interpretation of specifically international law. That being the West cannot match the flexibility that Russia has to move between which of its international legal arguments it wishes to implement at any time. She discusses the ability for Putin, with his vast executive power, to change political tack rapidly. This is something both Western scholars and politicians often interpret as inconsistent and/or contradictory behaviour. In the case of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, this allowed Russia to move fluidly from arguments based on protection of civilians, to self-determination, to dismissing legal challenges on the basis the revolution in

Ukraine was no more than an armed coup. The case study research contained in this thesis comes to the conclusion that for Russia these arguments are part of one cohesive narrative, based on, and conforming to, Russian understandings of how institutions apply in the civilisational space that constitute Russia's areas of obligation and strategic interest. To the West however, this overtly appeared to be Russia seeking an argument to justify an illegal intervention, based on the West's counter-understanding of those same institutions and differences in understanding where the limits of Russia's legitimacy to enforce its will lie.

Ukraine is critically important to understanding Russia's position on institutions, particularly in the post-Soviet space. The intervention (2014) and invasion (2022) of Ukraine provides insight across a broad range of institutional and normative factors, at both the global and regional level. With regards to the wider geo-political context, Charap (2014) explains the events in Ukraine as an attempt by Russia to prevent the "strategic setback" (p45) of losing the Yanukovich government from becoming a "strategic catastrophe" (ibid) through the loss of dominance over the region. Something that holds true at the time of writing and continues to explain the existential ferocity with which Russia is committed to its 2022-2024 operations in the country. Mearsheimer (2014) goes so far as to claim that the Ukraine crisis, on balance, is the West's fault, through policies of NATO expansion and plans to westernise Ukraine. All of which are unacceptable existential threats to Russian identity, influence, and its civilisational perspective on global order. Allison (2014) articulates that this issue is more complex than a manifestation of a geo-political and/or geo-economic power struggle between Russia and the West. His conclusion is that Russia is motivated in Ukraine, primarily by concerns rooted in the need to maintain regional dominance. However, he does concede that the removal of a friendly government in Ukraine "had been felt very personally by Putin, and its consequences in Kiev were not just a strategic, but also a political and normative challenge to Putin's vision of Russia-led Eurasian integration" (p1297). The danger in Allison's analysis reflects the trend to reduce the complexity, through personalisation of the Russian policy onto Putin alone. Charap & Darden (2014) point out that despite the narrative that often places Putin as the driver of this conflict, the Maidan Revolution in 2014 and chain of events that followed, forced Russia to respond due to internal Ukrainian politics, which would have been the case regardless of who held the Presidency. This being due to the revolution

resulting in an unacceptable ceding of influence by Russia to the West (including NATO and the EU).

The governance approach that Davies (2016) examines Russian intervention against is relevant here too. The overarching analysis and conclusions give considerable insight into the Russian perspective, not taking the temptation to apportion blame on Russia as much of the Western literature does. Exploring whether the decline in Russia-West relations over the past three decades is to do with fundamental incompatibilities between European governance (or the West more broadly) and how Russia behaves is at the core of this project. From this perspective, international governance and the rules and norms on which it is based can only be fully complied with if institutional homogeneity is in existence. However, Russia cannot be expected to conform to a governance approach based on Western interpretations of primary institutions and associated norms and rules designed to reinforce them. Moscow simply does not recognise or implement primary institutions in the same way as the West. It must be noted that this is probably the case for multiple actors across International Society and constitutes an area for future study across other influential global powers across different regions such as China, India, Brazil, and Saudi Arabia. All of which would provide deeper understanding into the fabric of wider International Society.

This short overview concerning Russia and military interventions highlights the utility of the subject matter with which to make the empirical (polysemy) and methodological contributions, as well as help focus the research hypothesis, questions, and objectives (outlined in in the next section). Military interventions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine provide excellent environments for the case study chapters to study how institutions function, and what Russia's interpretations and prioritisation of them are. During these military interventions, the literature reflects that the normative and structural parameters of primary and secondary institutions are tested, but at least in the Georgia and Syria cases, not to the point of failure as observed historically in total war scenarios. Therefore, institutions can be analysed through case studies that force the deep normative differences to the surface, whilst still being contained within a largely functioning International Society. This allows examination of both the differences in norms and whether this equates to polysemy, and inquiry into what is ultimately keeping Russia-West International Society functioning. The

Ukraine case study specifically provides a context for the study of any consistencies and differences that occur in the understanding, interpretation, and implementation of institutions when the Russia-West International Society is in the process of changing into a more combative relationship, akin to what the ES would term an international system (see chapter 3) which does not assume shared values. The timeline of Russian military interventions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine shows that even during the period of hope for expanded co-operation between Russia and the West in the early 2000s, the underlying polysemy in primary institutions existed. This is important as it both demonstrates the power that secondary institutions can have in providing (albeit limited) co-operation within a pluralist International Society, and their ultimate limits when polysemy in primary institutions creates a critical impasse after which conflict becomes inevitable.

1.4 Research Objectives, Hypothesis & Questions

1.4.1 Research Objectives

In line with the empirical contribution, against the context of the case studies of military intervention, the objectives of this research are to:

Objective1: Demonstrate the polysemy of primary and secondary institutions through the study of military intervention.

Objective 2: Determine which primary and secondary institutions are of most importance to Russia and the West, and where the differences in their understanding of them and prioritisation lie.

Objective 3: Establish that the interpretations of primary institutions, based on mismatched normative perspectives, limits Russia's cooperation with the West, largely to the realm of secondary institutions. Demonstrate that the polysemic nature of primary institutions is the source of this mismatch.

Objective 4: Develop and implement a repeatable method that minimises Western centrism to enable analysis of polysemy in the primary institutions of International Society.

1.4.2 Research hypothesis & questions

To meet the objectives this research is guided by testing a two-part hypothesis, tested by three research questions. The first part of the hypothesis is that the increasingly combative and competitive relationship between Russia and the West is based on significant normative differences due to the polysemic nature of primary institutions. It should be noted that this thesis contends that primary institutions are almost certainly polysemic across various actors in International Society, defined by multiple factors including language, culture, economics, military power, history, and overall political context (including material power and influence in international relations). However, this thesis only has scope to explore the concept of polysemy in Russia-West relations against the context of the three case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine. The second part of the hypothesis is that Russia-West relations have, until the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, been maintained in a state of varying non-existential competition through the cumulative regulating effect of adherence to common rules of secondary institutions (termed within this research as regulative solidarism). Testing this hypothesis will be focused through the questions below:

Question1: How does the normative position of Russia observed across the Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine case studies give understanding into the interpretation of primary and secondary institutions?

Question 2: Which institutions matter to Russia in the cases of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine, and does a hierarchy of primary and secondary institutions exist? If so, how does this compare to Western understandings for the same events?

Question 3: How do the case studies help to illustrate how the Russia-West International Society has developed with respect to pluralism and solidarism?

1.5 Project Structure

This thesis has eight chapters with the first four outlining the project, reviewing key literature, and establishing the analytical method. Chapters 5 to 7 apply the analytical method to the three military intervention case studies and chapter 8 brings together the conclusions of the research and identifies areas for future study. A summary of the content of each chapter is outlined below.

Chapter 2: Existing Analysis of Russia: Theory & Themes. This chapter reviews a representative portion of the existing literature concerned with how Russia has and continues to be analysed from various theoretical and analytical perspectives. The central arguments of this chapter are first, that traditional singular theoretical perspectives are not adequate to explain the range of normative and material factors that determine the values gap in Russia-West relations or describe the state of the institutions that constitute global order. Second, that the ES is a logical choice of theoretical framework as it can incorporate all the relevant perspectives from which Russia is traditionally analysed without being bound to any singular approach. And third that Russia's perception of global order has a civilisational, multipolar basis that transcends the policies of any specific head of State. To achieve this, the chapter is split into two main sections, theoretical approaches (theory), and thematic approaches (themes). Within the theory section the following is covered. Firstly, realism as the most prevalent approach applied to the study of Russia-West relations is discussed including the enduring importance that polarity theory continues to have. Although literature that uses liberalism as a framework to specifically focus analysis on Russian behaviour over the period this research covers is sparse, the impact of liberalism within Russian policy is discussed next. The emphasis is on the enduring effect the liberal tradition in Russian politics continues to have as an influence over its politics and behaviour rather than its use as prominent framework for analysis. The chapter then moves on to theoretical approaches that attempt to combine the complex material and normative elements of Russian policy. This includes multi-theory approaches, constructivism, and the ES. The themes section firstly addresses the trend of reducing the Russian state to being synonymous with Putin. The final two sub-sections then move on to cover the concept of Russian multipolarity as distinct from realist

conceptions, and the body of literature that analyses Russia's approach in its near abroad. Critically, both multipolarity and the literature concerning Russia's near abroad provide key insights into how Russia manifests its state level policy from its civilisational perspective on global order.

Chapter 3: The English School. Following on from the review of theoretical and analytical approaches used to study Russia, this chapter serves three functions. Firstly, to outline the principles of the ES. Secondly it provides justification for its use as a methodological basis. And thirdly it gives a baseline of Western interpretations of institutions for comparative analysis in the case studies. To achieve this, the chapter breaks down the ES into three component parts and reviews them. These are International Society (and the three traditions), the pluralism versus solidarism debate, and institutions. The chapter highlights both the strengths of the ES, notably its ability to combine a complex mix of material and normative analytical approaches, effectively borrowing from multiple theoretical disciplines. It also highlights its enduring weaknesses of lack of clarity and definition, susceptibility to cherry picking elements to fit a given hypothesis, and Western centrism. This chapter concludes with a final section that gives a baseline of Western interpretations of the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights to enable comparison of these institutions with the Russian perspectives identified through the case study analysis of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine.

Chapter 4: Method. This chapter outlines the analytical method that this thesis contributes. It is based on the key principles and understandings of the ES drawn from chapter 3. It consists of five sections that cover an introduction and overview of the basic method, including a graphical representation of the process. It then explains why case studies in general have been chosen to frame the research before justifying the use of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine as specific examples. The fourth section concerns data selection, specifically justifying the use of Russian MFA sources for the principal data before moving on to the final section that provides a step-by-step breakdown of the method's process.

Chapter 5: Georgia. The first of the case study chapters focuses on the Georgia conflict of Aug 2008 to identify and analyse Russia's interaction with, and interpretation of, primary and

secondary institutions. Georgia provides, from the Russian perspective, an intra-civilisational conflict that is relatively contained and assessed as a non-existential war of choice. The source data used covers a period from the Rose Revolution in 2003 through to the end of the conflict to establish which narrative themes pertaining to institutions are present, and whether they have been consistent during periods of rapprochement and escalation. The three narrative themes that emerge and are contrasted to the Western equivalents during this case study are: international law; human rights and how it influences views of sovereignty and territoriality in Russia's near abroad; and the frequency of interaction with secondary institutions, specifically the OSCE and UN.

Chapter 6: Syria. The second case study covers a six-month period between September 2015 (the start of the intervention) to March 2016. The reasons for such a short period are firstly due to the sheer volume of data being produced by the Russian MFA by this point in time, and that this covers the start of the intervention to the point that Russia likely believes it has achieved its main strategic aims. The Syrian intervention affords the opportunity to study Russia operating in an inter-civilisational conflict where it is not obligated to protect cultural, ethnic, and/or historical Russian interests and instead is focused on preventing the spread of the conflict. When contrasted with Georgia, although the core narrative themes are still present, how they are applied differs. This is specifically relevant in the case of sovereignty, whereby the Russian-centric human rights links seen in Georgia are replaced with more traditional views on sovereignty by virtue of state borders.

Chapter 7: Ukraine. This case study differs from the other two in that it focuses on the year prior to the invasion. This is due to the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2024 representing a threshold where International Society between Russia and the West collapses. As a consequence, this case study provides the opportunity to analyse Russian behaviours in an intra-civilisational conflict that is perceived as existential. The data once again shows some parallels with the Georgia case study in terms of which institutions matter, and how they are interpreted and communicated. However, the overarching narratives surround Russia's stated belief that the situation in Ukraine is a symptom of a much larger, and existential battle between the emerging multipolar powers (of which Russia, empowered by its wider

civilisational area of influence are one) and the West who are seeking to maintain dominance over global order.

Chapter 8: Conclusions. This chapter brings together the project conclusions, sets them against the hypothesis, research questions and objectives. It makes assessment on the degree to which the aims have manifested into meaningful contributions as well as highlighting areas for future study.

Chapter 2
Existing Analysis of Russia: Theory & Themes

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of two that form the literature review. It provides a representative overview of the range of analytical methods, theoretical perspectives, and themes used to analyse Russian state level behaviour. By investigating the way in which Russia has, and continues to be analysed it can be demonstrated firstly, that traditional singular theoretical perspectives are not adequate for studying the complex mix of material and normative factors driving the values gap in Russia-West relations. Secondly, that the English School (ES) provides a suitable mixed-method basis for the analysis in the case study chapters. Thirdly, that Russia's conceptualisation of a civilisational, multipolar order transcends the policies of a specific leader. These three central arguments provide the foundation on which the empirical and methodological contributions are based. The potential scope of this chapter is vast, and it is not possible to comprehensively cover the huge back catalogue of work that exists concerning Russia-West relations. As such, what follows is designed to reflect the relevant theoretical approaches, and themes of how Russia has, and continues to be analysed.

The chapter is split across two main sections, each with several sub-sections. Section 2.2 covers theoretical approaches. The first sub-section of which covers how Russia has been analysed within the traditional paradigm of realism. Realism and its enduring influence must be addressed as the most frequently applied theory to understanding Russia-West relations. Realist perspectives are borne of a Cold War legacy that has contributed, for better or worse, the concept of polarity as a framework, terminology, and often simply a shorthand for understanding power dynamics. Critically for this research, polarity theory has informed and influenced Russian understandings of power dynamics and its terminology, if not its traditional meaning, survives in Russian multipolar policy. Therefore, polarity theory and its development have emphasis. A concise overview of literature that uses liberalism as a framework is given next. There is a limited body of literature that uses liberalism to attempt to understand Russian state level behaviour, but liberalism must be covered as it provides

important insight in understanding the mediating effect of secondary institutions (international organisations specifically). The final sub-section of the theory section moves on to approaches that seek to mitigate the limitations of the traditional paradigms through applying more emphasis on understanding the relationships between material and normative drivers for observed Russian policy. This includes the concept of neo-revisionism, constructivism, and a very brief introduction to the ES (the ES is covered in detail in chapter 3). The aim of outlining these approaches is to demonstrate that whilst no single approach can do justice to the complexity of Russian foreign policy and inter-state relations, none can be totally discounted. This section provides the bulk of the justification for the development of the methodological contribution being derived from the principles of the ES.

The second main section of this chapter covers thematic approaches. These are approaches that do not necessarily conform to a specific theoretical perspective but that are bodies of work which have direct relevance to the study of polysemy in primary institutions in Russia-West relations. The first sub-section discusses the body of work that equates the Russian state as synonymous with its leadership, specifically President Putin. This literature, although engrained with over-simplification does have relevance and cannot be ignored due to the enormous executive power the office of Russian the President holds, highlighted starkly by Moscow's decision-making process for Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The next sub-section covers work concerned with understanding Russian multipolarity which informs its civilisational perspective of global order. As stated in the introduction chapter the definition of Russian multipolarity taken forward by this thesis makes this body of work distinct from the realist definition of polarity other than the acknowledged sharing of terminology. The final sub-section analyses what is in effect the manifestation of Russia's multipolar approach in its near abroad, providing insights on its regional perspective. As already discussed in chapter 1, this links to the Russian conceptualisation of itself as a civilisational power. These thematic approaches to analysing Russia are of huge importance to this research as both the concept of Russian multipolarity and how this can be observed to manifest both globally and regionally provides critical insight into the polysemy inherent Russian and Western interpretations of primary institutions, and Russia's civilisational worldview. Specifically how these interpretations manifest in the geographic space where East and West collide.

2.2 Theoretical Approaches

2.2.1 Realism and the Influence of Polarity

The prevalence, and prominence, of realism as a framework to either fully, or in part, explain Russian foreign policy across a wide range of literature means it must be addressed. Realism is an attractive and obvious approach for the study of Russia, not least because as a state Russia displays some policies easily interpreted as overtly realist. These include apparent zero-sum approaches to Russia-NATO power competition, reliance on, and preference for the use of political, economic, and military hard power, as well as the conviction that global order should be shaped by the traditional great powers (Lo, 2015), what Russia would consider the great civilisations. What follows is designed to be a representative overview of the prevailing themes within the relevant realist literature to articulate why realism as a stand-alone theoretical approach has been and continues to be a pervasive influence on Russia-West analysis. It is a perspective that alone is unable to provide adequate explanation for Russian motivations and actions on the global stage, but one that must be able to be incorporated into any analysis of Russia as it does reflect prominent elements of Moscow's state level behaviour.

Although the military intervention case studies used for this research (Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine) are post-Cold War, it is important to note the influence that the Cold War analysis continues to have on realist thinking. Crucially the framing of state-on-state power relationships in terms of polarity (bi, uni, or multi), often to the exclusion of domestic and normative factors. The insertion of the concept of polarity as a manifestation of observing the Cold War power struggle between Russia and the West continues to shape the most common forms of realism in use today. The concept of polarity is borne of Soviet-Western competition and as such is critical to understanding both the prevailing Western analysis of Russian state level behaviour as well as the limitations of realist analysis in general. The most relevant limitation being that realism, in whatever guise, fails to adequately incorporate Russia's normative motivations. The importance of normative motivations will become increasingly apparent throughout the later sections of this chapter and are central to understanding

Russian interpretations of primary institutions such as international law, sovereignty, and human rights and where Moscow sees itself as the centre of a civilisation, as well as a state.

The term polarity, as understood in the context of international relations as the descriptor of the number of system-defining state powers within the international system, is a modern concept. The use of the term only appears in literature post World War 2 (Wohlforth, 1993) as a direct consequence of the great power competition between the Soviet Union and the United States. Williams Fox's 1944 book, *The Superpowers: The United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union* probably constitutes the first direct use of polarity as a metaphor where in relation to the international political system, he states, "the Western democracies and the Soviet Union will constitute the poles" (Fox, 1944, p97). Morten Kaplan (a student of Fox) further developed the idea of polarity by defining a set of rules that outline the characteristics of various types of polarity, one of which was loose bipolarity. This definition created the idea of two opposing "bloc actors" (Kaplan, 1957, p75) of NATO and the Soviet Union. Ultimately for realism, Kenneth Waltz (also a student of Fox) is commonly considered to be responsible for developing the "clearest and most persuasive exposition of polarity" (Greico, 2007, p65) through his seminal 1979 work, *Theory of International Politics*, after which "polarity has held court over systemic theory discussions ever since" (Legro, 2011, p343). Fox, Kaplan and Waltz's contribution to contemporary realist framing of the global order has a dynastic quality, effectively growing from the same source of influence, and from the same transitional context (World War 2 to Cold War). In simple terms, Fox planted the seed of polarity theory, Kaplan developed it into something systematic, and Waltz clarified the concept into a persuasive, and pervasive idea that continues to permeate the literature that analyses global order and power competition in which Russia-West relations is prominent in the debate.

Polarity, as evolved from the Fox, Kaplan, and Waltz's line of thinking, is such a central concept in the realist literature relevant to the study of Russia, and Russia-West relations specifically (Mearheimer, 2014, p81; Gotz, 2016, p232, Tsygankov, 2022, p211), it is important to have noted its origins. This is for two reasons: firstly, to highlight the permeating nature of a material power-based concept for framing power distribution in the realist conception of the international system. Polarity is a concept inherently linked to the Soviet Union and Russia, but that fails to account for normative drivers and post-Cold War developments (including

the collapse of the Soviet Union and associated loss of Russia's great power status). Secondly, the links that bind Russia and multipolarity together across literature from multiple theoretical perspectives, and from Russian policy makers is widespread. Russian policy states "The world is currently going through fundamental changes related to the emergence of a multipolar international system" (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). This reinforces Russia's use of polarity (specifically multipolarity) as an aim point for the desired end state for global order. The genesis of this multipolar vision is rooted in former Russian Foreign Minister (1996 - 1998), and latterly Prime Minister (1998 – 1999) Yevgeny Primakov's strategy to restore Russia to great power status, representing the wider Russian civilisation. A vision which although initially influenced by typically realist perspectives and terminology (Sakwa, 2007) diverges substantially to include a complex mixture of material and normative elements that speak more to a civilisational perspective, than multipolarity as the Western literature understands it. Despite substantial differences in meaning between the theoretical realist, and Russian policy concepts of polarity, the fact the terminology pervades both the academic literature and Russian policy documentation has ironically reinforced the perception of Russia-West relations as being able to be distilled as realist power competition.

The legacy of realists placing emphasis on explaining international state-on-state relations in terms of material strength and bestowing pole status through accumulation of sufficient hard power permeates the realist literature. Authors such as Mearsheimer (2001; 2014; 2023), Layne (1993), Hopf (1991) and Ambrosio (2001 & 2005) embed this view into their work which focuses on states attempting to maximise their military and economic power as key to gaining great power status within the global order. This offensive neo-realist approach effectively relies on a zero-sum mentality of states using brute force to revise the global order into a desirable structure, weakening competitor states in the process. Layne (2012) highlights the importance of economic power to this zero-sum perspective, stating that structural flaws in the western economic model have left the US living outside its means and owing its debt to foreign powers. Some of which are its direct competitors, leaving the door open for the likes of Russia and China to take advantage. In contrast the defensive neo-realist perspective is represented by the likes of Wohlforth (2009) who attempts to look beyond the zero-sum, compound effect of hard power and include the matter of status competition, posing the question of whether status is more important than material security. Ultimately, although a

less tangible quality such as status gets included in this analysis, from the realist perspective it is the material strength that provides the status, rather than a normative basis. Thereby still giving primacy to the material factors, over the normative elements of state level behaviour.

Further examples of this approach can be seen in Wieclawski (2011) and Sussex (2012). Wieclawski compares classical, neo, and structural realism to explain Russian foreign policy. He concludes that the latter is particularly useful despite conceding realism's general inability to account for the complexity of Russian policy making. However, this concession is given no significance in the analysis, perhaps due to it directly evidencing the inadequacy of realism as a singular approach. The author is probably seeking to limit the contradiction of conceding that normative elements are important whilst advocating a framework that only accounts for material power. Sussex (2012) is another who attempts to explain the change in Russia-West relations as being solely attributable to the availability of material power. The argument follows that recent increases in material power have enabled Putin to move from "accommodating realism" to "assertive realism" (p208), directly linking the ambition of the foreign policy of the Russian state to its military and economic strength. This simplistic logic ultimately dooms the analysis to framing Russia as an aggressive state, prone to contradictions and incoherence, and ultimately limited in its actions by its inferior material power relative to the US. Ultimately, any analysis founded on the assumption that Russia is pursuing foreign policy, based primarily on an expansionist material power basis fails comprehensively to account for the broader range of factors that contribute to how Russia aims to gain and maintain power, status, and influence (Lukyanov, 2010). It ignores the most important and enduring factors that shape why Russia behaves the way it does due to overemphasising what Russia's physical actions are as it attempts to achieve its state and civilisational level objectives. This has implications for how Russia perceives institutions in the context of this thesis. In a world of zero-sum material power, the normative imperatives that shape Russian interpretations of sovereignty, territoriality, and international law get lost, or at least relegated behind the great game of zero-sum power politics. This approach, as is borne out by the case studies research, does not adequately explain all aspects of Russian behaviour. However, although this thesis argues strongly that an exclusively realist approach does not explain either the complexity of Russia's behaviour as it relates to institutions, or the general nature of International Society, it recognises that the principles of realism retain

substantial value as part of a comprehensive analysis. This is with regards to the overtly material power elements observed in Russia's foreign policy and behaviour. The ES principles that guide this research's method inherently incorporates the realist worldview as one of the three traditions (International System/Realism) but not at the expense of the ability to incorporate and prioritise normative factors contained within the other two (International Society/Rationalism and World Society/Liberalism).

2.2.2 Liberalism

Very little liberalist analysis that seeks to explain modern Russian state level behaviour was found during the review of relevant literature. During the Soviet and Cold-War period, literature that uses liberalism to attempt to analyse Soviet/Russian state level behaviour is almost completely absent. This is probably due to the perspective that liberalism understood the Soviet Union as a fundamentally illiberal power, destined to display aggressive behaviour until such time as a democratising event occurred (Jackson, 2001). However, liberalism and liberalist concepts do need to be covered here to highlight why they cannot be discounted in the methodological contribution. This is specifically due to the perspective that liberalism has on the nature of international organisations, or what the ES terms secondary institutions. Russia puts a lot of importance on a great number of international organisations that help to regulate state-on-state relationships in International Society, not least as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

International organisations are specifically relevant in understanding how Russia has been able to have pragmatic cooperation with the West since the fall of the Soviet Union despite major normative differences. This cooperation is highlighted by Russia's attempts at integration with the Western economic model throughout the 1990s (Sergunin, 2016). During this period, it is widely accepted that Soviet ideology was replaced by an attempt at Western capitalism. This approach inherently included a degree of associated liberalisation and necessity to adhere to liberal norms built into the frameworks of Western led international economic organisations (Rezvani, 2020; Vasileva & Becker, 2017). The work of Keohane and Nye (2001) discuss this type of engagement with international organisations as an interdependence that drives how states are regulated in terms of behaviour by reliance on

the other members (sometimes more powerful or influential members) of global order. This is where the "liberalist institutionalist sees the role of international organisations [secondary institutions] as that of a mediator" (Smith, 2014, p28). The liberal concept of interdependence, in which all actors do not necessarily have equal power and status, must be considered in studies of Russia-West relations where there is an accepted hard power (military and economic) mis-match. Specifically with regards to cooperation within the bounds of liberal norms in contrast to Moscow's own normative positions due to the fear of negative consequences and/or to promote Russia as a "responsible and important actor" (Oliker, 2009, p183) in International Society. Co-operation ultimately based on restrictions due to Moscow's low relative power with the West in the immediate post-Soviet period (Fischer, 2020, p9) that has almost certainly shaped Russia's interactions with Western led institutions since. This includes institutions such as energy treaties and agreements with EU member states (Godzimirski et al, 2024), the World Trade Organisation, and membership of the G8 (prior to exclusion over Ukraine in 2014). Russia pursuing pragmatic interaction in international organisations because of interdependence informs the concept of regulative solidarism that this thesis contributes and hypothesises. Regulative solidarism ultimately enables the continued functioning of a pluralist international society, despite vastly differing normative perspectives and the polysemic nature of primary institutions. Understanding the limits of this interdependence and Russia's willingness for pragmatic engagement in liberal norms in international organisations is a theme that emerges from the Ukraine case study. Therefore, liberalism and its conceptualisation of interdependence must be able to be factored into the analytical method to understand both the functioning of Russia-West International Society, and ultimately its limits.

Although liberal analyses to explain Russian state level behaviour are hard to find, and Russia's engagement in liberal norms may be restricted to pragmatic engagement, liberal theory nonetheless offers important perspectives on Russian engagement with the West in shared institutions; specifically secondary institutions. As with Realism, Liberalism as a singular approach is not a viable framework for a comprehensive study of Russia. However, the importance of liberal influence in international organisations and Russia's membership of them mean that this theoretical approach must be factored into any comprehensive analysis of the Russian state.

2.2.3 Neo-Revisionism, Constructivism, and the English School

Despite the prevalence of realist approaches which over-emphasise hard power, a vast body of literature that positively identifies the importance of, and incorporates normative factors exists. This sub-section will explore the theoretical perspectives of neo-revisionism and constructivism which allow for multiple perspectives to be incorporated, before introducing the ES which is covered in detail in the following chapter.

An approach that illustrates an important link between traditional realist analysis and approaches that use wider theoretical foundations to explain the complex nature of Russian policy making is the concept of neo-revisionism, comprehensively explored by Richard Sakwa. The approach assumes and assesses a significant element of realism in Russia's decision-making process and posits neo-revisionism as the current stage of an evolving foreign policy. The previous stages of this evolution have been liberal Atlanticism, competitive coexistence, and new-realism (Sakwa, 2019). The first of these stages relates to the final years of the Soviet Era under Gorbachev and thus falls outside the scope of this project. Competitive coexistence and 'new-realism' represent policy direction driven by pragmatic, realist ideals born of Primakov's zero-sum pragmatism and Putin's evolution of multipolar strategy and new-realism being a mix of Russian realpolitik and attempts for economic integration with the West (Sakwa, 2008). It is concluded that the result of the failures of competitive coexistence and new-realism have driven Russia to taking a neo-revisionist approach where they seek to change "not the rules of the game, but the way in which the rules were practised" (Sakwa, 2019, p145). A perspective echoed by both Buzan and Romanova writing from a predominantly ES perspective. Buzan (2014a) when writing on China's place in the international order theorises three types of revisionist power. Revolutionary revisionists seek to change both the rules of the International Society and how status hierarchies operate within it. Orthodox revisionists are generally happy with the rules but want changes in status. The third, which mirrors the concept of neo-revisionism most closely is radical revisionism which seeks to change the rules, but within existing frameworks. Romanova's (2018) view aligns with the radical-revisionist perspective as she posits that Russia must be considered a neo-revisionist power as it seeks to influence the nature of global order to better suit its own normative position. This is set against the context of assessing that Russia's ideological

position is that it believes that the Western liberal order is but one sub-ordinate element of a wider International Society. Further, that society should be developed through universal secondary institutions to enable co-operation without degrading the pluralist nature of global international relations (ibid).

The concept of neo-revisionism has relevance to this thesis as it places substantial importance on secondary institutions as enablers for Russia to achieve its objectives of integration into a wider International Society, without compromising its own normative agenda. The polysemic nature of primary institutions this project evidences explains why the neo-revisionist perspective on universal institutions ends up being constrained to secondary institutions, as polysemy in primary institutions excludes universality. Where neo-revisionism sees universality in secondary institutions as an enabling and integrating function for a state, this thesis frames the same observation as a regulative function that creates elements of solidarism. This being the mechanism that ultimately enables the survival of a thin pluralist International Society, despite the polysemic nature of primary institutions. Through understanding these factors, the analysis can be re-framed where Russia is not simply seeking to change the rules of the game, but that Russia and the West are using different rules for the same game.

Understanding these differences in interpretations of the rules of the game has led to a common trend across many of the most prominent and arguably most balanced authors in the field. This trend being to actively avoid wedding analysis to any single theoretical approach. A comprehensive work that highlights this trend is by Sergunin (2016). Instead of entrenching in any one theoretical camp, he gives perspectives on Russian foreign policy from ten different schools of thought. He concludes that the realist perspective continues to dominate the analysis but argues that due to its inadequacy as an individual approach that theoretical frameworks should be complex and integrative. This is to provide the flexibility required to explain the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in Russian policy because of the combination of normative and material elements that constitute it. Writers that are overtly conscious of the Russian perspective (such as Averre, Tsygankov, Monaghan, Leichtova) do not wed themselves to a specific theoretical discipline, giving freedom to explore any mix of material and normative drivers for Russian state behaviour.

Constructivism is an interesting and relevant framework as arguably it could have been chosen in place of the ES on which to develop the methodological contribution. This is due to the accepted similarities between the disciplines and the fundamental principal both perspectives share that global order is the sum of material, social, and normative elements (Wendt, 1995; Guzzini & Leander, 2005, p87). Both the ES and constructivism understand "international norms are constitutive as well as regulative" and "that norms, rules, and institutions" underpin the interaction between states and actors in the global order/international society (Hurrell, 2013, p142). Additionally, as outlined by Wendt (1999, p32), constructivism as a social theory of international relations has the capacity to incorporate multiple theoretical perspectives across the categories of holism, individualism, materialism, and idealism. This integrative nature makes it overtly suitable as a basis for the research this thesis undertakes. In fact, within Wendt's model, the ES is included as part of his social theory of International Politics and explicitly acknowledged as a useful perspective within constructivism (see figure 2 below).

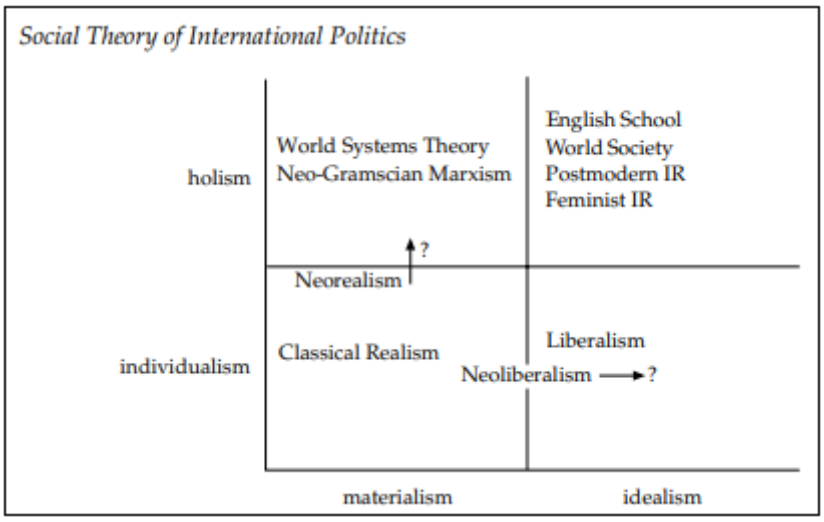

Figure 2. Wendt's Social Theory of International Politics.

However, Wendt's diagram above is representative of a trend, as described by Reus-Smit (2002) that constructivists have a general tendency to focus "narrowly on its [the ES] core ontological propositions" whilst ignoring "one of the most prominent aspects of English School scholarship – the normative inquiry" (p59). As will be discussed in detail within chapter

3, the constraining of the ES to the top right corner of holism and idealism is not accurate, and is at odds with the ES conceptualisation of the global order through the three traditions of International System, International Society, and World Society. A conceptualisation which inherently affords potential to incorporate a range of material, social and normative factors. The diagram below (figure 3), evolved by this thesis from Buzan's (2004, p9) work, is a visualisation of the ES traditions as overlapping and co-existent, providing a wide range of analytical options that Wendt's (figure 2) conceptualisation would preclude.

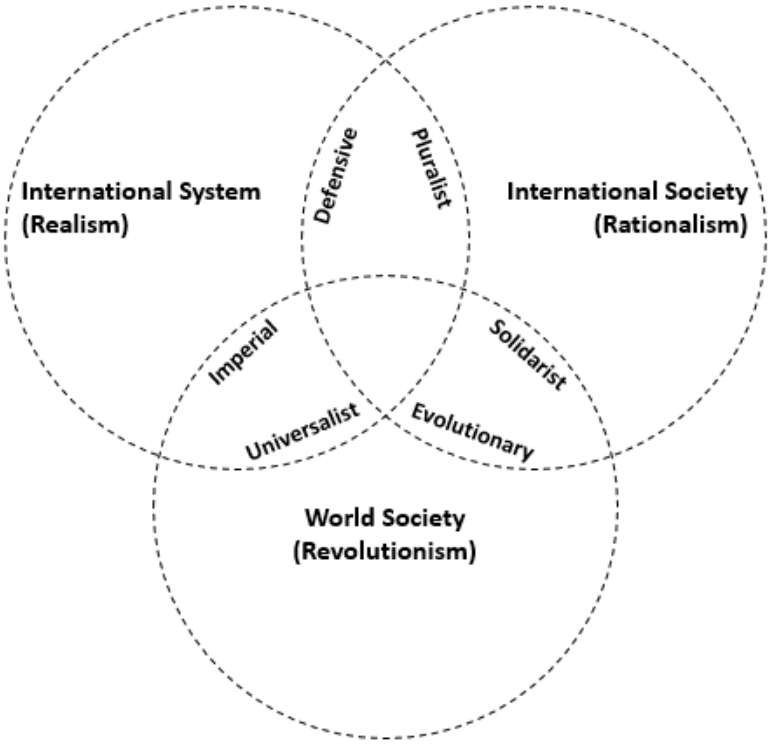

Figure 3. Venn diagram of the ES 'three traditions'.

What has been discussed so far demonstrates that both constructivism and the ES are suitable for a multi-theory or multi-perspective approach that account for material, normative, and social factors. A prominent constructivist, Ted Hopf, has been writing for several decades about the need for modern constructivism to be integrative with "mainstream international relations theory [and] critical theory" as a true understanding of the complexity of the global order and politics "derives not from imposed homogeneity, but from an appreciation of difference" (Hopf, 1998, pp199-200). Hopf's 2007 article *Russia's Identity Relations with Europe, the EU, and the United States: 1991-2007* is an example of him applying his integrated

approach. This article, although not necessarily overtly theoretical or constructivist in its language clearly applies the analysis of difference between how three identified periods of Russian identity in foreign policy approach "1992, 1993-2001, and 2005-present [2007]" (p1) are able to incorporate the traditional paradigms of liberalism and realism as part of a wider explanation of socially constructed international political environments. Socially constructed environments led by the contexts of the fall out of the fall of the Soviet Union, post 9/11 counter terrorism co-operation, and US unipolar ambitions.

There is a wider body of literature that also makes use of constructivism to study Russia, specifically when attempting analysis that requires an integrative, multi-theory perspective. Some examples of incorporating constructivism to suit very different analytical agendas include Tsygankov (2022), Leitchova (2016), Thorun (2008), and Mankoff (2014). Tysgankov (2022) makes use of social constructivism as part of his overall analysis to provide balance to "cultural contexts" (p180) for the events surrounding change and continuity in policy for which he feels Western "ethnocentric" (p197) liberalism and realism are inadequate. Leichtova (2016) uses constructivism to attempt to bridge multiple theoretical disciplines to synthesise an approach that although is heavily weighted on the ideological (personalised) basis of Russian foreign policy (the pitfalls of which are discussed in the next section of this chapter), also gives space to include the key material elements of realism as a by-product of a socially constructed environment. Thorun (2008) also uses a mix of constructivism and realism but contrasts his analysis to Leichtova's through placing the opposite emphasis of social constructivism filling the gaps that realism leaves. However, the application of constructivism to balance analysis and mitigate Western centrism is not taken forward by all who use constructivism's wide range of available perspectives. A prime example is Mankoff's (2014) combined realist and constructivist analysis of Russia's great power ambitions, which almost certainly gives greater insight into Western perceptions of Russia as a revisionist great power seeking to recreate Moscow's Soviet era hard power, than of any meaningful understanding of the drivers for Russia's state level behaviour.

Mankoff's (2014) work is still relevant as it highlights a challenge that both constructivism and the ES face. That being the almost unbounded range of options available, giving it great potential for authors to pick and choose elements that support a hypothesis. This leaves both

approaches open to confirmation bias (discussed in chapter 3 in relation to the ES) unless the analysis is applied via a bounded method. Specifically, a method that demands defined and wide-ranging primary source data leads which analytical and theoretical perspectives (across the material, normative, and social) are relevant, rather than the perspectives being pre-chosen by an author/analyst.

Having established that constructivism and the ES share many similarities and strengths, it is now only left to explain why constructivism was not selected over the ES to develop the methodological contribution this thesis makes. In essence, it was found that both theoretical approaches could be made suitable to the task of proving polysemy in institutions in international society, and both approaches allow space for analysing the material, social, and normative factors that create this polysemy. However, constructivism was rejected in favour of the ES primarily for the clarity of explanation of complex and intertwined factors that can be developed from the well-established ES terminology of the three traditions, pluralism and solidarism, and critically, institutions (primary and secondary). In essence, it was determined that with less modification and clarification, the language and thereby explanatory potential of the ES's key principles were more suitable for the study of polysemy in international institutions.

Prior to the next chapter, which will cover the ES and its principles in detail, it is worth briefly outlining some of the existing literature that focusses on Russia written from this perspective. Despite an increase in analysis of Russia using the ES over the past decade, this body of work remains relatively small. More importantly is that the literature that does exist tends to use the language of the ES, without defining what that language means. Poorly defined parameters and inconsistent use of its key concepts is common across the ES in general due to the vast array of theoretical perspectives that can be incorporated through the three traditions (Realism, Rationalism and Revolutionism/Liberalism).

In general terms the ES literature that does exist frames the analysis in terms of Russian pluralism struggling for a place within a Western solidarist-dominated International Society. Arguably the most prolific writer in the field who uses the ES to inform his work is Allison. The most significant of his work relative to this project is his book as discussed in Chapter 1, *Russia*

and Military Intervention (2013b). This work constitutes an extremely detailed empirical study of a wide range of military interventions but is a typical example of using the ES to provide descriptive language as opposed to analytical structure. Stepanova (2018) is also typical of this application of the ES. Her article on Russia's approach to the Libya conflict uses occasional ES vocabulary to loosely apply concepts such as pluralism. Her analysis is more akin to incorporation of aspects of the ES she has deemed useful to fit the points being made, rather than it being clear that the source data has guided which principles are relevant. This is a clear example of the issue of inducing cognitive bias when it is not clearly defined how the vast array of concepts available within the ES are being used. This approach is present in other works such as Aalto (2007), Astrov (2013) and Mateiko (2014). Applying a deductive approach using pre-selected ES concepts or language without developing a process that objectively selects which ES concepts are important to a given context leads to a major strength of the ES, that of the ability to incorporate and integrate multi-theory perspectives, acting as its main weakness. The result being an inbuilt bias through allowing the author the freedom to pick and choose those elements from the theory that are useful to their individual analysis, essentially selecting 'facts' to prove a hypothesis. It also affords possibility for wide interpretation by the reader, leaving significant opportunity for ambiguity and assumption. Buzan (2001) speaks directly to the need to increase clarity in application of the ES whilst maintaining its ability to incorporate a wide intellectual scope as the way to "increase its impact and reach" (p22). This research's methodological contribution seeks to answer Buzan's challenge to increase impact and reach by using well defined principles without limiting analytical scope through the data-led study across the military intervention case studies.

2.2.4 Theoretical approaches summary

The following are summary points from the review of the representative selection of literature that articulates the state of theory as applied to the study of the Russian state.

Despite not being able to explain Russian state level behaviour on its own, realism has and continues to endure as a major influence on Western understanding of Russia. The overtly realist elements of Russian policy continue to give writers who advocate this perspective substantial material on which to make a case for Russia as a largely realist entity, concerned

primarily with material power. Furthermore, the pervasive nature of the term polarity as both a theoretical framework and common language (for academics, and policy makers alike) to describe power dynamics in the global order means realist approaches must be acknowledged as an important perspective in understanding the material element of state-on-state relations.

As with realism, liberalism is not able to offer a stand-alone theoretical framework to adequately analyse Russia-West relations. However, the contributions it makes in understanding institutions and specifically the pragmatic engagement with liberal norms that Russia makes with international organisations (secondary institutions) is of significant value to this research. Specifically in understanding the manifestation of secondary institutions as a regulative function in International Society, enabling Russia-West relations despite polysemy in interpreting primary institutions such as international law.

Due to the limitations of single theoretical approaches in general, and the traditional paradigms of realism and liberalism specifically, mixed theoretical approaches that include and blend neo-revisionism and constructivism with traditional paradigms are increasingly common for analysis of Russia. Many writers borrow elements of different approaches to explain the complexity of Russian policy making. However, these mixed method approaches are often tainted by a lack of a clear framework which can cause significant issues with understanding where analytical parameters lie. Additionally, although constructivism as a theoretical lens was deemed suitable for research into polysemy it was ultimately dismissed as a basis for the methodological contribution in favour of an ES derived framework due to the clarity the ES provides in studying institutions specifically.

Ultimately, a review of the theoretical approaches to the study of Russia highlights the need for a range of perspectives to adequately account for the mixture of normative and material elements that contribute to both the nature of International Society in general, and Russian state level behaviour specifically. The principles of the ES can provide this as they inherently incorporate the traditional paradigms of realism and liberalism, as well as a range of other perspectives used in other theoretical approaches such as constructivism. In essence, the principles of the ES, given a robust structure, can be effectively guided by source data to

define what balance of theoretical approaches are most appropriate to frame and articulate a given a set of conditions and actors. This ability to use theoretical approaches as different lenses with which to observe different elements of global order, in a way that removes mutual exclusivity is the core justification for the ES derived method that has been developed for the case study analysis. Chapter 3 goes on to give a more detailed overview of the core principles of the ES, and how this research applies them.

2.3 Thematic Approaches

Moving on from theoretical frameworks, this next section of the chapter discusses common thematic analytical approaches to studying Russia. In this category of literature, there are three prominent strands most relevant to this project. The first is the personalisation of Russian policy, in which the Russian state is equated to be synonymous with Putin. The second is Russian multipolar policy, and the third is how Russia implements policy in its near abroad. Exploration of these themes offers substantial insight into how analysts and academics frame Russian behaviour outside theoretical frameworks. These themes are also central to understanding how Russia interprets and understands both primary and secondary institutions.

2.3.1 Personalisation of Russian Policy

There is a pervasive analytical trend in a significant element of the Western literature to emphasise the importance of the ideological position of Russian leadership (specifically Putin) as the primary driver for the normative position of the state. A comprehensive perspective on the personalisation of Russian foreign policy is summarised as Wilsonian bias by Gunitsky and Tsygankov (2018). Their key argument is that explaining Russian state level behaviour and decision making as a direct reflection of the ideological perspective of any individual President leads subsequent analysis to either omit or dismiss wider geopolitical factors. These include Russia's need to balance its many interests across Eurasia, Asia-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic regions (Svarin, 2015). The argument Gunitsky and Tysgankov make is that the long-term consistency observed in the geopolitical position of Moscow evidences that Russian norms

transcend any one leader. The excerpt below that critiques McFaul's 2014 work (Gunitsky & Tysgankov, 2018, p386) highlights the reductionist flaws in not just the application of personalisation of Russian policy, but also how this approach is often partnered with Western normative bias, and combined with realist understanding of Russia-West relations:

> "Thus, for a scholar like Michael McFaul (2014) to say that the roots of the Ukraine crisis are "about Putin and his unconstrained, erratic adventurism," misses the historical and geopolitical context in which the conflict takes place. To argue that, in Ukraine, "Putin made impulsive decisions that subordinated Russia's national interest to his own personal political motives," as Stephen Sestanovich (2014) does, reduces a centuries-long national interest to the delusional whims of an impulsive, bitter, and volatile ideologue"

The 2022 war in Ukraine serves as reinforcement that the roots of the crisis go much deeper than one man. However, the decisions that Putin has personally made to commit to warfighting, reportedly in isolation of many of his traditional inner circle of advisors demonstrates that the importance of the individual, particularly in societies that bestow substantial executive powers on their leaders, must not be discounted entirely. There is a substantial body of literature that argues that Putin is of critical importance to understanding the Russian state due to the executive power he wields; executive power that has been incrementally gained over the past two decades. Power that has grown from that initially granted in the 1993 Constitution through the hundreds of additional powers that have been added since (Shiraev & Konstantin, 2019). Lo (2015) argues that although Putin has advisors, including other senior regime personalities, he is the ultimate decision maker.

It is often cited that Putin seeks to institutionalise his personal power based on an ideological perspective honed during his time in the KGB whilst under the tutelage of Yuri Andropov. It was during this time that it is assessed that Putin's belief in restoring Russia's civilisational greatness through order, discipline and the removal of foreign influences was developed (Applebaum, 2013; MacFarlane, 2006; Remmington, 2010). The perspective that Putin leads Russia based primarily on his own formative experiences is also articulated at length by Hill (2015) who explains him as "a composite of six identities…the statist, the history man, the survivalist, the outsider, the free marketeer and the case officer" (p44). Identities that have given him a world view that is conservative statist, rooted in the historical greatness of a

Russian civilisation destined to battle "for survival against a hostile outside world" (p45). This type of analysis is problematic as it is capable of superficially explaining some high-profile Russian state behaviour, particularly if it is assumed that coherent and singular interpretations of the primary institutions (i.e., international law) exist between Russia and the West. For example, it becomes easier to explain the interventions in Ukraine if they are driven primarily by Putin's ideological position, hard-wired to challenge the West and Western-style democratic behaviour as opposed to a complex set of normative and material factors embedded in Russian political culture. Factors that are based on the long-established rights that Russia feels it must be considered a civilisational great power with its security and sovereignty guaranteed through domination of its traditional geographic areas of influence in which ethnic, cultural, and/or historic territorial Russian interests lie. The position this thesis takes is that on the weight of evidence, Putin's presidential terms are part of a wider evolution in post-Soviet policy and downwards relations with the West. Although undoubtedly important to decision making, he is a much a product of the Russian system as he is its creator.

Russian state behaviour, particularly in the foreign policy domain, although led by the decisions of the Russian premier are decisions moulded by long standing normative and material factors and grievances that pre-date Putin's rise to power. Factors that span historical status, perceptions of civilisational greatness, geopolitical realities, the perception of Western threat (critically NATO and EU expansion), and lack of material power (relative to the West) that leads to a sense of security vulnerability. As Trenin (2014, p3) summarises, analysis that distils Russian state behaviour to the ideological level of individuals has "Time and again… proven inadequate as a tool of foreign policy analysis". The danger now with such a high-profile event as the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and subsequent brutal nature of the war, is that the simplest and most politically appealing conclusion is to make it about the man, not the conditions that created him.

2.3.2. Russian Multipolar Policy

As discussed in the realism sub-section (2.2.1) of this chapter, it is virtually impossible to have a systemic discussion about Russia's place in the global order without mention of polarity. The hard-wiring of the term into the Russia-West vocabulary is borne of the Cold War, but as

already discussed, interpretations of what it now means to non-Western states generally, and Russia specifically, has substantially diverged from the material base of Waltz's pervasive definitions. Understanding Russian views regarding multipolarity and how it is linked to their civilisational perspective is important to this thesis as the concept is inherently linked to how Russia interprets both primary and secondary institutions as well as being embedded into their policy approach. As Newton (2010, p88) summarises, "No major power embraces the concept of a multipolar world order as fully as Russia does".

Multipolarity as a concept and strategic end state is symptomatic of an official narrative that has increasingly focused on the need to challenge US-led Western primacy (or unipolarity). Over the past two decades it has become a catch-all term for Russia's multipolar, civilisationally focused policies, thanks largely to its insertion in Russian foreign policy and security documentation and doctrine by former Russian Foreign Minister (1996-1998) Yevgeny Primakov (Silvius, 2016a & b). Multipolarity in this context has been subsequently embedded in the Russian discourse as a central but broad concept during the Putin era. Primakov diverged from his predecessor Foreign Minister (1990-1996) Andrei Kozyrev's preference for co-operation through increased Westernisation, instead conceptualising a competitive pragmatism rooted more in a zero-sum understanding of international relations. However, what has developed since throughout the Putin years has resulted in a brand of multipolarity that is multi-faceted, complex, and civilisationally focused. A concept almost certainly influenced by the back and forth, uneven relationship Russia has had with the Western powers since the fall of the Soviet Union. What has resulted is a multipolar understanding of International Society that has space to incorporate realist zero-sum concepts based on material power, but is also flexible enough to incorporate co-operative multilateralism, the building of shared institutions, and informs Russia's perspective on the "norms of contemporary International Society" (Kurowska, 2014, p491). These norms are centred on the premise that Russia has a rightful place at the top table of international relations based largely on the civilisational and cultural greatness of the Russian state (Kassab, 2022).

A key theme in the literature is the incompatibility of Russian multipolar policy with international norms. At one end of the spectrum, the divergence between Russia and the

West is described as a fundamental incompatibility of normative perspective. Miskimmon and O'Loughlin argue that "The Russian model of plural civilisations undermines the possibility of a shared normative basis for institutions" (2017, p112) in which Russia cannot mask the difference in its conceptual understandings of international law and democracy. This is important as the case study analysis demonstrates that Russia applies at least some primary institutions such as international law and sovereignty from a civilisational perspective, not fully bound by state borders. Makarychev and Morozov (2011) also frame the degree of shared values as an incompatibility, describing Western multilateralism from the Russian perspective as an ideologically unacceptable collective unilateralism (led by the US). For Russia, Western multilateralism represents a multipolar or multilateral club which Russia would be forced to join as a junior partner, with status relative to their current military-economic power. This is an unacceptable outcome for Moscow.

Other views do exist that argue that normative incompatibility is not the key driver for failures in Russia-West relations in a multipolar/multilateral framework. Arbatov (2018) argues that Russia has failed to adequately prepare for the emergence of a multipolar system, and it is Russia's unwillingness to compromise that has led to its multipolar vision, as a challenge to US hegemony, to be deeply flawed and doomed to failure. Kononenko (2003) goes further and dismisses the normative element altogether, arguing that Russian multipolar policy is evidence of Russia attempting to gain/restore status via means of realpolitik. Makarychev (2011) takes a middle line where he acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of Russian multipolarity. He contends that Russian policy makers see multipolarity from a broader perspective, but also argues that they can be somewhat limited in their application of these concepts by what is culturally ingrained realpolitik thinking. Arbatov, Kononenko and Makarychev highlight a narrative embedded across the Western literature and policy that reflects the view that the Russia-West divide is predominantly a realist Russia's fault due to its unwillingness to adhere to the rules of the global order. As the rules of this international order are manifested through both primary (i.e., sovereignty and international law) and secondary institutions (international organisations, treaties etc…), it follows that the whole International Society will only function smoothly if all actors concerned agree on their definitions. The research in the case studies of this research show clearly that Russia does not interpret primary institutions from a shared universal normative basis with Western powers.

Therefore, the perspective of Russia as a non-conformist is an oversimplification of reality. Russia is non-conformist to the extent that it does not subscribe to the concept of an International Society based solely on Western values. It is proposed in this thesis that it is polysemy that defines the normative divergence between Russia and the West, ensures the entrenchment of the thin pluralist International Society, and creates an enduring need for Russia to pursue its brand of multipolar policy to ensure its customs, values, and civilisation are protected. Makarychev (2011b, p16) uses the term "cognitive dissonance" to describe this impasse of understanding between Russia and the West. He concludes that Russia and the West have "different understandings of the nature of diversity and pluralism as constitutive features of International Society" (p17). This argument reflects the importance of the normative elements of how international societies are constituted from the Russian perspective. In essence, Moscow assigns emphasis to their own cultural and historical significance to justify the level of international status they feel they deserve, rather than basing their status on their current material power.

For Russia, the ideological and material dominance of the US in international affairs, where the West sets the standard of civilisation (Buzan, 2014) is immoral and ignores the historical greatness of Russia. Russia's pursuit of multipolarity is therefore both a normative and material strategy (Silvius, 2016a & b). The material element is heavily weighted on economics, as opposed to military power, as material power-based poles in this context are better described in the modern sense as "conglomerations of economic interests, united around the most power centres of attraction" (Lukyanov, 2010, p24). This understanding of the material element of Russia's multipolar strategy is important in understanding Russia's approach to regional dominance (to be discussed in the next sub-section). Not least because of Russia's civilisational approach and need to dominate its near abroad in areas of historical Russian interest. The need to protect a wider Russian civilisation creates an existentiality that the West can neither recognise nor accept. A perception of existentiality that manifested in the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

However, prior to discussing Russia in its near abroad, it must be noted that across the literature, there is not a general agreement on the relative importance of multipolarity to Russian strategy. The inconsistency and incoherency in Russian decision making perceived by

prominent writers such as Averre (2016), MacFarlane (2006) and Stent (2008) explains away multipolarity as lacking real substance or being one of Russia's post-Soviet "grand schemes" (Lo, 2015, p216). The argument is that the concept lacks any tangible impact or clear strategic purpose, with Russia continuing be reactive to international events beyond their control. Kratochvil (2002) also disagrees with the importance of multipolar policy as a key component of Russian strategy, instead assessing that it is a tool to build domestic political consensus, provision of superficial justification for counter US hegemonic narratives, and sets context for bilateral relations with other poles. He further concludes that Primakov's multipolarity concept is "dead" (p2), and that Putin views multipolar policy as a tactical, not a strategic tool. However, the analysis that concludes Russia to lack strategic purpose and consistency is based on the observation of selected examples of reactivity through secondary institutions when Russia feels that primary institutions (such as sovereignty and international law) have been compromised. Ultimately, multipolarity as a concept defined by Moscow as linked to Russia's civilisational worldview in which it acts as a "civilising force within 'its' part of the world" (Oskanian, 2022) is taken forward as an important concept by this research. It is a perspective that enables insight into where Russia and the West diverge, without dismissing this divergence as inconsistency, contradictory behaviour, or refusal to adhere to the rules-based order (RBO) promoted by the West.

2.3.3. Russia in its Near Abroad

The multipolar civilisational worldview discussed above can be mostly overtly observed manifesting through the approach Russia takes to its nearest neighbours. Across the literature it is reflected that Russia perceives a need to create and sustain primacy over the post-Soviet space to enable its ability to influence wider International Society, challenge Western hegemony, and protect its rights under Russian understandings of international law and sovereignty. This subsection will review literature related to Russia in its near abroad, focussing on what this region tells us about institutions and the "mismatching vectors of value system development" (Karaganov, 2016) between Russia and the West. This section is important to this thesis as two of the three case studies focus on events in territories in Russia's near abroad (Georgia and Ukraine). Further, the 2022 invasion of Ukraine is the most extreme manifestation of divergence between Russia and the West over security concerns

since the end of the Cold War and is underpinned by differences in positions on primary institutions and the struggle for the future constitution of global order. How Russia perceives its near abroad security environment from a civilisational perspective is at the heart of understanding the normative impasses between Russia and the West, and their respective aspirations for the composition of global order.

One of the most overt examples of Russia's differing perception and understanding of a primary institution of International Society is represented across the literature on Russia's application of conditional sovereignty in its near abroad. Two overarching narratives dominate explanations of Russian motivations for their policies designed to ensure domination of the post-Soviet states. One posits a defensive Russia, attempting to consolidate sovereignty through collective strength. This is what Cadier (2015, p156) describes as Russia guarding against "Western strategic expansionism". The counter narrative frames Russia as using aggressive and expansionist methods to directly challenge Western hegemony.

The defensive narrative includes literature such as Deyermond (2016) who assesses Russian policy towards the post-Soviet space as a continuation of Soviet policy, reflective of Russia's views on the sovereignty of its satellite states as being bound to "republic sovereignty" (p15). This is the perspective already discussed concerning Russia's civilisational perspective where its sovereignty is collectively protected by the states that geographically sit on the boundaries of the wider Russian civilisation. In this model sovereignty is inviolable from outside influence beyond the civilisational space, but internally limited and hierarchical with Russia having primacy (replacing the federal centre of the USSR). Lyne (2015) argues that this is because Russia sees these states as historically part of a greater Russia who form a "security perimeter" (p7) that cannot be allowed to act in ways that cause vulnerability to Russia's strategic depth. Deyermond's analysis frames Russia as seeking to fend off a perceived threat from the West against the soft target of post-Soviet states. Monaghan (2008) explains Russia's initial position in 2000 as defensive due to their relative weakness in comparison to the West in the immediate post-Cold War period where Russia was forced into conceding to US hegemony to survive as a viable state. Popescu (2006) cites that the Beslan siege of 2004 was an important turning point for Russia, in that to Putin it highlighted that Russia had become weak enough to be interfered with by external forces and therefore must regain regional

dominance. The decade that followed saw Russia regaining material strength and becoming increasingly disillusioned by the West's economic system and political motivations. A key conclusion is the Russian realisation that "few common values were actually shared and that common interests had to form the basis of…Russia-West cooperation" (Monaghan, 2008, p733).

The crisis in Ukraine from 2014 onwards almost certainly reinforces this view for Russia. The underestimation (by the West) of the normative and material importance of Ukraine to Russia as the hub of its strategic economic, security and ideological aspirations (Feklyunina, 2015) has led to what Russia perceives as interference in a key post-Soviet state to the detriment of Russian sovereignty. This underestimation in the wider context of the West's lack of recognition for Russia's regional interests is cited by Tsygankov (2015) as the driving force that made Russian intervention in Ukraine "inevitable" (p279). Trenin (2015) frames this as part of Russia's attempts to formulate (and implement) policy with the objective of creating a more balanced and equal relationship with the West. The means by which it attempts to do so is through consolidating its own "spiritual sovereignty" (p36), that includes a domination of its near abroad. This reflects Russia's own interpretations of the primary institutions of the International Society, specifically sovereignty and the notion of which states do and do not fully qualify for it.

The literature that places Russia as an expansionist power driven by its history, geography and culture seeks to paint Russia as subversive, degrading the international system, and morally unjust (see Cornell, 2016; Fleitz, 2016; Cohen & Radin 2019). Payne & Foster (2017) represent the extreme end of this view where Russia uses "intimidation tactics" (p87) to drive Russia's expansionist grand strategy. Wieclawski's (2011) analysis is less accusatory of Russia and instead articulates Moscow's position as an aspirational regional hegemon, with its objectives rooted in "imperial nostalgia" (p174) and geopolitical factors, but ultimately limited by material constraints. Analysis that focuses on events in Ukraine 2014 are further used to evidence Russian aggression or expansionist policy. Kaczmarska (2015) describes Russia's actions in its near abroad as a "violation of pluralist norms" (p442) amounting to clear cut contradictions in Russian narratives regarding sovereignty and international law. This expansionist explanation is rooted in the realist approaches taken to analysis of Russia and

results in simplistic conclusions that frame Russia as simply “militant” (Cooper, 2016, p144) in the face of the accepted norms of international relations. An explanation that unravels quickly once it is understood that those ‘accepted’ norms are not universally understood from the same perspective by all actors within International Society.

An interesting perspective that spans both defensive and expansionist narratives is given by Nalbandov (2016), who identifies two major determinants of the character of Russian involvement in its near abroad. These are firstly, how close the given post-Soviet state is to Russia (specifically if they share a border) and secondly, the amount of ethnic Russians who make up the population. The author asserts a zero-sum approach from Russia under Putin, both in its actions towards the West and its perceptions of Western actions. This is a common assumption across the literature (see also Borshchevskaya, 2017; Diesen, 2015), and is a perspective that works on the premise that if a post-Soviet state aligns with the West, whether economically, culturally, or for security rationale then they are inherently betraying “centuries of brotherly relations” (p293) with Russia. The events of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine appears to evidence this perspective and the apparent existential threat Russia perceives from the West expanding eastwards. Nalbandov (2016) interestingly notes the exceptions of the Baltic states due to their political status within the EU and NATO. This also provides evidence of the pragmatism Russia applies in who they bestow full sovereignty on as well as explaining why Russia now pre-emptively acts in countries like Georgia and Ukraine prior to them gaining NATO membership and the effective threat of Article V.

As the discussion across the literature regarding Russian views on the post-Soviet space is heavily weighted on Russia’s understanding of sovereignty as “the fundamental principle in international law” (Baaz, 2016, p269), it is important to understand that “Russia lives in a different legal dimension compared to most modern states” (Lukanova, 2015, p14). The legal domain, as borne out in the case study research, is where the values gap between Russia and the West is manifested most clearly across the primary institutions. This view is shared by others such as Arbatov (2018), who argues that the current international order cannot be explained through a universal understanding of international law among states. Logically, therefore, if sovereignty is upheld by international law, then the meaning of sovereignty and its limits can have as many interpretations as the law that upholds it. Lukanova articulates

three significant points in her analysis; firstly, the divergence of Russian and European (i.e., Western) interpretations of law where the former is from a positivist perspective (dealing in absolutes and order) and the latter is aligned to natural law (guided by justice and morality). Second, although natural law-oriented lawyers do exist in Russia, they are not given roles within the state apparatus, and do not influence policy making. Finally, she argues that civilisational differences have been overstated, and that Russian leaders have pursued a positivist narrative somewhat cynically, to preserve their own power from the threat of democracy and greater freedoms. This theme of Russia picking and choosing its legal arguments to suit its own strategic ends becomes common place in the literature after the Georgia intervention of 2008 and is recognised by the likes of Averre (2016, p707) who terms this "borrowing selectively" from various cultural, political, and legal narratives. Allison (2008) recognises that realists would argue that this is expected behaviour of a major power putting interests over norms. The insight into Russian legal perspectives Lukanova offers is important in helping to explain the understanding of international law that Russia implements through its policy of limited sovereignty in its near abroad. Recognising the homogenous ideological make-up of Russian state law makers, and the Russian perspective that views full sovereignty as bestowed only upon those from a privileged group of traditional great powers (Aalto, 2017; Ghebali, 2005), then Russia's apparent contradictory position on sovereignty in the post-Soviet space becomes more coherent and explainable. Moscow's legal position, as described by Averre & Davies (2015, p813) is "rooted in statist international law". However, this position becomes more complex with the caveat that not every state has an equal degree of sovereignty from the Russian civilisational, multipolar perspective.

The impasse between Russian and Western interpretations of sovereignty, and by association international law is reflected in a substantial portion of the literature (see Cadier 2015; Allison 2013a; Kurowska, 2014; Lo, 2015) as a symptom that Russia sees policy concerning the post-Soviet states as part of its domestic, rather than foreign policy. Lo (2015) makes the argument that domestic concerns drive Russian foreign policy (at least in its near abroad), and that the variable of unforeseen events forces Russia into reactive policies to protect domestic interests. Economic hardship in 2009 following the 2008 global crash, and anti-Putin protests of 2011-12 are cited as specific examples that hardened Putin's foreign policy approach to the West. For Lo, Russia's foreign policy is "domestic policy by other means" (p25), which has

significant relevance to Moscow's actions in its near abroad and application of limited sovereignty to post-Soviet territories. Allison (2013a) specifically discusses such domestic concerns, stating that Putin's approach to sovereignty, not just in the post-Soviet space but globally, is driven primarily by domestic factors. Thereby creating an inherent need for Russia to dominate its near abroad to maintain its own sovereignty. There is not the scope available to review this whole body of literature, but it is important for the context of this thesis to highlight the domestic component of Russian strategy as part of understanding how Russia interprets institutions in the context of a near abroad that constitutes a buffer zone. A buffer that is reflective of Russia's perceived civilisational borders that when dominated provide a form of collective sovereignty to protect Russia's political stability, underpinned by international law and the principle of non-interference (Averre, 2009). Cadier (2015) and Kurowska (2014) put forward that domination of the near abroad is to satisfy both domestic and international concerns, and that domestic and foreign policy are "constitutive" (Kurowsaka, 2014, p492) of each other respectively. The concept that Russia's interpretation and application of primary institutions being dependent on whether a state falls inside its civilisational remit (intra-civilisational) or outside (inter-civilisational) is reflected in the case studies that follow in chapters 5 to 7. An impactful, if not anecdotal example given by Charap & Darden (2014, p7) that demonstrates the domestic and international blur that occurs in Russia's near abroad cites Putin questioning "whether Ukraine was a real country in a private moment with George W. Bush". This gives a flavour of Russian interpretation of how much Ukraine is perceived as an extension of Russia, linked to issues of sovereignty and territoriality. A comment that aids in explaining the legal freedom Russia felt it had to take action in Ukraine in February 2022.

2.3.4 Thematic Approaches Summary.

With regards to personalisation of Russian policy, like the traditional theoretical paradigms of realism and liberalism, this approach seeks to simplify the complex mix of drivers behind Russian state level behaviour. It makes the state synonymous with the ideological position of Russia's leadership, or, often with the case of Russia, just President Putin himself. With the

enormous executive power Putin holds, and the events of the Russia-Ukraine war of 2022, this approach cannot be totally dismissed but must be considered as part of the overall mixture of factors that inform and guide Russian state level behaviour.

The concept of Russian multipolarity and how the Russian state enforces this policy in its near abroad is key to understanding and explaining how Russia interprets the institutions of International Society in three important ways. Firstly, multipolarity is widespread across Russian official documentation and has been embedded into policy over the past three decades. The term is also used heavily in the academic literature to describe important aspects of Russian state behaviour related to institutions. This is both useful and problematic. An accurate understanding of what is meant by Russian multipolarity can highlight key differences in how institutions are interpreted between Russia and the West. However, with the term having realist roots, it is often and erroneously taken to be synonymous with Waltzian understanding, thus reducing the analysis to the material dimension only. Second, Russia's manifestation of its multipolar policies, specifically concerning sovereignty and international law both for its global status and in extending its domestic policies to its near abroad provides understanding and historical precedence of how Russia interacts and interprets the institutions of International Society; framing them from a civilisational perspective that blurs domestic and foreign policy agendas. Finally, Russia's near abroad has proven to be the predominant physical environment where the competing narratives of Russia as an expansionist and aggressive versus defensive and consolidating state are analysed and evidenced. Ultimately, with the near abroad being physically and normatively caught between Russia and the West, it provides the stage on which Russia and the West ideologically and physically collide.

2.4 Chapter Conclusions

The literature reviewed in this chapter concludes into three central arguments that set the conditions for both the methodological and empirical contributions of this thesis. The first is that traditional singular theoretical or thematic approaches leave substantial and important gaps in understanding Russia's complex mix of material and normative drivers for state level

behaviour. Use of singular approaches entrench simplification not appropriate for the complexity of analysis required for understanding International Society and where states perceive themselves to be within the hierarchy of global order. Most frequently, this type of simplification includes reducing Russia to a zero-sum material power centric state easily explained through the lens of realism and Waltzian polarity-based competition, and/or the reduction of Russian policy to synonymous with Putin and his ideological position.

The second conclusion that leads on logically from the first is that to provide a comprehensive analysis of Russian state level behaviour that hopes to provide any degree of accuracy must include a wide variety of perspectives. Russia's civilisational understanding of global order requires an analytical approach that allows exploration of perspectives that would often be regarded as mutually exclusive within the traditional paradigms. The summary conclusion of the literature review is therefore that a full palette of theoretical and thematic perspectives must be available for analysis. Only through this approach can Russian actions within International Society be usefully assessed and understood. This is the driving factor for the development of the ES derived method (detailed in chapter 4) that this thesis contributes and applies to the case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine. Although it has been established that constructivism could also have been used as the theoretical basis for the analysis, it was rejected due to the specific way in which the ES conceptualises global order into the three traditions, pluralism and solidarism, and institutions (primary and secondary). Primarily due to the explanatory power of the ES to understand polysemy in the primary institutions of international law, soveriengty, territoriality, and human rights as identified through the primary source research. The ES and its qualities are discussed and detailed in the next chapter.

The third and final conclusion to this chapter is that the clear and widely observed values gap between Russia and the West, regardless of theoretical and/or analytical perspective applied is informed by Russia's multipolar, civilisational worldview. A worldview that Russia are pursuing in a coherent and consistent way. Russian multipolarity gives insight into how Russia understands, interprets, and interacts with the institutions of International Society. Specifically, how Moscow's interpretation of primary institutions can change dependent on whether they relate to states that Russia perceives as within its civilisational remit (intra-

civilisational) or to states that exist out with the Russian civilisation (inter-civilisational). This is particularly apparent in areas where Russian and Western values conflict over the primary institutions of international law and sovereignty. Critically, this includes the difference in their application between the traditional great powers of Europe and post-Soviet states. The latter onto which Moscow bestows limited or qualified sovereignty as regional security concerns blur the boundaries between Russian foreign and domestic policies. This leads to Russia and the West having fundamental differences over legitimate grounds for interference in the internal interests of another state where for Russia sovereignty is sacrosanct, but only to states that qualify for full sovereignty status. From this position of conflict, created by substantial differences in normative positions and regional security concerns on both sides, Russia and the West have failed to adequately build shared norms in their mutual geographic areas of interest. This has led to the steep decline in relations over the past 20 years, ultimately manifesting in the 2022 conventional military invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces.

Chapter 3

The English School: Theory & Application

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the English School (ES) has been selected to provide the basis for the methodological contribution of this thesis. As such this chapter is required to serve three main functions. The first is that it outlines and explains the key principles of the ES used to guide and frame the case study analysis. Secondly, it provides detail on the justification for its selection beyond that discussed in chapter 2. The third function is to provide an appropriate place to detail Western interpretations of the institutions highlighted by the primary source research. This provides a baseline for comparison in the case studies across chapters 5-7 to enable meaningful analysis of the existence of polysemy. To achieve these functions, this chapter's first section explores the main tenets of the ES, extracting its key concepts in the process. This begins with an overview of International Society which is achieved through three further sub-sections covering how International Society is defined, exploring the weakness of western centrism, and outlining current thinking on how International Society can be conceptualised as a myriad of sub-global societies. The second section addresses the concepts of pluralism and solidarism, their definitions, if they co-exist and/or co-depend, and the challenge that a normatively diverse international political landscape poses to these concepts. The third section explores analysis of institutions and how the way in which they are defined and understood has developed and evolved over the past five decades. This is achieved through defining institutions, establishing their importance to the ES, and examining prominent existing analytical models. Each section of this chapter has a concise summary of the perspective this thesis takes forward into the methodological contribution regarding International Society, pluralism and solidarism, and institutions. The final section of this chapter then provides a baseline of the prevailing understanding in the existing literature and primary source material of how the West interprets the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights in the specific context of Russia-West relations.

3.2 International Society

3.2.1 Defining International Society

At the centre of the ES is the concept that there are "three distinct spheres at play in international politics" (Murray, 2015, p1). These exist concurrently (albeit with differing levels of individual importance for a given time or context) that when understood together can explain international relations as a whole. These three spheres which, from here on will be referred to in Wight's original term of the three traditions (Keene, 2013), are defined as the International System, International Society, and World Society. The enduring understanding of the nature of each tradition remains rooted in the work of Bull (1977) and Wight (1991). This is that the international system is based in the "power politics" (Buzan, 2004, p7) of realism and represents a Hobbesian/Machiavellian worldview. The International Society is concerned with shared interests and institutions with a methodological basis in Grotian internationalism/rationalism. The world society is Kantian in its approach, representing universalism/revolutionism. Together, these three traditions act as dimensions of an interconnected, multi-faceted theoretical basis to understand global order. In this model, realism provides an understanding that conflict and power politics are inherent in interstate relations; rationalism contends that people can learn to live under conditions of mutual respect; and Revolutionism proposes a progressive cosmopolitan view that subscribes to moral unity in lieu of state centrism and self-interest (Linklater, 2013b).

The relationship of the three traditions is usefully summarised by Buzan (2001) in the pie diagram below at figure 2:

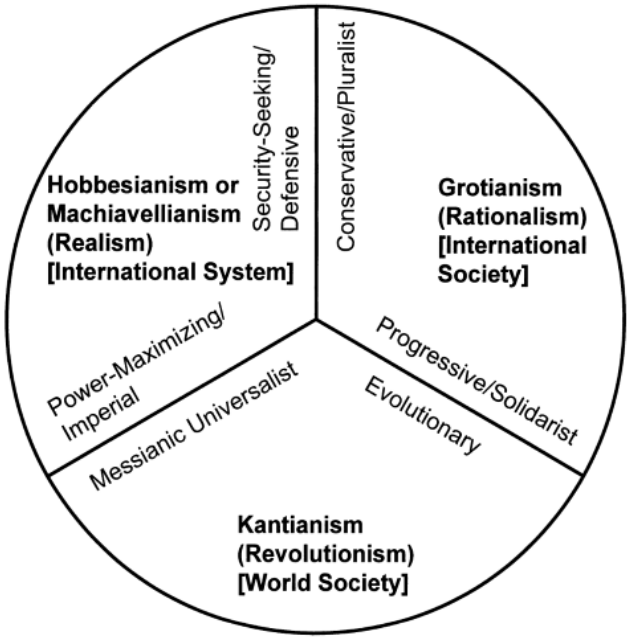

Figure 4. Pie diagram of the three 'traditions' (Buzan, 2004, p9).

This diagram, although useful, does not represent fully what is reflected in the literature in that the three traditions are not generally accepted as mutually exclusive. Figure 4 implies solid lines between each tradition which does not accurately represent the key advantage of ES analysis in that it affords "ample opportunities to theorize about state and non-state actors within a single theoretical framework" (Devlen et al, 2005, p172). Therefore, this thesis proposes that the Venn diagram below at figure 5 (previously introduced in chapter 2, figure 3), as a development of Buzan's pie diagram represents a more accurate and useful visualisation of the porous nature of the borders between the three traditions, and their co-existing and fluid nature.

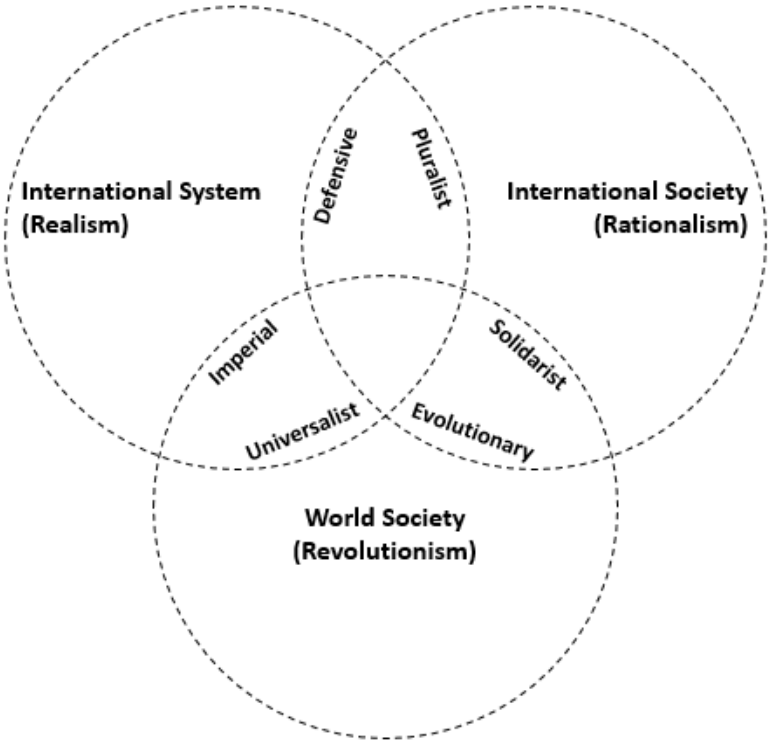

Figure 5. Venn diagram of the three traditions.

The ES's ability to use multiple theoretical approaches does lend itself to criticism in some key areas such as Western centrism in the application of norms, rules, and customs (Acharya & Buzan, 2019; Kayaoglu, 2010) and in understanding the nature of power. The latter point being due to a predisposition to treat each "'element' or 'stream' of international life" as distinct, without appreciation of the "links between power … and norms, rules, and institutions" (Hurrell, 2007, p13). The issues that arise from appreciation of the links between norms, rules, and institutions can be solved by not assuming the universality of interpretation of norms, rules and especially institutions (i.e. that polysemy exists). The empirical contribution this thesis makes directly addresses this issue. Ultimately, the ES, with its potential for an integrative approach (Dunleavy, 2019) affords substantial flexibility to incorporate new ideas, grow, and adapt. This potential for flexibility is best evidenced through the development of the understanding of institutions, explored in the third section of this chapter.

Within the ES, it is widely considered that the current state of international relations is not adequately explained by an international system, and that the concept of a morally universal

world society 'utopia' is currently unattainable. Therefore, most ES analysis is currently framed by the dominance of the International Society tradition as its "flagship" (Buzan, 2014, p23) concept; noting that this does not exclude elements of both the international system and world society as part of the analysis due to the overlapping three traditions model. A foundational assumption of this research is that an International Society or societies exist (the concept of multiple simultaneous societies will be addressed later), hence defining International Society is a necessary starting point. Although a significant range of ideas exist in how best to understand the constitutive parts of an International Society (the institutions) there is consensus on the basic definition of what it fundamentally is. Bull (1977, p13), in his seminal work *The Anarchical Society*, describes the International Society as a "group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values" that interact and cooperate through "common institutions" with common rules. This definition has endured through the decades of ES analysis that has followed. Although this thesis assumes that this definition generally reflects the state of global order, the fact that this research investigates the potential for polysemy in primary institutions means that the common values element of this distinction is up for debate, as is the prioritisation of which of the common institutions are most important to a given state actor.

With regards to shared interests, different arguments are made regarding their social versus functional nature. Buzan (2014, p13), citing Wight (1991) outlines that International Society is a "social contract" between different societies each with their own terms. Brown (2001, p98) conversely asserts that the social aspect of International Society "is minimal", and that cooperative interaction is based on the functional aspects of "norms, practices, and customs of international law and diplomacy". Dunne's (2005, pp162-163) analysis appears to straddle this line, using Bull's clear boundary between system and society (which Dunne states is flawed but useful) to separate state interactions between those that are "anomic" and those that are "social" respectively. The interpretation of how states interact and what motivates them is best studied through institutions.

Regardless of the arguments that discuss the relative nature of cooperation in International Society, there is at least the consensus of the "central assumption… that states 'conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and

share in the working of common institutions'" (Hjorth, 2007, p601). Additionally, this practical cooperation, through common institutions, is the only viable form of international political order in the modern state system (Linklater, 2010; Jackson, 2000). Brown (1995), citing Nardin's overall position that most ES scholars reject the viability of world society, argues that International Society should be considered "a practical association" that "is an attainable form of international order" (p92). International Society is neither aiming to develop into world society as an end state, nor is it an inferior option or 'necessary evil' middle ground. An important distinction in defining International Society, as taken forward by this research is that articulated by Buzan (2014) who highlights the importance of understanding International Society as specifically relevant to state level politics. He reflects on arguments by Bull (1966a & 1966b) and Suganami (1989) that the nature of International Society differs from domestic society, and must be studied separately due to the differences of state versus individual behaviour. Understanding inter-state behaviour in relation to the institutions that constitute International Society is central to ES analysis. Specifically, that states to a greater or lesser extent operate within their interpretation of the norms, rules and customs that shape institutions.

3.2.2 Western Centrism in International Society

The ES shares a significant issue common to Western international relations theory in general, susceptibility to Western centrism. This often manifests due to an assumed basis of International Society as developed from European roots where theories are reflective of the domination of the values of the West over those of non-Western origin (Linklater, 2010). At its extremes the ideas of Wight and Kant subscribe to International Society as a second-best option against the potential for a world society based on moral universalism rooted in 20th Century Western values. For Wight this is further reduced to a universalism based on the morality of his Christian faith (Brown, 1995). Bain (2014) elaborates on the influence of Wight's analysis as being tainted by his Christian perspective of moral right and wrong. He concludes that due to Wight's influence on the three traditions as a core basis for understanding International Society, the concept is deeply tied to Western Christian beliefs and an associated moral standard. The result of this embedded perspective in much ES analysis, when considered against the ambitions of the discipline to explain inter-state politics

at a global level, leaves a situation that Acharya (2014, p35) summarises as although "Few have examined the place of non-Western countries in the international system more systematically than the English School… no other school of IR has rendered the idea of Western dominance more integral to its theoretical worldview". The ES thereby lends itself to the criticism that it loses its relevance outside the Western world. Acharya does acknowledge that "later day stalwarts of the English School" (Buzan and Little are cited specifically) have attempted to incorporate non-Western perspectives but have somewhat failed due to the inherently Western principles they base their analysis on. This is specifically relevant to the evolution of the practices that define the institutions of International Society being borne of the Western state system concept.

This thesis argues that the application of ES principles need not be destined to result in Western centrism. The enduring Western centrism in the ES comes from either an inability or unwillingness to allow for differences in interpretation of institutions and acknowledgement of the ideological and normative diversity of global actors; what Paikin and Flockhart (2022) describe as the inherent "volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity" (p3) in the global International Society. If it is assumed that an International Society is based on fixed interpretations of the institutions that constitute it, then any state that does not conform will be deemed as operating outside the society. This subsequently leads to analysis that cannot account adequately for the behaviour of non-Western states. Brown (2001, p98) reflects this view in his overarching conclusion that an International Society cannot be held to any universal standard due to lack of moral consensus among states. He summarises that "those who posit the existence of an International Society that can act morally in world affairs are not wholly mistaken, but the values and norms upon which that society can act are limited in range and scope." This is an important point of relevance to this thesis, as it supports the inadequacy of applying a universal normative standard across International Society.

Regardless of its foundations, it is now commonly accepted within the ES that International Society is developing away from total dominance of Western values. Linklater (2010) asserts that for this reason the ES "warrants respect" (p12) and provides value in reinforcing the need to be "building bridges between Western and non-Western perspectives" (ibid). The analytical method contributed by this research makes the integrative premises of the ES that

underpin the three traditions and their application to International Society fit to analyse a morally diverse global order by ensuring primary source data directs which perspectives are used, in place of being led by the cultural bias of the analyst.

3.2.3 Regionalism

The concept of regional or sub-global international societies is woven into the foundations of ES theory. However, early ES scholars such as Bull, Butterfield, and Wight subscribed to a historical perspective with emphasis placed on the expansion of the European International Society to the global level (Stivachtis, 2013). The result of which is the classical ES interpretation of International Society as being borne of the ultimate domination of one (the West) regional society over all others. Stivachtis (2013, p69) borrowing language from Buzan defines this as part of a "general agreement among ES scholars" that global International Society is normatively thin and pluralistic within which exists several thick regional international societies that are solidarist. Buzan & Lawson (2015) conceptualise this international versus regional debate as "decentred globalism" (p275). The roots of which are traceable to an article from 2010 where Buzan discusses two possible ways the expansion of International Society could be accounted for. These are a vanguardist perspective that reflects that European values and culture are at the heart of the global International Society, with norms, values and customs transmitted to non-European states. This is contrasted with a syncretist account that represents integrative interplay of different civilisations and cultures building a society together, evolving norms, practices, and customs along the way. From this, Buzan posits two ways the modern world could have evolved, polycentric (diverse cultures melding together) or monocentric (imposition of norms, rules, and institutions of a key power(s)). He concludes the latter is closer to the truth. He also speaks to a middle ground between vanguardist and syncretist international societies where the "result would be a decentred International Society in which different regions, including the West pursued their own cultural values and regional international orders." (Buzan, 2010, p23) This latter description, which he describes as layered, describes the interplay of multiple heterogenous regional international societies as part of a wider functional global society, existing concurrently and in parallel.

Buzan & Schouenborg (2018) discuss three types of differentiation in International Society aside from the global level. These are regional, sub-global, and hierarchical. Regional societies are "geographically coherent" (p30) and factor in the importance of shared culture and history. Sub-global differentiation is not necessarily geographically limited. The two examples given of sub-global societies are the Fascists of the early to mid-20th Century and the bipolarity of the Cold War Soviet and Western Blocs. The final differentiation is hierarchical which may or may not be geographic but must be built on a "dominant core and subordinate periphery". Buzan & Schouenborg are building from Bull's (1984) contention that the global society had taken a form where "periphery states shared some practices, norms and primary institutions with the core, but contested others". These definitions are useful to this thesis as they help explain the regional, sub-global and hierarchical elements of that make up relatively independent sub-global and normatively thick international societies which together form the complex fabric of a wider and normatively thin global International Society. As this thesis seeks to understand how Russia (and its periphery) and the West interact without destroying the wider, thinner global International Society, the overall conceptualisation as normatively diverse and heterogeneous is a crucial contrast to classical approaches that are globally focussed and based on the domination of Western values.

The understanding of International Society as a collection of regional or sub-global societies also helps explain the normative unevenness observed across the global International Society as a whole and Russia-West International Society specifically. It also has significant relevance to understanding the potential for polysemy in primary institutions at both the regional and global levels. However, due to the scope of this project being limited to better understand how Russia interprets the institutions of International Society in comparison to Western perspectives, this research will be unable to deliver any meaningful conclusions on other regional international societies. Specifically, the question of how they collectively constitute a wider global International Society.

3.2.4 Summarising International Society

The following is a concise summary of International Society, and the perspective this project takes forward to its analytical method. Firstly, although International Society is the

predominant tradition, it exists concurrently with elements of an international system and world society. This affords theoretical flexibility through enabling analysis that is integrative of multiple perspectives which are often treated as mutually exclusive in the traditional paradigms of international relations theory (i.e., realism and liberalism).

Second, although there is consensus across the ES that International Society is based on states mutually co-operating through shared/common interests, there is room for debate on whether this co-operation is normative (based on shared moral understanding of key institutions) or regulative (largely functional, enabling pragmatic co-existence).

Thirdly, much of the ES analysis of the International Society is mired by Western centrism, embedded from its earliest roots. However, this thesis argues that the application of ES principles need not be inherently Western, and that the ability for the ES to integrate multiple perspectives makes it an ideal basis for investigating the potential scale of normative diversity within International Society.

Finally, investigation concerning how the Russia-West relationship relates to other sub-global or regional international societies cannot be completed by analysing only Russia and the West's relationship. A much wider exploration of global state actors would need to be completed to bring meaningful conclusions. This does not pose an issue for how this thesis uses International Society, as accurately breaking down how the entire global International Society is constituted is not required to test the hypothesis of polysemy, and meet the objectives and research questions.

3.3 Pluralism & Solidarism

For the purposes of this project, the terms pluralism and solidarism are defined primarily as useful explanatory language to describe the nature of International Society and the behaviour of the states within it. What follows should be taken in the context that pluralism and solidarism can act as an "empirical description", "normative framework" and a "theory of change" and/or transition (Bain, 2010 p1).

3.3.1 Definitions

"Pluralism and solidarism are possibly the most distinctive of ES categories, except perhaps only the master concept of order" (Bain, 2010 p1) to which it is inextricably linked. This places the question of to what extent the International Society is pluralist versus solidarist (the pluralist-solidarist debate) as an important shorthand to communicating complex ES analysis of shared (or not shared) norms and values between state actors. There is consensus across the ES literature reviewed in this chapter that Bull's (1966a) definitions of pluralism and solidarism continue to determine the core meaning of the terms:

- Solidarism: "the solidarity, or potential solidarity, of the states comprising International Society, with respect to the enforcement of the law." (p97)
- Pluralism: "states do not exhibit solidarity of this kind but are capable of agreeing only for certain minimum purposes which fall short of that of the enforcement of the law." (p97)

Framing International Society in terms of pluralism and solidarism is an attempt to understand the legitimacy of state actions with regards to their normative position. This includes individual versus state rights and is concerned with how to create and maintain stability. Pluralism represents order, it defends civilisational diversity, and is secured by sovereignty and non-intervention in domestic affairs. Solidarism is concerned with justice and transcends state primacy, focusing on upholding universal values above absolute sovereignty (Bull, 1977; Buzan 2014). This contrast between pluralism and solidarism is inherently concerned with the moral perspective. In its purest form, pluralism is state-centric whereas solidarism is concerned with the primacy of individual rights (Linklater and Suganami, 2006). The question this raises is how does pluralism differ from the self-interest perspective of realism? The distinction lies in that pluralism presents within a rationalist International Society, coexisting (to be discussed next) with elements of solidarism, where solidarism represents shared norms, customs, and rules, with pluralism setting their limits. Judging whether an International Society is predominantly pluralist or solidarist is essentially an assessment of how strict those limits are. The discussion in the previous chapters concerning Russia's civilisational perspective and collective sovereignty would strongly indicate that the current

state of Russia-West International Society is predominantly pluralist. However, there is complexity in that the elements of solidarism that present as shared norms, customs, and/or rules vary between what Russia perceives as an intra- versus inter-civilisational issue. In the wider International Society and in inter-civilisational (outside Russia's near abroad, and on matters that do not threaten Moscow's multipolar global order) it is feasible that a relatively high degree of solidarism could be observed in interactions between Russia and the West at the state level, particularly through secondary institutions (as described in the liberalist literature in chapter 2). This is dependent on if the interaction is deemed not to be a threat to ethnic, cultural, and/or historic Russian interests, and associated status in a multipolar global order. The next section of this chapter explores the potential for pluralist and solidarist traits to be in existence concurrently, and subject to change dependent on the prevailing context within international societies.

3.3.2 Co-existence & co-dependence

There are two linked concepts that are fundamental to understanding pluralism and solidarism. First is that they are not "irreconcilable opposites" (Buzan, 2014, p164), being more aptly described as "a spectrum ranging from 'thick' to 'thin' in terms of values shared" (Buzan, 2004, p157). In this context, the thickening of shared values results in a more solidarist, morally unified International Society. Secondly, to some degree solidarism is "immanent" (Suganami, 2010, p26) or inherent within pluralism due to it being concerned with ensuring order. The sum of these two concepts result in pluralism and solidarism not only being co-existent, but to some extent co-dependent. This co-dependence can be described as Solidarism providing a platform of shared norms and values on which pluralist differences can be overlayed. Pluralism sets the limits of normative convergence and divergence, with sovereignty and territoriality providing clear boundaries between states both within, and between International Societies. There is a consensus across the prominent literature that the base provided by solidarism is related to shared culture which affords stability within a given international system. Although this argument has merit, this thesis suggests that it need not be a shared culture that provides this base. It is hypothesised, and evidenced by the case studies, that solidarism in other aspects of International Society such as the regulative or mediating effect of secondary institutions can and does afford the same

stabilising function. The argument is that solidarism based on culture is limited to the realms of homogenous international societies, whereas a regulative form of solidarism based on pragmatism and shared interests enables the thin global International Society to continue functioning. This is despite potentially vast cultural and associated normative differences which are more readily apparent through interpretations of the evolved, rather than created, primary institutions. This does not mean however that the analysis can be limited to secondary institutions as understanding the differences in primary institutions provides the critical insight into understanding how viable an International Society is to continue functioning. This is due to, as is evidenced in the Ukraine case study (chapter 7), there being a breaking point at which the regulative power of secondary institutions reaches a critical point of failure to sustain International Society. In the case of Ukraine, that point of failure being the result of differing interpretations of international law, sovereignty, and competing visions for the normative basis of global order between Russia and the West.

To further illustrate the nuanced and interconnected nature of pluralism and solidarism, it is useful to return to the three traditions. Bull (1966a) conceptualised pluralism as reflecting the realist sphere, more typical of state system type behaviour. By contrast, solidarism represents the revolutionism/universalism of world community. However as discussed above, these concepts do not present in their pure forms, instead manifesting as co-dependent elements within an International Society that represent the thickness of shared values. This enables a framework for the analysis of the character of international societies as being on a scale of pluralism and solidarism rather than being simply describable as pluralist or solidarist.

3.3.3 The challenge of normative diversity

The challenges that the normative diversity of the international political landscape bring to the pluralist-solidarist debate have not been ignored within the ES. In a challenge to the generally accepted linking of solidarism with world society, Williams (2005) argues that a progressive world society can be found within pluralism. A world society that champions diversity and accepts the ethical differences that exist across the globalised political landscape. He prioritises diversity over territoriality where moral universalism is neither realistic, nor a desirable end state. This is at odds with Hurrell (2007) who although accepting

"space for pluralism and toleration of difference" sees there to be "no viable retreat to pluralism" (p299) since individual states cannot completely disconnect normatively, or politically, from wider global society. As already discussed, pluralism and solidarism are best understood as fluid, not finite concepts that can be used to help explain state behaviour. This leaves ample room for pluralism within international politics. However, Williams' (2005) analysis that a progressive, pluralist world society can be envisaged if International Society "can be de-territorialised" (p29) highlights a key weakness of his argument when applied to contemporary case studies. That being the likelihood of International Society becoming de-territorialised in the foreseeable future. Keating (2015) proposes a more realistic middle ground where an "inclusive form of pluralism" (p102) protects sovereignty whilst accepting a wider, but thinner, set of universal individual rights. However, Russia's perspectives on the importance of territoriality at the expense of adhering to international notions of universal rights underpinned by their interpretations of civilisationally focused sovereignty and international law (as borne out in the case studies chapters) suggest that at least in the case of Russia and the West, the relationship is becoming less focused on universal rights in the early decades of the 21st Century.

Buzan (2014), in an article where he separates solidarism into cosmopolitan and state-centric types is addressing the same issue that Williams identifies through his vision of a pluralist world society. Buzan also follows a pragmatic approach that allows for normative diversity through using the perspective that not all manifestations of solidarist behaviour in International Society are borne of liberal, universal human values, with the aim of providing genuine convergence of "consensual beliefs across international and world society" (p114). His analysis and discussion highlight several issues with solidarism as a universal concept and explains why state-centric solidarism (based on co-existence and co-operation) rather than cosmopolitan solidarism (based on genuine values convergence) remains dominant. Firstly, cosmopolitan solidarism relies on a convergence of beliefs and values that essentially amount to a moral universalism. Secondly, cosmopolitan solidarism relies on states having compatible interpretations of the institutions that constitute the International Society of which they are part.

Buzan (2014) further contends that pluralist institutions have "evolved in solidarist directions" (p164) and that other emergent institutions such as human rights, democracy, and environmentalism are inherently solidarist. The case study evidence within chapters 5-7 of this thesis provides strong counter claims in the specific cases of both democracy and human rights which indicates that Buzan's analysis is tainted by Western interpretations of these institutions. Institutions such as human rights and democracy appear to have both different interpretations and prioritisation across a wide range of morally diverse states. However, despite these issues, Buzan's overall conceptualisation of pluralism and solidarism remains of key importance to progressive ES thinking through framing these concepts as not mutually exclusive. Further, his views that solidarism is achieved pragmatically in most cases to ensure functional inter-state cooperation, rather than by any meaningful moral convergence, has substantial value in framing the regulative or mediating effect of secondary institutions.

3.3.4 Summarising Pluralism & Solidarism

The first key point to note is that pluralism and solidarism are concerned with legitimacy and the prioritisation of state versus individual rights respectively. They are concerned with the degree to which shared values and interests are held by members of an International Society where pure solidarism would equate to total normative coherence between states. Secondly, pluralism and solidarism are not mutually exclusive concepts. They do not exist in pure forms, but rather interact as mutually co-existent and co-dependent aspects of state behaviour. States can be described as exhibiting both pluralist and solidarist traits concurrently which is useful when attempting to articulate the complex normative diversity present in International Society. Finally, pluralism and solidarism represent an enduring and useful "vocabulary, rather than a precisely defined debate" (Bain, 2010, p12) to frame analysis of International Society and its institutions.

3.4 Institutions

3.4.1 Centrality of institutions

The centrality of institutions to the ES has been evident since Bull's original (primary) institutions of balance of power, diplomacy, war, international law, and great power management were conceptualised. Although they have been subsequently developed and expanded on, most prominently by the likes of Holsti and Buzan, the underlying concept has endured (Bull 1977; Dunne, 1998; Watson, 1992). This has provided the basis for understanding both the regulative and normative landscape of inter-state relations. Holsti (2004, p18) summarises that through the study of institutions we can understand "the context within which the games of international politics are played". Hurrell (2007) concluded that institutions are important because they allow for "moral debate", "shared rules" and "development of a global moral community" (p308). Hurrell's interpretation summarises both the huge importance institutions have in terms of creating an environment where shared practices, norms and rules can evolve as well as demonstrating the major weaknesses in traditional ES thinking. That being of the assumed trajectory towards a world society end-state based on a universally shared normative basis. The increasingly multi-cultural, normatively diverse world that exists today, and is continuing to develop makes this world society end state incredibly unlikely to manifest. Further a "global moral community" (ibid) would arguably require the collapse of the idea of self-interest focussed statehood, sovereignty, and territoriality which is beyond the realms of all likelihood for the foreseeable future. Therefore, within the scope of this thesis, institutions will be analysed as vehicles that allow and enable mutual co-operation, shared norms, customs, and rules, but are not morally universal agents of a coherent global International Society.

A key weakness of applying an ES approach is that despite institutions being a key focus, they are not defined clearly by "most writers" (Buzan, 2004, p167) who instead select and/or focus on specific institutions that they perceive as relevant to their research. This approach is analytically unacceptable as it lends itself to confirmation bias. The methodological contribution of this thesis is an attempt to minimise this bias by ensuring the primary source

data identifies the institutions to be studied, rather than beginning the study with a list of institutions with assumed importance. The lack of clear definition or consensus surrounding what qualifies as an institution is problematic for any research project attempting to robustly analyse International Society as there is no definitive theoretical basis from which to assess institutions (Duffield, 2007). This has the risk of rendering understanding of them fragmented and ambiguous. This is not an insignificant issue considering the centrality institutions will have to any analysis derived from the ES. Therefore, the following review of the literature on institutions is an attempt to pull together the best developed conceptual models to be used as reference points for the case study analysis. The inclusion of both primary and secondary institutions is important as the underlying hypothesis of this project relies on studying both primary and secondary institutions where pluralism and solidarism can exist concurrently in societies where the potential for the "polysemy of institutions" (Buranelli, 2013, p2) can be explored and evidenced. Additionally, the case study data from Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine shows conclusively that secondary institutions matter to Russia, so must be analysed. For these reasons, only existing models that incorporate secondary institutions as important elements of International Society (post-2004) are considered. It should be noted that the idea of polysemy could be seen as contradictory with the generally accepted status of primary institutions as having intersubjective meanings (Wendt and Duvall 1989; Reus-Smit, 1997; Buzan, 2014; Parrat, 2014 & 2017; Spandler 2015) where it is conceptualised that they are borne of general agreement of what each institution represents. However, this research evidences that the level of shared understanding in this intersubjectivity is not absolute across a global International Society, and instead manifests, to borrow from Buzan's terminology, in thin and thick forms.

Prior to an examination of the development of analysis of primary and secondary institutions within the ES, definitions of what institutions are is worth revisiting. The consensus distinction between primary and secondary institutions is that primary have evolved rather than been designed and are concerned with customs, practices, principles, norms, and rules (see Buzan, 2014; Holsti, 2004; Onuf, 2002; Dunne 1998; Linklater, 2013). As stated at the start of this section, primary institutions (i.e. sovereignty, international law, territoriality, and human rights) were made central to the ES by Bull (1977) whereas the explicit distinction, and associated terminology, of secondary institutions is a later addition to mainstream ES. Buzan,

borrowing from regime theory, introduced the distinction, published in his seminal work *From International to World Society* (2004). By his definition, secondary institutions are designed elements that manifest through organisations and treaties (Buzan, 2014; Navari, 2018). Prominent examples of secondary institutions in the context of this research are the United Nations (UN), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and their various associated treaties and agreements.

Despite Buzan's contribution to bringing secondary institutions into the ES vernacular and his understanding that they have a constitutive function (Parrat, 2017), the overall narrative of much of his work continues to place primary institutions at the heart of the analysis. This is based on an understanding that International Society is made of states that emphasise "shared values as the basis of primary institutions" (Buzan, 2015, p6). For example, different states basing their interpretations of sovereignty and international law on a shared normative position of what is acceptable and unacceptable. This is in effect a prioritisation of primary over secondary where secondary is reduced to being derivative of any assessed related primary institutions (Navari & Knudsen, 2018). Spandler (2015) describes this lack of emphasis placed on secondary institutions as an analytical weakness where the ES "has largely failed to study secondary institutions… as autonomous objects of analysis" (p602). Williams (2015) gives slightly more credit to ES writers in addressing secondary institutions, but also concedes that they have not been addressed as part of an "overall framework" (p123).

However, it is generally accepted that meaningful analysis of secondary institutions as constitutive parts of the International Society is a recent occurrence (Navari & Knudsen, 2018). These observations are telling of a general lack of analysis that regards secondary institutions as important, constitutive elements of International Society. Assigning sole constitutive status to primary institutions where general assumptions are made that they function based on shared values is flawed due to the normatively diverse nature of International Society (Acharya 2000 & 2014b). The regulative and mediating functions provided through secondary institutions bind states together through practical cooperation, enabling the continuance of a functional global International Society despite the normative differences. This is generally coherent with Parrat's (2017) understanding of primary and secondary institutions where primary institutions are flexible, intersubjective, and borne of

the practices of actors whereas secondary are generally fixed and stable. However, Parrat's view that secondary institutions are simply "formalised versions of primary institutions" (p628) does not adequately account for the observable structured co-operation (presenting as solidarist traits in International Society) between states that have different views on primary institutions.

Buranelli (2013) introduces two key concepts that affect how the same institutions may be defined and understood by different members of the global International Society. First, he argues that not all institutions will be shared across International Society. Second, he introduces the concept of the "polysemy of institutions" in which "a concept or an idea has different meanings albeit retaining the same verbalisation" (p2). The understanding that multiple members of International Society can have different interpretations of the same institution is central to the empirical contribution this research makes. Polysemy theoretically applies to both primary and secondary institutions, but it must be noted that due to the evolved nature of primary institutions, there is significantly more room for variation in their interpretation than in the constructed regulative frameworks of secondary institutions. This room for variation is observed in the case study data analysed in chapters 5-7. Buranelli's conceptual development borrows from Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez (2009) as a basis for explaining both how regional international societies form and demonstrate where polysemy manifests:

- When an actor/s adopts one or more institutions than those generally accepted at the global level of International Society.
- When an actor/s rejects one or more institutions of global International Society.
- When an actor/s interprets one or more institutions differently from others within International Society.

All three of these conditions apply to Russia's relationship with the West. The second and third conditions as listed above are fundamental to understanding how and why normative divergence manifests.

3.4.2 Institutional models

Prior to exploring the prominent models, it is worth noting that there is not a consensus across the ES literature of the relative importance of individual institutions to International Society. However, there is some consistency in those institutions which are deemed essential to the existence of an International Society. These are given terms such as "foundational" (Holsti, 2004, pp24-25) or "Master" (Buzan, 2004, p184) by those who distinguish between types and sub-types of primary institution, in contrast to earlier writers such as Bull and Wight who single out specific institutions as providing a foundational function. One of the most elevated and studied institutions, sovereignty, is often cited as a pre-condition for creation and sustainment of International Society (Keohane, 1988; Duvall and Wendt, 1989; Buzan, 2004, 2017; Wight 1977). Notably, sovereignty is absent from the early lists of institutions from both Bull (1977) and Wight (1979). However, both place significant emphasis on it with Bull ascribing it as a constitutive norm rather than an institution and Wight (1977) understanding it as a precondition for the existence of International Society. Sovereignty sits as a hugely important primary institution in all conceptualisations of the ES. For the ES, the existence of this institution enables the existence of either an International System or International Society through providing the principle that delineates states from one another.

Holsti and Buzan both published their seminal works in 2004. Although their approaches share many similarities and compatibilities, Buzan's work is far more detailed in its attempt at defining a comprehensive list of contemporary institutions. This is symptomatic of Buzan's general commitment and significant contribution to structuring ES theory in a way that is applicable to empirical analysis (Buzan 2001). In Holsti's (2004) model he identifies institutions as "essential markers" (p18) of change within International Society and splits them into three types: Foundational, Procedural, and Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) and Laws. Foundational are those institutions such as sovereignty, international law and territoriality (i.e., the founding principles of the Westphalian system) that define the state based political landscape. Procedural are those that regulate inter-state behaviour such as war and diplomacy. Finally, his third tier of IGOs and laws represent the regulative function; what Buzan termed secondary institutions. Holsti does not make any attempt to provide a definitive list of institutions, but does propose that to qualify as an institution, three criteria

must be met. These are that an institution must, constitute an action that is routine and practiced, be made of “coherent” (p21) ideas/beliefs that underpin the need for the action, and reflect norms, “rules and etiquette” (p22). For Holsti it is not necessary to provide an exhaustive list of what these institutions are, as his criteria will allow an analyst to test a prospective institution against the criteria.

Buzan in figure 6 (below) “summarizes the understanding ‘identified by others’” (Navari, 2018, p58) in reference to Holsti’s analysis into what is arguably the most comprehensive attempt at defining institutions. This list, although not exhaustive, does provide a good starting point from which to conduct analysis of institutions. A key deviation and evolution of Holsti’s concept is the direct relationship Buzan proposes between primary and secondary institutions, and his nesting of several derivative primary institutions under ‘Master’ institutions. However, both Buzan and Holsti see secondary institutions as derivative. Despite this interpretation of secondary institutions as manifestations of an associated primary institution (or institutions), Buzan’s list of what constitutes an institution need not be applied this way. This research accounts for Buzan’s identification of institutions, without subscribing to his definitions of which institutions sits within the ‘master’ and ‘derivative’ categories and does not treat the list as exhaustive. In the case of understanding the relationships between primary and secondary institutions, and their prospective hierarchy of importance, this thesis takes the approach that this is context dependent. This is more akin to the understanding of how institutions interact as put forward by Knudsen (2018) and Spandler (2015).

Primary Institutions		Secondary Institutions
Master	Derivative	(examples of)
Sovereignty	Non-intervention	UN General Assembly
	International law	Most regimes, ICJ, ICC
Territoriality	Boundaries	Some PKOs
Diplomacy	Bilateralism	Embassies
	Multilateralism	United Nations
		Conferences
		Most IGOs, regimes
Great power management	Alliances	NATO
	War	UN Security Council
	Balance of power	
Equality of people	Human rights	UNHCR
	Humanitarian intervention	
Market	Trade liberalisation	GATT/WTO, MFN agreements
	Financial liberalisation	IBRD, IMF, BIS
	Hegemonic stability	
Nationalism	Self-determination	Some PKOs
	Popular sovereignty	
	Democracy	
Environmental stewardship	Species survival	CITES, UNFCCC,
	Climate stability	Kyoto Protocol, IPCC,
		Montreal Protocol, etc.

Figure 6. Buzan's (2004, p183) Contemporary Institutions

Rare examples do exist that don't follow the line of development that sees increased integration of secondary institutions. Notably, Schouenborg (2011) offers a "typology" (p28) based on functionalism which offers a totally different perspective. He proposes five categories for institutions; "(1) legitimacy and membership; (2) regulating conflicts; (3) trade; (4) authoritative communication; and (5) international organisation". His conceptualisation essentially removes the primary and secondary differentiation. However, this approach does not aid with either resolving issues concerning defining institutions clearly or removing ambiguity. Arguably it does the opposite.

Knudsen (2018) conversely develops the importance of secondary institutions, specifically in the form of IGOs to having a "reticular relationship" (Navari, 2018, p53) where they can have a transformative effect on primary institutions. This is an important step away from the conceptualisation of secondary institutions as derivative. The perspective this thesis takes forward is that International Society is constituted by both primary and secondary institutions, with secondary playing an important role in maintaining the thin pluralist global International Society due to differences in interpretations of primary institutions.

Spandler (2015) develops the idea of co-constitutive primary and secondary institutions through his characterisation of the constitutionalising and institutionalising functions of both types of institution. He argues this distinction must be made as if both primary and secondary institutions were constitutive of International Society, then a "central criterion" (p609) of differentiation between them is lost. This is problematic as assuming an "international organization is effectively the same as a normative principle such as sovereignty" (p609) in its effect on inter-state relationships inevitably leads to flawed analysis and denies the exploration of the links between them.

For Spandler the following are the constitutive processes of institutions:

- Primary institutions define which actors count as a state within the International Society and the basic nature of interaction between them.
- Secondary institutions ascribe "differentiated roles to actors and by empowering them to engage in specific forms of interaction" (p610) that would be otherwise impossible; i.e., memberships of significant IGOs such as the UN.

Whereas processes of institutionalisation are:

- For primary institutions, institutionalisation occurs through repetition and practice to the point where norms develop and "leads to convergent expectations about behaviour" (p612) and an assumption is made on the meaning of institutions during interactions.
- For secondary institutions this occurs through "the conscious creation, reform, or dissolving of international organizations, regimes, treaties, networks, and the like" (p612).

Parrat (2017) building on Spandler subscribes to the co-constitutive and complex nature of the links between primary and secondary institutions as laid out in the constitutionalising versus institutionalising framework. She uses the terms "practice based" and "treaty based" (p623) to describe the origins of primary and secondary institutions respectively. She does

not believe that primary institutions need to be carefully designed and that some ambiguity and flexibility is more apt to their intersubjective, potentially enduring, but non-permanent nature in contrast to the fixed and stable nature of secondary institutions. Parrat criticises Spandler's lack of definition of what secondary institutions are, which is arguably unfair as it is impractical to give a comprehensive definition due to the sheer volume and diversity of formal memberships and IGOs that exist globally.

3.4.3 Summarising Institutions

Institutions are central to the ES. However, they are often ill-defined and used in a selective way, leaving analysis of them susceptible to confirmation bias. However, there is consensus across the literature on the distinction between primary and secondary institutions; primary are evolved and secondary are designed. Further, contemporary international societies cannot be adequately explained without incorporating both primary and secondary institutions.

Although this project accepts that a definitive and complete list of institutions is impractical to achieve due to their dynamic and impermanent nature, an expansive list that is relevant to the modern world is useful for enabling meaningful empirical research. For this reason, Buzan's list of institutions will be used as a starting point, or baseline for identification of institutions in the primary source material, albeit with an understanding of how these institutions interact based on the data analysed in the case studies rather than the theory presented by Buzan.

The polysemy of institutions is the main empirical contribution of this thesis. The research in the case study chapters shows that differences in interpretation of institutions helps explain the normative divergence between Russia and the West, enabling a re-examination of Russian motivations and behaviour within International Society.

As within the overarching concept of International Society, a key weakness in explaining the International Society through institutions has been the Western centrism that lies at the heart of traditional understandings of institutions.

3.5 Western interpretations of primary institutions

Attempting a comprehensive baseline of collective Western perspectives on the primary institutions of International Society in all contexts is a challenge much greater in scope than this thesis will allow. What is presented here are the general principles, observed in how the Western states (principally the states that make up the EU and NATO) are interpreting and manifesting their approach to the primary institutions identified in the specific cases of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine, and only in the context of Russia-West relations. This is with the express aim of analysing the potential for polysemy within the Russia-West International Society. As previously stated, the four identified primary institutions from analysis of the Russian primary source data that underpins the case studies are international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. A fifth primary institution that becomes hugely relevant when outlining the Western position on these same primary institutions is democracy. The normative and moral perspective that democracy provides to Western understanding of international law significantly affects the way in which Western states understand sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights in the Russia-West context. The three case studies demonstrate the flexibility the West also has in interpreting primary institutions dependent on whether the state concerned is perceived to be on a path to Western style democracy (Georgia and Ukraine) or not (Syria). There is a substantial caveat on all that follows in that it is accepted that the West, whether as a collective or as individual states have demonstrated an inconsistent application of primary institutions dependent on context and/or whether the interaction is with traditional allies versus perceived adversaries across International Society.

3.5.1 International law

As in the case of Russia (as detailed in the case study chapters), it is justification through international law that supports Western interpretation of sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. For the West, justifications for its approach in the case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine comes from a perspective rooted in natural law, with the moral position being

guided by the principles of democracy. The linking of democracy to international law based on a moral position, how this has developed Western views on human rights, and the impact this has on other primary institutions such as sovereignty and territoriality is reflected in a wide body of literature (examples include Reus-Smit, 2018; Ikenberry, 2018; Forsythe, 2000). The moral-democratic approach lends itself to substantial criticism from the fact that it is often applied unequally by Western powers dependent on other geostrategic interests. For example, the West's history of overlooking human rights abuses and major ideological differences with key allies such as Saudi Arabia to maintain both the economic and military strategic advantages that relationship provides (Chinkin & Kaldor, 2017, p147) is in direct contradiction to Western policies taken with other less powerful regional states such as Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. This criticism highlights a complex area of analysis concerned with understanding the balance between the West's genuine commitment to the democratic, individual rights focused international law it publicly espouses against the prioritisation of geostrategic interests, both economic and security led, that the West feel they need to protect to secure Western societies (Keohane, 2005; Ignatieff, 2013). This material and normative collision creates huge contradictions for the West where competing ideological, political, and pragmatic interests clash, with the result being some high-profile Western policy making appearing to be reduced to a 'better the devil you know' (El Amrani, 2012, p62) approach. In effect being willing to compromise on moral position where it is deemed that the benefits of holding key allies or partners to an ideological and moral standard is deemed to not outweigh the advantages this would give the West's adversaries; who are also not ideologically aligned and have no interest in democratising global order.

As stated above, this thesis does not have the scope to evolve into a detailed investigation into the contradictions observed in all geostrategic contexts that manifest in Western policy making, and the subsequent effect this has on specific applications of primary institutions in all its foreign relations. What is apparent in the Russia-West context is that international law is being linked to a pro-democracy, pro-individual rights perspective and that this has been the long-standing position from the Western powers. This is a normative position that has been part of US led Western policy making since the end of the Cold War. A pertinent example to illustrate this from the primary source material is the *Strategy for NATO's Expansion and Transformation* (1993) which states that NATO's biggest "challenge… over the next

generation [is] containing and coopting Russian power" to "build democracy in Europe" (Davis, NSA document, 7th September 1993).

As this position on building a preferred democratic line of development for International Society is based from an ideological perspective that places greater importance on individual rights (Peters, 2016, p3) it has the potential to leave any non-democratic regime at risk of intervention from Western powers over the treatment of their people. Again, this is with the caveat that the non-democratic state in question is not a 'better the devil you know' strategic ally or partner wrapped up in wider geostrategic interests. This perspective has manifested many times since the late 1990s with Western powers breaching the sovereignty of non-democratic states on the principle of human rights and responsibility to protect (R2P) (Orford, 2011; Thakur, 2016). What this amounts to in the Russia-West context as observed in the case studies is a Western position that takes an overtly democratic view of international law with the express aim of creating more progressively democratic conditions within Russia-West International Society. This is at odds with the desired thin pluralist position that Russia desires, backed by a positivist understanding of international law that protects a normative diversity (Malksoo, 2015, pp93-97) based on Moscow's multipolar vision and civilisational worldview.

The Western position on international law with regards to Russia-West relations is transparent in policy documents, official publications, and in the spoken narratives of Western leaders. The West directly links its democratic understanding of international law to the UN Charter as the foundation on which "the rules based order that preserves stability worldwide" (Blinken, US Department of State, 17th February 2022) is based (Hurrell, 2007, p151; Johnstone, 2013, pp272-280). As will be seen in the Ukraine case study, the ideological position of a democratic, rules based order (RBO) that sets the parameters for Western understanding of the UN Charter and by association international law is at odds with the multipolar, civilisational, and thin pluralistic International Society that Russia both desires as the future of global order, and believes the UN Charter protects. Therefore, to say that Western international law is based on the UN Charter is an over-simplification, not least due to the potential for normative contradictions in Western foreign policy which have resulted in clear breaches of UN principles and resolutions (Gray, 2018). However, what the evidence

shows, is that at least in the case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine and in the context of Russia related foreign policy, the West is using the UN Charter as the principal source of international law, interpreted from a democratic perspective with a focus on preserving the rights of individual freedoms. It is worth noting the potential for a range of interpretations of the UN Charter, a document which does not contain the word democracy or any of its derivatives, but does include the building block principles of democratic practice such as individual freedoms and rights. The Western interpretation of international law as being based on a RBO, or democratic liberal order, has deep roots to the victories of the democracies after the second world war and over Communism at the end of the Cold War. To some extent, the West's position on international law is a key part of justifying its self-professed continuation of the fight for supremacy of the Western democracies over the rising non-Western autocracies (see Raab, HM Government, Press Release, 24th March 2021; von der Leyen, European Commission Transcript, 4th February 2022; Blinken, US Department of State Remarks, 18th February 2022).

An example of the West implementing international law from a morally democratic perspective in Russia-West relations comes out of the Ukraine case study and is contained as part of the analysis within chapter 7. This being Public Law 115-44 concerning titled *Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act* provides legal authority to impose economic costs on Russia (as well as other non-democratic states) when they threaten "democratic processes" and undermine "sovereignty and territorial integrity" (US Government, Public Law 115-44, 2017, p14). The above represents the US legal position and obligation to directly constrain, using economic coercion, non-democratic powers who threaten democratic values where they exist, and/or are working to prevent the spread of democracy where it doesn't. A direct quote from Secretary of State summarises the competitive nature of this moral position:

> "Russia and China together are right now less than 20 percent of world GDP. The United States, Europe together 45 percent of GDP. When we bring in some of our democratic partners from Asia, Japan, Korea, Australia, others, we're well over 50 percent of world GDP. That is a very powerful weight when it's acting in unison" (Blinken, US State Department Remarks, 18th February 2022).

3.5.2 Sovereignty and Territoriality

Although separate institutions, Sovereignty and territoriality are intertwined across the case study data and so will be discussed together in this sub-section. It is first important to state that these are extremely complex primary institutions to assess from a Western perspective. Linked to the criticism in the previous sub-section regarding contradictions in Western interpretations of international law, there are numerous associated instances of inequality in the application of sovereignty and territoriality to non-Western states by Western powers over recent decades (Falk, 2014, pp75-78). Notable examples include invasions of Afghanistan following the events of 9/11 under the justification of collective self-defence, and military interventions across Iraq, Syria, and Libya as the highest profile examples. However, in the cases of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine some themes on how the West interprets and subsequently manifests policy and behaviour emerge. In the case studies presented in this thesis the West makes clear distinctions on whether sovereignty and territoriality are inviolable based on whether that state is seen as in the process of democratising and westernising (in the cases of Georgia and Ukraine), or constitutes an autocracy, not aligned to wider Western strategic interests and perceived to be failing to protect the individual rights of its people (i.e. Syria). This is in line with the moral-democratic interpretation of international law used by the West as outlined in the previous sub-section.

In Georgia, the Western powers make clear statements on the links between Georgian sovereignty and its territorial integrity. In the case of Georgia, despite the acceptance that the Georgian authorities attacked Russian forces in the country first, the Western consensus that Russia had provoked Georgia to do so in the build up to the war (see Chapter 5, sub-section 5.2.1) led the West to perceive the conflict as “a great power’s [Russia] coercive politics and diplomacy against a small and insubordinate neighbour” (European Union, 2009b, p 31). From the Western perspective this constituted a violation of both Georgia’s sovereignty and territoriality against a democratically elected Georgian leadership which had total legitimacy to rule (White House Statement, 2008). The ideological position the West shows in applying international law to sovereignty and territoriality to democratic states manifests as a linking of sovereignty and territoriality (Bush, 2008, p 1129-1386; UNSC Press Release SC/9418, 2008;

UNSC Press Release SC/9419, 2008) through the inherent legitimacy the West places on a democratically elected government that has ambitions for westernisation (Ikenberry, 2012).

This perspective on the linking of sovereignty and territorial integrity is repeated in the case of Ukraine who is seen by the West as a democratic, ideologically westernising state. In this context, Russia can have no claims over either its sovereignty or territoriality. This is as a counter position to Russia which has long standing claims that Ukraine forms an essential part of its security perimeter and sits within its civilisational remit. For the West, Ukraine and its territory is inviolable to external influence from Russia and as a democratic state, it is assumed by the West that it poses no direct security threat to Russia by aligning more closely with the West, or its aspirations to join NATO and the EU. This is despite the self-proclaimed position that the most powerful Western states (predominantly those that comprise NATO and the EU) believe they are in direct competition for the future of global order with the autocratic states, of which it lists Russia as a significant adversary. For the West, any violation of Ukrainian territorial integrity, through both Russia's actions post-2014 following the annexation of Crimea and the subsequent invasion in February 2022 constitute "a brazen affront to the modern international order" (Blinken, US Department of State, Press Statement, February 25th 2021) that undermines the very foundations of "sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence" (HM Government, Press Release, 18 March 2021). The European Commission goes so far to proclaim that the continued breaches of Ukraine's sovereignty and territoriality constitutes "the biggest threat" to democracy which poses a direct challenge to "our [the West's] model of societies" (EU speech, 22nd March 2022).

In contrast the position on sovereignty and territoriality taken with regards to the democratising/westernising states of Georgia and Ukraine, the West's position on Syrian sovereignty and territoriality is that these institutions are not inviolable. In the specific case of Syria, this is based on the assertion that the autocratic leadership (Assad) has lost his legitimacy to rule due to the way his government treats its population (Gilboa, 2013, p62). Syria is also complicated by being seen as a significant element of the Arab Spring revolutions which Western powers supported as they generally perceived the events to be part of a regional democratisation event, not the dangerous and destabilising Islamic uprisings they are perceived as by Russia (Vysotsky, 2014, p45). Western support to Syria's opposition sits

as coherent with part of a much wider pattern of policy making over the past three decades. The West has both with UN legal approval (Kosovo 1999 and Libya 2011) and without (Iraq 2003) embarked on breaching the sovereignty and territorial integrity of several autocratic states through military intervention to enact regime change (Özçelik & Çakmak, 2018, p169). Interventions with the express aim to install democratic systems of government coherent with the West's understanding of international law and desired ideological end state for a more normatively aligned International Society with increased Western moral solidarist traits.

In the case of an autocratic government, the West's application of full sovereignty often being tied to legitimacy through democratic governance, it follows that it becomes a relatively easy step (from the West's moral position) to de-link sovereignty and territoriality in cases of autocracies. A direct example of the US led Western coalition de-linking the sovereignty of the Syrian state with the Assad government, and thereby granting itself permission to breach Syrian territorial integrity under international law is highlighted by Joint Resolution 44 of the US Congress which states that military force can be applied to protect the citizens of Syria whilst being explicitly not "in support, or in cooperation with, the national government of Syria" (US Congress, S.J.Res.44, 16th September 2014). From the Western perspective, if a government is failing its people (in this case the Assad government is deemed to be failing) then the territorial integrity of that state can be breached to protect a population despite the wishes of its government for it not to do so. For the West, a government's right to sovereignty is directly linked to its responsibility to protect the individual rights of its people which has led to the manifestation of the West's principal justification for intervention of responsibility to protect (R2P), to be discussed in the next sub-section.

The case of Syria does raise further questions linked to Western inconsistency of applying its stated principles on primary institutions and specifically on how the Western powers select which autocratic governments get to stay in power. The position this research takes that this selectivity is dependent on the wider geo-strategic value, and specifically the perceived risk of ceding influence to more powerful non-democratic competitor states, principally Russia and China that is an important determining factor in how committed the West is to implementing its democratically focused, ideological position in a given context. Therefore, with the objective of evidencing the potential for polysemy between Russian and Western

interpretations of primary institutions, contradictions on both sides should not be used in isolation to discount either Russian or Western observed normative positions as lacking credibility. What must be taken forward is the general way in which both Russia and the West have approached these institutions within Russia-West relations.

3.5.3 Human Rights and Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

The sub-section above has already covered many of the key elements of the Western human rights approach through how this primary institution links to and affects sovereignty. Since the early 1990s, the increasing focus on individual human rights through the UN has changed "the meaning of sovereignty" (Walling, 2013, p267) placing more responsibility on state governments to protect their people. From the Western perspective, this is a principle inherently linked to the individual rights that democracy provides and that is underpinned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This declaration has huge international legitimacy despite the principal drafters being Western (specifically Canadian, French and American), as there were many significant non-Western contributors including the USSR and China (Schabas, 2013). The articles of this document focus heavily on individual rights and freedoms, including the right to freely choose governments, rights to culture, religion and belief without persecution, rights to education, and rights to a standard of living (UN, 1948). Principles that equate to world society ideals and a solidarist moral position on human rights. The UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights website today states that "Democracy as a form of government is a universal benchmark for human rights protection" (UN OHCHR, 2022). The explicit statement from a prominent UN organisation that democracy is a universal benchmark is problematic for non-Western, non-democratic state actors. Russia, despite citing the primacy of the UN as the basis for international law across the case studies do not appear to be implementing those elements, including human rights based on the overtly democratic articles within UN Charters, resolutions or declarations to which they are signatories.

Instead, Moscow operates from the position of a human rights hierarchy where those with Russian ethnic, cultural, or historical roots take primacy over those who do not. This is a

significant manifestation of the polysemy evidenced in the case studies. The democratic solidarist versus multipolar pluralist visions for International Society that the West and Russia have are laid bare over the matter of human rights and its links to how sovereignty, territorial integrity, and ultimately international law are interpreted. Principally in the matter of whether sovereignty and territoriality are de-linked and can be breached based on human rights, and R2P justifications. The West take the consistent approach that democracy and individual human rights freedoms is a desired end state for all states across International Society. This approach to democracy and universal human rights sits at the ideological heart of the Western democracies desire for a more normatively aligned International Society based on Western democratic principles. From a human rights perspective this leads logically to how the West has implemented its R2P policies and helped to invoke "more than 80 UN Security Council Resolutions" concerning R2P and intervention in states across Africa and the Middle East where individual freedoms are being threatened by autocratic regimes (Global Centre for R2P, 2022).

3.5.4 Summary of Western interpretations of primary institutions

The overview above provides a baseline on which to compare the interpretations of the primary institutions identified as of most important to Russia from the case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine (international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights). The comparative analysis that is conducted in the case studies is with the express aim of evidencing the polysemic nature of these primary institutions in Russia-West International Society. The key areas identified in prevailing Western understanding of these institutions are as follows.

Firstly, that despite the contradictions that can be found in wider Western policies and historical precedence, a democratic lens is placed over the Western interpretations of the primary institutions in the Russia-West context that is analysed in this thesis. In this specific context, the West are observed to intertwine international law, sovereignty, territoriality and human rights through their belief that sovereignty and territoriality can be breached under international law to protect universal individual liberties and freedoms. This enables the West

to intervene in non-democratic states with relative ease through both legal and moral justification using R2P based on the primacy of democracy over all other systems of government.

The West understands international law to be underpinned by the Charter, treaties, and resolutions that make up the UN. This, as will be seen from the case studies is also Russia's stated position. However, the Western perspective focuses on those elements that support the development of solidarist traits through a democratic RBO and not the pluralistic multipolar order that Moscow desires.

Western perspectives on the linkage between sovereignty and territoriality hinge on whether the state involved is democratic or not. The case studies and existing academic literature all evidence that the West has regularly, over the past three decades, breached the territorial integrity and/or sovereignty of a non-democratic state with the express aim of regime change, to create more democracies using human rights and R2P justifications.

3.6 Chapter Conclusions.

As each section has given summary conclusions throughout this chapter, this final section will conclude with a reiteration of the three important functions this chapter provides to the overall thesis. The first two relate to outlining the key principles of the ES and justification for them being taken forward as the basis of the methodological contribution. Specifically, that this chapter concludes that there is huge utility in the three traditions (with a focus on international society), pluralism and solidarism, and institutions in analysing global order generally, and the perspectives individual states have on how that global order is constituted and governed. The nature and value of being able to conceptualise global order through the theoretically integrative lens of the three traditions, and the explanatory power of pluralism and solidarism as a spectrum to communicate the degree of values shared provides an excellent foundation on which to overlay an analysis of institutions (both primary and secondary). When coupled with the argument from chapter 2 which evidenced the need for a multi-perspective theoretical or analytical lens through which to study Russia-West

relations, the flexibility and explanatory power of these key principles emerges as a powerful justification for use of the ES from which to derive the method this thesis contributes to the field.

The third function has been to provide a baseline of Western interpretations of the institutions identified within the primary research conducted for the three case studies at chapters 5-7. This is critical to enabling meaningful analysis of the existence (and degree) of polysemy inherent in primary institutions in the case of Russia-West relations. From which, analysis of the importance of polysemy as a driving factor in the degradation of Russia-West relations over the past two decades is enabled. The fundamental difference that emerges of a Russian multipolar, civilisational worldview versus the Western view that assumes the moral primacy of the democracies is fundamental context to the case study analysis. This critical divergence in values, specifically when applied to international law and the secondary institutions charged to uphold it (i.e. the UN) is at the heart of understanding how and why the polysemy observed in the case study data manifests in Russia-West International Society, and explain its eventual collapse in February 2022.

Chapter 4

Method

4.1 Introduction and overview

The literature reviewed across chapters 2 and 3 demonstrates the need for an analytical method that can account for the clear and apparent normative differences concerning key primary institutions in International Society identified in the case study material in chapters 5-7. Specifically, the interpretations of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights which link to Russia's civilisational, multi-polar worldview in opposition to the Western democratic vision for global order of the post-Cold War period as outlined in the conclusions of the previous chapter. The literature reflects that due to the complexities of attempting to understand International Society, that singular theoretical or analytical approaches are prone to bias, and/or large analytical deficiencies. This leads to the logical step of developing an analytical method, derived from the principles of the ES. This is due to the ES affording huge scope to incorporate multiple perspectives through the overlapping three traditions model that allows for a wide range of normative and material factors to be analysed through the study of primary and secondary institutions. Institutions being the components that allow or prevent the functioning of inter-state relationships, both from normative (primary institutions) and functional (secondary institutions) perspectives.

As stated in chapter 1, the methodological contribution is an attempt at what Onuf (2002, p 211) would describe as a "best theory" that can give insight into which institutions matter most in a given context. The key principle of the method is that it forces the primary source data to guide which institutions will be studied. It also seeks to explore what evidence exists for Knudsen's, Spandler's and Parrat's perspective of the co-constitutive interaction between primary and secondary institutions and enables the primary empirical contribution of expanding and evidencing Buranelli's conception of polysemy. The method itself is case study based and is a mixed-method approach with inductive and deductive elements. Figure 7

(below) returns to the graphical representation of the method as previously presented at figure 1 in the introduction chapter of this thesis.

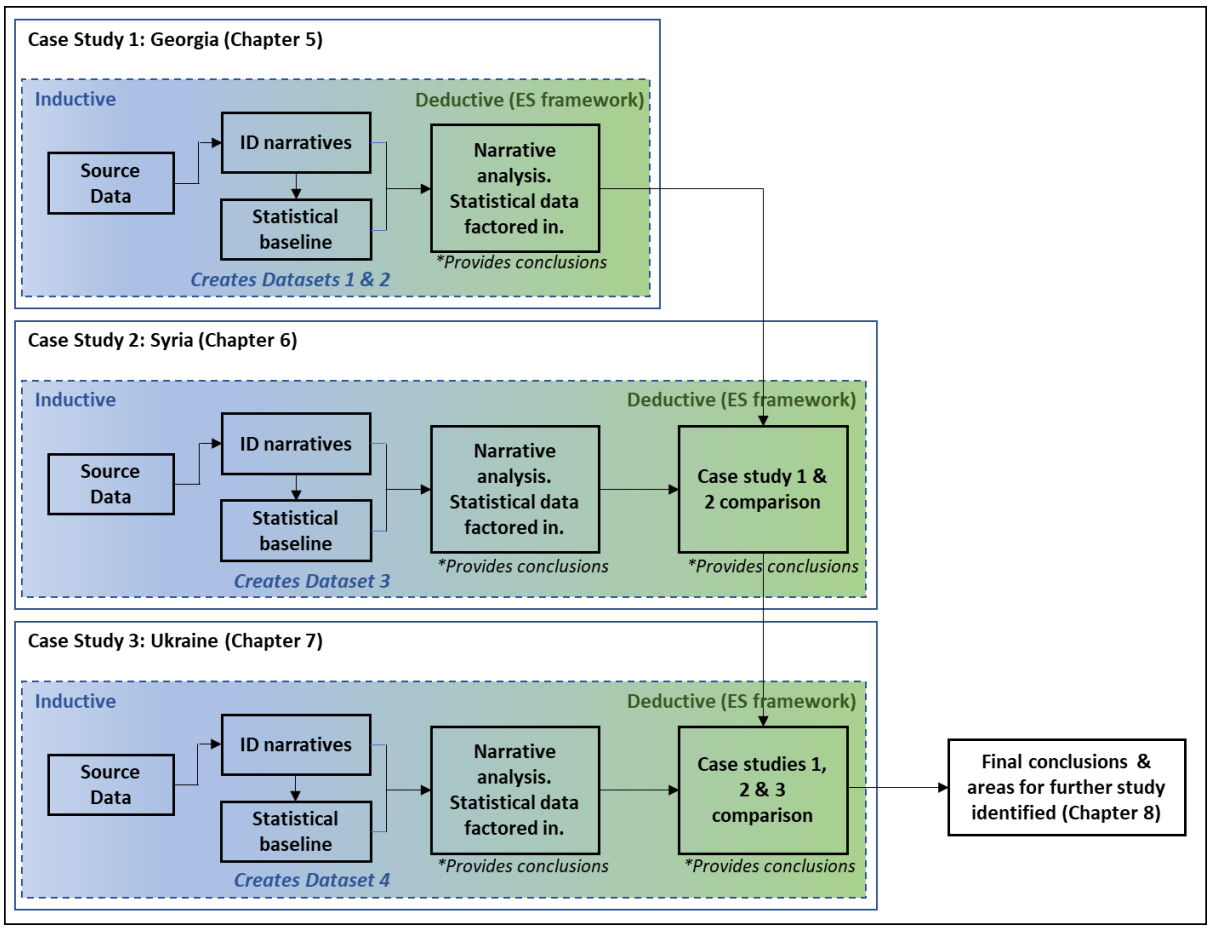

Figure 7. Analytical Method Graphic

What the graphic shows is how the method flows from an inductive, quantitative element that creates datasets, through to the qualitative analysis of identified narratives (concerning institutions) against the ES principles (detailed in chapter 3) for the case studies of Russian military intervention in Georgia (2003-2008) and Syria (2015) and the invasion of Ukraine (2021-2022). The datasets of this thesis are constituted of all available Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) documents published during a case study period. These datasets provide the baseline for the initial inductive element of the method which is used to identify and quantify narratives pertaining to both primary and secondary institutions of International Society. Appendices D, E & F contain the basic case study statistical data out from each dataset which is used to guide the direction of the qualitative element of the method. The inductive element is designed so that the datasets are as expansive as practical within the inherent

limitations in scope of this thesis. This is to ensure that it is the primary source data that defines which institutions are analysed in detail, not pre-formed opinions of which institutions matter most. This prevents the author from pre-selecting which institutions to study and biasing the analysis. For example, the Georgia case study uses a baseline of 623 Russian MFA documents from 2003 – 2008 to establish the narratives that are important to Russia (MFA Dataset material reference lists for all three case studies are at Appendices A, B & C). Once the inductive quantitative element is completed to establish which narratives exist concerning relevant institutions, the dataset guides the qualitative analysis against the ES principles outlined in chapter 3. This includes the addition of relevant additional sources that relate to the events and narratives established through the initial, quantitative data analysis. Additional sources include, but are not limited to IGOs, treaties, and Government policy documents (both Russia and Western nations). It is at this stage that conclusions can be begun to be drawn from the material. The case studies draw conclusions and comparisons sequentially from case study to case study rather than a single comparative conclusion at the end. This is to prevent generalisation of the narratives from the creation of one giant case study. The sequential approach provides the opportunity of higher fidelity case study to case study comparisons of similarities and differences over time as they build chronologically.

The outline of the method above raises three main questions that must be answered to justify the development of the method in this form. Firstly, why are case studies chosen as the vehicle for analysis? Second, why use the cases of Georgia, Syria and Ukraine? Finally, why choose MFA publications for the baseline source for Datasets? The following three sections of this chapter will address each question individually prior to a step-by-step breakdown of the method process itself. The second of these questions regarding why Georgia, Syria and Ukraine has been covered in chapter 1 and so an abridged version is included here as a refresh of the key rationale. However, prior to moving onto the justification for why case studies are used, it is useful to first re-familiarise with the research hypothesis, questions, and objectives as laid out in full in chapter 1.

Research Hypothesis. The hypothesis is two-part. The first part hypothesises that Russia-West relations are guided by significant differences in interpretation (polysemy) of the primary institutions of International Society. The second part proposes that at least up until the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia-West International Society has been maintained in the realm of non-existential competition through adherence to the regulations laid down in common secondary institutions (i.e., international organisations and treaties).

Research Questions and Objectives. The research questions and objectives all centre on the study of institutions and cover the following. How interpretations of primary and secondary institutions dictate Russia-West relations. Which institutions matter most in the Russia-West context and whether there is compatibility in relation to relative importance of specific institutions. Ultimately, the hypothesis, questions and objectives are designed to satisfy the key objective of gaining deeper insight into Russia-West International Society. This is specifically through gaining a better understanding of Russia's perspective from both a state and civilisational worldview in order to contribute an understanding of institutions based on their polysemic nature.

4.2 Why case studies?

The term case study can mean many different things and much of the literature that discusses case studies from a theoretical perspective identifies the issue that they are not easily, or consistently defined in the social sciences (Morgan, 2012, p668). Part of this is due to the semantics of what a 'case' consists of within the relevant theory. Gerring (2004) refers to the term case study as a "definitional morass" (p342) and breaks down the broad definitions into five categories that span from studies that range from a single or small number of variables, units or 'cases' to ones that investigate a "phenomenon, instance, or example" (ibid). George & Bennett (2005) describe a case study as a "class of events" that form part of a "historical episode that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than the historical episode itself" (p4). The case study method created for this research can be viewed as mostly conforming to this latter definition, in that the classes of events are the institutions to be studied within the historical instances of the military interventions. However, instead of the investigator (the

author) choosing the specific 'events' (in the case of this thesis, the 'events' being the institutions of International Society) they are dictated by the quantitative element of the method.

This approach to case studies allows for an integrative "middle ground" (Kacowicz, 2002, p120; Adler, 1997) between a positivist and interpretivist approach that can deal with both the statistical quantitative, and complex normative qualitative elements of analysis of military interventions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine. The ability to combine positivist and interpretivist characteristics also enables the mixed inductive and deductive analysis of the method as outlined in figure 7. The positivist approach of working from the perspective of a singular truth and objectivity (Scotland, 2012, pp9-10) is present in the statistical element of the creation of the Datasets. This subsequently directs the deductive ES analysis which could be understood as having the interpretivist traits of the subjectivity of cultural systems, norms, and practices (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022, p12) that define the difference (polysemy) in the interpretations of institutions between Russia and the West. The study of institutions that accounts for polysemy in their interpretation is tied directly to defining the differing reality of what institutions mean as a construct of the human consciousness from the differing cultural and societal perspectives (Russia and the West) experiencing them. This is definitionally compatible with the concept of interpretivism and as such any method studying them must be able to account for this too. The combination of using the study of classes of events (institutions) within historical instances (military interventions) definition of case studies enables the use of characteristics that span the positivist to interpretivist interpretations of reality, and demands a mixed method inductive and deductive approach. An approach that, allows the study of institutions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine to play to the strengths of case study analysis, whilst mitigating against the weaknesses.

As discussed in chapter 1, military interventions in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine afford the opportunity to analyse the interplay of the institutions of International Society to provide a 'stress test' that aids in highlighting the relative positions of Russia and the West in interpreting both primary and secondary institutions. Bennet & Elman (2007) highlight the specific utility of case studies in analysis of war and international security due to the case study method's ability to handle "interaction effects among many structural and agent-based

variables, path dependencies, and strategic interaction among large numbers of actors across multiple levels of analysis" (pp 164-165). The mixed method approach of this thesis is designed to be able to take advantage of the mixture of quantitative and statistical methods that allow a large volume of data to be aggregated and then applied to a qualitative evaluative framework (Barumoeller & Sartori, 2002, pp 140-143). This approach is intended to mitigate the key weaknesses that sceptics of the case study method put forward. By defining clear cases, these being the historical instances of time bound periods of military interventions in Georgia, Syria and Ukraine, and determining the class of events to be studied as institutions, the often ambiguous and "open-endedness" (Morgan, 2012, p 668) that case studies can suffer from is removed. This open-ended nature, common in case study analysis, also links to another weakness of case studies struggling to measure the frequency and importance of given variables. (Bennett, 2002, p28). A weakness that is countered by this thesis' method that combines data driven, quantitative study that measures frequency of 'cases' with a subsequent qualitative ES analysis that assesses relative importance and consistency (or inconsistency) over a substantial time.

4.3 Why Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine?

The cases of Georgia, Syria and Ukraine have been selected for the following reasons. Firstly, as already discussed above and in chapter 1, military interventions in these states provide an excellent environment to study the actions, behaviours, and values of actors within an International Society under high pressure. Secondly, they represent the military interventions Russia has undertaken that include a significant Western facing element and are widely considered as hugely significant in understanding Russia-West relations, as reflected in the research context and literature review across chapters 1 and 2. Thirdly, they provide snapshots across the two decades that represent the period of generally accepted decline in Russia-West relations (see chapter 1, subsection 1.1.2). Fourth, they cover interventions that are both inter- (Syria) and intra-civilisational (Georgia and Ukraine) from the Russian perspective at varying levels of existentialism. These four reasons combine to provide a strategic overview of Russian interpretations of the institutions of International Society with analysis of where they may or may not differ from the West's view as detailed in chapter 3,

section 3.5. The selection of Georgia, Syria and Ukraine for the reasons above reflect what Ruffa (2020) would term “strategic case selection” of cases which can then be related to “to a broader universe of cases” (p10). In essence the cases are selected to be representative of Russia’s views on the institutions of International Society and therefore able to provide valuable and wide-ranging insight on both the potential for polysemy and on how Russia-West interactions are likely to develop for a given context, based on the institutions at play.

4.4 Data selection

This section on data selection is included to justify the use of Russian MFA publications as the baseline source for the military intervention case studies. The MFA data, which includes all Russian Government, Foreign Policy focussed publications, press releases and transcripts provides the information that the Russian state is seeking to present as its official narratives. Additionally, through the MFA, Russia also publishes its inputs to other forums and organisations such as international conferences, the UN, OSCE, and both domestic and international media. This gives the advantage of inherently providing the Russian perspective on these events and captures a comprehensive baseline of Russia’s narratives on institutions for both domestic and international audiences. It must be acknowledged that the use of MFA data could be susceptible to the risk of presenting a viewpoint that is deliberately disingenuous to satisfy a particular political or information warfare purpose. However, this issue is mitigated by the fact that the focus of the study is on the institutions of International Society, combined with other source documentation (from international organisations, media, and government sources), scrutinised against the body of literature presented in chapter 2, and the qualitative analysis focuses on manifested observed behaviours in real world events. Additionally, as the study is concerned with understanding polysemy in the institutions of Russia-West International Society, the MFA data provides a large volume of Russian perspective information over a long period of time, enabling trend analysis to mitigate any temporary narratives that have been created to suit an individual political agenda at a given time.

An issue, apparent from early in the research is that due to not being a Russian speaker, the analysis in this thesis relies on translated documents. However, the MFA does produce all its published documents in an official translation to English which at least mitigates to some extent that the documents represent what was intended to be published by the Russian state. Additionally, due to the point above concerning this thesis using large volumes of data to establish general narrative trends over the minutia of the language in individual documents, this issue is mitigated adequately to meet the research questions and objectives, and to test the hypothesis this thesis presents. Additionally, where ambiguity exists the author has regular access to an experienced Russian linguist (cited in the acknowledgements) who has provided language support when required.

4.5 Method process

This final section of this chapter gives a breakdown of the method process for each of the case studies. The method is designed to be simple, but comprehensive. It also prioritises the Russian perspective as the research questions and objectives are based on understanding Russia's viewpoint on global order and its interpretations of the institutions of International Society. As stated above in the data selection section, the analysis uses MFA publications as the baseline data to gauge the enduring perspectives of the Russian state for comparison with Western views of the same events. Across all the case studies, three snapshots in time (2003-2008, 2015, and 2021-2022) cover a total period of 19 years. The method begins with a quantitative research element designed to highlight the narratives concerning primary and secondary institutions for the relevant case study. This quantitative element is akin to a 'forensic' search of the source data to identify how often narratives concerning institutions occur. This is followed by a qualitative analysis of the identified narratives that draws out what the Russian perceptions, interpretations and manifestations of those institutions are. Throughout, evidence of the prevailing Western perception of the same institutions, for the same events is presented for comparative analysis to highlight any coherence or divergence of normative position/interpretation. As this project is written by a Western analyst attempting to better understand Russia's state level behaviour within the International

Society, the analysis is constructed from, and weighted heavily towards understanding the Russian perspective first.

The method process is as follows. The statistical data summary below (at table 1) is taken from the Georgia case study to demonstrate this element of the process.

- Step one is an extensive and comprehensive collation exercise to gather the source data. This involves collating all accessible published material from the MFA relevant to the defined case study period.

- The next stage involves reading the material in detail to identify the narratives within the documents that relate to the primary and secondary institutions of International Society.

- Identified narratives are then quantitatively processed, by month, over the whole period to identify their prevalence and any patterns that emerge against the wider political context at the time within the case study. Below, table 1 is a screenshot excerpt from Dataset 2 from the Georgia case study data spreadsheet (Appendix D). It shows the results of refined quantitative data from 596 documents that identifies themes and narratives. Note, only July - August 2008 are shown on the graphic due to the space restrictions on this page. However, the original spreadsheet includes quantitative data on a month-by-month basis from November 2003 – August 2008. This constitutes the period from the Rose Revolution (the point at which Russia lost significant political control over Georgia) to the end of the beginning of the period of warfighting on 7th August (the period of warfighting is Dataset 1).

	Jul-08	Aug-08	Totals		Percentage
Total Number of Documents	14	4	596	Total Number of Documents	
Specifically about Georgia	13	4	436	Specifically about Georgia	
Mentions Georgia part of a different topic	1	0	158	Mentions Georgia part of a different topic	
Theme 1 - Law (Instrumental)	8	3	308	Theme 1 - Law (Instrumental)	51.67
Theme 2 - Human Rights (Russo-Centric)	2	1	104	Theme 2 - Human Rights (Russo-Centric)	28.69
Theme 3 - Importance of Sec Inst (WTO/EU/NATO)	11	1	203	Theme 3 - Importance of Sec Inst (WTO/EU/NATO)	34.06
OSCEmentioned or direct meeting	4	1	108	Meetings with OSCE reps	
UN mentioned or direct meeting	8	0	166	Meetings with UN	
Use of regional institutions (CIS/BSEC etc...)	1	0	142	Use of regional institutions (CIS etc...)	
Common Culutral ties/importance of relations Mentioned	1	0	94	Common Culutral ties	
External interference Mentioned (including expansion/double stanc	0	0	56	External interference	

Table 1. Georgia Quantitative Data Example

- The data above in table 1, along with the data from the 27 documents in Dataset 1, then informs the structure of the qualitative analysis, which adds additional primary sources relevant to the study of the identified institutions and coincident events in the established timeline. This includes adding sources that represent the Western perspective for comparative analysis.

Chapter 5

Georgia (2003 – 2008)

5.1 Introduction

On the night of 7th August 2008, following months of provocation and simmering tension, Georgian forces launched an assault on the city of Tskhinvali in the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. The Russian response was swift, and using legal justifications based on the protection of Russian peacekeepers stationed under an OSCE mandate, Moscow launched a military intervention. Russia's increasingly fractured relationship with the Georgian government had its roots in the Rose Revolution of 2003, after which the country retreated from Moscow's sphere of influence, and embarked on a programme of westernisation. By 2008, the situation had become intolerable for Russia, and Moscow protested Georgia's potential accession to both NATO and the EU.

The Georgia case study is divided into two sections. The first, covers analysis of data pertaining to the period of conflict itself; between 7 – 12 August 2008. This section identifies and analyses the key narratives regarding institutions that Russia promoted during the period of warfighting. It identifies and analyses three key themes. Firstly, how Russia applies a contractual understanding of international law as the most important and overarching institution of International Society. Second, how human rights and a Russo-centric understanding of responsibility to protect (R2P) informs and shapes Moscow's application of sovereignty and territoriality in former-Soviet republics. Lastly, how Russia uses secondary institutions, specifically the UN and OSCE in this case to maintain dialogue with the rest of the international community and as a forum to voice its justifications based in international law. As the sample size of data for this section is small, focussing on only the 5 days of the war, a second section concerns Russian narratives prior to the conflict. This section mitigates against two potential areas for bias in the analysis. Firstly, against the potential for the narratives during the conflict not being a true representation of Russian beliefs due to the pressures on Moscow to build legitimacy for its military intervention. Secondly, the small sample size of data from the period of warfighting itself may not reflect consistently displayed

interpretations over longer periods of time, a requirement for meaningful analysis. This second section also provides some initial trend analysis to show how Russia prioritises institutions, providing considerable evidence, that for Moscow, international law sits above all other institutions.

5.2 Russian Narratives During the Conflict

> "Russia was and is present on the territory of Georgia on an absolutely ***legal basis*****,** fulfilling its peacekeeping mission in accordance with the ***international agreements that were reached*****…** Russia has ***historically been and will remain the guarantor of the security of the peoples of the Caucasus*****."** [emphasis added] (Medvedev, MFA Statement, 8th Aug 2008)

President Medvedev's statement (above) made on the morning after the commencement of Russian military operations in Georgia serves as a useful summary of Russian narratives during the five-day Russia-Georgia war of August 2008. The emphasis added to the statement highlights two key Russian justifications for engaging in military operations that give insight into Russian perspectives on the institutions of International Society. These justifications are pervasive throughout the 27 documents that comprise the official published material by the Russian MFA between 7th and 12th August 2008. The first justification is that Russia was obliged to intervene on the grounds of international law. Both due to Georgian breaches of extant non-use of force treaties and agreements, and on the grounds of human rights violations by Georgia's regular military forces. The second is more complex but linked to, and intertwined with, the first justification through the institution of human rights. Russia emphasised not only its justification to act, but its obligation to do so through the blurring of its constitutional domestic policies regarding the protection of ethnic Russians, Russian citizens and/or speakers under the banner of a regional foreign policy, driven by an overarching humanitarian intervention principle. This exposes a key difference between Russian and Western perspectives where Russia openly embarks on implementing a hierarchical, Russo-centric human rights policy where ethnic and/or those culturally aligned/identify as Russian have primacy. The volume of Russian (whether by ethnicity, language, or identity) diaspora in the post-Soviet Republics, along with Russia's post-Soviet policies of proliferating passports to these communities (Rytovuori-Apunen, 2019), has had

substantial influence on shaping Russia's interpretation of the institutions of sovereignty and territoriality in this region. In former-Soviet Republics that can be deemed civilisationally Russian by citizenry, a wider collective or republic sovereignty based on Russian cultural, ethnic, and/or historical territorial interests (see sections 1.1.3 & 2.3.3 – 2.3.4) is formed. This creates ambiguity for outside observers (i.e. the West) regarding where Russia's domestic policy ends, and its foreign policy begins.

The way Russia intertwines the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights is the standout feature of this Georgia case study. When coupled with Russian attempts to enable and justify the Georgia intervention of 2008 using the processes and associated legitimacy of global/multi-national organisations and international treaties (secondary institutions), a snapshot of Russian perspectives is revealed that gives substantial understanding of Russian interpretations of multiple primary and secondary institutions. As such, this section of the chapter breaks down the narratives observed during the conflict into three sub-sections. The first covering Russia's use of international agreements. The second explores and assesses how human rights, sovereignty and territoriality interlink, and the third discusses Russia's use of secondary institutions to message their perspectives. Throughout, prevailing Western perspectives of the same events are added to provide comparison and demonstrate where polysemy is apparent. The weight of emphasis is on understanding the Russian perspective with Western perspective examples selected as representative of wider Western interpretations of institutions as outlined in section 3.5 of chapter 3.

5.2.1 International agreements and legal basis for war

Prior to exploring the Russian narratives published during the period of warfighting, it is important to note that Russia's justification for military operations does not account for the wider context of escalation between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. There is not scope for a comprehensive examination of these events, nor is it required as this thesis is does not seek to apportion blame regarding the cause of the conflict. However, it is important to note for the analysis, specifically concerning Russia's understanding and implementation of international law, that Russia's legal justification was formulated amidst

what was widely considered in the West to be Russian provocation of the Georgian state. This perceived aggression manifested in various ways, notably through Russia undertaking large scale military exercises (Caucasus Frontier 2008) which included approximately 8,000 troops in July 2008, effectively rehearsing the scenario for a Georgia intervention (IISS, 2009). The specified aim of this exercise was to practice provision of military support to Russian peacekeepers in the Joint Peace Keeping Force (JPKF) stationed in South Ossetia (Gvosdev & Marsh, 2013).

Other acts considered aggressive by both Georgia and the West included Russian military aircraft overflights of South Ossetia. These were described by Russia as an urgent preventative measure to stop an imminent attack by Georgia on the territory. This display of military power was also coupled with overt political support to Ossetian separatists involved in internal fighting against Georgian state authorities. A US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing in June 2008 described Moscow's behaviour through the spring and early summer of that year as "increasingly aggressive" (p2) and cited that Moscow was ignoring both US and EU calls for the Russian side to follow peace initiatives. The US stated Moscow was "playing a very destabilizing role" (p3) in the region. Overall, the prevailing Western understanding of the descent into fighting between Russia and Georgia is that, although Georgian forces did attack Russian forces first, Russia baited them into it (see also HM Government, 2008). This view is reflected widely throughout the subsequent EU Independent Fact-Finding Mission Report published in 2009. Volume II of which serves as a compilation of Western subject matter expert opinion. It states that from a legal perspective there is no evidence that Georgia acted in self-defence against Russia and, in all probabilities, did attack Russian forces inside Georgia causing a Russian counterattack, and ultimately the war on the night of 7th-8th August 2008.

However, the subtext throughout the 2009 EU report speaks to Russian provocations, and support to Georgian separatists. It is damning of Moscow's lack of necessity and proportionality in its reaction the Georgian attack (European Union, 2009, pp199 – 257). The authoritative findings from the report, detailed in volume I, echo the position that it is accepted (by the West) that Georgia started the conflict, and had no legal basis to do so. However, the report only applies this to the initial Russian rebuttal of the Georgian attack and

not further military action reaching into other Georgian territory, where the express aim was not the protection of the JPKF (European Union 2009b, pp22 – 33). At this point the EU Fact-Finding mission states that "In a matter of a very few days, the pattern of legitimate and illegitimate military action had thus turned around between the two main actors Georgia and Russia" (p24). The report also highlights the pressure the Georgian government was under in the post-Soviet period as it attempted to Westernise (including aspirations for accession to NATO and the EU) in opposition to Moscow's wishes. Ultimately, the EU Fact-Finding mission found that the context for the conflict must be understood considering "the impact of a great power's [Russia] coercive politics and diplomacy against a small and insubordinate neighbour" (p31). Whilst the report does not explicitly state this as a mitigation for the Georgian breach of international law, it can certainly be read as strongly implied. An implication that did not pass Moscow by.

The differences highlighted by this case study in what can justify military intervention, specifically in terms of proportionality, highlights very different applications of international law where the Russian view requires only the act of breaching an agreement, or law (in this case the Georgian attack on Russian forces and subsequent right to use Article 51 of the UN Charter). The act of breaching becoming detached from, and more important than, the context in which that agreement/law was breached, despite any contributing provocations and/or factors. International law in this regard is being applied in a positivist contractual manner. Effectively a contract whose terms are laid out in the relevant international treaties and agreements (secondary institutions) between the parties (in this case Russia and Georgia). By this interpretation, if the terms of this international legal contract are broken, even if by coercion, then this breach can be used to legitimise and justify any number of other normative and material policy goals. This includes the use of military force with higher thresholds on what is proportionate and necessary than the West accepts. Russia's contractual approach to international law sits in direct opposition to the democratic moral position on international law that the West takes in the Russia-West context, and is a clear case of polysemy presenting in this primary institution.

The importance of employing this contractual approach to international law to justify Russian arguments that military intervention was not only legitimate, but an obligation, is highlighted

by the frequency with which Georgian breaches of international law are referred to across the MFA publications. In just 5 days, international law is used as the base justification for the conflict 100 times across 27 documents (dataset 1). This total figure of 100 is broken down further into categories in table 2 (below) to demonstrate where Russia is placing emphasis within its international law narrative for onward analysis.

Category of Reference to International Law	Occurrences across Dataset 1
Reference to violation of International Law by Georgia through violation of treaties and agreements.	23
Reference to violation of International Law by Georgia through wider principles of international community (i.e., UN Charter).	18
Reference to Georgian Human Rights violations.	38
Reference to Georgia's unwillingness to sign new international agreements on non-use of Force.	21

Table 2. Russian official references to Georgian violation of International Law 7 – 12 August 2008

As already discussed, the EU Fact-Finding mission and wider West generally acknowledges that Georgia did attack first, breaking the international treaties that existed between the two countries. For Russia, a treaty of particular importance was the Dagomys Agreement of 1992 (also known as the Sochi Agreement) pertaining to the non-use of force in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Dagomys Agreement (its full title being the Agreement on Principles of Settlement of the Georgian – Ossetian Conflict, 1992) laid out the principles of a regional cease-fire, withdrawal of Russian and Georgian regular military forces from South Ossetia, economic restoration, and the creation of a Joint Control Commission (JCC). The JCC would go on to create the JPKF which ultimately provided Russia with what it felt was a legal mandate for protecting Russian personnel stationed in South Ossetia. Particularly due to the fact the JCC and JPKF were initiatives supported and monitored by the OSCE (OSCE, 2020) which provided international legitimacy. Although the breach of Dagomys by Georgia is mentioned only twice by name across dataset 1, it is referred to a further 8 times by its date (10 times in total). This constitutes just under half of all mentions of Georgian breaches of international treaties from official releases during the conflict and is central to Russia's initial justification for engaging in military operations. The breaching of Dagomys (as well as

subsequent agreements), from the Russian perspective, affords Moscow a clear mandate to protect Russian members of the JPKF stationed in South Ossetia. Therefore, the official narratives suggests that for Russia, once they perceived they could articulate that the Georgian side had breached its obligations under the conditions of Dagomys, it then had unquestioned legitimacy to intervene militarily; affording Russia the ability to also pursue its longer-term normative agenda in the region. Specifically, an agenda concerning collective sovereignty and territoriality via the justification of protecting the human rights of Russian peoples in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The statistical data in table 2 highlights the centrality of human rights to the Russian legal basis for initiating military operations. Breaking down these references further, of the 38 instances noted, 23 specifically cited threat from the Georgian state to Russian citizens. The importance of the protection of Russian citizens, underpinned by Moscow's domestic constitutional obligations that reflect their multipolar and civilisational worldview, is laid out in no uncertain terms by Russia on the first full day of the conflict. President Medvedev stated on the 8th August 2008 that "I am obliged to protect the life and dignity of Russian citizens, wherever they are" (Medvedev, MFA Statement, 8th August 2008). This is a statement that continues to have wide implications for all former-Soviet Republics. Most notably, the obligation to protect continues to be used as a key justification for Russian intervention in Ukraine (see Ukraine case study at chapter 7). The way Russia uses its protection of Russian citizens justification highlights the blurred boundaries between Moscow's domestic obligations and international law when applied to citizens of Russia, or anywhere it considers culturally and/or civilisationally Russian.

Another prominent theme linked to international law and human rights is the use of the terms genocide and ethnic cleansing (cited 6 and 10 times respectively). By the 12th August, (the end of the period of Russian military operations) the narrative on human rights abuses appears to consolidate into definitive accusations against Georgia. Both President Medvedev and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lavrov, make clear public statements to that effect. Lavrov also states that the West, specifically the US, wished Russia to refrain from highlighting the human rights abuses committed by the Georgian Regime. On the 12th August, he stated that "Dr Rice [US Secretary of State] kept pressing me that in our public commentaries on what Mikhail

Saakashvili is doing in South Ossetia Russia should avoid expressions like genocide, ethnic cleansings and war crimes" before going on to question why Russia could not make such an assessment in the face of such an "obvious designation supported also by testimonies of eyewitnesses and journalists" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 12th Aug, 2008). The same day, speaking during a press conference with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, in which Medvedev marked the cessation of Russian military operations in Georgia, the Russian President was even stronger in his language. He stated that Georgian actions were "an issue that is qualified in international law as a crime, just as the murder of thousands of citizens is called "genocide". There is no other name and cannot be." (Medvedev, Press Statement, 12th August 2008). US Secretary of State Rice's address concerning US-Russia Relations on 18th September, shortly after the war, highlights the prevailing Western perspective regarding these Russian claims of genocide, and its use as a justification under international law. She categorised Russian claims as "alarmist" and inferred it was being used as a justification to "dismember a sovereign country" (Rice, 2008). By doing so, the US totally dismissed Russian claims and effectively accused Russia of using Western R2P precedence to embark on an aggressive and territorially expansionist foreign policy.

The EU Fact-Finding mission, which serves as a useful summary of the Western position on genocide in Georgia categorically states that "genocide did not take place" (European Union, 2009b, p17). In the face of the facts that the circumstances and number of people killed in the conflict by Georgia did not meet the threshold for genocide under international law (as detailed in the EU report), Russia backtracked on its accusations (European Union, 2009, p222). Instead, Moscow turned to a more measured narrative where the justification became about preventative measures as reflected by their statement that "As far as we can judge, there were indeed reasons to believe that the actions undertaken by the Georgians were aimed at exterminating fully or partially the Ossetian ethnic group" (p426). The flexibility demonstrated by Russia in pivoting their perspective on the genocide argument serves as further evidence of Moscow's view of international law as a contractual tool with which to create legitimacy through operating within what it perceives to be the letter of international law. Once the genocide narrative lost value, an alternative based on prevention was swapped in which could be referenced to accepted international documentation such as UNHCR Resolution 7/25 which states that it is "the responsibility of each individual State to protect

its population from genocide, which entails the prevention of such a crime, including incitement to it, through appropriate and necessary means" (UNHCR, 2008). This quote is a direct echo from a comprehensive resolution from the UN General Assembly 2005 World Summit in which those states present adopted commitment to intervene and protect populations under threat of genocide and ethnic cleansing (UN General Assembly, 2005). Due to the contractual nature of Russia's interpretation of international law, Moscow no doubt felt it had legitimacy to act through using justifications in line with UN resolutions, alongside precedence of Western states using a R2P justification in conflicts in Kosovo and across Africa.

In the wider context of Russia's policies that blur its domestic and international obligations to protect civilisational interests, a clear picture of how Russia is interpreting international law and seeking to use those clauses/resolutions/treaties which legitimise its actions emerges. An approach which also helps to explain why Russia may use greater force than the West deems necessary or proportionate. If Moscow is taking it literally that protection of Russian citizens abroad and associated sustainment of Russian civilisational domination of former-Soviet states relates directly to its own sovereignty and territoriality, the issue gains an existentiality that the West does not recognise and/or acknowledge as a legitimate concern against its own interpretations of those same institutions and democratic rules based order (RBO) perspective of International Society.

5.2.2 Human rights, collective sovereignty, and territoriality

Having identified the Russo-centric human rights narratives that Russia used to support its intervention in Georgia, this sub-section explores how the Russian perspective on international law pertaining to protection of ethnic, cultural and/or historic Russian territory affects and informs Russian views of sovereignty and territoriality in Georgia. In responding to a question posed during a BBC interview, Foreign Minister Lavrov summarised the scale of Russia's normative challenge regarding its obligation to protect Russian citizens living in former-Soviet Republics: "Some 25 million people who used to be the citizens of the Soviet Union, overnight found that they are living in a foreign country" (MFA Transcript BBC Interview, 9th August, 2008). Moscow's Russo-centric obligations and right to intervene in its near abroad is directly compared to international precedence of use of Western led R2P

policies through comparing the intervention in Georgia to the UN's humanitarian missions in Africa. Lavrov states "But this is not Africa to us, this is next door. This is the area, where Russian citizens live" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 9th August 2009). Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigory Karasin also gives insight into the blurring of the civilisational borders between Russia and Georgia when he insists "that there is no Georgiaphobia, as it is sometimes said, in Russian society, nor was or will ever be there; because the one million or so Georgians living in Russia are a part of the Russian people" (Karasin, MFA Transcript, 10th August 2008).

These statements collectively provide some perspective on the scale of Russia's notions of collective sovereignty and territoriality, and why Moscow feels obligated and justified in implementing elements of its domestic policy inside the borders of former-Soviet Republics. Further, when the perspective that relative to sovereignty, "Territorial integrity is a separate concept. And if sovereignty is based on the will of the people and on the Constitution, then territorial integrity, as a rule, shows the real state of affairs" (Medvedev, MFA Statement, 12th August 2008) is coupled with the values based policy that "Russia has historically been and will remain the guarantor of the security of the peoples of the Caucasus" (Medvedev, MFA Statement, 8 August 2008) then Russia's understanding of regional, collective sovereignty being led by the will of the people logically follows to a conclusion that a population of Russians wanting to be part of Russia represents the "real state of affairs" with regards to territoriality. This in turn leads onto Medvedev's commitment that "In accordance with the constitution and federal legislation, as President of the Russian Federation, I am obliged to protect the life and dignity of Russian citizens, wherever they are" (Medvedev, MFA Statement, 8th August 2008). These statements encapsulate the Russian view that in practical terms demotes Georgia's sovereignty as secondary to Russia's civilisational view of the region, underpinned in this case by an obligation to Russo-centric human rights from both a normative and legal basis. A position based on the domestic policy of the Russian Constitution (Russian Government, 2020). Words to this effect are repeated 18 times by Russian Government representatives across dataset 1, demonstrating the importance of this justification for intervention in Georgia, based on a 'real state of affairs' view of sovereignty and territoriality when applied to former-Soviet Republics.

An apparent result of Russia's application of its domestic policy influenced Russo-centric and civilisational view of human rights in Georgia in 2008 is the ambiguity and contradictions in Russian narratives regarding sovereignty. In some instances, Russia overtly states that it accepts, and respects Georgia's sovereignty from the highest levels of the Russian Government (Medvedev, MFA Statement, 12 Aug 2008). However, concurrent narratives also exist that attribute substantial autonomy to South Ossetia (and Abkhazia). These being territories generally referenced by Moscow as separate entities by virtue of their predominantly 'Russian' populations. The way Russia describes and discusses matters related to sovereignty and territoriality related to South Ossetia within dataset 1 places a greater emphasis on territoriality as the manifestation of self-determination, with sovereignty a secondary factor in determining where true borders lie. This is not a perspective shared by the West. Several comments from US President Bush and his administration highlight the robust link between sovereignty and territorial integrity as essentially two sides of the same coin. "Georgia is a sovereign nation, and its territorial integrity must be respected" (Bush, 2008, p1129) is typical of a series of statements made by the US Government throughout August that directly link Georgia's sovereignty to its territorial integrity (Bush (2008), pp1129 – 1386). Further, those areas which Russia cited as being obligated to protect due to their traditional Russian links are highlighted by the US President as such: "Abkhazia and South Ossetia are within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia, and they must remain so" (White House Statement, 2008). This line from the US is replicated by other Western nations and reflected in a G8 statement which termed Russia's actions in Georgia as an occupation, and that "Russia's recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia violates the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia" (US Department of State, 2008).

In sum, for Russia, with regards to Georgia, sovereignty represents Sakashvili's Government, and territoriality represents the popular will of the people. The latter being a stronger factor in determining the status of the pro-Russian autonomies of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as part of the wider Russian civilisation. From a Western perspective, in the context of Georgia, territoriality is treated as a function of sovereignty and that breaching one, breaches the other. To the West, Russia's position is a contradiction to their professed view of the inviolable nature of sovereignty as detailed in the review of existing literature in chapter 2 (see Sakwa,

2019; Baaz 2016; Aalto, 2007; Ghebali, 2005; Charap & Darden, 2014; Cadier, 2015; Lo, 2015). However, this same literature also acknowledges this contradiction and discusses the difference in application of sovereignty by Russia in the former-Soviet Republics where Russia appears to differentiate between those states that qualify for full sovereignty (those outside the Russian civilisational sphere of influence), and those to which it applies a much more limited version based on its civilisational view.

Ultimately, the culmination of Russian sovereignty and territoriality narratives related to the Georgia conflict conclude with the Russian assertion that regardless of whether South Ossetia and Abkhazia were part of a sovereign Georgia prior to the conflict, Georgia's actions, in violation of international treaties, the rule of law and associated human rights abuses means that in practical terms they can no longer be. From the Russian perspective, Georgia emerges from the conflict with a "big question mark" over its reliability and credibility as a member of International Society (Lavrov, MFA Statement, 8th August 2008). This loss of trust in the Georgian State leaves the South Ossetian and Abkhazian peoples without the ability to feel safe living within the borders of a unified Georgia (Karasin, MFA Transcript, 10 August 2008). Lavrov states this explicitly at the cessation of hostilities when speaking of the Ossetian and Abkhaz people; "they will not be secure together with Georgia. This is an absolute fact." (Lavrov, MFA Transcript 12th August 2008).

It is ultimately Russia's delineation of sovereignty and territoriality that provides their legal justification for intervention, based on interpretations of territoriality in former-Soviet republics that do not conform with the prevailing Western view. The differences in understanding on what constitutes a legitimate justification for intervention on human rights grounds evidences the polysemy occurring in the interpretation of the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights when applied to Russia's near abroad, and highlights the pluralistic nature of the Russia-West International Society. On the evidence of the narratives above, in this geographic location, Russia and the West are at multiple impasses through different interpretations of these institutions and their ability to justify legal and normative positions. Positions that are almost certainly considered existential to both Russian and Western world views as they lay the basis for what are the acceptable rules for International Society.

5.2.3 Use of Secondary Institutions

An important and relevant sub-narrative that supports the main themes already identified is the emphasis Russia places on certain international organisations. In the case of Georgia, the most prominent are the UN and OSCE. The importance of the UN to Russian efforts to build legitimacy based on international law for their military operations in Georgia is shown through the high priority Moscow places on consistent engagement with the organisation during the conflict. This begins with a letter from Russia's permanent representative to the UN, Vitaly Churkin on 7 August 2008 to request an emergency meeting to discuss the "aggressive actions of Georgia against South Ossetia, an internationally recognized party to the conflict" (UNSC Letter, S/2008/533). This short letter shows the use of this key secondary institution to establish Russia's position on Georgia's impending breach of international law. The language used both recognises Georgia as a state that must be held to UN rules, including through international treaties and agreements, as well as undermining Georgian sovereignty and territoriality by emphasising South Ossetia's autonomous status.

The resultant 5951st meeting of UN Security Council (UNSC), held on 8 August 2008, afforded Russia the opportunity to reinforce its key narratives. Specifically, those discussed above regarding the breaching of international agreements and law to which Georgia was beholden "as a member of the international community guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations". Russia further states that the international community, led by the UNSC must "play its role" in forcing Georgia to disengage from hostilities in South Ossetia (UNSC Meeting, S/PV.5951). Although the OSCE document library does not appear to hold a copy of the statement given by Russia at the 725th Special Plenary Meeting of the Permanent Council, the MFA documentation contains a transcript which coherently echoes the same narratives being fed into the UNSC (OSCE Journal, 8 August 2008; Voronkov, MFA Transcript, 8th August 2008). Dataset 1 also shows consistent inclusion of the OSCE as a priority secondary institution for Russia to attempt to use to build legitimacy for its actions, and as a forum to spread its narratives internationally. The OSCE being used either to present Russia as a responsible member of the international community operating within its legal mandate, or to highlight Georgia's failures to do so some 24 times across the 27 documents.

Two further UNSC meetings took place during the conflict, the first at the request of Georgia (UNSC Letter, S/2008/536) and the second at the request of both Georgia and the US (UNSC Letters, S/2008/537 & S/2008/538). These two meetings provide some insight into the differences between the Russian and Western position. In both the 5952nd and 5953rd meetings of the UNSC, Russia reinforced its position that Georgia was the aggressor, and had broken international law in several ways. This included violating the human rights of both South Ossetians and Russian nationals, as well as claims of genocide by Georgian forces. During the 5953rd meeting the Russian side also referenced the 1992 Dagomys Agreement and stated that Georgia had deliberately targeted Russian peacekeepers in violation of international law. Churkin summarises these points in a follow up letter on 11th August 2008, not only pressing those narratives but also invoking Article 51 of the UN, the right to self-defence (UNSC Letter, S/2008/545). All of this is further evidence of Russia's contractual approach to international law where the focus is on building narratives of violations by Georgia to legitimise the Russian response.

The Western perspective is somewhat different. At the 5952nd meeting of the UNSC, the Western powers of the US, UK, Italy, and France all used their statements to call for peace and demand that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia be respected (UNSC Press Release SC/9418, 2008). At the 5953rd meeting the US narrative becomes directly accusatory and critical of Russia's intervention, speaking to Russian attacks "against a sovereign State that had not posed a direct threat to Russia" (UNSC Press Release SC/9419, 2008). All the above reinforces the apparent inseparability to the West of the concepts of sovereignty and territoriality when applied to a legitimate government (in Georgia), through its democratic credentials. In this context, the West is treating sovereignty and territoriality as inseparably linked and confined to the borders of recognised states, not civilisations. Through their official positions on the conflict, the states of the West also effectively elevated the priority of maintaining Georgia's sovereignty through territorial integrity above the Russian grievances related to treaty violations, the targeting of Russian forces, and Moscow's humanitarian concerns based on protection of Russians and/or civilisational interests. The perceived existential necessity to Moscow of implementing its protection of Russian interests, whether cultural, ethnic, and/or territorial, makes the relative Russia-West positions on sovereignty, territoriality, and international law totally incompatible, yet with both parties believing they

are speaking the same language. This is a clear example of the differing prioritisation of the primary institutions of International Society, the polysemy inherent in them and an attempt from all parties involved to regulate their interactions, and maintain political dialogue through secondary institutions.

The only other prominent secondary institution narrative that appears in dataset 1 concerns the European Union (EU). However, narratives are markedly different to those concerning the UN and OSCE. This is almost certainly due to the fact the EU is a powerful international organisation in which Russia has no equity and therefore no power to make its case on an equal footing. Therefore, the narratives surrounding the EU include both an overt willingness to engage as a partner, but also a steady stream of criticism of the organisation's member states in failing to use the collective power of the EU to prevent Georgia's aggression in South Ossetia. Overall, the narratives surrounding the EU are accusatory in tone and place the EU as an external body, interfering in regional politics of which that have inadequate understanding, or deliberately bias perspectives.

5.2.4 Summary of Russian Narratives During the Conflict

Russian narratives during the Georgia conflict of 2008 can be distilled into three intertwined themes which highlight where polysemy in primary institutions exists. Additionally, the themes speak to the balance of pluralism-solidarism in the state of relations between Russia and the West, and Russia and Georgia, by showing that any solidarist traits that exist between Russia and the West fall short of being able to enforce a shared view of international law; thereby reinforcing the thin, pluralist society between them.

The first theme centres on Russia's contractual use of international law to underpin every justification for their military intervention in Georgia in 2008. From highlighting specific breaches of non-use of force treaties by Georgia, to more broad accusations of genocide and ethnic cleansing, Moscow demonstrates a positivist understanding of international law, which if broken releases the parties to that law to act outside any former terms of agreement. Importantly the context of how this international legal contract is broken appears less

important that the breach itself. Additionally, when legal arguments begin to falter, focus can be quickly shifted to other justifications.

The second theme is human rights and how it links to collective sovereignty and Russia's understanding of civilisational global order**.** Russian interpretations of human rights and R2P shows a clear hierarchical and Russo-centric basis, with Russian citizens obliged to be protected by the state by virtue of their being part of the greater civilisation. This approach to human rights and R2P is the largest contributing factor and justification for Moscow's blurring of the boundaries of domestic and international law within dataset 1. This has potentially huge implications to how Russia then views and applies sovereignty and territoriality in areas of traditional Russian influence where cultural, civilisational, and geo-strategic security interests overlap. In functional terms, this leaves the Russia-Georgia relationship as more in line with two powers, one considerably larger than the other, operating in a way more in line with the material principles of an international system, albeit on a regional basis. Russia's apparent belief in its existential need to retain influence and civilisational dominance over those areas it considers historically Russian, in the face of Western and NATO expansion is laid bare in their position that can divorce territoriality from sovereignty. This affords Moscow the ability to create a collective sovereignty including the territory of other internationally recognised states that border Russia, so long as they house what it considers Russian populations and/or has civilisational connections.

Finally, Russia's narratives concerning, and physical interaction with, secondary institutions constitutes the third theme. Russia's extensive use of the UN and OSCE, as organisations in which it has equal status with the West, demonstrates the regulating effect (and its limits) of such organisations where dialogue can continue, allowing the wider pluralist International Society between Russia and the West to continue to function. This is despite the significant differences observed in application of primary institutions. It is important to note that the EU is treated differently due to Russia having no equity within the organisation. In part it is treated as an entity with enough power to be respected and engaged with, but also seen as a symbol of the Western power through its creeping expansion into the traditional Russian geographic and civilisational area of influence.

5.3 Russian Narratives Prior to the Conflict

The analysis of narratives during the conflict that identified the three themes concerning Russian interpretations of international law, human rights (including how this impacts sovereignty and territoriality), and use of secondary institutions must be put into the wider context of Russia's consistent narratives concerning Georgia over a longer period. This is for two main reasons, the first of which is that analysis solely based on Russia's narratives during warfighting may not be representative of long-standing peacetime Russian interpretations of the same institutions. Instead, under the pressures of conflict, it is conceivable Moscow could have formed narratives with the express intent of creating legitimacy for their military intervention rather than these narratives being an accurate representation of Russia's true beliefs. The second reason is simpler, the data used to identify Russian narratives during the conflict is a small sample (7th – 12th August 2008) and in and of itself may not be representative of the consistent approach Russia takes to interpreting institutions.

To ensure that the themes identified in the first part of this chapter provide a useful and robust baseline of Russian interpretation of institutions, the Russian narratives that present prior to the conflict over a substantial period must be analysed. To achieve this, all MFA publications related to Georgia following the Rose Revolution on 23rd November 2003 up until the start of the Russia-Georgia war have been analysed against the context of the three themes identified from dataset 1. The Rose Revolution in 2003 has been chosen as an appropriate starting point for two reasons. Firstly, it is one of a series of colour revolutions, events of great concern to Russia with regards to national security, which impacted Russia-West relations directly. Secondly it marks a definitive reduction in Russia's influence in Georgian affairs (Delcour & Wolczuk, 2015). Essentially the manifestation of a direct threat to Russia's civilisational worldview. The 596 MFA documents that cover this period are collectively referred to from this point as dataset 2 (available at Appendix B). The analysis of this dataset examines the prevalence of the three identified themes (international law, human rights, and secondary institutions), and any relationships that exists between them dependent on the wider context (i.e., periods of escalation versus relative calm within the Russia-Georgia relationship). For dataset 1 (MFA documents between 7th-12th August 2008)

the following data is presented as a baseline for the following analysis of dataset 2 (MFA documents between 24th November 2003 – 4th August 2008).

Theme	Prevalence	Prevalence by percentage
1, International Law	21 in 27	78%
2, Human Rights	18 in 27	67%
3, Secondary Institutions	14 in 27	52%

Table 3. Dataset 1 Thematic Statistic Baseline

For dataset 2, the equivalent table is presented below.

Theme	Prevalence	Prevalence by percentage
1, International Law	308 in 596	52%
2, Human Rights	171 in 596	28.69%
3, Secondary Institutions	203 in 596	34%

Table 4. Dataset 2 Thematic Statistic Baseline

The statistical analysis above immediately provides a clear answer to whether the three narrative themes related to institutions identified during the war 2008, were also consistently present prior to it. That answer is overwhelmingly yes. Additionally, insight is gained into understanding the hierarchy of importance that Russia placed on the institutions in the case of Georgia. What is shown is that this remained largely consistent, but with narratives increasing in volume during crisis. At this point it is useful to present the bulk of the data from dataset 2 as a graphic to aid in drawing out further conclusions regarding Russia's use of, and interpretation of institutions in post-Rose Revolution Russia-Georgia relations. On the chart below at figure 8 the following data is presented.

- The horizontal axis represents time, divided into years, sub-divided into quarters.
- The vertical axis is number of Russian MFA documents pertaining to Georgia in each quarter.
- The dashed grey line represents total documents produced per quarter.

- The three coloured lines (blue, green, and red) represent how many documents each theme is contained within.
- Also highlighted are peaks of high output of Russian narratives related to Georgia, which relate to periods of increased narrative 'volume' during specific crises.

It should be noted that the incomplete quarters (quarter 4 of 2003 and quarter 3 of 2008) are not included on the chart to prevent biasing the data. However, the final 6 months of 2008 is presented in a separate month by month chart (figure 9, p121) to highlight the specific interplay of institutions in the immediate period preceding warfighting.

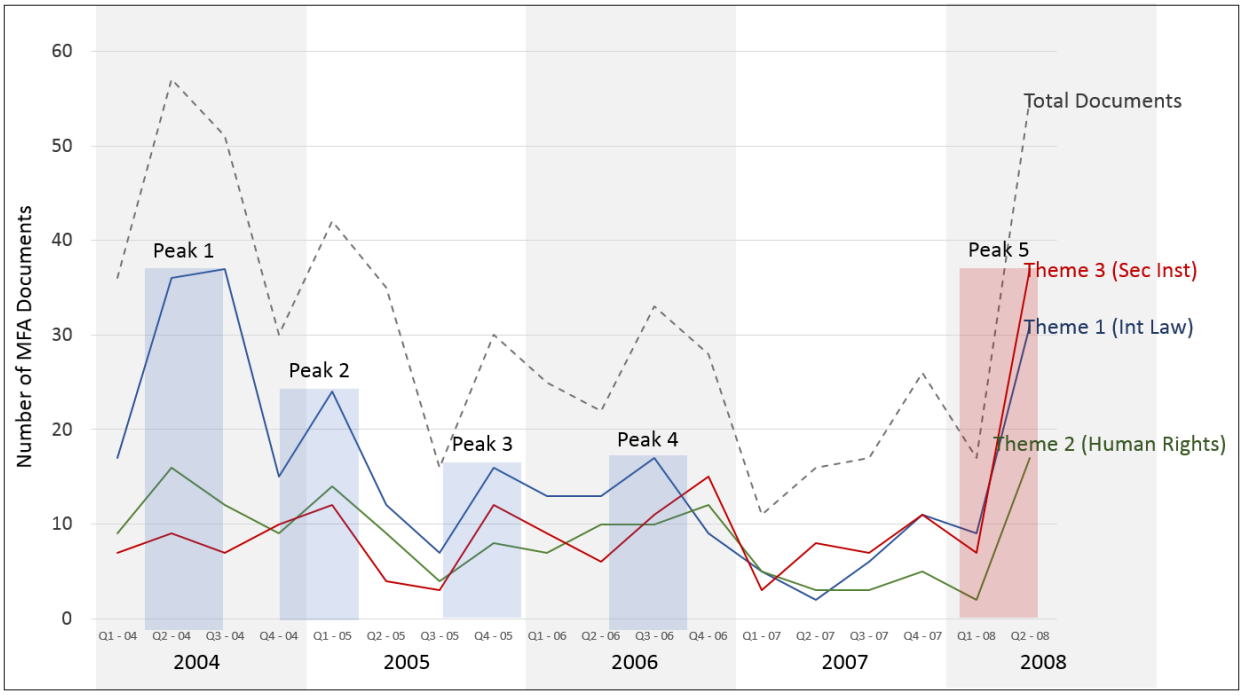

Figure 8. Prevalence of Russian narratives in Dataset 2

What the data in figure 8 shows, is that Russian narratives related to this case study are overwhelmingly underpinned by a contractual approach to international law. As discussed previously in section 5.1 (table 2) the human rights and secondary institutions narratives related to military intervention in Georgia are legitimised through justifications based in international law. Therefore, it is not possible from the data to assign a definitive position within a hierarchy for the institutions observed in the data other than to assess that international law has primacy, acting as what Buzan would describe as a master institution.

In Buzan's breakdown of institutions however, he lists international law as a derivative of sovereignty and territoriality, whereas the evidence presented here would suggest that for Russia in the post-Soviet space, sovereignty and territoriality are more akin to a derivative, rather than master, institution. This serves as important evidence of polysemy in interpreting institutions that help to explain Russia-West normative divergence, in the post-Soviet space at least. Despite the data examined not giving a clear hierarchy of institutions, other than international law being at the top, the data does show that the relative importance of human rights and Russia's use of international organisations to reinforce narratives appears linked, and can flex to the requirements of a given political environment. This is highlighted by how these themes interrelate, switching places in terms of prominence during the peaks outlined in figure 8.

What is immediately apparent from the visual representation in the chart is that during times of crisis or escalation the human rights narrative becomes more prevalent than those related to secondary institutions. This is despite over the whole near 5-year period, human rights (whilst a constant) is generally given less coverage by relative percentage (appearing in 28.69% versus 34% of documents across dataset 2). Peak 3 appears as an anomaly in that human rights narratives remain less prominent than secondary institutions. This is almost certainly due to quarters 3 and 4 of 2005 reflecting a general deterioration of Russia-Georgia relations and increased concern from Russia about Georgia's NATO ambitions rather than a security crisis that was physically manifesting, as was occurring in each of the other peaks. Thirdly, it appears that in the immediate build up to the conflict in August 2008, international law narratives drop below those concerning secondary institutions. Due to not including the incomplete quarter 3 in 2008 as part of peak 5, the graph ends up being somewhat mis-leading in this single instance as it shows a higher frequency of secondary institutions narratives overtaking those concerning international law. This contrasts with the patterns established throughout the whole period and during the other peaks. To gain a clearer picture of what was occurring in relation to the narratives as the escalation that eventually led to the war was occurring, a higher fidelity month by month break down of the 6 months preceding the war is included at figure 9 below. This shows that as with other periods of crisis (that did not amount to warfighting), international law takes primacy, with human rights (Russo-centric) taking a higher priority than secondary institutions. However, it is notable that such

a large effort was being made to build narratives through international organisations immediately prior to the conflict which probably reflects Russia's desire to build legitimacy through increased international dialogue that placed Georgia as the actor in breach of its legal obligations.

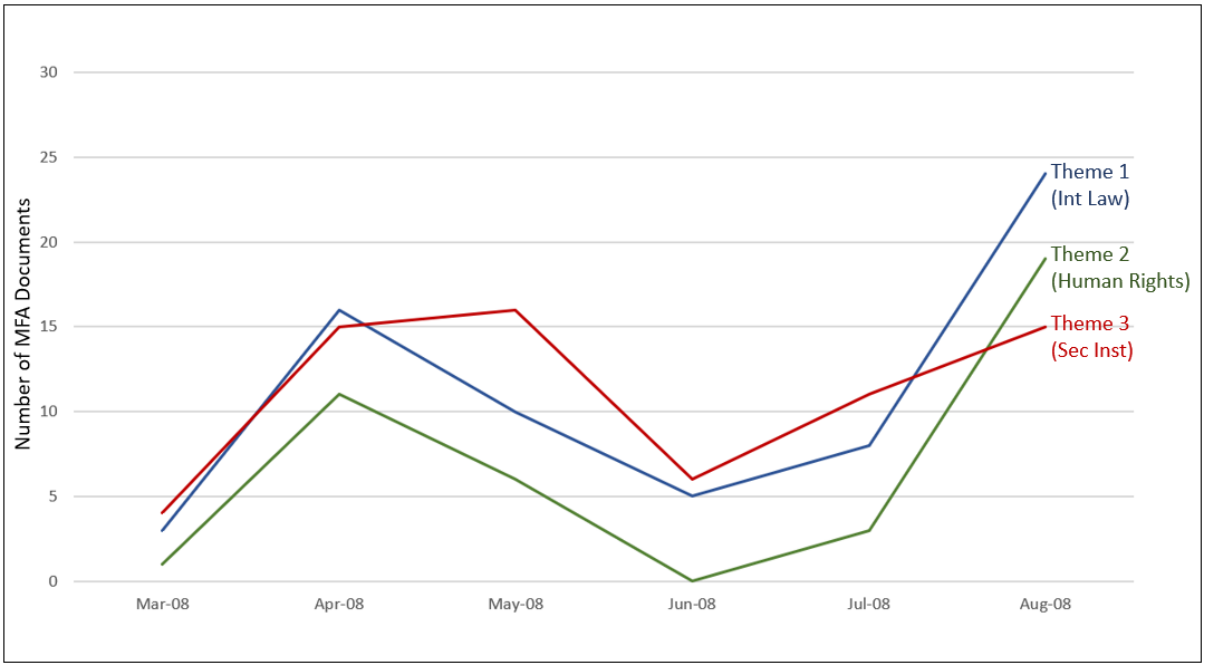

Figure 9. Monthly Breakdown of Narratives March – August 2008

Although it is out-with the scope of this research to conduct analysis of dataset 2 to the same level of detail as dataset 1, it is useful for context to give a concise overview of the context in each of the five peaks in figure 8.

Peak 1 (May – July 2004). During this period the Adjara crisis occurs. A crisis sparked due to the head of the autonomous region, Aslan Abashidze, being unwilling to recognise the Georgian Government in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution. By the late spring of 2004, significant escalation was occurring, including a very real threat of military intervention by Georgian forces into Adjara, with the express aim of re-asserting Georgian Government control. Russia reported that on the night of 5th into the 6th May a large contingent of Georgian Special Forces were heading towards Batumin, the Capital of Adjara. Abashidze, reportedly decided to prevent bloodshed, and facilitated by Russia fled to Moscow (MFA Statement, 7th May 2004), paving the way for President Saakashvili to assert central authority over the

region. The Adjara crisis is relevant to this research for three principal reasons. Firstly, Russia increased narratives related to Georgia's obligations within international law, and Moscow ultimately assisted Saakashvili in meeting them. Specifically, ensuring non-use of force agreements were adhered to by facilitating Abashidze's exile. Russia appeared content for Georgian territorial integrity to remain intact when Moscow felt it could not generate a narrative with a basis in international law. Additionally, the unpopularity of Abashidze who governed Adjara with a structure "reminiscent of feudal principalities" (Gurev, 2005) would have complicated any Russian justifications to prevent his removal from power as he was simply lacking popular support (Zorin, 2004). It is notable that in this instance, Russia's implementation of its understanding of international law, and support to the Georgian government in ensuring Abashidze's removal from power was praised by Western powers and major international organisations. A joint press conference by the Head of the OSCE and US Secretary of State at the time included the statement "I am pleased to note the constructive role played by the Russian Federation, in particular by Igor Ivanov, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, in settling the crisis situation, which has ended with the resignation of the Ajaran leader, Aslan Abashidze" (Passey, 2004).

In the preceding months, statements had been made by Moscow regarding its obligation to protect Russian citizens living in autonomous republics, but these notably do not include Adjara. A typical example from Foreign Minister Ivanvov in November 2003 states "You know that many Russian citizens live in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and we are not indifferent to their fate" (MFA Statement, 28th November 2003). This was followed up a day later with "our task here [Abkhazia and South Ossetia] is to provide them [Russian Citizens] with maximum assistance and not allow their rights to be infringed upon" (MFA Transcript, 29th November 2003). Russia is clear about the regions (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) that it does feel it has a legal mandate (via the JCC, JPKF and OSCE) to intervene if its interests are threatened. Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs stating that "We [Russia] believe that any attempts to apply the "Adjarian scenario" in other regions of Georgia may turn out to be dangerous (MFA Statement, 13th May 2004). These statements show considerable consistency in what issues matter for Russia in Georgia, and ultimately where they feel they have the legal mandate and legitimacy to act if required. This is highlighted by the fact that in addition to the Adjaran crisis, throughout the summer of 2004, Georgian Special Forces entered South Ossetia and

clashed regularly with local forces. These clashes were set against the context/pretext (dependent on perspective) of Georgian crackdowns on smuggling operations in the region. This serves as a direct comparison to Russia's reaction to Georgian Forces entering Adjara around the same period. In South Ossetia, the tone was very different. There was no facilitation of Georgia's aims and objectives, and there was strong criticism and accusations that Georgia was using an anti-smuggling rhetoric to justify destabilising the region in contravention to existing legal agreements. Dataset 2 contains 45 documents produced in the two months of June and July 2004 that re-iterate Georgia's legal obligations, including to obey the terms of the 1992 Dagomys Agreement, and obligations under the UN, OSCE and JCC. Russia also repeatedly condemns Georgia's actions as cynical. A summary of the prevailing Russian narratives during this period comes from a statement by Deputy Foreign Minister Loshchinin during a meeting with South Ossetian Leader Eduard Kokoity, "Tbilisi should be aware that provocative actions of the Georgian military security forces destabilize the situation not only in South Ossetia, but in the region as a whole. Russia cannot remain indifferent when it comes to the security of the Russian citizens living in South Ossetia and protecting their rights and interests." (MFA Press Release, 30th July 2004).

Peak 2 (March 2005). The data shows that a peak of narrative activity, again concerning primarily international law occurred in March 2005. This activity largely relates to two ongoing Russia-Georgia issues. Firstly, disagreements over how border control should be implemented, whether that be via international organisation oversight (the Georgian preference) or bi-laterally by Russia and Georgia (Russia's preference). Secondly the emotive matter of the withdrawal of Russian military bases from Georgia. This second issue set against the context of a Georgian Parliamentary resolution in March 2005 that if an agreed timescale for withdrawal of Russian forces has not been made by May 2005, the Georgian state would declare Russian military presence on its soil as illegal (Civil Georgia Magazine, 2005). These events serve as further evidence of Russia's consistently applied contractual understanding of international law as well as their belief in the legal mandate they have to be directly involved in matters of security and governance in certain regions of Georgia.

Peak 3 (October – December 2005). A general tone of deterioration of relations occurs in the data from quarter 4 of 2005. This relates both to Russia's dissatisfaction of Western/NATO

nations supplying arms and equipment to Georgia (MFA Press Release, 13 September 2005; MFA Press Release, 13 October 2005; MFA Statement, 17 October 2005) and to a perceived increase in anti-Russian rhetoric coming from the Georgian state. The whole period speaks to Russia's dissatisfaction with the US led Georgia Train and Equip (GTEP) (US State Dept, 2003), and Sustainment and Stability Operations Programme (SSOP) (Globalsecurity.org, 2023) which both aimed to implement Western standards onto Georgian armed forces. To Russia, this served as an overt attempt to usurp Russian influence in the region in favour of shifting the power balance towards NATO, as well as providing NATO a southern flank. A specific statement by Foreign Minister Ivanov in response to a resolution passed in the Georgian Parliament regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia in December summarises the situation from Russia's perspective. Within his statement he addresses Georgia's "biased assessments of the state of affairs in Abkhazia and South Ossetia", that they wish to "denounce… international agreements" and that Georgia only wishes to solve the issues in the autonomous regions with "military force". He concludes that "The Russian side will take all necessary action to ensure the implementation of the existing international accords, to prevent destabilization in the region and to protect the rights and interests of the Russian citizens living there." (MFA Statement, 12th October 2005).

This deterioration in relations provides valuable insight into how Russia leverages secondary institutions, in this case primarily the OSCE, to regulate the situation and attempt to hold the Georgians to their previous agreements. The narratives in December 2005 are heavily weighted towards articulating exactly what the Georgians are obligated to do (centred on commitment to non-use of force), with legitimacy being taken for Russia's position from the international organisations that are responsible for monitoring the implementation of agreements between Russia, Georgia, and the autonomous republics.

Peak 4 (July – October 2006). The main event during this period was the Kodori Gorge crisis, occurring in late July 2006 when Georgian forces took control of the area inside Abkhazia from a local warlord (Emzar Kvitsiani). This caused a breakdown in dialogue between the Georgian and Abkhazian Governments as Georgia threatened to install the pro-Tbilisi Abkhazian opposition that was in exile. The crisis in the Kodori Gorge features heavily in Russian narratives between late July and early October despite the 'hot' phase of the crisis only lasting

6 days. The day prior to Georgian Forces making an incursion into the Kodori Gorge, Russia cited the precedence of Georgian aggression towards Abkhazia and prior use of the Kodori Gorge as a base of anti-Abkhazian operations in the 1990s (MFA Statement, 25th July 2006). The narratives that follow over the next three and half month's centre on long established Russian narratives of Georgian aggression, breaches of international law, and Saakashvili's disregard for the agreements and treaties established through international organisations.

Peak 5 (April – August 2008). The largest of all the peaks in narratives unsurprisingly occurred in the months preceding the build up to the Russian-Georgian war itself. All of Russia's key narratives increased in regularity, with a concerted effort to robustly articulate what Georgia's obligations were under international law. Additionally, narratives asserted strongly that Russia would act in accordance with the agreements and frameworks of which it was part. In April Russia commits to greater ties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, committing Russia to protecting their rights as autonomous entities. Saakashvili's re-election follows in May and his consolidation of power is complete. In June, Abkhazia cuts all ties with the Georgian Government and Russian narratives across all three themes rise sharply, with Moscow making increasing statements of Russia's obligation to protect Russian citizens and peacekeepers against Georgia's breaches of international law.

5.3.1 Summary of Russian Narratives Prior to the Conflict

Analysis of the Russian narratives prior to the conflict demonstrates that the three themes identified during the Russia-Georgia conflict of 2008 were prevalent since at least the time of the Rose Revolution. The data shows that coincident with the escalation of tensions between Russia and Georgia, the volume and frequency of these narratives increase. This consistency in the narratives evidences that they were not borne of the Russia-Georgia war of 2008 and therefore are assessed as Russia's long-standing interpretations of these institutions in the Georgia context, vice cynical justifications for the military intervention. The pre-war data also correlates the importance Russia places on their contractual approach to international law which underpins all other institutions seen in dataset 1. The other two themes of human rights and secondary institutions are observed to interchange during periods of heightened

tension with Russo-centric human rights narratives overtaking Russian attempts to regulate an escalating crisis through use of international organisations (principally the UN and OSCE).

5.4 Conclusions

The Georgia case study gives considerable insight into polysemy manifesting in international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights between Russia and the West. The Russian narratives from the time of the Rose Revolution in 2003 to the Georgia conflict in 2008 consistently reflect an ideological/normative perspective that understands at least parts of Georgia to be part of a wider Russia and critical to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that Moscow-led civilisation. The analysis of datasets 1 and 2 provides some strong evidence for the polysemic nature of primary institutions, the pluralist nature of International Society between Russia and the West, and gives an understanding of how Russia prioritises international law as its master institution under which all the others derive their limits.

The first and most important conclusion is therefore that for Russia, international law is treated as its master institution and interpreted in a positivist, contractual way in direct contrast to Western perspectives based on democratic morality. The result of this polysemy then affects all other primary institution interpretations across sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. In the case of Georgia at least, a hierarchy of which institutions matter to Russia most begins to emerge. International law takes precedence over all other institutions, reflected in the pervasiveness of this narrative across all of Russia's justification and attempts to build legitimacy for its actions. For Moscow, international law provides the foundation for all other normative and procedural use of institutions, whether primary or secondary.

Conclusion two is that Russia's perspective on human rights and R2P results in Moscow divorcing sovereignty from territoriality in the former-Soviet Republics. Moscow's Russo-centric perspective of human rights, and the way it links to their domestic constitution causes substantial degradation of their view of Georgian sovereignty. The contractual approach to applying the policies of the Russian domestic constitution, which is rooted in a civilisational worldview, to protect Russians wherever they are, causes a blurring of domestic policy into

the region of the former-Soviet republics where Russia can cite either direct Russian citizenry or Russian civilisational links. This interpretation of human rights, and specifically the obligation to engage proactively in a form of R2P to protect general Russian interests leads to a completely different interpretation of sovereignty when applied to Georgia (and anywhere else cultural, ethnic and/or territorial links exists). From the data analysed, it appears that Georgia's sovereignty only fully applies to the government and not territorial borders. Those borders become flexible in relation to what Lavrov explained as being based on the will of those who live there, and their desire or civilisational destiny to be linked to, or directly part of a greater Russia; describing this as the "real state of affairs". The Western view totally counters this, and reflects that territorial integrity is a guarantor of sovereignty and cannot be de-linked in this way. This reflects a major divergence in how Russia and the West understand these institutions, at least in the case of Georgia as a former-Soviet republic. As Russia links the preservation of cultural, ethnic, and traditional areas of territorial influence to its own security and sovereignty, the necessity to protect these areas is a manifestation of the concept of collective sovereignty as discussed in chapter 2. This adds a layer of existentiality to Russia's perceived need to engage in actions such as that in Georgia in 2008 to prevent Westernisation of Russian areas of influence. An additional insight that this ability to separate sovereignty and territoriality gives is that it could be described that Russia is applying a regional international system when a crisis is deemed as intra-civilisational. This helps to explain why Russia is often observed as a realist entity by Western analysts, and the apparent contradictions that occur in Russia's foreign policy between that which it applies to the former-Soviet region, and the rest of International Society.

Conclusion three is that Russia prioritises secondary institutions in which it is an equal partner. Russia extensively uses and relies on international organisations to provide a platform for articulating its legal position with the rest of International Society with the aim of managing the escalation of wider conflict, as well as reinforcement of its own position within the legal limits of the treaties and agreements that apply to it. Moscow's extensive use of the UN and OSCE to perform this function demonstrates Russia's preference for regulating its position and engagement within the wider International Society in a procedural way, through using institutions in which it has an equal voice with Western states.

Chapter 6

Syria (2015 – 2016)

6.1 Introduction

On the 30th September 2015, four and half years since the start of the Syrian civil war, and at the request of the Syrian government, Russian forces militarily intervened with the explicit purpose to fight Islamic terrorism. From the outset, Russia positioned itself as a stabilising force, as a counterpoint to the failed Western supported regime changes across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) during the Arab Spring. Regime changes which Moscow asserted had provided the conditions for the rise of Islamic State (IS) and other hard line Islamist groups. Russia's position was that they were left with no choice but to intervene, defeat the extremists, and prevent Syria from becoming another victim of Western imposed democratisation, and a failed state in the mould of Libya. For Russia, "The notion that the internal setup in Arab countries could be remodelled at will by outside forces was a product of misplaced unipolar ambitions and 'end of history' attitudes" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 11th December 2015).

Russia's relationship with Syria has substantial historical roots. The Soviet Union supported Syrian nationalists who achieved independence from France in 1946 (Lawson, 2013, pp160-164). Through this, Moscow is permanently linked with the modern Syrian state's formation, independence, and sovereign rights. The Soviet Union and latterly Russia has maintained a strong political relationship with Damascus despite some political Western re-orientation during the early years of President Bashar al Assad's tenure, and some periods of degradation in relations during the mid-1980s (Leverett, 2015, p225). Critically**,** Bashar's father Hafez was a staunch ally of the Soviets (Shylkov, 2015, pp31-50) in opposition to the West throughout the Cold War. It is these foundations of this relationship which endured in Russia's long-term alliance with the Assad regime. A relationship that also afforded Russia a permanent presence at Tsartus naval base, granting all year-round strategic access to the Eastern Mediterranean and to NATO's southern flank. An important marker for the degree of importance that Russia places on its relationship with Syria was evidenced by the role Russia played in negotiating a

solution to the August 2013 chemical weapons (CW) crisis that nearly resulted in Western airstrikes; save for a UK Parliamentary vote (BBC News, 2013) that fragmented Western resolve. The culmination of which was the Russian brokered deal for Syria to disarm and permit the destruction of its CW stockpiles under the supervision of the international community, via the mechanisms of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (UN, A/68/398–S/2013/565, 2013). Up until late 2024 when internal events in the country spiralled beyond their control, Russia remained committed to solutions to the Syrian conflict that recognised Bashar al-Assad as the legitimate Head of State. Russia's strategy from the early stages of the uprising from 2011 onwards built a platform that enabled steadily increased political and materiel support to the regime (Scheller, 2013, pp203-204), which peaked with the Russian intervention on 30 September 2015.

In sum, Russia's relationship with Syria was forged in enduring strategic interests that explain both its desire to protect the sovereignty and integrity of Syria from external influence. Therefore, Russia's intervention makes it an ideal case study to analyse Russia's interpretations of primary and secondary institutions in an area outside of their civilisational remit. Syria provides important insight into the apparent contradictions in how Russia applies the primary institutions of International Society in relation to those states Moscow believes fully qualify for sovereignty (i.e., Syria) against those who do not (i.e., Georgia).

This chapter is broken down into five sections. The first (6.2) gives an overview, and justification for selection of the data sample used. It then gives a breakdown of the data into identified narratives related to the overarching institution themes identified throughout all of the case studies (international law, secondary institutions, sovereignty, and human rights). A comparative analysis is given on the similarities and differences between the Georgia and Syria narratives as well as acknowledging that the increase in complexity and nuance in the Syria data makes precise comparisons problematic. However, international law again is established as having primacy and the remainder of the chapter reflects Russia's use of international law to legitimise their intervention, and actions within it. The next sections, 6.3 (Secondary Institutions) and 6.4 (Primacy of the UN: International Law & Sovereignty) provide analysis of which secondary institutions are important and how Russia employs them in the Syrian context. These sections provide analysis of the Russian perspective on their legal basis

for intervention and show how Moscow employs its contractual understanding of international law to a context in which they have no civilisational interests. Section 6.5 provides an important contrast in how the institution of human rights is applied and prioritised in a context where no Russian cultural and/or ethnic interests are present, in contrast to Georgia in 2008. The final section prior to chapter conclusions, section 6.6, provides further assessment of Russia's civilisational worldview as highlighted by the contrasts observed between this case study and Georgia. Specifically, how Moscow applies primary institutions differently based on whether it has a civilisational obligation (intra-civilisational) to do so, or not (inter-civilisational).

6.2 Data Sample, Narratives Identified, and Case Study Comparison

6.2.1 Data sample

The data sample chosen for the Syria case study runs from 30th September 2015 to the 14th March 2016. This reflects the period that Russia defined as its direct military intervention. The 14th March 2016 marking Vladimir Putin's announcement of the withdrawal of most Russian forces. There are three reasons why this period was chosen. Firstly, during this time all of Russia's main arguments surrounding their intervention are present, along with associated narratives on the institutions of International Society. This period also covers a significant positive change in the success of military operations against IS from both the Western coalition and Russia. By March 2016, IS was in irreversible decline, heralded by such events as the impending fall of the hugely symbolic city of Palmyra in the desert to the east of Damascus. By the 14th March 2016, Russia had felt secure enough that it had achieved its main objectives and was moving to reduced tempo operations and a reduction of forces. Although the withdrawal of some Russian military personnel and equipment did not mean an end to the intervention, it did signify a change from high tempo military operations to stabilisation and maintenance. In sum the threat to the existence of the Syrian Regime had passed. The second reason is pragmatic in that by 2015, the MFA was releasing a significantly higher volume of material than in the period that covers the Georgia case study. Therefore, attempting analysis of a similarly broad period could not be achieved within scope. The

Georgia datasets comprised of 623 documents, totalling 416,982 words of material, covering a period from November 2003 to August 2008. In comparison the Syria dataset comprises of 261 documents totalling 437,803 words for the period 30th September 2015 – 14th March 2016. The third and final reason links to the second in that despite its shorter timescale, the Syria case study provides ample evidence to demonstrate polysemy in primary institutions, particularly as it sits as part of the wider analysis that includes the Georgia and Ukraine case studies, and the literature reviewed within chapters 2 and 3. If this case study was to stand alone, it would no doubt require broadening to include a longer timeline. However, in the context of the whole project, the period of the main intervention in Syria itself has proven adequate to study and evidence polysemy in primary institutions, and the regulating effect of secondary institutions.

6.2.2 Narratives Identified

Not only is there a significant increase in the volume of content produced by the MFA by the time of the Syria intervention, but there is also an increase in the complexity of the themes and narratives when compared to the Georgia case study. Within the Syria dataset (dataset 3), twenty-one narratives related to both primary and secondary institutions have been identified that overlap and intertwine as per figure 10 below. These are grouped into three overlapping themes of international law, sovereignty, and secondary institutions. The fourth theme of human rights is included on the figure below as a separate entity straddling international law and sovereignty, as although present, it is more notable by its relative absence in contrast to its prominence in the Georgia case study. The human rights narratives also focus more on the practical elements of providing humanitarian assistance rather than enforcing a standard of human rights. The focus being squarely on the legal obligation to provide aid rather than trying to define what constitutes human rights in the Syrian context. This will be discussed further in the short human rights section of this chapter (6.5). As a result of the narrative analysis of the Syria dataset, including comparative analysis with Georgia, trends emerge that provide evidence of Russia's different implementation of primary institutions dependent on the context being intra- (Georgia) or inter- (Syria) civilisational. This is explored in the final section (6.6) of this chapter.

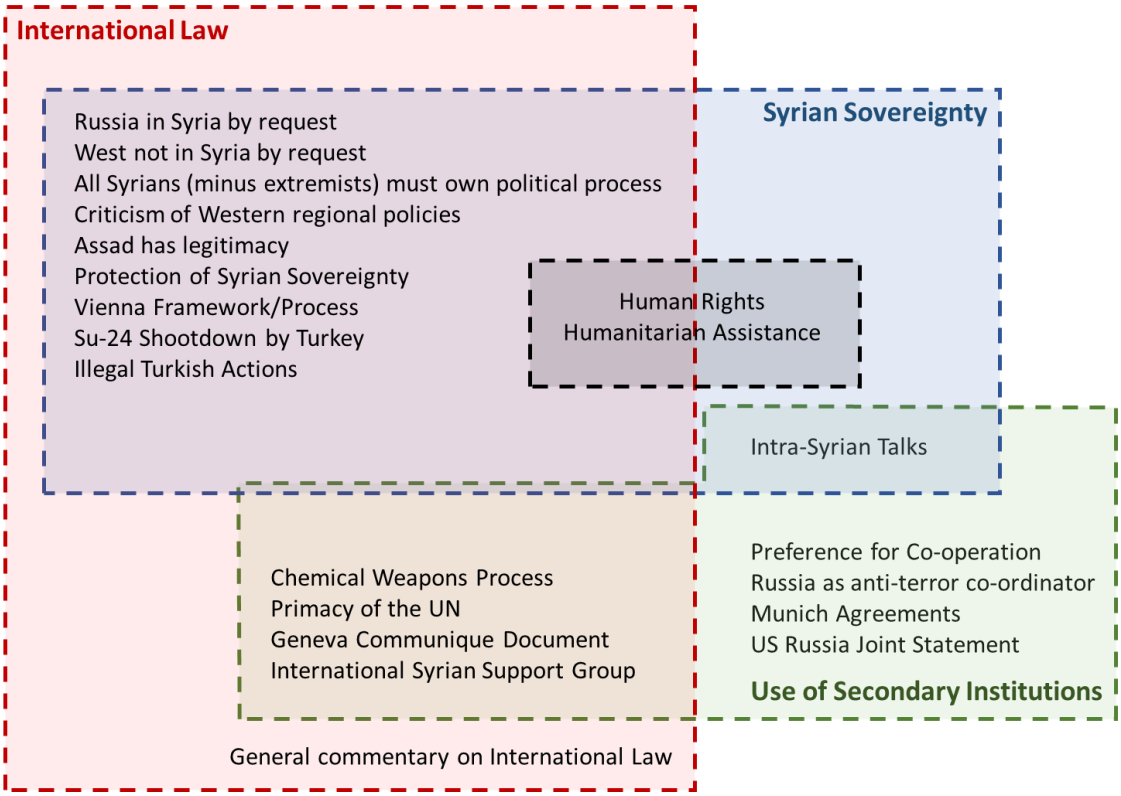

Figure 10. Narratives and themes identified from Dataset 3 (Syria case study)

A further strong narrative that is not represented in figure 10 (above) but that appears in over 66% of the documents in dataset 3 is Russia's justification for its intervention on the basis of fighting Islamist terrorism. Although this narrative does not speak consistently and explicitly to the institutions of International Society, the justification is rooted in international law and protection of Syrian sovereignty. Further, Russia's anti-terrorism approach to the conflict in Syria is overtly based on attempting to gain anti-terrorist co-operation and consensus through organisations such as the UN, OPCW, and International Syrian Support Group (ISSG). The anti-Islamist terrorism narrative is important to Russia's overall worldview and "not just about Syria and Iraq" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 11th December 2015). It is therefore important to provide a little additional context at this point. This is to provide a balanced view on Russia's rationale and motivation to combat Islamism, and discuss its perspective on the duty it feels that responsible states hold within the global International Society to combat common threats to the stability of the whole system.

During the early 1990's, following the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia adopted a relaxed approach to the burgeoning rise in Islamist extremism from countries situated through

Central Asia and the Caucasus. Removal of religion under the Soviet regime, coupled with high illiteracy rates among former Muslim communities in Central Asia had led to a loss of traditional religious knowledge, specifically the forms of Sunni Islam practiced in central Asia in the pre-Soviet era. These had been forms that had diverged from the branches of Sunni Islam practiced across the Middle East, and were considered to have a greater degree of religious tolerance. The result of this loss, when added to the social conditions that permeated central Asian former-Soviet nations (Yemelianova, 2010, pp122-136) such as economic hardship and social inequality set the conditions for the introduction of more conservative and extreme forms of Islam, providing fertile ground for Salafist-Wahhabi belief systems to take root. Systems ideologically aligned to the brand of Sunni Islam promoted by Saudi Arabia via organisations such as the Muslim World League (Balci, 2005, pp239-252). Consequently, Russia is confronted with a form of Islamist extremism on its southern borders, like that which is faced globally, and compatible with the ideology of entities such as Al Qaeda (AQ) and IS. As a result, Russia is motivated by an ideological desire to degrade and neutralise the Islamist extremist threat. A common goal Russia shares with many of the world's major powers who are invested in military operations to combat this form of extremism across the MENA with a key centre of gravity considered to be Syria (and Iraq).

Russia understands that without combatting the issues of Islamist extremism in Syria, the global threat which applies to all civilised International Society cannot be effectively addressed, and mitigated. Russia also perceives that the West's policies have failed in the region for nearly 25 years. Not only in failing to reduce Islamist extremism, but through policies of regular intervention and regime change serving to increase the Islamist threat, culminating in the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. Revolutions which resulted in a marked increase in Islamist extremist group activity and their ability to gain power, influence, and hold territory. Russia's long-standing fight against Islamist terrorism on its southern border, combined with its belief of the globally destabilising effect of Western regime change policies in the region is important context for all that follows in the sections regarding international law, Syrian sovereignty, use of secondary institutions, human rights, and democracy and self-determination.

6.2.3 Georgia versus Syria themes comparison

Prior to individually analysing dataset 3 by theme, it is first important to draw some overarching comparisons between the Syria and Georgia case study material to understand where some immediate similarities and differences lie. This is to aid in determining the overall consistency of Russia's interpretations of institutions and International Society. Due to the increase in complexity of the content being produced by the MFA by 2015-2016 it is not possible to draw comparisons that have total equivalency as they are very much shaped by the context of each case study. However, in terms of broad trends such as prioritisation of institutions (including the potential for a hierarchy of importance to the Russian worldview) and identification of obvious differences and divergence in approach to institutions, a brief comparative analysis of the statistical element of the data provides important insights.

To make any comparison with the Georgia thematic data, it is first necessary to simplify the twenty-one Syria narratives into the four themes (international law, sovereignty, human rights, and secondary institutions) as detailed in figure 10 (p132). This enables meaningful comparative analysis of broad trends with the data from the other case studies within this thesis. Figure 11 (below) gives an overview of the prevalence of each of the four themes in the Syria dataset by percentage. Only one occurrence for each theme is counted per document so multiple instances of an individual narrative being present are not included as part of the overall prevalence. In total, across 261 documents, all narratives when combined amount to 1596 occurrences, with those categorised as international law totalling 921, secondary institutions 617, sovereignty 476 and human rights 75 which translate into the percentages as below. It should be noted for clarity, that the total occurrences of the narratives when categorised into themes (2089) is higher than the combined narrative occurrences count of 1596 due to individual narratives overlapping into multiple themes.

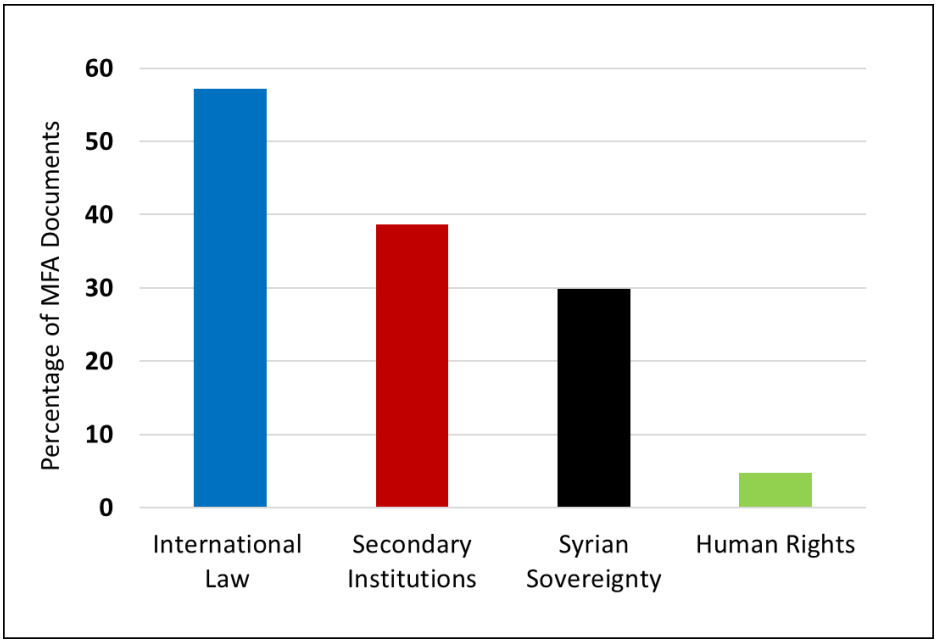

Figure 11. Prevalence (by percentage) of institutions themes in dataset 3 (Syria)

Prior to drawing comparisons, it is important to recap the definitions from the Georgia case study, section 5.2 where prevalence of narrative themes is also detailed:

- **International Law (Georgia case study)** is defined as narratives within the MFA documents relating only to Russia's contractual use of international law to legitimise its actions.
- **Human Rights (Georgia case study)** is defined as narratives within the MFA documents that demonstrate Russia's interpretation of human rights with a clear hierarchical and Russo-centric basis. This also includes examples of the blurring of Russia's domestic and international laws that manifested as the de-linking of Georgia's Sovereignty and Territoriality.
- **Secondary Institutions (Georgia case study)** is defined as narratives within the MFA documents concerning the use of secondary institutions including, but not limited to, the UN and OSCE that demonstrates Russia's functional use of these organisations to attempt to uphold its understanding of international law.

From the definitions above, it is immediately apparent that the human rights theme cannot have direct comparisons drawn, and stands out as a stark difference between the case studies due to the absence of ethnic Russians within the Syrian conflict. In the Syria data, due to the

lack of presence of ethnic Russians, or presence of civilisational Russian interests, sovereignty stands alone as an inviolable concept under international law, and mostly replaces the human rights narratives seen in the Georgia case study. Aside from the issue of compatibility of the data for comparison regarding human rights, the other definitions of institutions from the Georgia case study are largely extant, except for the minor amendment needed that the secondary institutions definition would not include the OSCE (as a regional European security organisation). It is also notable that, as per the Georgia case study, all of the themes identified can be categorised as elements of international law, with use of secondary institutions, sovereignty and human rights all acting as fundamental support pillars of a multipolar, civilisational, and contractual perspective of international law rooted in positivist ideals; the terms of which define and guide Russia's interstate relations in line with their desired end state of a pluralistic, civilisational International Society (see section 6.6).

The graphic below at figure 12 applies comparative percentages of the prevalence of narratives, grouped by institutions across the Syria and Georgia case studies, recognising the limitations as outlined above.

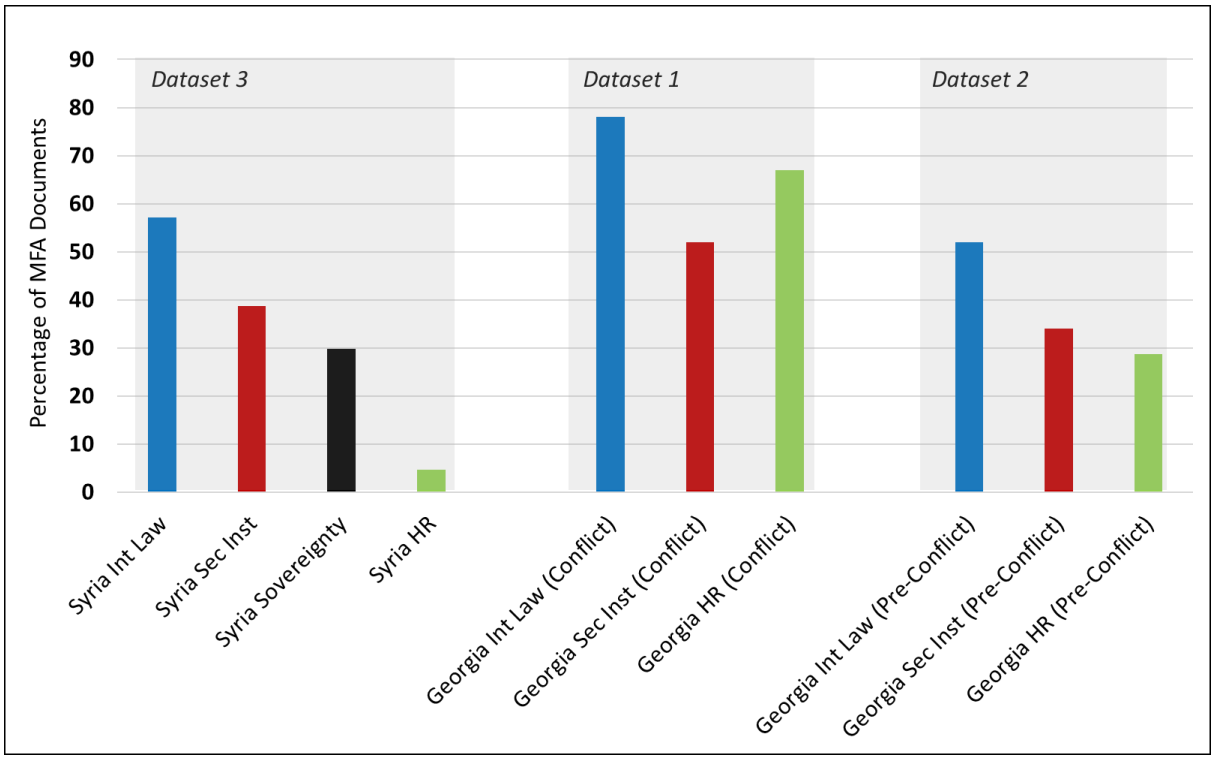

Figure 12. Syria versus Georgia Prevalence of Themes Comparison

The statistical comparison serves as a useful starting point for the detailed analysis in the chapter sections that follow. It also enables direct comparison of the data with the Georgia case study and highlights key areas of convergence and divergence in how Russia approaches institutions inside and outside its near abroad (intra- versus inter-civilisational). The data comparison allows for three immediate observations to be made. The first being that there are clear consistencies in Russia's prioritisation of using a contractual approach to international law, based on international agreements, and international precedence. The second is that a similar ratio between the prevalence of the use of secondary institutions and contractual international law narratives is apparent across the datasets that cover Syria (during intervention) and Georgia (in a pre-conflict stage). This suggests that Russia assigns no immediate existentiality to the intervention in Syria. Thirdly, a clear divergence in how Russia is interpreting institutions based on intra- versus inter- civilisational context is seen in its approach to human rights and sovereignty. In the Georgia case study, the human rights narrative was so inseparably linked to how Russia viewed sovereignty and territoriality that it did not justify becoming a separate theme. The linkage of protection of ethnic Russians and civilisational Russian interests usurped universal notions of the inviolability of a sovereign state. In the case of Syria, sovereignty is linked not to the peoples living there by ethnicity or civilisational allegiance, but more akin to a Westphalian view of inviolability by simple virtue of recognised statehood. Although in both cases Moscow uses human rights and sovereignty as legal justifications, in the case of Syria there is no blur between international law as recognised by international institutions such as the UN, and Moscow's domestic law that requires a human rights-based intervention where any persons that can be considered Russian are recognised as under threat.

A final point, prior to moving onto the detailed narrative analysis is that the massive rise in prevalence of the Russo-centric human rights narratives during the conflict in Georgia demonstrates that the prioritisation of institutions that support international law can flex to the context of the environment. In the specific matter of human rights, when involving direct Russian interests, it is more of a priority than major international organisations (secondary institutions) charged with providing the rules and legitimacy for the wider International Society; most notably the UN. This is almost certainly due to the existentiality of the threat Moscow perceives through ceding influence in its near abroad (as discussed under the

concepts of collective or republic sovereignty in chapters 1, 2 and 5) as opposed to the war of choice it undertook in Syria where no immediate existential, or civilisational threat is apparent. This allows greater space in the Syria contect for, albeit limited, solidarist traits in the Russia-West relationship to emerge, regulated by stronger reliance from both sides on secondary institutions (specifically the UN) where at least dialogue is consistently maintained, and compromises reached.

Due to the complexity and intertwined nature of the narrative themes identified pertaining to institutions, the following sections do not attempt to separate the detailed analysis into international law, secondary institutions, sovereignty, and human rights used for the initial Georgia-Syria comparison. As stated above, the themes identified continue to reinforce Russia's use of international law as its master institution, which all other institutions support to legitimise its actions. Therefore, the remaining sections of this chapter are broken down not by individual narrative, but in a logical progression that explains Russia's approach to the Syria conflict in a way that provides analysis of polysemy of institutions in an area in which Russia has no civilisational obligations. As already stated, international law appears to be perceived by Russia as the master institution with all of the twenty-one individual narratives identified within dataset 3 supporting and/or being derived from it. Subsequently, the next two sections have international law running through their core. Section 6.3 provides an overview of the secondary institutions important to Russia in the Syrian context, and the legal frameworks they provide for Russia's actions in Syria. Section 6.4 covers how these secondary institutions are employed under an approach that gives primacy to international law using Russia's invitation from the Assad regime to intervene, their overt willingness to cooperate with the international community (with some caveats), and outward commitment to a Syrian led political process.

6.3 Secondary institutions: prioritisation and frameworks

6.3.1 Frameworks and definitions

Russia's justifications for militarily intervening in Syria relies on a robust framework of internationally agreed UNSCR and UN endorsed resolutions. This represents a major departure from the other two case studies of Georgia and Ukraine in that there is widescale agreement from both Russia and the Western states involved of needing to adhere to the consensus views of the international community as endorsed through the UN. However, the main point of disagreement is that for Russia, the terms of the various legal frameworks and UNSCR are tied to the legitimacy of the incumbent Syrian Government. Moscow's baseline position within dataset 3 is that Assad is the recognised Syrian authority, and that Russia's legal right to intervene was through the invitation of his government. This legitimacy for Russia to intervene based on invitation is something that Western powers consistently refused to acknowledge.

Typical Western narratives concerning Assad's legitimacy include examples such as the UK government's statement that Assad can have no part to play in the political future of the country (Hammond, HM Government Press Release, 14 November 2015) and US acknowledgements of the "sharp differences within the international community, especially about the future of President Assad" (Kerry, US State Dept Remarks, 18th December 2015). Sharp differences that are enshrined in the official US government's policy on authorising the use of force inside Syria to defeat IS. Joint Resolution 44, from the 113th Congress in 2014 authorises the use of force in Syria with both the objective of protecting national sovereignty wherever IS operate (including Syria) under international law, whilst also explicitly stating that any strikes inside Syria against IS are not "in support, or in cooperation with, the national government of Syria" (US Congress, S.J.Res.44, 16th September 2014). This represents a Western position regarding Assad that from the Russian perspective is in opposition to international law and the principles of the UN, including extant UNSCR relating to Syria and counter terrorism.

In essence, any policy to fight terrorism that does not include the consent of the Syrian regime, or worse still, is contingent on regime change in Syria is inherently illegal. In this regard, Moscow also ties the legality of their intervention to overtly supporting a Syrian led political process, which includes the current government. Russia's narratives return regularly to the Syrian led political process, how it ties to UNSCR, and articulates its own central role alongside the US in being responsible for guaranteeing it. Under this approach, the UN has primacy across all Moscow's narratives as summarised by Sergey Lavrov, who when speaking on the fight against terrorism in Syria states: "On a universal scale, we'll continue to cooperate within the framework of the United Nations" (Lavrov, MFA comments, 9th Nov 2015). All the above demonstrates the potential for the Russia-West International Society to demonstrate some solidarist traits, regulated through the shared rules of secondary institutions, whilst concurrently showing polysemy in primary institutions.

Despite the key difference detailed above, Russian, and Western policies regarding Syria have significant convergence through the frameworks and legitimacy of the UN. Therefore, some definitions of the key UN linked frameworks and organisations that both Russia and the West committed to are required. These comprise a set of secondary institutions that essentially provide a constitutive function (concepts discussed in 3.4.1) for International Society within the Syria context, despite differences in perspective over how the primary institutions of international law and sovereignty apply to the Assad led government. Specifically with regards to the illegality of Western forces operating in the country without consent from the Syrian regime.

The four main secondary institutions identified from dataset 3 are the Geneva Communique, Vienna Format/International Syria Support Group (ISSG), Intra-Syrian Talks, and the US-Russia Joint Statement (process for ceasefires). Definitions of each are as follows:

- **Geneva Communique:** When Russia cites the Geneva Communique, they are referring to a document titled *Final communique of the Action Group for Syria* dated 30th June 2012. The document is from a UN General Assembly of the Security Council agenda item regarding the prevention of armed conflict. It commits the Syria Action Group, made up of a wide array of international actors from across the Western and Arab

worlds to a UN agreed six-point peace plan centred on an inclusive Syrian led political process resolution. This critically, from the Russian perspective, commits the international community to "the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic." (UN Letter A/66/865 – S/2012/522)

- **Vienna Process/ISSG:** The Vienna peace talks, referred to as the Vienna process, Vienna format, and/or meetings of the ISSG were a series of meetings between China, Egypt, the EU, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the United States. The ISSG effectively succeeds the Syria Action Group and in many ways is an expanded continuation of it. The aims of the talks were to find constructive and inclusive solutions to the Syrian crisis. They yielded a substantial number of commitments from all participants, including acknowledging Syria's independence, sovereignty and integrity, the rights of all Syrians to decide their own future as per the principles of the Geneva Communique, and that a UN monitored ceasefire will be sought (EU, 2015). A key result of the Vienna/ISSG process was UNSCR 2254, under which the principles of the ISSG were unanimously endorsed by the international community (UNSCR 2254, 2015).

- **Intra-Syrian Talks:** A product of the ISSG and UN Security Council, the intra-Syrian talks were designed as a forum for the Syrian government and opposition to begin the process towards a political settlement. The first round, began in Geneva on 29th January 2016 and lasted only a few days, being suspended on 3rd February with both sides and their international backers claiming the other had come to the talks without genuine intent to make progress. These talks however, are important in the context of the analysis of institutions in that despite their failure (a failure that continued over the subsequent months and years) they represent an attempt to fulfil the terms of the Geneva Communique, ISSG and USCR 2254. They therefore represent an important cohering mechanism for Russia and the West in their interactions over Syria, and provide, along with the other secondary institutions discussed here, evidence of the power of secondary institutions to regulate the relationship between Russia and the

West despite the polysemy apparent in primary institutions, specifically in international relations outside Russia's near abroad.

- **US-Russia Joint Statement:** As a result of meetings held in Munich in February 2016 under the auspices of the ISSG, the US and Russia released a joint statement on the 26th February 2016 which announced agreed "Terms for a Cessation of Hostilities in Syria" (US DOD, 2016). Although this statement amounted to external international parties agreeing a ceasefire they could not implement, it is notable as an agreement specifically between Russia and the US. An agreement that places Russia and the US as equal partners, seeking to end the conflict based on agreed rules of International Society as laid down through UN frameworks and resolutions. Although ultimately not able to have any great effect on the conflict itself, the Russian narratives after the release of the statement regarding criticism of the West's foreign policy in the region drop by a significant degree; further evidencing the regulating power of secondary institutions. It is argued here that this type of agreement is only possible from the Russian perspective when concerning an inter-civilisational matter.

Figure 13 (below) is included to provide an overall representation of how the secondary institutions narratives developed throughout the case study period. The particular focus is on the four secondary institutions detailed above, as well as the narrative concerning the primacy of the UN. Four important initial observations can be made from this data to aid in guiding the analysis in the following section. The first is that by percentage of MFA documents in dataset 3 in which narratives concerning secondary institutions provide a central theme, there is a clear and obvious emphasis for Russia that all international actions within Syria must give primacy to the UN as the source of legitimacy. The Second is that as Russia engaged in contributing to build the ISSG, Intra-Syrian talks, and ceasefire agreements that resulted in the US-Russia joint statements, the prevalence of the Geneva Communique narrative drops in direct relation. This is due to its terms being incorporated more widely into other endorsed institutions and treaties. Thirdly, the one instance in which another narrative, aside from reinforcement of the UN as having primacy, being the most prevalent is during the period in December 2015 when the principles of the ISSG are being endorsed and formalised through UNSCR 2254. Fourth, the only other narrative that reaches the same importance as the

primacy of the UN is the US-Russia joint statement, the only bilateral statement that explicitly places the US and Russia as equal powers.

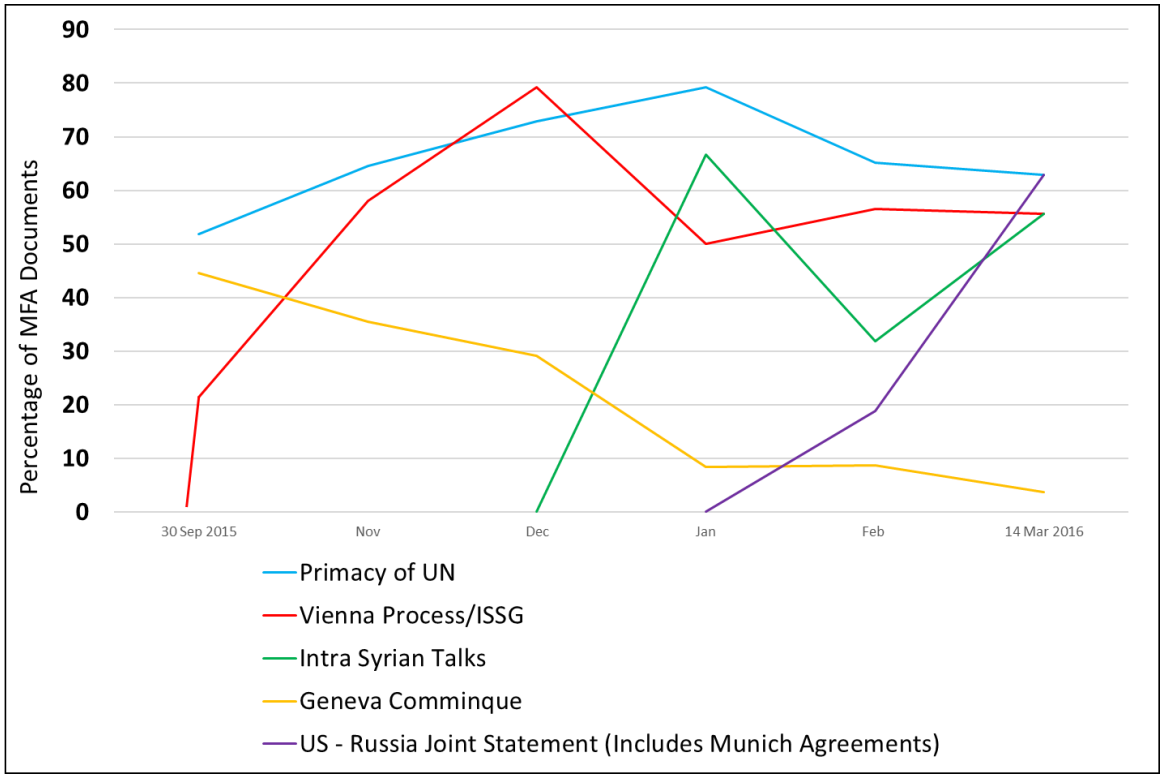

Figure 13. Secondary Institutions Narrative Prevalence

6.3.2 UN Security Council resolutions overview

As the next section (6.4) analyses the primacy of the UN in Russian narratives, it is imperative to have a baseline understanding of the contents, and subject matter of the UN resolutions (some of which already defined above) that Moscow cites for legal justification. However, there is not the scope to comprehensively detail all eleven UNSCR cited within dataset 3. What is important, is how those UNSCR relate to primary institutions related to Russia's key narratives. Table 5 (below) summarises how these USCR relate to primary institutions, and whether they contain statements on other key narratives from the Syria case study. Critically, all but one of the UNSCR make explicit statements to recognising and respecting Syrian sovereignty. Understanding the basic contents of these UNSCR enables a better analysis of what Moscow is using these documents for, outside of their primary topic. Specifically, when building a case for the legitimacy of the Assad regime, and trying to enforce a principle of non-

interference by external actors (i.e., the West and its coalition in Iraq) in the internal affairs of Syria.

UNSCR No	Primary Topic	Includes Statements on			
		Affirms Syrian Sovereingty	Syrian-led Political Independence	Humanitarian Aid	Condemns Terrorism
UNSCR 2118	Framework for elimination of CW				
UNSCR 2139	Access to Humanitarian Aid				
UNSCR 2165	Humanitarian Aid and Monitoring				
UNSCR 2170	Threat of Terrorism (Iraq & Syria)				
UNSCR 2178	Threat of Terrorism (Iraq & Syria)				
UNSCR 2199	Threat of Terrorism (Iraq & Syria)				
UNSCR 2235	Non proliferation of CW (Syria)				
UNSCR 2249	Threat of Terrorism (Iraq & Syria)				
UNSCR 2253	Threat of Terrorism (Iraq & Syria)				
UNSCR 2254	Cease Fires - ISSG and Joint Statement				
UNSCR 2268	Cessation of hostilities & humanitarian aid				

Table 5. Overview of UNSCR cited in Dataset 3 (UNSCR 2218, 2013; UNSCRs 2139, 2165, 2170 & 2178, 2014; UNSCRs 2199, 2235, 2015, 2249, 2253 & 2254, 2015; 2268, 2016)

6.3.3 Summary of Secondary institutions: prioritisation and frameworks

Three summary points from this section are important to take forward into the subsequent sections, and to the overall research questions and objectives of this thesis. Firstly, Moscow's legitimacy in Syria is based on adherence to UN linked secondary institutions, including eleven UNSCR. Although the West and wider international community are in consensus over the fundamental legitimacy of these UN linked secondary institutions, the key point of divergence concerns how they relate to the Assad regime. This divergence highlights the polysemy inherent in how Russia and the West interpret international law and sovereignty in the country, and provides further evidence of the pluralistic nature of Russia-West International Society. This is despite finding some solidarist traits through secondary institutions-based interactions. Moscow inextricably ties sovereignty to the Syrian Regime, a position not shared by the West.

Second, the Primacy of the UN sits above all other secondary institution narratives which gives insight into Russia's position on states outside its civilisational area of interest. That being that UN led international law prevents external interference in the Syrian state unless express permission has been gained from the Syrian government. This specifically relates to protecting sovereign rights and territoriality which Russia does appear to link in the Syria

context. This is not something that Moscow factors in the other two cases studies in the project, Georgia and Ukraine, which it is proposed here that Moscow views as intra-civilisational conflicts.

Thirdly, despite the significant polysemy apparent in how primary institutions are applied in Syria between Russia and the West, particularly when determining the limits of the sovereign rights of the Syrian government, secondary institutions linked to the UN do provide a platform for convergence of interests in several areas between Russia and the West. This provides some evidence of the regulative power of secondary institutions in International Society, in contexts where polysemy of primary institutions occurs.

6.4 Primacy of the UN: international law and sovereignty

The most prevalent secondary institutions narrative within dataset 3 is Russia's emphasis of the primacy of the UN to legitimise its intervention in Syria, and attempt to set the ground rules for other international actors in the country. In total, 165 of the 261 documents stress the supremacy of the principles of the UN in relation to intervention in Syria (and the wider Middle East). The only other narrative that is marginally more prevalent overall, as already discussed, is Moscow's position of fighting Islamist terrorism. However, this is intrinsically linked to UN narratives through numerous UNSCR (see table 5 above) that outline the international commitments to fighting Islamist terrorism. Figure 13 in the last section also evidences the consistency with which the primacy of the UN features across dataset 3, always appearing more than 50% of documents published on a monthly basis, and peaking at nearly 80% in January 2016. The peak occurring during the period where Russia was negotiating US co-operation on agreeing ceasefire terms, and attempting to implement intra-Syrian talks as part of the wider group of 20 nations that comprised the ISSG.

The primacy of the UN narrative provides Russia, in the Syrian context, a robust set of rules to which it applies its contractual understanding of international law. Rules which can be cited as being overtly endorsed by the US and wider international community. What follows are pertinent examples from across dataset 3 which highlight Russia's perspective on

international law against the context of the Geneva Communique, Vienna process/ISSG, Intra-Syrian Talks, US-Russia Joint Statement, and eleven UNSCR that Russia uses as the basis of its legal justification for its intervention. Specifically, against the UN's "strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic" (UNSCR 2218, 2013; UNSCRs 2139, 2165, 2170 & 2178, 2014; UNSCRs 2199, 2015, 2249, 2253 & 2254, 2015; 2268, 2016). Three areas that Russia reinforces the primacy of the UN to legitimise its own position with regards to international law and sovereignty (the key area of disagreement and manifestation of polysemy between Russia and the West in Syria) are analysed in the following sub-sections. The first sub-section returns to examine Moscow's position regarding its invitation to intervene in more detail, as introduced in the previous section. The second concerns Russia's views on its willingness to cooperate in line with the terms laid out in the various UN linked secondary institutions including UNSCR. Finally, the third section discusses Russia's position on the Syrian political process and how it seeks to build narratives that include the Syrian regime as a legitimate actor.

6.4.1 Intervention by invitation

Russia's narratives surrounding the invitation to intervene from the Syrian government emphasise the UN's explicit position on protecting Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They also reinforce Assad's government as the recognised sovereign leadership and highlight the contrasting "illegality" (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 12th November 2015) of the US-led coalition's presence in Syria as well as other US-led interventions across the Middle East, and Western regime change policies in general. The West, led by the US with regards to the matter of regime change, has a complex history of policies that contrast with Russia's view on non-interference in the internal politics of other states. The West's willingness to intervene based on a particular brand of liberal intervention that also includes democratisation as a desired end state can be seen from the late 1990s, with obvious early examples being the interventions in the aftermath of the break-up of Yugoslavia. Additionally, it can be seen in US policies such as the Iraq Liberation Act, endorsed by Congress in 1998 which explicitly states that "It should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime" (Public Law 105-388, 31 October 1998). As

discussed in section 3.5 of chapter 3, the West's position on intervention and R2P based on being able to breach the sovereignty of a foreign state, with the intent to remove a particular government or regime to protect a population (or elements thereof) is not one Moscow shares in the case of Syria. This is with the caveat that justifications concerning R2P may be used when related to states it considers within its civilisational remit, as in the cases of Georgia and Ukraine detailed in chapters 5 and 7.

For Russia sovereignty is inviolable in areas/states outside the limits of its civilisational remit/obligation. In these cases, intervention in the affairs of another state is not possible within the constraints of international law, unless by request or invitation from the legitimate head of state, and/or UNSC approval. Anything else effectively forms part of a regime change agenda from an intervening state. Additionally, Moscow contrasts what it sees as the West's failed policy in the region of illegal regime change over the past 30 years to its own position of non-interference to reinforce its legal position. Specifically referencing the West's historical behaviour across the MENA, which Moscow presents as being in direct contravention of international law and the UN Charter. The two most prominent examples being that of Iraq and Libya. In the case of Iraq, Russia points to the fact that UNSCR 1441 regarding Iraqi disarmament was not legal justification for regime change, nor were the claims of Iraq's assistance to terrorist entities, or the discredited claims of Iraq's possession of, and willingness to use, weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It is worth pointing out this was not just the Russian view, but in fact one shared by many states and actors globally, including by the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan who publicly stated on record in 2004 that the US led invasion of Iraq was "illegal" (UN News, 16th September 2004). As already discussed in chapters 1 and 2, Russia's sense of betrayal over what it perceived as the West's dishonesty over its motivations in Libya through using UNSCR 1973 and protection of civilians as a cover for regime change further solidified Russia's position on Western led interventions, and the illegality of democratically focused regime change policies.

In terms of sheer volume, the invitation narrative throughout dataset 3 is nowhere near as prominent as many of the other narratives already identified throughout this chapter. The request/invitation for Russian intervention is present in just over 10% of the MFA documents (27 of 266). However, the narrative is reinforced on a consistent enough basis to clarify that

Russia, unlike the West has intervened at the request of the legitimate government of Syria, in accordance with international law, to fight terrorism and secure Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is also a basis on which all the other Russian UN focussed narratives that focus on sovereignty and territorial integrity are founded. Moscow juxtaposes phrases such as "we started the air operation in Syria at President al-Assad's request" with "the US-led coalition has been operating in Syria without the approval of the legitimate government or a UN Security Council mandate" (Lavrov, MFA Interview, 19th November 2015). Russia's clear position on the validity of the Syrian regime, and therefore the legitimacy of its invite is summarised through the following MFA statement. The 'problem' cited below refers to the Western coalition's unwillingness to recognise the Assad regime as legitimate:

> "The problem should be resolved through the applicable legislation and in the course of a political process. Second, the fundamental point we have always emphasised is that Syrian statehood should be left intact because it is key to combating terrorism in the country and the region as a whole. The Syrian army is the only force confronting the Islamic State on the ground. We know that yet another regime change in the region won't lead to anything positive and will only add to the chaos that has engulfed a number of neighbouring countries." (Zakharova, MFA Statement, 5th November 2015).

What the above statement, representative of several pervasive narratives throughout dataset 3, provides is evidence of the importance of the invitation to intervene narrative to Moscow's legal arguments. The statement summarily outlines the key points from the Geneva Communique of 2012 and multiple UNSCR (as discussed in section 6.2) regarding the recognition and preservation of Syrian sovereignty, and the need for an all-inclusive political process (which Russia argues must include the current government). Additionally, it reinforces the common objective both Russia and the West share of fighting Islamist extremism and reinforces that the Syrian Army are required to be kept intact to achieve the defeat of these groups.

The invitation narrative is for Russia, a simple statement of fact. However, this 'fact' can only be credible if linked robustly to the UN, and therefore international community's, commitments to ensure Syria's independent political process and sovereignty under international law. Moscow has built its narratives on the conflict to rely on the primacy of the

UN, to which it applies its contractual understanding of international law to the Syrian government's invitation. From this perspective, the invitation is unquestionably legal, and in line with the international community's consensus in the Geneva Communique, the UN Charter, and multiple UNSCR. As already discussed, this is a view not shared by the US and Western allies. What Russia appears to be doing, as also observed in Georgia, is building what it perceives as a solid legal argument with which to deter or coerce other actors into behaving in ways that suit its interests. However, in the case of Syria, the narratives concerning institutions are somewhat 'cleaner' and more practical as sovereignty and territorial integrity are not de-linked as in Georgia and Ukraine due to the lack of Russian domestic, and/or human rights interests in Syria.

Having established that Russia constructs its legal position in Syria from a foundation of the invitation, and institutions to which it is linked (the UN, sovereignty, territoriality and even to some extent democracy/self-determination), it is important to explore the other narratives to which it is associated. These can be grouped into two interconnected and mutually supporting topics which are covered in the next two sub-sections of this chapter. The first is Russia's stated willingness to co-operate with other international powers. This includes the desire to create and lead a multi-national anti-terrorism coalition to provide a platform for co-operation in the fight against Islamist extremism. The second concerns ensuring that the political process in the country is Syrian owned, and includes all elements of Syrian society, minus those elements it considers to be Islamist extremist groups.

6.4.2 Co-operation

Russia's narratives surrounding international co-operation begins with the premise that Moscow is trying to create and lead an anti-terrorist coalition against IS and other Islamist extremist entities in Syria. Russia's position is that it is the only foreign power conducting military operations in Syria on a legal basis, in line with the UN Charter, and on the invitation of the Syrian Government (as already discussed). Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov explicitly states this point when speaking of Putin's desire "to establish a large-scale anti-terrorist front, relying on international legal standards and the UN Charter and operating with the consent and in close coordination with regional states" (Lavrov, MFA Remarks, 14th October 2015).

The anti-terrorist coalition narrative is specifically referenced by name in 37 documents, but is intertwined with a much wider narrative Russia promotes regarding its general willingness to co-operate with all states in the fight against terrorism. Naturally, this co-operation being confined to the bounds of international law, and the UN frameworks as Moscow understands them. This narrative, of preference for general co-operation is much more prevalent, and appears in just under half of the documents in dataset 3 (121 of 261).

Co-operation narratives reflect Russia's official position as being willing to cooperate with "absolutely everyone" (Lavrov, MFA News Conference, 5th October 2015) in relation to the counter terrorism effort against IS and other extremist groups. However, there is clear focus on bilateral co-operation with the US. A statement from Lavrov just two weeks into Russia's intervention, after reiterating that Russia was acting on the request of the Syrian government, speaks of Russian President Putin directly informing US President Obama of the impending intervention as well as a proposal from the Russian side "to have the US send a delegation of military experts to Moscow to agree on a series of joint steps" (Lavrov, MFA Remarks, 14th October 2015). Until the turn of the year in 2016, Russia's narratives are about pursuing meaningful cooperation with the US and Western allies on terms that do not include preconditions related to regime change (specifically the removal of Assad). Instead, Moscow attempts to push the focus onto the shared interest of fighting terrorism, with the rationale being that the fight against Islamist extremism is better served with Assad in power. This is reinforced with narratives that cite the history of increased instability and failed states where the West has manifested its democratic regime change agenda throughout the previous decade. For Russia "seeking President al-Assad's dismissal from office from the very start of the political process is an extremely rash decision; Iraq and Libya show that following that path would cause the last island of stability, Damascus, to plunge into chaos" (Lavrov, MFA Comments, 10th November 2015).

Russia also seeks to put the blame of a lack of historical cooperation on fighting terrorism in the region on the US and US-led coalition. A typical example being to lay the blame through asserting that whilst Russia remain open to cooperation, the US and allies "are saying that the possibility of cooperation… is only acceptable… on the formation of a coalition government" citing that for Western states, their unwillingness to cooperate with Russia is because "they

believe that by cooperating with us they will indirectly cooperate with Assad" (Churkin, MFA Interview, 14th December 2015). Russia states that it will only "be able to judge the real intentions of the US and other Western powers by whether they are prepared to form a single counter-terrorist coalition" (Lavrov, MFA Interview, 11th December 2015). The clear subtext of these statements being that it is the US and Western coalition that are preventing cooperation with Russia due to the prioritisation of democratic regime change over fighting terrorism. Moscow cites the West's initial refusal to endorse the Geneva Communique in 2012 "because it made no reference to regime change" (Lavrov, MFA Statement, 25th December 2015) as evidence of this position.

When discussing the US coalition itself, and Russia's willingness to cooperate on Western terms, Lavrov's response to his Italian counterpart summarises the Russian position. Russia is willing to cooperate "only on the basis of full equality" (Lavrov, MFA News Conference, 11th December 2015) and not as a junior partner, working to US interests. Interests that Russia feel have no legitimacy in Syria, which results in the US and its coalition having no authority to dictate preconditions for cooperation. Lavrov articulates the legal duality the Russian government perceives in the US coalition fighting IS and operating from Iraq as being "based on two different frameworks. One framework is international law that is applied to strikes at targets in Iraq, while the strikes against Syria are delivered contrary to law" (Lavrov, MFA Interview, 19th November 2015). He goes on to say that Russia is open to practical and pragmatic cooperation despite this breach of international law, but the implication is clear. Russia gets to set the agenda, within the framework of the UN and supporting documents, as it is Moscow that has the legal mandate to be in Syria. This includes the non-negotiable Russian position that the removal of Assad from power in Syria would constitute a "stark violation of the UN resolution that approved the Geneva Communique of June 30, 2012" (Lavrov, MFA Remarks, 14th October 2015) and breach of Syrian sovereignty. For Moscow, a key concession it needs is cooperation in Syria to the extent that the US acknowledges the need to deal with the Syrian regime as a practical reality. This validates Russia's position through a de facto acknowledgment of Assad's government as an important and inescapable part of the Syrian political process. Russia thus places itself as the intermediary, able to grant legitimacy to external international actors (ostensibly the US and Western coalition) to operate in Syria to fight terrorism in return for some form of pragmatic acknowledgement

that Syrian sovereignty is linked to the Assad led Syrian government. (Lavrov, MFA Interview, 9th December 2015).

6.4.3 Political process

The political process narratives that Russia promotes cover several different themes. However, there is a consistent message that Russia's primary focus is to set conditions for implementing the UN endorsed consensus that Syria must own its own political process. This is the third largest of the twenty-one narratives identified in dataset 3 appearing in 133 of the 261 MFA documents analysed. For Moscow, the Syrian owned political process is stated as the only way to "restore unity and sovereignty" (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 8th October 2015). Russia supports this overarching narrative through reinforcing the legitimacy of the relevant UN resolutions and Geneva Communique of 2012. The narratives surrounding the Geneva Communique positioning the document as the starting point, and authoritative source for defining the terms the international community must follow in Syria. This narrative is particularly strong in the first month of intervention where it figures in 25 of the 55 documents published, falling to 11 of 31 in November, and 14 of 51 in December. After the turn of the year, as the terms of the Geneva Communique are incorporated into other secondary institutions linked to the ISSG, which in turn had its principles endorsed through USCR 2254, the Geneva communique narratives fall steadily. This leads to the ISSG led Intra-Syrian talks process and the US-Russia Joint Statement on ceasefires effectively replacing and superseding the Geneva Communique (see figure 14 below) as the primary source of legitimacy for Russia's approach to the political process in Syria. Both of which include the protection of Syrian sovereignty, which Russia explicitly links to the Assad regime's government.

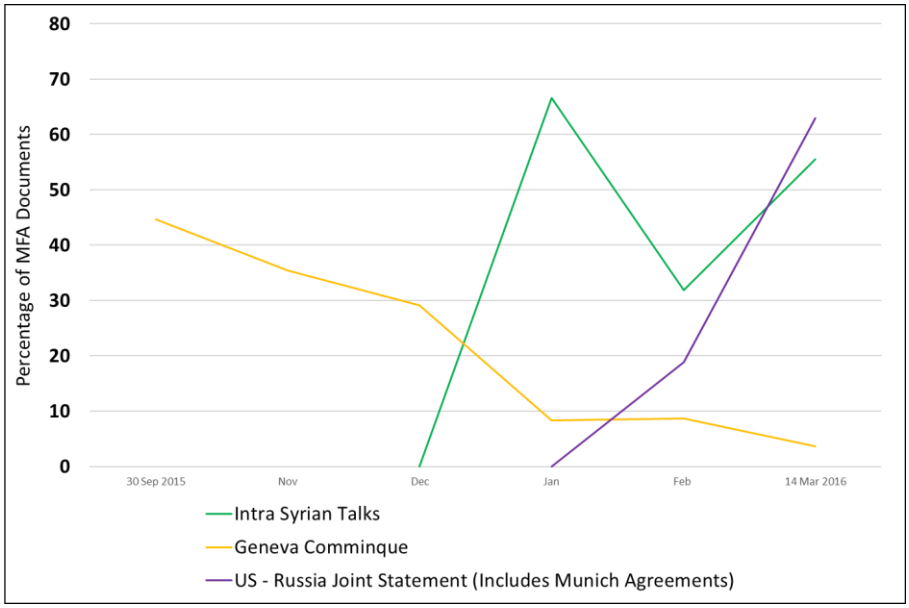

Figure 14. Narrative trends for agreements pertaining to Russia-US co-operation.

By November 2015, Moscow's tone towards the political process has changed significantly to reflect that Russia feels that it has made at least some progress on cooperation with the US and its allies. Most importantly gaining a degree of acceptance, if not consent, that the Assad government is part of future political negotiations and solutions. This is reflected in Russia's emphasis on the Intra-Syrian talks (UN endorsed and inclusive of the Syrian regime), and the US-Russia Joint Statement on ceasefires. Both processes, which although do not explicitly state recognition of Assad as head of state, do not include preconditions regarding his removal from power; granting from Russia's perspective a de-facto recognition of sorts.

With regards to the international community's overall contribution to the Syrian political process, Russia crafts its narratives in a way that positions itself as the enforcer of the ISSG's Un endorsed terms. By actively emphasising the importance of the ISSG's leadership "which is co-chaired by Russia, the United States and the UN, for effective external assistance to the intra-Syrian political process" (Lavrov, MFA Press Statement, 23rd January 2016), Moscow is reinforcing the secondary institutions and processes in which it has equity with its American counterparts. These allow for pushing the narrative of non-interference by external actors in the Syrian political process as "Naturally, Russia, the United States and other ISSG members will not take part in the talks between the Syrian Government and the opposition" (Lavrov, MFA Statement, 20th January 2016).

Through use of the UN endorsed (via UNSCR 2254), and thereby compliant with international law ISSG (Lavrov, MFA Remarks, 26th January 2016), Moscow is building limited consent for the Syrian regime as a valid part of the political process of Syrian self-determination. Moscow's narratives also reflect that when contesting Assad's position ceases to be the primary focus of the West, then progress can be made (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 14th January 2016). For Russia, approaches which demand Assad's removal not only prevent meaningful progress but represent "a deviation from the position that was agreed upon during meetings of the International Syria Support Group and was unanimously formalised in Security Council Resolution 2254" (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 22nd January 2016). The tangible form of this progress for Russia is evident by the existence of the US-Russia Joint Statement announced on 22nd February 2016 (MFA Statement, 22nd February 2016). This Joint Statement represents another co-chaired process that places Russia on an equal footing to the US, within a framework derived from the terms of the ISSG and UN; affording it legitimacy under international law (Lavrov, MFA Press Release, 22nd February 2016). The Joint Statement represents a substantial area of cooperation enabled by a secondary institution. Ultimately one able to shape and regulate the interstate relationship between Russia and the US (and by association the wider West) in the Syria context.

Although Moscow does push the cooperation narrative hard, and has a need for the US and Russia to work together to progress the Syrian political process, it also seeks to highlight where the US and its allies are breaching UN principles, agreements, and international law. This is to reinforce Russia's position as the only legal external actor operating in Syria, thereby giving it legal primacy, and an internationally endorsed (via the UN) moral high ground from which to attempt to coerce other actors to act in its interests. Moscow's narratives centre on emphasising the illegality of preconditions regarding regime change in the country as well as citing the historic failures of democratisation attempts by the West in countries such as Libya and Iraq. This is a persistent narrative, appearing in 71 of the 261 MFA documents in dataset 3. Russia's overall position on Western regime change policy in Syria is that it is part of the Arab Spring, which Moscow understands as a US led "project" that "fell through" which is not only "illegal, but it is also at odds with all fundamental international principles." (Zakahrova, MFA Briefing, 29th January 2016). The illegality Russia perceives as inherent in the Western intervention in Syria is such that it is presented as a statement of fact. Statements such as the

US “is operating illegally in Syria … without the consent of the Syrian government or the UN Security Council” (Lavrov, MFA Remarks, 27th October 2015), and that Washington is involved “in illegal methods of changing governments in a number of countries” (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 12th November 2015) are commonplace and are consistently repeated. The follow-on narratives reflect that not only are these actions by the West illegal, but that they serve to create instability and chaos. Russia states repeatedly that regime change, as in the cases of Iraq and Libya only lead to “deep crisis” (Lavrov, MFA Comments, 23rd October 2015) and “chaos” (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 5th November 2015). Further, these narratives are linked to Western immorality, in that the West would rather pursue democratic regime change than engage in cooperation over anti-terrorism efforts. For Russia “In the face of such a colossal and unprecedented threat [Islamist terrorism], it is unforgivable to continue to dally and put forward preconditions, such as regime change in a particular country”. (ibid)

6.4.4 Primacy of the UN: international law & sovereignty summary

Russia’s position on Syrian soveriengty, and its application of international law in the country is reflected in three interwtined themes. These are Russia’s invitation to intervene, international co-operation, and the requirement for a Syrian owned political process. All of these are supported and legitimised by UN linked secondary institutions. Although not explicit in a large number of MFA publications, the invitation narrative is linked to, and implicit across all narratives concerning sovereingty. Specifically when it links to Russia’s legal right to be in the country, as well as highlighting the illegality of Western action in Syria. The recognition of the Assad regime as the legitimate leadership of Syria is the foundation of Russia’s legal justification to operate in the country. Assad’s legitimacy, and direct link to Syrian sovereingty is the most significant example of normative divergence between Russia and the West (specifically the US) in this case study as the difference of opinion is irreconciable. This is due to the polysemy inherent in the context of Moscow applying a principle of inviolability to Syria’s soveriegnty in contrast to the US led West application of a nuanced approach based on Assad’s perceived failure to protect all his citizens, thereby forfeiting his personal link to Syrian sovereignty.

Within Russia's understanding of the inviolability of Syrian sovereignty, and its legal link to the Assad regime, Moscow esposues narratives of willingness to co-operate with all other members of International Society to combat the terrorist threat emanating from Syria (and Iraq). Moscow's narratives place specific emphasis on bi-lateral agreements between Russia and the US which do not include preconditions related to regime change in Syria. This is in line with how Russia interprets the content of the various UNSCR, with emphasis on how they relate to Syrian sovereignty. Although Moscow does highlight the illegality of the US and wider West's intervention in Syria, it does appear to be able (to some extent) to overlook this breach of international law where co-operation can be sought to fight Islamist terrorist groups in a way that does not threaten the Assad regime. This serves to validate and legitimise Moscow's position by creating at least some consent, or at least acceptance from the US and West that Assad is functionally in charge of Syria; legitimising Russia's position in the country, based on its invite from the recognised government.

Linking the first two narratives together is how Russia attempts to shape the Syrian owned political process, which is key to Moscow's narratives. The linking of sovereignty with Assad and his government ensures that he remains part of the political process. This both reinforces Russia's legal right to be in the country (invitation) and reduces the opportunity for the US and West to attempt regime change. The importance of a Syrian owned political process for Russia is highlighted by its appearance in around half of all narratives in dataset 3. This is also linked to the narratives concerning Western regime change policy failures in the region, where the ownership of political transition was not granted to the inhabitants of other countries the West intervened in, such as Libya and Iraq. The political process narratives are framed within Russia's contractual perspective on international law, tied to Moscow's interpretation of the various UN documentation/secondary institutions that relate to the Syrian conflict. Specifically, the Geneva Communique, ISSG, and Intra-Syrian Talks that have Russia as an equal partner with the US. From November 2015, a tone shift occurs in the narratives as it appears Russia feels it has achieved, at least in part, its objective to create acceptance that the Syrian government under Assad is part of the political process. As that process is UN led under international law, this appears to be enough legitimacy to enable meaningful cooperation (specifically bi-lateral with the US), and for Russia creates recognition of its legal right to operate in Syria by invitation.

6.5 Human Rights

Although more notable by their relative absence, Russia's human rights narratives regarding Syria provide insight into a major difference of approach when compared to the Georgia case study. The lack of threat to Russian citizens, ethnic Russians or areas of intrinsic Russian cultural significance appears to reduce the human rights considerations to the practical provision of humanitarian assistance, in line with the principles of the UN Charter and the various UNSCR that demand it. As Moscow is insisting that all members of International Society are being held to the exact terms of the various UNSCR and UN endorsed processes in Syria, the humanitarian angle is important in fulfilling these terms. On this basis, for Russia, human rights considerations in Syria do not provide justification for any violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity (as in Georgia) as there is simply not a cultural or civilisational element that Russia is required to protect. In this regard it provides a key indicator that in Syria, Russia is applying its purest form of foreign policy, unencumbered by the domestic considerations it is obligated to comply with in the former-Soviet states.

As a direct comparison with Georgia, the human rights narrative, which is largely concerned with humanitarian support in Syria reflects in less than 5% of the narratives identified in dataset 3, compared to nearly 29% of narratives in Georgia pre-war and 67% during the Georgian conflict, which are centred on protection of ethnic Russians. From the data, it cannot be fairly assessed whether Moscow truly puts a different value on the life involved in Syria, in comparison to Georgia. The statements surrounding humanitarian support are largely about Russia's practical responsibilities, in line with UNSCR, for providing humanitarian aid rather than as commentary on the ethics of the circumstances. What this does evidence, is that Russia does not feel the same weight of responsibility or obligation to protect human rights in states that do not have direct Russian ethnic, cultural or civilisational links.

The other prominent narratives that Russia links to human rights throughout dataset 3 concern criticism of the US and allies in the MENA, and the humanitarian costs associated with Western intervention. These narratives are positioned as a counter and/or response to Western criticism of Russia's actions in Syria, in effect using an argument akin to 'those in

glass houses, shouldn't throw stones'. This includes citing alleged historic abuses by the US such as the Pentagon's alleged withholding of photographic evidence of torture in Afghanistan and Iraq as evidence that the US is not in a fit to judge the ethics of Russia's intervention in Syria (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 10th February 2016). Russia does not limit itself to the MENA region when criticising the US-led wider West's inconsistency over its position on human rights, citing UN figures on civilian losses in Kosovo as well as Afghanistan (Zakharova, 18th February 2016). Off the back of these arguments, Moscow then positions itself to have never "idealised Syria's political system" which "includes [human rights] violations not only by one of the parties but by all the parties involved". A statement backed by the UN who "admit that all the forces in these areas are violating international humanitarian law in one way or another" (Lavrov, MFA Speech, 13th February 2016). These arguments are almost certainly given prominence to create the effect that the morality and ethics of the situation are so complex, and violations so prevalent, that for the West to single out Assad makes no sense other than as part of a commitment to a foreign policy based on regime change and attempts to install Western democratic ideals.

6.6 How Syria highlights Russia's civilisational perspective

As discussed throughout this thesis so far, Russia's civilisational perspective on international relations defines how Moscow interprets and implements the institutions of International Society. The notion that Moscow's "model of plural civilisations" (Miskimmon & O'Loughlin, 2017, p112) degrades Russia's ability to share a normative basis for primary institutions and Buzan's (2010) concept of a "decentred" International Society constituted of different regional actors pursuing their own values systems are apparent in the Syria case study, particularly so when contrasted with Georgia. The presence of Russia applying a civilisational model to its international relations, in what could be considered a decentred system is apparent through the differences in the institutional limits (particularly the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty and human rights) Moscow applies when intervening in an area that it considers within its own civilisation (Georgia) as opposed to the limits it has on its action outside its own civilisational remit (Syria).

Throughout the datasets used for the Syria and Georgia case studies, Russia has been consistent in articulating their civilisation-based worldview. By the time of the Rose Revolution in 2003 (the starting point for the Georgia case study) Moscow was increasingly entrenching in their concept of a multipolar vision for International Society, a concept informed by Russia's civilisational perspective. Across all Syria and Georgia dataset evidence, a clear picture of how Russia both views and compartments the world can be observed in their narratives. Overall, Russia appears to understand International Society as grouped into civilisations, which all sit under an overarching "world" civilisation (Lavrov, MFA Statements, 3rd December 2003 & 14 March 2016). World civilisation in the Russian context appears to be representative of all civilised peoples who have a degree of investment in their society pragmatically engaging in countering the common issues and threats facing global affairs such as terrorism, international organised crime, and environmental concerns (Lavrov, MFA Statements, 3rd December 2003 & 14th March 2016). It is this world civilisation that Russia describes as the multipolar system that "reflects the geographic, economic and civilisational diversity of the modern world" and critically the desire of people within those civilisations to "determine their own destiny" (Lavrov, MFA Remarks, 6th November 2015). Within this model, Russia represents one of the most important civilisational "poles", charged with leading and determining the path for the wider Russian civilisation (Trubnikov, MFA Interview, 17th March 2004). A civilisation that Russia even goes so far to define as being one of the three branches of European civilisation (distinct from Western civilisation) "the European Union, the American branch and the Russian branch" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 24th September 2008). This perspective, when coupled with the observed behaviour of Russia during military interventions helps to explain and evidence where Moscow believes is part of the Russian civilisation (large parts of the former-Soviet republics).

It is not possible to outline the exact composition of how Russia understands the civilisational makeup globally from the case study material researched for this thesis. However, it is possible to make a convincing case that Moscow does at least see Georgia as within its civilisational remit, and the Arab world, or Arab civilisation to be outside it. Firstly, the evidence from the Georgia case study chapter, in conjunction with the literature reviewed in the introduction and chapter 2 demonstrates that Russia perceives Georgia as within its civilisational remit. Secondly, the Arab civilisation is singled out as a distinct entity in multiple

MFA documents where the narratives are centred on creating greater mutual understanding and co-operation on matters pertaining to world civilisation. Co-operation based on the concept of mutual non-interference in the internal affairs of others (see Lavrov, MFA Remarks, 13 October 2015; Lavrov, MFA Remarks, 18 November 2015; Yakovenko, MFA Article, 31 December 2003).

6.7 Syria case study conclusions

The Syria case study gives important insight into Russia's prioritisation and application of institutions in an area outside of what it considers its civilisational remit. Additionally, the case study data speaks to the increase in complexity and nuance of Russian narratives in the time between 2008 (end of the Georgia case study) and 2016. Some of this complexity increase is almost certainly due to the development of how Russia controls and disseminates information as well as the development of, and increased understanding of internet-based influencing. From the twenty-one intertwined narratives identified and analysed across dataset 3, the following conclusions relevant to polysemy, institutions, and how Russia engages with the West in International Society can be made.

Firstly, international law remains as the master institution to which all others must support. The contractual nature of international law, identified in the previous case study also remains. This is evidenced by how Russia builds legal arguments based on its invitation from the Syrian regime, supported by what it perceives as literal interpretations of the various UNSCR regarding the crisis in the country; specifically with reference to protection of Syria's sovereignty. Additionally, to support and legitimise this position, Russia overtly makes itself open to cooperation with the West, supports a Syrian owned political process, highlights the illegality of historical and ongoing Western interventions, and states the unacceptable nature of Western pre-conditions for cooperation based on the removal of Assad from power.

The second conclusion is that this case study evidences the constitutive power of secondary institutions in providing a framework for cooperation between Russia and the West (principally the US), despite a major normative divergence in interpreting and applying

sovereignty and aspects of international law to the conflict. Despite this polysemy continuing to present in primary institutions, pragmatic compromise can be reached through working within specifically designed UN frameworks. The fact that the primary institutions where divergence exists are those that are traditionally thought of as those which bind International Society together such as international law, sovereignty, and territorial integrity speaks volumes to the degree of power secondary institutions can have in ensuring the functioning of Russia-West International Society when these primary institutions are not performing that function.

The third conclusion is that there is a relative absence of human rights narratives when directly compared with the Georgia case study. Human rights focused narratives only appear in 5% of all documents in dataset 3, in contrast to 67% of those published during the period of hostilities in Georgia, and 29% of those published prior to the conflict (from the Rose Revolution onwards). This demonstrates the relative lack of interest in this institution when Russian citizens, ethnic, and/or cultural Russians are not involved in the equation. This again speaks to how Russia applies institutions differently to areas, states, and populations within their civilisational remit, and to those outside it.

The final chapter conclusion is that Russia is employing its contractual style of international law based on the rules and regulations of a civilisationally focused International Society, not a state-centric one. The result of which has the potential to create radically different approaches to state level interactions based on interpretations of primary institutions. This is dependent on whether those states concerned fall inside or outside the Russian civilisation. The case study evidence presented so far in this thesis shows the following manifestations of how key institutions are treated and implemented in Syria and Georgia:

- In both case studies, international law acts as the master institution. The approach to international law is contractual and based on the adherence to an appropriate rule set. For Russia in the case studies analysed so far, this results in a Russian civilisational rule set for Georgia, and a world civilisational rule set for Syria.
- In Syria, the application of a world civilisational international law results in the primacy of the UN as the authority on international (read also inter-civilisational)

relations. **Inter-civilisationally, sovereignty is not flexible** and thus an invitation from the Syrian government is required to operate, as are UN resolutions and international agreements that include representatives from the Arab civilisation.

- In Georgia the application of a Russian civilisational rule set of international law results in the necessity to be able to present that Georgia attacked first to give a legitimate pretext for protection of Russian cultural, ethnic, and/or territorial interest on an intra-civilisational basis. **Intra-civilisationally, sovereignty appears flexible** based on the primacy of Russia within the Russian civilisation and its obligations to protect not just Russian territory, but territory where Russian culture and/or ethnicity resides.

Chapter 7
Ukraine (2021 – 2022)

7.1 Introduction

On 24th February 2022, the world changed as conventional war returned to Europe on a scale not seen since the end of the Second World War. Russia's invasion of Ukraine marked the culmination of the escalation that occurred in the years following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 in the wake of the Maidan Revolution. A revolution that Russia openly protested, seeing it as a US sponsored coup with the express aim to force Moscow to cede considerable regional influence through the overthrowing of President Viktor Yanukovych. Yanukovych being a figure with long standing policy of maintaining ties with Moscow rather than the West and NATO. The subsequent 8 years of conflict in the Donbas, the international condemnation of the annexation of Crimea, and a myriad of other crises between Russia and the West to include, the Salisbury Novichok poisonings, and election interference by Russia in the 2018 US Presidential election meant that by the coming to power of President Zelensky in Ukraine in 2019, Russia-West relations were at an all-time post-Cold War low.

Zelensky's overt preferences for EU and NATO membership, combined with Western policies formed in response to the events surrounding, and following, Maidan led to a critical point of divergence being reached in early 2021. An impasse marked by Ukraine's confidence to pass Decree 117/21 on 24th March 2021 in which it formally added to its constitution the legal obligation to reclaim all territories occupied by Russian forces or separatists in the Donbas and Crimea, returning Ukraine to its pre-2014 borders. For Russia, this signified that a red line had been crossed by the West in its support for Ukraine, a territory Moscow perceives as critical to its civilisational identity, security, and collective sovereignty. This case study covers the year prior to the outbreak of this world changing conflict. It builds on the understanding of institutions, and how Russia perceives International Society from Georgia and Syria, as well as the foundational knowledge on Russia-West relations from the literature review. Where this case study differs from the previous two is that both Georgia and Syria sit as non-existential limited conflicts, or wars of choice. Both the scale of Russia's willingness to undertake a conventional invasion of another sovereign state for the first time in its post-Cold

War history, and the scale at which it was willing to do so, regardless of the wider international consequences speaks to an existentiality Moscow perceives in the threat of Ukraine falling under NATO influence. An existentiality not present in its interventions in Georgia and Syria. Because of this existential element, the other major difference between this case study, and Georgia and Syria, is that the focus is on the period leading up to the conflict and not the period of conflict itself. This is due to the immediate run up to war being able to give greater insight into Russian interpretations of the primary institutions of International Society and polysemy than after the conflict has begun. The beginning of the conflict is assessed by this research to signal the end of the Russia-West International Society and any remnants of solidarism between Russia and the West. What followed the invasion resulted in a state of relations closer akin to a combative international system where the potential for co-operation based on shared values is no longer assumed.

To analyse the vast amount of data collected for this case study, the chapter is broken down into three main sections. The first covers the data sample used, the narratives identified and a comparison of the initial data with the previous two case studies. The narratives are then bracketed into two major themes. The first covers Russian versus Western competing visions for global order. This section analyses the narratives that relate to the existential importance of Ukraine to Russia, and covers why Russia sees Ukraine as a strategic necessity in the ideological struggle for the future of global order between the multipolar powers, and Western supported US hegemony in the form of a Rules Based Order (RBO). The final section, prior to chapter conclusions, then covers those narratives that act as justification for Russia's interventions in Ukraine (including the invasion). These range from those that align with previous narratives seen across the other case studies such as the importance of secondary institutions (i.e. UN, OSCE, and international treaties), to those such as the alleged threat of Nazism Russia states as emanating from Ukraine. The narratives in this latter section are problematic in terms of the ability to assess their credibility as genuinely held beliefs by Moscow. This is due to it not being fully possible to discount them either being manufactured to justify military action, or truly held beliefs within the data researched.

7.2. Data Sample, Narratives Identified, and Case Study Comparison

As with the previous case study (Syria), the first section of this chapter gives a justification for the data sample of MFA publications selected (to be referred to as dataset 4). It also provides an overview of the narratives identified, and an initial thematic comparative analysis of similarities and differences to the other two case studies of Georgia and Syria.

7.2.1 Data sample

The data sample for the Ukraine case study covers the period 1st February 2021 to the end of March 2022. This period has been chosen as it covers the critical period of escalation between Russia, the West, and Ukraine, culminating in the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022. This period also covers Russia's first mass build-up of forces in April 2021 which did not amount to military action, but was widely assessed as either a final warning to the West about their influence in Ukraine, or a practice run through of deployment (Bielieskov, 2021). During 2021, and in response to the general escalation around Ukraine, NATO responded through increased Russia facing exercises. Critically, in March 2021, there was also the formalising of a re-unification policy (to include reclaiming Crimea) in the Ukrainian Constitution (Office of the President of Ukraine, Decree 117, 2021) which garnered wide scale support through Western-led institutions such as the G7 (UK Government Press Release, 18 Match 2021). Significantly the G7, as a development of the G8, being an institution that Russia was removed from by Western states over its interference in Ukraine in 2014 (Davis, 2023, p5).

Where this case study differs to the Georgia and Syria analysis is that it does not concentrate on the period of warfighting but on the build up to conflict. This is because the scale and type of military action undertaken by Russia goes beyond the realms of a limited intervention. The subsequent war has a character more akin to an existential and attritional conflict which has resulted in the breakdown of the International Society between Russia and the West. With these conditions, narratives pertaining to institutions become increasingly unreliable for comparison as opportunities for co-operation between Russia and the West effectively cease. This is particularly relevant to Russia's narratives when they become dominated by

justifications for the invasion (as detailed in section 7.3). In the immediate run up to the invasion (from December 2021 onwards), the evidence from dataset 4 strongly suggests that a transition from a Russia-West International Society to a confrontational international system is occurring, where neither side "conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another" (Bull, 1977 p13). What the narratives identified in dataset 4 show, and what much of the reviewed literature covered in chapters 1 and 2 articulates is that for Russia, Ukraine is not simply about Ukraine, but about safeguarding wider Russian sovereignty and security from Moscow's civilisational view of international order. In an ideal scenario dataset 4 would stretch back to prior to the Maidan Revolution of 2014 to demonstrate the consistency of the narratives concerning the central importance of Ukraine to Russia. However, this would constitute an undertaking well beyond the size limitations of this thesis.

7.2.2 Narratives Identified

Across dataset 4, twenty-one narratives related to primary and secondary institutions are identified. These narratives are all linked to the same institution themes of international law, sovereignty, human rights, and secondary institutions identified in all case study data from Georgia and Syria (see figure 15 below).

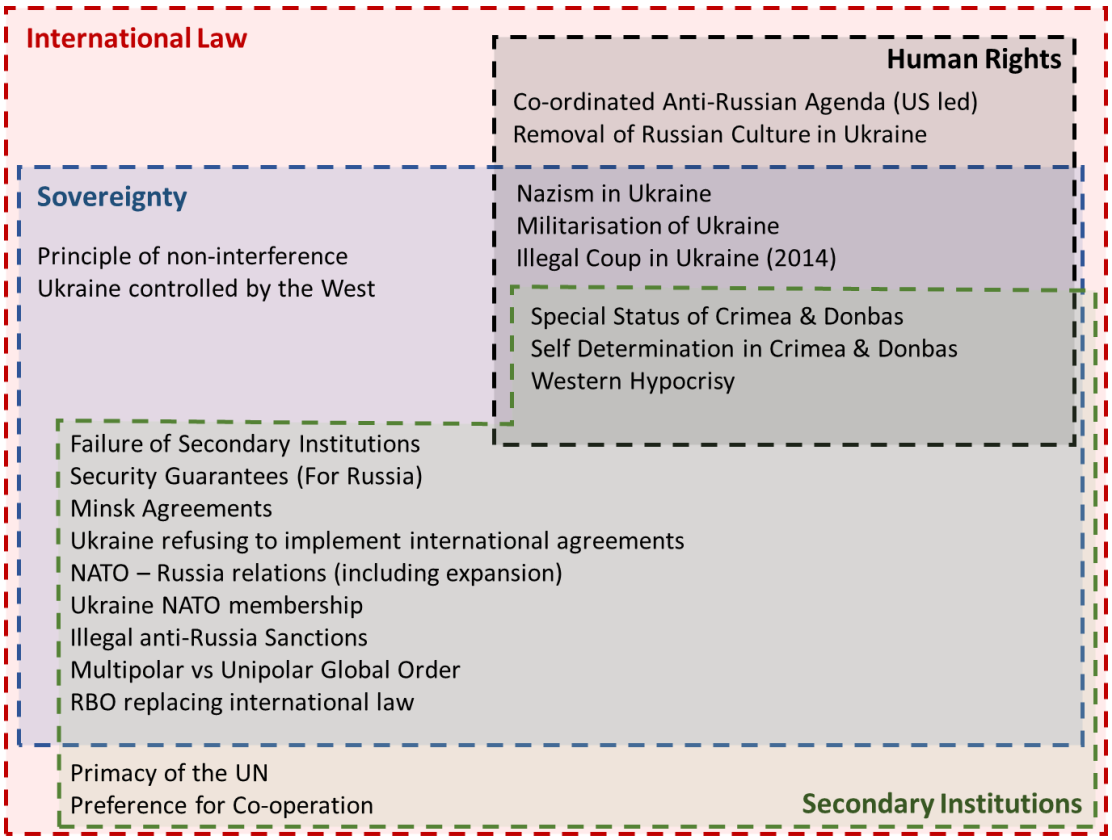

Figure 15. Narrative and themes identified from Dataset 4 (Ukraine case study)

The narratives in figure 15 can be broken down into two main categories which form the basis for the detailed analysis in sections 7.3 and 7.4. The first is summarised as narratives that situate the Ukraine conflict as part of a much broader existential struggle for the future of global order, and Russia's place within in it. This forms the basis of section 7.3, *Russia versus the West: Competing visions for global order*. The second category of narratives discussed in section 7.4, *Justifications for intervention* analyses narratives that use Russia's contractual interpretation of international law to question the legitimacy of Ukraine's sovereignty, to justify the invasion in February 2022.

The first category of narratives covered in section 7.3 is underpinned by spiralling Russia-West relations due to what Russia defines as the West's continued territorial and cultural expansion into areas essential to its security. This manifests as Russia stating that it perceives the war in Ukraine as a critical part of the greater ideological struggle between the US led West's obsession with retaining its unipolar dominance, and Russia's commitment to guaranteeing its rightful place as a great civilisation in the emerging multipolar global order. This is linked to Russia's stated belief that the West is attempting to replace international law with a

democratic RBO. An overview of the narratives that evidence Russia's perception that influence over Ukraine is critical to securing a global order that is acceptable to Moscow are as below (Table 6). The percentage in which they appear in the 268 documents in dataset 4 is listed to show their prevalence across the case study period, with the exceptions of the two narratives in italic which appear only from December 2021 (Security Guarantees) and from the day of the invasion (Failure of Secondary Institutions). These two narratives, although not present throughout the whole period, are hugely significant to providing a timeframe for the collapse of Russia-West International Society.

Failure of Secondary Institutions	*70% 66 docs*
Co-ordinated Anti-Russian Agenda (US Led)	55%
NATO - Russia relations (including expansion)	54%
Security Guarantees (for Russia)	*50% of 144 docs*
Primacy of the UN	46%
Illegal anti-Russia Sanctions	39%
Multipolar versus Unipolar Global Order	35%
Principle of non-Interference	29%
Preference for Co-operation (with the West)	27%
Rules Based Order Replacing International Law	23%

Table 6. Russia versus the West Narratives

The second category of narratives that guide section 7.4 (table 7 below) are those pertaining to justifications for intervention. These narratives attempt to demonstrate Ukraine is not abiding by the international agreements it has signed up to, as well as having no regard for the right to self-determination for the Russian people of the Donbas and Crimea. This links to the application of Russia's domestic law and constitutional obligation to protect Russian peoples and culture in the former-Soviet space as discussed extensively within Chapter 2 and the Georgia case study. Additionally, this links to the intra-civilisational concept outlined in the conclusions of the Syria case study, where Russia applies different standards of sovereignty dependent on the intra- versus inter-civilisational status of the state involved. There are some clear parallels with the previous case studies in the basic narratives used to justify military intervention based on international law, sovereignty, and human rights. However, some of the specific justifications for the invasion are more centred on undermining the basic legitimacy of Ukrainian sovereignty. These include the rise of Naziism and

nationalism in Ukraine, the illegality of the 2014 Ukraine 'coup' (Maidan Revolution), and equating Ukraine to a US vassal, and not an independent state.

Minsk Agreements	51%
Nazism in Ukraine (including de-Nazification)	38%
Ukraine refusing to implement international agreements	37%
Militarisation of Ukraine (including need to de-militarise)	35%
Ukraine controlled by the West	35%
Self-determination in Donbas & Crimea	32%
Special Status of Crimea & Donbas	31%
Illegal Coup in Ukraine (2014)	31%
Removal of Russia Culture in Ukraine	26%
Ukraine NATO membership	15%

Table 7. Justifications for intervention narratives

7.2.3 Georgia versus Syria versus Ukraine themes comparison

This sub-section provides a comparison of the institution themes of international law, sovereignty, human rights, and secondary institutions that all the case studies share. This is to provide some consistency in the analysis from case study to case study to add to the overall picture of Russia's interpretation and use of the institutions across the whole period this research project covers (2003 – 2022).

To repeat the caveat from the equivalent sub-section from the Syria case study, the intent here is not to claim 100% accuracy in the equivalency of the data gathered across the four datasets from three case studies. This is due mostly to the methods with which Russia has crafted its information output, developing in complexity over time. However, as per the Georgia-Syria comparison, it is important to understand the observable similarities and differences in Russia's approach when faced with different circumstances. In this case, the context of escalated tensions in the period prior to the invasion. Escalation of a level not observed in the other case studies. Following the format and graphical representation of the Georgia-Syria comparison (figure 11) for consistency, a simplified comparison is given below at figure 16 based on the same method of quantifying the percentage of each institution

theme of international law, sovereignty, human rights, and secondary institutions based on whether each narrative occurs in the 268 documents in dataset 4.

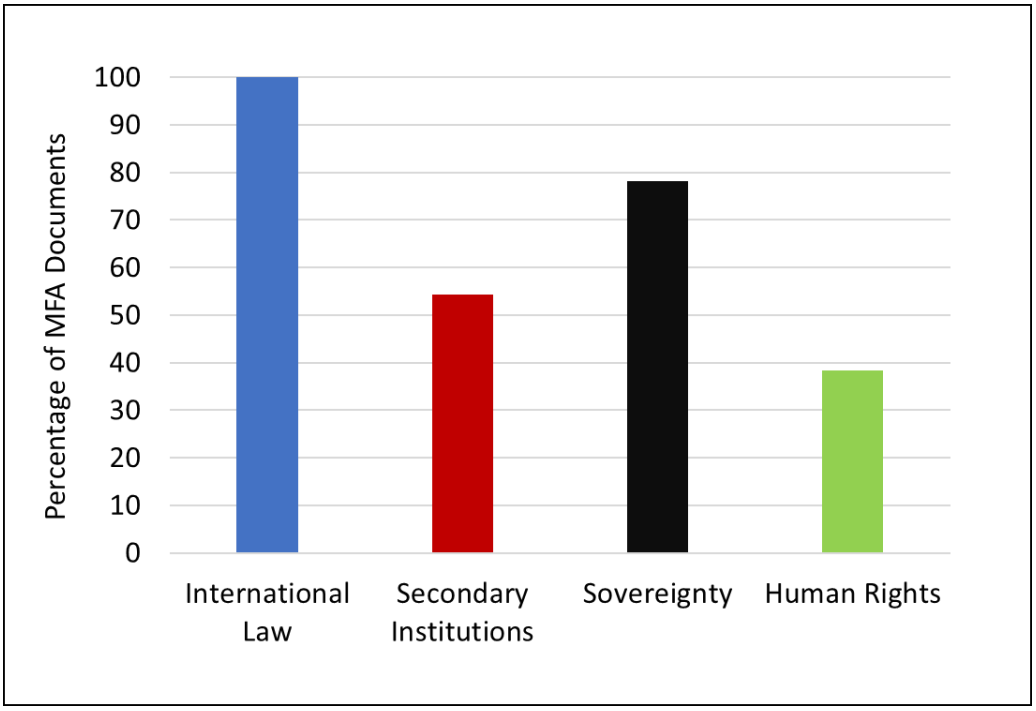

Figure 16. Prevalence (by percentage) of institutions themes in Dataset 4 (Ukraine)

As with the Syria case study, at this point it is important to recap the definitions of the institution themes established from the Georgia and Syria case studies to emphasise what is being evaluated in this initial comparison.

- **International Law** is defined as narratives within the MFA documents relating only to Russia's contractual use of international law to legitimise its actions. This definition was applicable to both the Georgia and Syria case studies.
- **Human Rights** definitions were not compatible across the Georgia and Syria case studies. In Georgia human rights is defined as narratives within the MFA documents that demonstrate Russia's interpretation centred on a clear hierarchical and Russo-centric basis. This also includes examples the blurring of the boundaries between domestic and international law that put into question Georgia's sovereignty and territoriality. For Syria, human rights narratives were totally different due to the lack of Russian ethno-cultural interests in Syria. As a result, human rights was not a priority, nor linked heavily to sovereignty. In Syria, an inter-civilisational perspective is taken

by Russia, where this institution does not stand above the principle of non-interference as laid out in the UN Charter. For the Ukraine case study, the definition returns to that observed within Georgia, equating to an intra-civilisation understanding of human rights based on Moscow's perceived Russianness of the people involved.

- **Secondary Institutions** is defined as narratives within the MFA documents concerning the use of secondary institutions including, but not limited to, the UN and OSCE that demonstrates Russia's regulating use of these organisations to attempt to uphold its understanding of international law. This definition was applicable to both the Georgia and Syria case studies.
- **Sovereignty** was only seen as a distinct narrative in Syria, not Georgia where all instances were linked to Russo-centric human rights as defined above. In Syria, the narrative centres on the inherent inviolability of sovereignty through the UN charter and international law. This is in line with Russia's inter-civilisational approach of non-interference in other civilisations' internal affairs, articulated in the conclusions of the Syria case study.

Between the case studies, the way in which Russia approaches international law is consistent and directly comparable across all three. The other institutions continue to act as supporting pillars to Russia's international legal arguments. For the Ukraine case study, international law narratives are used as justification for the type of global order (multipolar/civilisational) Moscow perceives as the only legitimate structure for inter-state (arguably inter civilisational) relations between the great powers of International Society. From a human rights perspective, there are clear parallels between Georgia and Ukraine. Human rights is linked to sovereignty, specifically in the Donbas region and Crimea, blurring the boundaries of territoriality and sovereignty. Like Georgia this is based on self-determination arguments and alleged violations of the human rights of ethnic-Russians, including erasure of cultural practices.

Across the three case studies, the interpretation and application of sovereignty is the most inconsistent. The Russian interpretation of sovereignty on display in Georgia and Ukraine demonstrates Moscow's ability to abandon the commitment it shows to the principle of non-

interference (in Syria) when applied to an intra-civilisational context which it links to human rights, and protection of Russian cultural, ethnic and/or territorial interests. The Ukraine data shows that Russia's perception that it must retain influence over Ukraine is a critical enabler of protecting wider Russian sovereignty and security from the threat of continued Western expansion. Expansion that is designed by the West to limit and contain Russia from gaining parity with the US. The narratives that support this position question the very legitimacy of Ukrainian sovereignty under the leadership of Zelensky due to the illegality of the 2014 revolution which Russia exclusively refers to as a coup. Other narratives to delegitimise Ukrainian sovereignty based on its current governance revolve around portraying Ukraine as rife with Nazi influence, not being in control of its own policies, and a vassal for the US as part of its strategy to dominate the international order.

Building on figure 12 (chapter 6), *Syria versus Georgia prevalence of themes comparison*, the below graphic (figure 17) adds Ukraine into this comparison. The order in which the datasets are presented has also been changed to group datasets 1 and 4 which reflect Russia using military intervention in an intra-civilisational context (Georgia and Ukraine) and 3 and 2 that reflect Russia either interacting during a period of relative peace (Georgia pre-war) or involved in a conflict outside its civilisational remit (Syria).

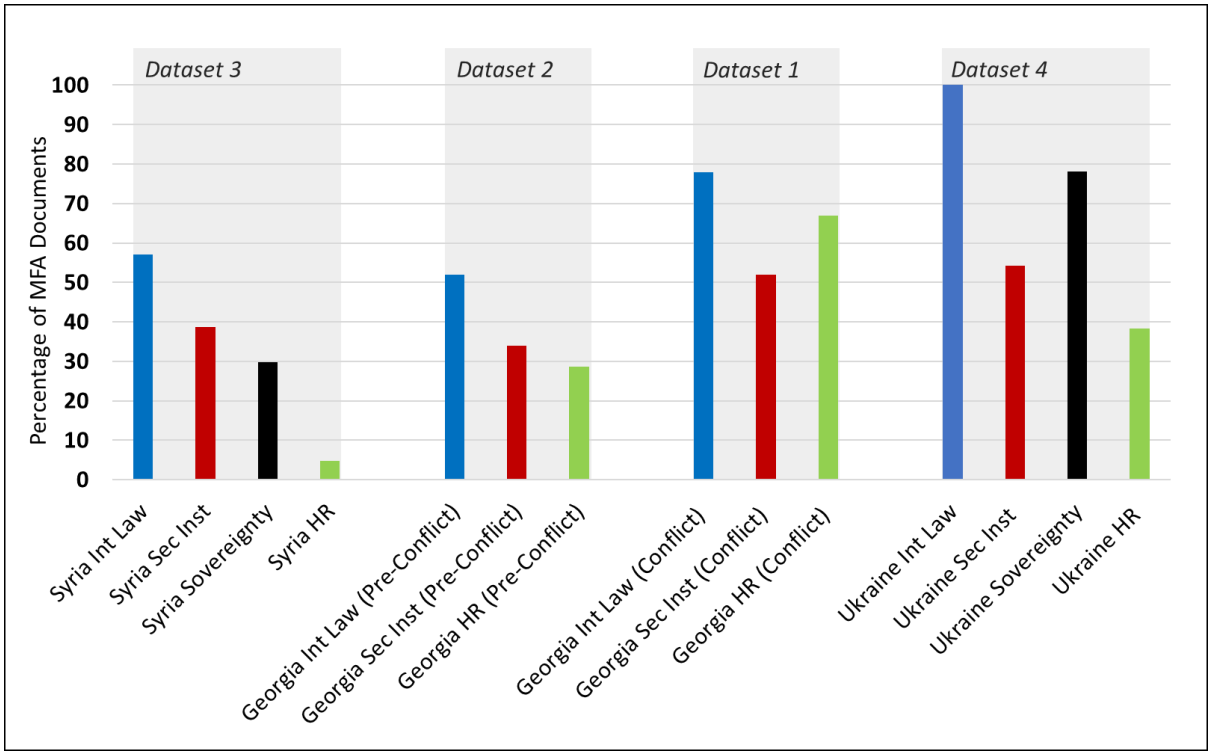

Figure 17. Syria versus Georgia versus Ukraine Prevalence of Themes Comparison

The first and most obvious difference between the Ukraine case study data and the other case studies is the overall increase by percentage across the narratives, with all linked explicitly to the master institution of international law. This is almost certainly reflective of the existentiality Russia perceives surrounding the Ukraine conflict. A level of threat that is not present in either the more manageable smaller scale Georgia intervention, or Russia's inter-civilisational intervention in Syria.

As with the other case studies, the different ways which Russia applies its context dependent interpretations of sovereignty, including its interchangeability with human rights in the former-Soviet republics, makes direct comparison across all three case studies difficult. However, the relatively predictable way in which sovereignty and human rights are interchanged to justify Russia's actions within international law results in a general consistency in the proportion of justifying narratives related to either sovereignty and/or human rights. The graphic below (figure 18) uses international law as a control measure, with the other institution themes represented as a relative percentage of it across each case study. This illustrates this consistency over a large volume of data (approximately two million words, four datasets, spanning case studies across nineteen years). Sovereignty and human rights

narratives for Syria and Ukraine are combined to enable a comparison with Georgia, in which human rights is inextricably linked to protection of Russian collective sovereignty. The graphic has also been ordered to group the institution themes into those made up of narratives observed during periods Russia was not engaged in an intra-civilisational conflict (i.e. in a state of conflict with an adversary that impacts notions of collective sovereignty), and those during intra-civilisational conflict with Georgia and Ukraine.

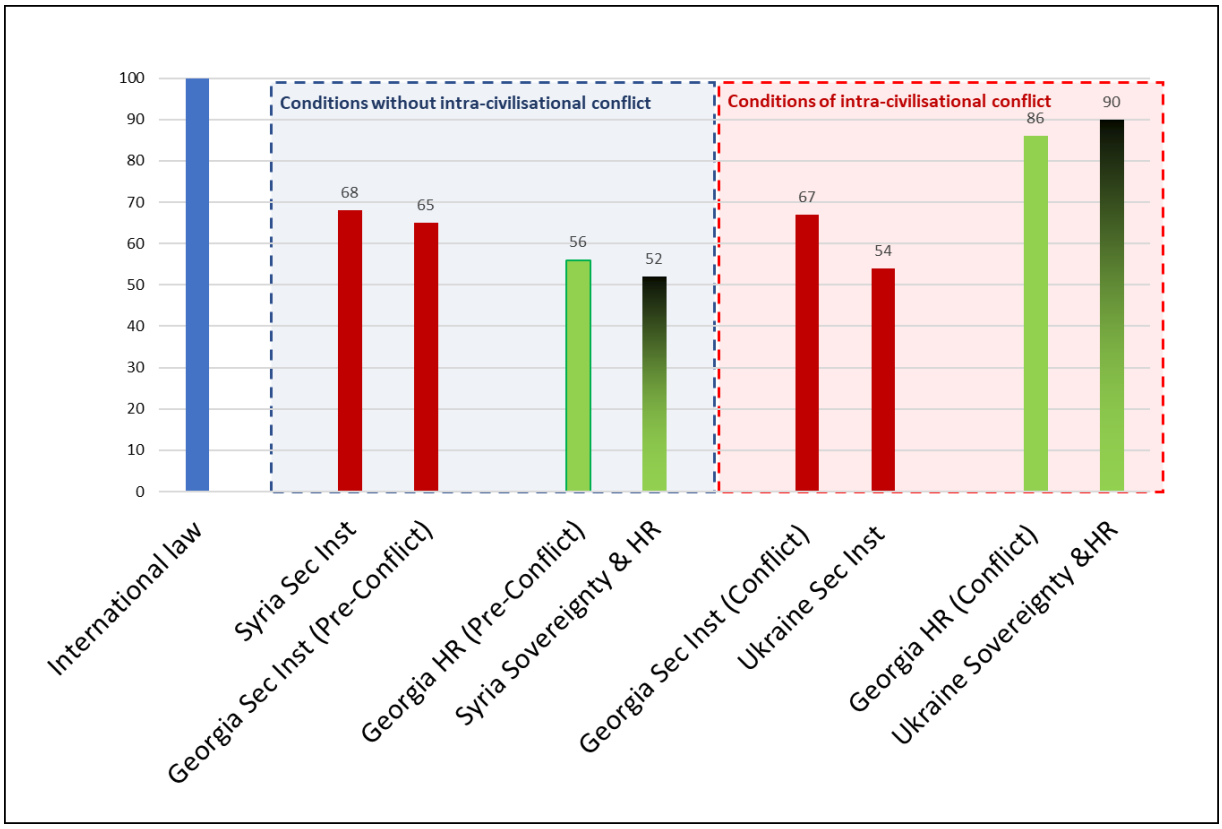

Figure 18. Syria versus Georgia versus Ukraine relative prevalence of themes versus international law

The statistical analysis represented in figure 18 that spans nearly two decades (2003 – 2022), across three conflicts reinforces the assessments made within the comparative analysis of Georgia and Syria in chapter 6 (Syria case study). Firstly, that international law, interpreted in a contractual manner acts as the master institution, supported by the other institution narratives. For Ukraine, the extreme nature of the crisis that unfolds throughout 2021, leading up to the largest European conventional war since World War 2, is evidenced by the statistic that all Russian narratives on Ukraine are underpinned by justifications through international

law. In terms of ratios of supporting narratives to international law, there is remarkable consistency, which appears to depend on the context of whether Russia feels it is engaged directly in intra-civilisational conflict. This is most obvious in the differences in the percentage of prevalence of human rights and/or sovereignty narratives relative to international law (bracketed together due to apparent interchangeability of these institutions as discussed previously). During the conflict stage of the Georgia case study and in Ukraine, where Russia observes itself in an intra-civilisational conflict, the narratives that have a human rights and/or sovereignty element appear as 86% (Georgia) and 90% (Ukraine) in ratio to international law. This drops substantially to 56% (Georgia) and 52% (Syria) in the case study data that covers the Syrian intervention, and the pre-conflict Georgia data. These latter percentages reflecting conditions where Russia does not feel involved in an intra-civilisational conflict. The consistency between pre-conflict Georgia where no military intervention is taking place and Syria, where inter-civilisational military action is occurring demonstrates that Russia's application and prioritisation of human rights and/or sovereignty narratives retains a similar importance during a time of relative peace from an intra-civilisational perspective (in Georgia), and whilst undertaking limited inter-civilisational military intervention. The data supports the assessment that it requires an intra-civilisational threat for Russia to increase prioritisation of human rights and/or sovereignty narratives to support its position in international law for military intervention. This analysis has implications for predicting when Russia feels it has reached a crisis point at which militarily action to protect Russian collective sovereignty and associated Russian interests becomes likely. The indicator that Russia may be preparing to act is a nearly twofold increase in sovereignty and/or human rights narratives.

Unlike narratives pertaining to human rights and/or sovereignty which change dependent on level of threat perceived, there is general consistency across the ratio of secondary institution narratives relative to international law in all circumstances observed in the three case studies. In the Syria data this ratio is 68% of international law narratives, Georgia pre-conflict is 65%, Georgia during conflict is 67%, with the outlier being Ukraine at 54%. Although no definitive reason why the Ukraine case study is lower, this is likely to be related to the fact that Russia, to an increasing degree throughout 2021, was losing faith in the Russia-West International Society and its associated international organisations and treaties. This is reflected in several individual narratives that will be analysed in the next sections of this chapter. These narratives

include a Western led co-ordinated anti-Russian agenda in 55% of the documents in dataset 4, the failure of secondary institutions in 70% of the 66 documents published after the start of the conflict, and the underlying theme of the West attempting to replace international law with a RBO in 23% of all documents.

7.3 Russia versus the West, competing visions for global order

This section of the chapter analyses the category of narratives identified as those that situate Ukraine as a "matter of life and death, a matter of our [Russia's] historical future as a nation" (Putin, MFA Transcript, 24th February 2022). These narratives underpin the apparent perception, prominent in both the dataset 4 sources and the existing literature reviewed in chapter 2 that the fall of Ukraine to Western influence amounts to an existential loss of regional power. Power that Russia requires to secure its place in the emergent multipolar global order. The narratives below at table 8 all stem from an environment that Moscow perceived as a collapse in Russia-West relations, led by the failure of key secondary institutions, such as the UN, to uphold international law. This failure is perceived as driven by the West's (specifically the US) uncompromising policies to impose a unipolar, and liberal democracy focused worldview on a global order undergoing a fundamental change to multipolarity. For Russia, Ukraine becomes the "red line" (ibid) where Russia's place as a global power in this multipolar order is won or lost. From the Russian perspective, it cannot maintain civilisational greatness with Ukraine ceded to a US unipolar RBO, in which Ukraine becomes a Western puppet state in its strategy to degrade Russia's influence and status.

Failure of Secondary Institutions	*70% of 66 docs*
Co-ordinated Anti-Russian Agenda (US Led)	55%
NATO - Russia relations (including expansion)	54%
Security Guarantees (for Russia)	*50% of 144 docs*
Primacy of the UN	46%
Illegal anti-Russia Sanctions	39%
Multipolar versus Unipolar Global Order	35%
Principle of non-Interference	29%
Preference for Co-operation (with the West)	27%
Rules Based Order Replacing International Law	23%

Table 8. Russia versus the West Narratives

To aid analysis of the narratives that apply to the existential nature of ceding Ukraine to the West (table 8), they are combined into the following four interlinked themes. The first will explore multipolarity and the Russian narratives concerning the illegality of the West's implementation of a RBO. The second concerns NATO (& Western) expansion, including the principle of non-interference. The third covers narratives related to co-ordinated anti-Russian agendas, and sanctions. The final theme explores the change from narratives that entertain some form of co-operation in Russia-West International Society to narratives that make demands on security guarantees against the backdrop of failing secondary institutions; after which Russia-West relations could be more accurately described as being an adversarial international system.

7.3.1 Multipolarity and the Rules Based Order

Two linked narratives support the base premise of Russia's position that escalation over Ukraine is centred on long standing Russian concerns regarding Western expansion (specifically NATO expansion, covered in the next sub-section 7.2.2). These two narratives are first, which appears in 35% of the documents in dataset 4, Russia's stated belief that the global order is undergoing a radical change from US hegemony (or unipolarity) to a multipolar order of rising great powers able to challenge the Western dominance of the past 30 years. The second, appearing in 23% of the documents in dataset 4, is that the West are attempting to retain dominance by replacing international law, as laid down by the UN, with a RBO. Although multipolarity is only 6th, and those concerning replacement of international law with RBO is 10th (of 10) in terms of quantitative prevalence of the narratives identified in table 8, these narratives form the basis of all the others. Even the narrative concerning preference for co-operation with the West is based on "equal international cooperation that takes into account the interests of other countries" (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 20th January 2022) based on Russia's place as a great civilisational power in a multipolar order.

Russia's narratives on multipolarity link to the established position Moscow has in perceiving both the global order in civilisational terms and as itself as a civilisational great within it. Critically this viewpoint, with Russia at the centre of a wider Russian civilisation and associated concept of collective sovereignty legitimises the use of the territory of an adjacent state,

within its own civilisation, to protect Russian sovereignty through retaining cultural and/or physical dominance (see conclusion to chapter 2). Within the framework of this perspective, Ukraine is critical to Russian sovereignty and any loss of Russian influence to the West, specifically the US and NATO, constitutes an existential degradation of Russian security. This position is summarised by Lavrov's comments when discussing the situation in Ukraine that "no one should strengthen their security at the expense of others'. NATO's further eastward expansion will obviously affect our fundamental security interests" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 2nd December 2021). Russian narratives expand to reflect that this position is reinforced by the lived experience of Russia in the 1990s and early 2000s where Moscow attempted to co-operate and integrate with the West after the fall of the Soviet Union when the new Russian state was at its weakest.

> "At some point (in the 1990s) we [Russia] were approached as an obedient country that opened up to the West, opened up in an unprecedented manner in many regards which was seen as weakness. The realisation that Russia should not be confined to a subordinate place of tertiary importance on a global scale did not come to us overnight." (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 30th August 2021).

For Russia, it logically flows that they cannot be a great power in an International Society it perceives as hegemonic, and Western centric. Subsequently Moscow has significant investment in communicating their belief that international relations "is rapidly adopting a new agenda, which includes a multipolar order" and "The unipolar and bipolar worlds are a thing of the past." (Grushko, MFA Transcript, 20th December 2021). Russia specifically links the breakdown in relations with the West to the matter of multipolar versus unipolar ambitions for global order. Stating that "complications began to emerge" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 19th February 2021) after it became apparent Moscow could not tolerate subservience to US dominance of the global order.

The Western counter position to Russia's civilisational perspective on where Ukraine sits in the global order is that Ukraine is in no way part of Russia's existential security perimeter. Western narratives are consistent that the borders of Ukraine are inviolable, and that its sovereignty and territoriality are in no way linked to Russia's collective security. Examples of the Western counter narratives are seen both in individual state narratives such as the US

stating that Russia's actions in Ukraine are "a brazen affront to the modern international order" (Blinken, US Department of State, Press Statement, February 25th 2021) and joint statements such as from the G7 stating that they are "united in their condemnation of Russia's continued actions to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence" (HM Government, Press Release, 18 March 2021). March 2021 being a significant date for the reassertion of the West's position on Ukraine, just days before the publication of Ukrainian Decree 117/2021 that committed the Ukrainian state to reclaiming the occupied areas in the Donbas and Crimea. The G7 making such statements having a particular sensitivity for Russia having been ousted from what was then the G8 over the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Davis, 2023, p5).

From an ideological perspective, what Russia states it perceives as a battle between multipolarity versus the RBO, the West interprets as a fight between the democracies and the autocracies (the autocracies being predominantly Russia and China). The Western narratives reflect the perception that the competition between Russia and the West, or the autocratic states versus the liberal democracies, is a zero-sum game "in a world where democracies are under threat from authoritarian powers" (Raab, HM Government, Press Release, 24th March 2021). At least with respect to the nature of this competition there appears to be a rare confluence of the perception of existentiality in the importance of reinforcing respective normative positions in the global order. The US state that "we as liberal democracies have to be a part of this competition between liberal forces and authoritarian forces" and that "what is at stake is nothing less than peace in Europe and the question whether or not we're going to defend our rules-based order" (Blinken, US Department of State Remarks, 18th February 2022). This position is reinforced by the major defence and economic institutions of the West, NATO and the EU. NATO publications outline the importance of "defending our rules-based order", the need to "strengthen our democracies" (Stoltenberg, NATO remarks, 19th February 2021), and articulates that the situation in Ukraine is "democracy versus authoritarianism" (NATO discussion, 17th June 2021). The European Commission outlines the situation in Ukraine as "the biggest threat" in this battle for democracy and that the "autocratic model… is challenging our model of societies" (EU speech, 22nd March 2022). Additionally, not only do the core economic (EU) and military centres (NATO) of the Western world state that this is an ideological battle between democracy and autocracy, but a NATO platform is given to the

Ukrainian Foreign Minister to publicly avow that "Russia has to understand that Ukraine belongs to the world of the democracies, to the Western world" (Dmytro Kuleba, NATO Press Point, 13th April 2021). As with Western G7 narratives, the timing of this statement, on a NATO platform, just one month after the Ukrainian government commits to reunification reinforces Russian beliefs on the zero-sum nature of the security loss it perceives through the ceding of Ukraine to the West and NATO.

Russia's investment in a civilisational, multipolar order in which "There are self-sufficient power centres beyond the United States and the West" (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 25th November 2021) leads Moscow to interpret the West's overt policy of imposing and protecting a RBO as a mechanism of retaining US-led hegemony over global affairs. The perception being that a multipolar order is a reality the "United States is not ready to accept" (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 15th April 2021). A statement from Foreign Minister Lavrov in June 2021 encapsulates the Russian position observed across the narratives within dataset 4. This statement directly links the West's insistence on the implementation of the RBO to the West's desire to circumvent international law to reinforce its dominance in global affairs. He accuses the West of "dodging the term "international law" and using instead the expression "rules-based world order,"" to "develop certain West-centric concepts and approaches to be later palmed off as an ideal of multilateralism and the ultimate truth" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 9th June 2021). This narrative is reinforced regularly and is one that also links the concept of a Western RBO as mutually exclusive to the rules as laid down in the UN Charter.

Statements to this effect include that "Western countries have gone so far as to purposefully demolish the UN-centric system of international law… to substitute it with the so-called rules-based order that benefits them alone" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 1st December 2021), and that the RBO is designed to directly "replace the UN Charter" with values that "are not universal" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 1st April 2021). A single comment that provides huge insight into the specific issue that Russia has with the concept of a RBO, that they see as separate to the UN Charter, is contained within a statement made by Lavrov in June 2021. He discusses the principle that for Russia "the words "law" and "rule" share a single root. To us, a rule that is genuine and just is inseparable from the law" (Lavrov, MFA Article, 28th June 2021) and that in English this is not the case. He proposes that for the English-speaking West, essentially

targeting the US and UK, that a set of 'rules' would allow for the circumvention of law, and that the West is therefore through its RBO, attempting to force "everyone around its vision" (Lavrov, ibid) at the expense of the legitimately emerging multipolar order. This insight also gives further weight to the contractual approach Russia has to international law as a tight set of rules, as per their interpretation of the UN Charter, as well as a direct example that at least Sergey Lavrov may understand that polysemy in international law is present within Russia-West International Society.

The Russian position that the RBO is inherently linked to the unipolar era of US dominance, and therefore constitutes a replacement of international law and circumvention of the UN Charter is a fundamental difference in perception of what the RBO is, and thereby how international law relates to it. For the West, narratives surrounding the RBO centre on emphasising that it is entirely coherent with the UN charter, applied from a non-civilisational perspective. For the West, the Russia-Ukraine crisis constitutes "a moment of peril… for the foundation of the United Nations Charter and the rules-based international order that preserves stability worldwide" (Blinken, US Department of State, 17th February 2022). The RBO is from the Western perspective a manifestation of the UN Charter, based on the inviolability of state borders, not civilisational ones. This position provides an unresolvable values impasse between Russia and the West in understanding what the RBO is for. For Russia the RBO is for maintaining Western dominance, for the West it is for maintaining the order "on which our peace and security depend" (Stoltenberg, NATO Speech, 9th March 2022).

As discussed above, the implications of Russia understanding that its civilisationally focused multipolar order is being directly countered by the West's RBO brings with it from Moscow's perspective a direct threat to its sovereignty, and security. The West's hardline position in the case of Ukraine on the necessity to protect democracies through a RBO based on the UN Charter is problematic for Russia as the term democracy (or its derivatives) appear nowhere in the Charter. However, for the West, the fact that individual rights and freedoms feature heavily amounts to it (UN Charter, 1973). The next sub-section discusses NATO expansion and Russia's position on the principle of non-interference which further highlights polysemy in international law manifesting as different interpretations of the UN Charter. Specifically, the impasses that arise through the West's intertwining of RBO, the UN Charter, democracy, and

NATO. A final quotation, prior to moving on to the topic of NATO expansion, from an interview in April 2021 regarding the state of Russia-West relations summarises the Russian position on expanding Western influence in the post-Soviet region. The quotation below articulates the position Russia desires the international audience to understand it is taking regarding its place within the global order, and is given in full due to its importance to the analysis and its specific linking of this sub-section to the next.

> "Nothing good will come out of this, unless the United States stops acting as a sovereign, as President Putin said during his Address to the Federal Assembly, accepts the futility of any attempts to revive the unipolar world or to create an architecture where all Western countries would be subordinate to the United States and the Western camp would work together to "rally" other countries across the world against China and Russia, admits that it was for a purpose that the UN Charter sealed such principles as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and sovereign equality of states, and simply honours its commitments and starts talking with us, just as with any other country, on the basis of respect for each other and for a balance of interests, which must be established." (Lavrov, MFA Interview, 28 April 2021).

7.3.2 NATO expansion, the principle of non-interference, and sovereignty

Russia's narratives concerning NATO expansion are firmly established and have been covered in the research context (Chapter 1, Section 1.2) and literature review (Chapter 2). Moscow's perception is that NATO expansion into former-Soviet republics is inherently damaging to Russia's security situation and constitutes interference in the wider Russian civilisation, ultimately threatening sovereignty. The centrality of the NATO expansion narrative to stated Russian motivations for interventions (from 2014 onwards), culminating in the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is highlighted by the fact this narrative appears in 54% of the documents in dataset 4, and that associated non-interference narratives appear in 29%. For Moscow, the West "has consistently expanded NATO towards the borders of the Russian Federation, moved its military infrastructure towards the east thus creating a direct threat to our security and violating the principle of indivisibility of security" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 30th Nov 2021).

Moscow feels that it has effectively and consistently messaged the importance of preventing further NATO expansion, which it sees as a critical threat to the future security and stability

of Europe. Further Russia professes that the West refuses to engage on "an equal and mutually beneficial basis" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 18th November 2021), instead choosing to dismiss security concerns regarding NATO as irrational. Further, the stated Russian belief is that the West (specifically the US) uses NATO to implement strategic dominance over the European continent through taking advantage of Russian weaknesses in influence and control over affairs in former-Soviet republics. This amounts to NATO being "a tool for advancing geopolitical interests and ensuring… the collective West's dominant position in international affairs" (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 17th November 2021). Moscow also repeatedly cites a widely established narrative regarding the West's broken promises to not expand NATO, which constitutes "serious violations of the agreements reached in the 1990s, when NATO pledged not to deploy considerable armed forces in the territory of new member states" (Lavrov, MFA Statement, 1st June 2021).

There is a great deal written about the alleged promises made by the West to not undertake further expansion of the NATO alliance. Much of which centres on the negotiations after the fall of the Soviet Union, including the reunification of Germany. There is not the scope to write about this extensively here, and the time-period falls well outside the scope of this case study. However, in a press briefing in January 2022, just 6 weeks before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Secretary of State Blinken made the following claim that Mikhail Gorbachev (President of Russia during the fall of the Soviet Union) and the US Secretary of State at the time Anthony Baker had stated that "the topic of NATO expansion was not discussed at all in negotiations about German reunification" and that "there was no promise that NATO wouldn't expand" (Blinken, US State Department Press Briefing, 7th January 2022). With the Western documentation available, it does appear that the latter part of this statement holds true, and that no direct written promise was made. However, the topic of NATO expansion being discussed is reflected in the official record. De-classified Nation Security Agency (NSA) transcripts show that Secretary of State Baker had discussed expansion as a central theme in negotiations on reunification. Baker stated that German neutrality would be worse for European security going forward than a unified Germany within "a NATO that is far less of a military organization, much more of a political one" and that there would "of course, have to be iron-clad guarantees that NATO's jurisdiction or forces would not move eastward" (Baker, NSA Memorandum of Conversation, 9th February 1990).

By 1993, the documentation from the NSA archive shows elements within the US Government beginning to push for expansion of NATO as a method to spread democracy as an ideological basis for peace in Europe, to prevent the re-rise of nationalism/autocratic regimes. This is a position entirely coherent with the later manifestation of a more developed sense that NATO is a key secondary institution used by the West to attempt maintain the dominance of democracy over authoritarianism as discussed in the previous sub-section. In a de-classified document titled *Strategy for NATO's Expansion and Transformation* the incumbent US Under Secretary for International Affairs, corresponding with Secretary of State Baker, states that a US led NATO's "challenge… over the next generation [is] containing and coopting Russian power" in effect to "build democracy in Europe and insure stability by preventing a return to nationalism" which would include possible expansion into former-Soviet states, and even Russia itself at some point (Davis, NSA document, 7th September 1993).

The Russian narratives from the Yeltsin Government of the early 1990s represent a period in which considerable political effort was being made from both sides in narrowing the gap between East and West on the matter of NATO and its expansion. However, what the Russian's saw within the Partnership for Peace process, agreed between the Clinton and Yeltsin administrations, did not amount to allowing the West to encourage narratives in the former-Soviet Republics that speculated on the "mythical Russian threat" which implied that they should "protect themselves by joining NATO" (Grachev, NSA Transcript, 5th January 1994). Russia's position was that "European security should be collective, not bloc-oriented, relying instead on all-European structures" (ibid).

By the end of 1994, President Yeltsin, in a de-classified communique with President Clinton, despite re-affirming his commitment to "profound co-operation with NATO" also states clearly that the expansion of NATO to subsume former-Soviet Republics "will be interpreted, and not only in Russia as the beginning of a new split of Europe" (Yeltsin, NSA Transcript, 6th December, 1994). This ties in with long standing narratives Russia has, that have been explored extensively throughout this thesis on its belief that its concerns on European security have been ignored over a long period, and that the West has not treated them as equals in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union. Excerpts from Russian Foreign Minister Primakov (previously discussed as a central figure in the development of Russian understanding of

multipolarity) articulate the Russian position by the late 1990s. He first cites that "[NATO] expansion will inevitably create such alienation [between European states] if one takes into account the psychological, political and military aspects connected to it" which "could lead to a slide into a new confrontation [between Russia and the West]" (Primakov, NSA Transcript, 31st January 1997). He also makes statements, that would be at home within the narratives seen within the Georgia 2008 and Ukraine 2022 case study material, that the Russian position is that "Western countries assured us that NATO would not move "one inch" to the East", and that the decision it made to expand has "consequences of which will define the European configuration for decades in the future" (ibid). These historical documents and the record they contain are incredibly valuable evidence that Russia's perspective on NATO expansion is a genuinely long held belief, and not manufactured for the sake of justifying intervention in Ukraine (and Georgia in 2008).

As well as the central disagreement over Western expansion, including Russia's belief of broken promises, a linked point of contention between Russian and Western perspectives on NATO is the argument of whether a state has the right to choose independently regarding applying to join the NATO alliance. Jens Stoltenberg's (NATO Secretary General) statement reflects the accepted Western position that "whether the country is going to become a member of NATO is for that aspirant country and for NATO Allies to decide, no one else" (Stoltenberg, NATO Transcript, 5th October 2021). The US Government's Office of the Spokesperson's publication aimed at discrediting 'Russian dis-information' echoes the NATO line. "NATO enlargement is not directed against Russia. Every sovereign nation has the right to choose" which "is a fundamental principle of European security, reflected in the UN Charter" (US Department of State, Fact Sheet, 20th January 2022). This linking of NATO membership to the UN Charter, consequently links NATO membership, and expansion as central to the protection of a democratic RBO in direct competition to the rising autocracies, or what Russia would interpret as the multipolar powers. Unsurprisingly against this context, Russia do not share the belief that all states have an equal right to join NATO and understand that "neutral states, are firmly bound by agreements and political commitments within the OSCE framework" which constitutes "a legal framework" that enshrines that "strengthening one's own security at the expense of others is unacceptable" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 14th January 2022). The exact quotation from the Charter for European Security that Russia is

citing is “Each participating State will respect the rights of all others in these regards. They will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States” (OSCE, 1999). This quote is preceded in the same paragraph with the statement that “We reaffirm the inherent right of each and every participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance” but starts with “Each participating State has an equal right to security” (ibid).

These quotations are problematic and ambiguous. They allow both Russia and the West to reinforce their positions by prioritising the elements that most closely align to their values, perceptions, and strategic objectives. For Russia, the emphasis is on the equal right to security, which in Moscow’s civilisational view of global order, and conceptualisation of collective sovereignty means that NATO expansion constitutes a zero-sum degradation of their security. For the West, the focus is on the right of all states to choose their security arrangements and works from the perspective that NATO does not pose a military-security threat to Russia. NATO states its purpose as “to guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means” and has no specific mention of Russia within its Charter (NATO, 2023). However, the individual policies of key member states such as the US and UK outline Russia as the principal threat to the Western, democratic global order. The UK’s 2021 Integrated Review stating that “Russia remains the most acute threat to our security” (UK Government, Integrated Review, 2021, p18) whereas the incoming Biden administrations interim National Security Strategy cites Russia as both an “authoritarian” (US Government, Interim National Security Guidance, 2021, p6) and “destabilizing” (p14) state that “remains determined to enhance its global influence and play a disruptive role on the world stage” (p8). This coupled with the fact NATO was formed “to provide collective security against the Soviet Union” (US Department of State, 2023), and the encroachment of NATO into what Russia perceives as its civilisational area of influence leaves Russia and the West at an ideological impasse. One where Russia’s contractual approach to international law, its belief that the RBO is being used by the West to undermine key primary (international law and sovereignty) and secondary (OSCE and UN) institutions, as well as using NATO as the military arm of a containment strategy aimed at reducing Russian international influence to that of a subservient power that cannot challenge the West’s global hegemony.

7.3.3 Anti-Russian agendas and sanctions

The Western strategy that Moscow perceives is designed to contain Russian power in International Society, enabled by NATO expansion, has several related supporting narratives within dataset 4. The most prominent is that the Western world is co-ordinating an international agenda against Russia, appearing in 55% of all documents. The only individual narrative that occurs in a higher percentage of documents is the one that stresses that key secondary institutions have failed to uphold the principles of interstate relations and international law. However, this narrative only appears after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022, and therefore appears in only 66 of the 268 total documents, with the caveat of presenting under the extreme conditions of an International Society that is in the process of falling apart.

The second main narrative that is explicitly linked to the co-ordinated anti-Russian agenda narrative is that of illegal Western sanctions. Moscow clearly sees the use of economic warfare as a long-standing strategy of the West to limit and degrade Russian influence. In the context of Ukraine this is particularly relevant with regards to Russia's influence over Kiev which has been historically the "hub of its [Russia's] strategic economic, security and ideological aspirations" (Feklyunina, 2015, as discussed in chapter 2). Additionally, Russia understands the economic weakness it showed in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union to be a key factor in its loss of influence in Eastern Europe which has the second order effect of degrading its ability to maintain control over collective Sovereignty in the post-Soviet states that have acceded to NATO.

Figure 19 (below) shows the prevalence (by percentage of documents in dataset 4) of the co-ordinated anti-Russia agenda, and anti-Russia sanctions narratives. What is notable is that the co-ordinated anti-Russian agenda narrative is generally consistent on a month-to-month basis, which is not the case across the other narratives in this case study; which can swing up or down by 20-30%. The co-ordinated anti-Russia agenda sits for the most part, approximately 10% either side of its 55% average with two exceptions. The first being the mid-Summer period centred on July, time coincident with increased NATO exercises, and the second being after Russia's invasion on 24th February 2022. As could be expected, after the invasion all

narratives that relate to the collapse of the Russia-West International Society increase markedly. The graph at figure 19 is included to illustrate the foundational role this narrative plays in supporting Russia's other narratives that communicate their belief that the West is attempting to degrade the emerging multipolar order through implementation of a RBO, and thus circumventing international law. Central to Moscow's view is the belief that the Western strategy is centred on degrading Russian sovereignty and security through NATO expansion, and US commitment to building an anti-Russia alliance to achieve its objective of retaining dominance in international affairs.

Figure 19. Prevalence of anti-Russia agenda and sanctions narratives

The West does not deny that it has an ideological strategy, aimed at developing International Society to be increasingly democratic. However, the narratives do not so much reflect a direct anti-Russia agenda, and instead focus on retaining the primacy of the democracies over the emergent autocratic powers, principally Russia and China. The general statement from Western powers, led by the US, is that "we want to build tomorrow's world with like-minded partners on an equal footing" (von der Leyen, European Commission Transcript, 4th February 2022) with the caveat appearing to be that a state qualifies for equal footing if it conforms to

the democratic values advocated by the US and Western powers. When referencing Russia directly in this context, the Western narratives speak to needing to combat "Russia's disinformation and destabilising regional activity" requiring "the need for like-minded nations to come together" (Raab, UK Government Press Release, 10th March 2021).

The Western view of sanctions as a tool to counter the Russian threat is that they are a legitimate, legal, and proportionate response to what is collectively determined illegal aggression in Ukraine. Written into US law in 2017 by President Obama, Public Law 115-44 *Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act* states Russia to be a key adversary and dedicates 42 (of 71) pages to detailing the conditions under which sanctions can, and must, be applied in response to Russian actions in Ukraine. The Act "authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to impose sanctions on those determined to be undermining democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine or threatening the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine." (US Government, Public Law 115-44, 2017, p14). Just six days prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, US Secretary of State Blinken makes a statement that summarises the US, and wider Western position on sanctions and their utility. Not only is the following statement specifically aimed at Russia as a last-ditch attempt at economic coercion to prevent a war, but also speaks to the wider context of the economic power of the democratic world in direct competition for dominance over the authoritarian states. "Russia and China together are right now less than 20 percent of world GDP. The United States, Europe together 45 percent of GDP. When we bring in some of our democratic partners from Asia, Japan, Korea, Australia, others, we're well over 50 percent of world GDP. That is a very powerful weight when it's acting in unison" (Blinken, US State Department Remarks, 18th February 2022).

7.3.4 Security guarantees and failure of secondary institutions

A marked shift in Russia's narratives occurs from the 10th December 2021 indicating that a decision has been made in Moscow to issue an ultimatum that requires either the implementation of security guarantees for the Russian Federation, or face the prospect of military intervention. Of the 144 documents published from 10th December onwards, 50% contain the demand for security guarantees to be met. This narrative rises as a steep decline

occurs in the prevalence of Russia's general narratives concerning preferences to resolve issues through equal co-operation. This relationship in the narratives is outlined below at figure 20. The graph also shows the rapid rise of another significant narrative which replaces security guarantees around the time of the invasion in February. This concerns the failure of secondary institutions to enforce international law and regulate Russia-West International Society. From Moscow's perspective, the failure of secondary institutions (specifically the UN, OSCE, and associated treaties) is used as a final justification for their imminent invasion of Ukraine to secure Russian sovereignty. This narrative becomes a central theme within 70% of the 66 documents published during this period.

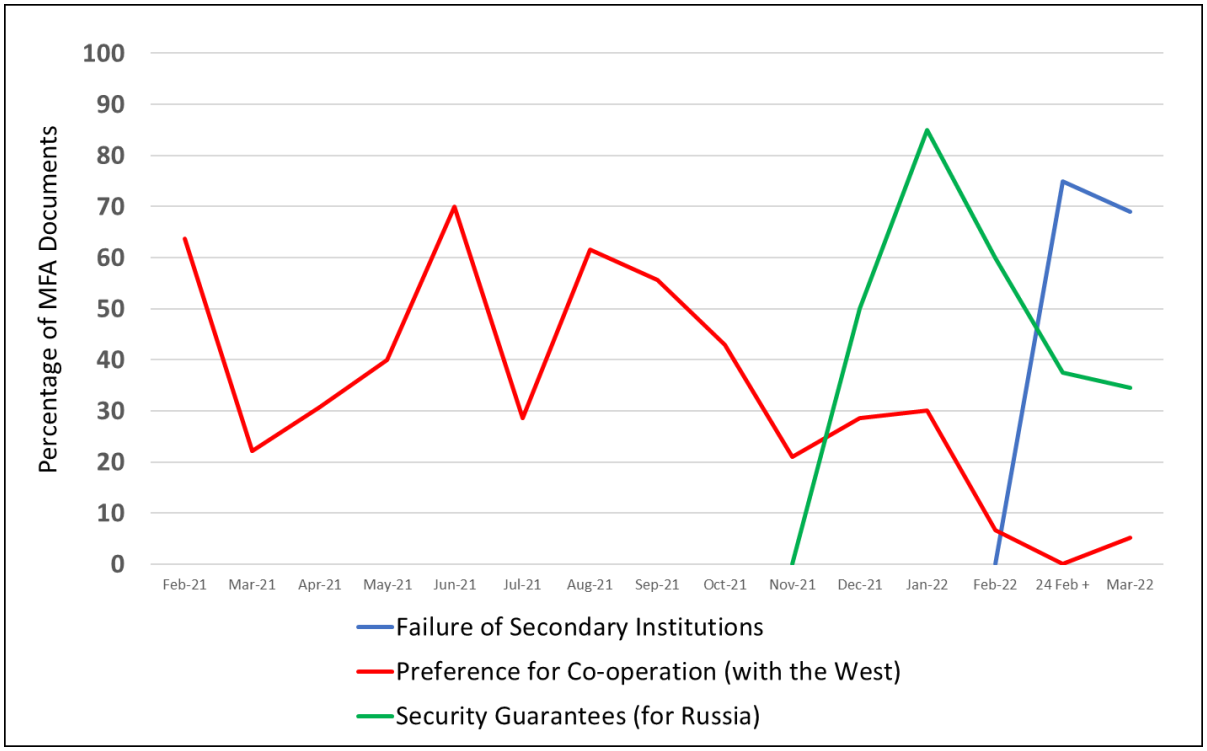

Figure 20. Prevalence of failure of secondary institutions, preference for co-operation, and security guarantees narratives and their relationships

What the three linked narratives above outline is a point in time between November 2021 and February 2022 that the collapse of the Russia-West International Society occurred, due to incompatible and competing visions for global order. Visions shaped by the different interpretations of primary and secondary institutions that have been discussed throughout all three case studies, principally international law, sovereignty, human rights, and the role secondary institutions have in regulating the state level relationships between Moscow and

its Western counterparts. The narrative for Russia-West co-operation, a recurring theme throughout this thesis, and first discussed in the literature review, centres on Russia's consistent position that cooperation between states can only be "on the basis of equality and mutual respect" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 9th June 2021). For Russia this inherently means the acceptance of the multipolar order, and Russia's place as a great power within it. The "aggressive unwillingness of our Western colleagues to accept this objective reality" (Ibid) stated by Lavrov in June highlights Moscow's total lack of belief that the West would be willing to entertain Russia as an equal power. This difference of opinion between Russia and the West on what constitutes the objective reality, whether politically, militarily, or legally is at the heart of the deadlock between Russia and the West. The effective abandonment of the co-operation narrative by Russia at the start of 2022, is a public statement that a tipping point has been reached in the relationship where the values base and interpretations of the institutions that maintain International Society are acknowledged as not only not being shared, but being in conflict. A values conflict that for Russia at least, carries an existential threat to their civilisational, multipolar worldview.

As the co-operation narrative all but ceases, the concurrent rise of Moscow's demands for security guarantees explicitly reinforces its belief that a critical point of existential threat has been reached. The first mention of security guarantees within dataset 4 comes on 30th November and is directly linked to the need to make "the principle of indivisibility of security legally binding" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 30th November 2021) in the context of NATO expansion. Lavrov goes on to state that Russia must "insist on the need to agree on long-term sustainable security guarantees" and that he hopes "the Kiev regime will not follow the path chosen by Mikhail Saakashvili in August 2008" (Ibid). The draft agreement on security guarantees proposed to NATO member states on 15th December 2021 is published within dataset 4 in full on 17th December. It outlines a nine-article agreement between Russia and NATO which Moscow links to several extant agreements between the two parties. The draft states that the nine articles would constitute a "reaffirming [of] their commitment" to "the Charter of the United Nations, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the 1997 Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the 1994 Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the 1999 Charter for European

Security, and the Rome Declaration "Russia-NATO Relations: a New Quality" signed by the Heads of State and Government of the Russian Federation and NATO member States in 2002" (MFA Draft Agreement, 17th December 2021). The linking of the draft agreement to secondary institutions (in the form of treaties, charters etc…) legitimises the document from the Russian perspective in line with NATO's (and by association, the West's) existing commitments to peace and security in Europe under international law. The detail of the nine articles contained within the draft itself will not be given here in full, but a summary of the key security guarantees is given to highlight the points of contention between Russia and the West. This also enables the analysis to account for where Russia is making a demand that they almost certainly know that NATO cannot, or will not accede to. The analytical challenge with Russia's security guarantee narratives is whether the draft agreement and associated narratives are a genuine attempt to avert what they perceive as a necessary military intervention, or whether they are an attempt to provide a justification for intervention based on their contractual approach to international law.

Five of the Articles in the draft agreement are not of great significance to the analysis of this thesis. Articles 1, 2, and 3 are concerned with communication and co-operation in the European space as equal partners, and do not contain anything that NATO and the West would likely deem unreasonable or unfeasible to enact. Article 8 details that the agreement does not interfere with the primacy of the UN and the Security Council, and Article 9 details the administrative details on how and when the agreement would come into force, including how the parties could withdraw from it in the future if desired. Articles 4 – 7 contain the security guarantees and highlight the impasse that Russia and NATO (and the West) have found themselves in through competing for influence in Ukraine. Article 4 demands that NATO reverses its expansion to the state it was in on "27 May 1997" with no military deployments in advance of the front lines as they existed then. Article 5 demands that "no land-based intermediate and short-range missiles [be deployed] in areas allowing them to reach the territory of the other Parties". Article 6 demands no further NATO expansion, with specific reference to a halt on any progress towards Ukraine's accession. Finally, Article 7 demands that neither party "conduct any military activity on the territory of Ukraine as well as other States in the Eastern Europe, in the South Caucasus and in Central Asia."

The response from the West to Russia's demands shows the fundamental incompatibility of their respective positions. On the matters of NATO membership and future expansion the West is unequivocal; "it's up to the individual sovereign nation to decide whether they want to join NATO or they don't… So, whether the country is going to become a member of NATO is for that aspirant country and for NATO Allies to decide, no one else." (Stoltenberg, NATO Transcript, 5th October 2021). On Ukraine specifically, the consistent narrative from the US is that "the United States supports Ukraine's right to decide its own future foreign policy course free from outside interference, including with respect to Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO" (US Government Media Note, 10th November 2021).

There is also clear cynicism from the Western side that Russia are being deliberately disingenuous with their list of security demands to justify further expansionist aggression towards Ukraine, rather than believe that Russia's actions in Ukraine from 2014 onwards are part of a wider existential threat that Moscow perceives from continued Western and NATO expansion. Secretary of State Blinken states directly that Russian demands for security guarantees are "to put out a list of absolutely nonstarter demands, and then to claim that the other side [the West] is not engaging and then to use that as somehow justification for aggressive action" (Blinken, US Government Press Brief Transcript, 7th January 2022). This narrative is reinforced directly from the NATO Secretary General the same day who cites Russia's demands, specifically against Russia's track record in Georgia and Ukraine as "one sided… that they [Russia] know are not acceptable" (Stoltenberg, NATO Press Briefing, 7th January 2022). This unacceptable perception of Russian demands is related to the West's position on its no-compromise principle that any negotiations on security guarantees must take into account the inviolability of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as the right for any state to choose to join the alliance as it sees fit; if NATO sees fit to endorse its application.

7.3.5 Russia versus the West, competing visions for global order summary

Russia understands its civilisational, multipolar perspective as the only viable challenge to the Western (US led) domination of International Society from which it feels deeply aggrieved after three decades of enforced subservience in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet

Union. Within this framework of understanding, the Western concept of maintaining a RBO is interpreted as a tool to constrain Russia's (and the other emerging non-Western powers) influence on the world stage. From the Western perspective, the Russian multipolar versus Western RBO impasse is perceived as a zero-sum battle between the democracies and the rising powers who have autocratic governments, of which Russia is stated a key actor.

Russian and Western perspectives on the nature of global order reinforce evidence of polysemy inherent in international law. Moscow's position is that the RBO is a Western attempt to subvert international law and the UN Charter, complicated by the fact that the West's position is that the RBO is a manifestation of both. Both sides seem to agree that the UN Charter must constitute the core of international law, but Russian civilisational perspectives on who does and doesn't qualify for full sovereignty (intra- versus inter-civilisational) reinforce Western beliefs that Moscow is willing to discount international law and the UN Charter to suit its aspirations to dominate the post-Soviet region using military power. However, from the Russian perspective the overt linkage of democracy to the UN Charter reinforces Moscow's belief that the West is overlaying its ideological basis on international law illegitimately as the term democracy, or any of its derivatives does not appear anywhere in the UN Charter.

With regards to the narratives relating to Western anti-Russian agendas and sanctions, both sides agree that it is a reality that a competition in which the West is attempting to reinforce its ideological dominance of the global order is taking place. The point of contention is that for the West this competition is related to the survival of democratic systems over the rising autocratic powers rather than a specifically anti-Russian effort. The use of Western sanctions to implement ideological dominance strategies are perceived as illegal by Russia in the context of a civilisationally based International Society.

The security guarantees narratives that emerge from December onwards are symptomatic of the rising importance of the standoff between Russia and the West over their competing visions for global order. Visions based on incompatible views of international law, sovereignty, and territoriality. What the narratives around security guarantees specifically highlights is that Russia and the West reach an insurmountable values impasse by February

2022, which constitutes respective existential threat to the societies, or civilisations they represent.

7.4 Justifications for intervention

The second type of narratives identified in dataset 4 sit together as a series of justifications for Russia's invasion. Table 9 (below) shows these span a range of legal, moral, and cultural justifications that can be presented to both domestic and international audiences. This type of narrative is more problematic to analyse than the first concerning Russia's vision for global order. Principally due to the difficulty of being able to meaningfully prove the degree to which individual narratives are genuinely held beliefs, or cynically manufactured to justify military actions Moscow believes it is obligated to undertake. Obligations that stem from the existential threat Moscow feels from the West's expanded influence in the region, and what Russia perceives as the replacing of international law with the RBO. As such, meaningful Western comparison on how these justifications relate to interpretations of the institutions of International Society is not likely to provide meaningful conclusions. Additionally, as a blanket statement it is fair to say that in general terms, the West unequivocally disagrees with all the justifications that follow. Consequently, there will be limited Western comparison in this next short section. However, it is important to give a brief overview of Russia's justifications as they do provide insight into how Moscow builds evidence to support its larger values-based positions on protecting its place in the global order.

Minsk Agreements	51%
Nazism in Ukraine (including de-Nazification)	38%
Ukraine refusing to implement international agreements	37%
Militarisation of Ukraine (including need to de-militarise)	35%
Ukraine controlled by the West	35%
Self-determination in Donbas & Crimea	32%
Special Status of Crimea & Donbas	31%
Illegal Coup in Ukraine (2014)	31%
Removal of Russia Culture in Ukraine	26%
Ukraine NATO membership	15%

Table 9. Justifications for intervention narratives

As per section 7.3, the narratives above will not be analysed individually but grouped into three themes. The first concerns Ukraine's obligations under international treaties and agreements. The second covers the right to self-determination that the peoples of the Donbas region and Crimea have to identify as Russian. This links to the narratives surrounding state sponsored Nazism, nationalism, and what Russia describes as the illegal coup of 2014 (Maidan Revolution). These first two themes relate to direct justifications for Russian intervention in Ukraine based on their contractual understanding of international law (i.e., Ukraine breaching treaties) and/or a moral obligation through international law to protect Russo-centric human rights. These mirror justifications from the Georgia case study. The final theme speaks to a more fundamental undermining of Ukrainian sovereignty and is linked to the narratives discussed across section 7.3 concerning Russia's perceived competition with the West in determining the global order and Russia's place in International Society. This theme concerns justifications/narratives that describe Ukraine as being handled/controlled by the West. By stating Ukraine is an instrument of the West, a logic argument is formed that supposes that its sovereignty has already been forfeited to the West and is therefore does not qualify as inviolable.

7.4.1 Treaties and international agreements

Two main narratives that emerge from dataset 4 concerning treaties and international agreements are those that refer directly to the Minsk agreements and Ukraine's general policy of violating its international obligations with Russia. The latter narrative of general violation of international treaties and norms is not always explicitly linked to the Minsk agreements, but it is implied widely. For context it is important to give a concise overview of the two Minsk agreements that were agreed in 2014 and 2015. As this thesis is concerned with understanding the wider implications regarding Russia's understanding of the institutions of International Society, and not the minutia of the agreements themselves, only the main points will be given to aid the analysis and enable comparison with the parallels observed in the Georgia case study. Both agreements were internationally mediated and designed with the aim of ending the conflict in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine; the region that contains the pro-Russian separatist areas of the Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic. The first Minsk agreement, known as the Minsk Protocol, was a

twelve-point plan of action drafted by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine and signed on 5th September 2014. The group consisted of Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE with mediation by France and Germany. The twelve points demanded an immediate ceasefire, independent monitoring by the OSCE, prevention of persecution of peoples within the Donbas, for Ukraine to implement local elections related to self-governance in the Donetsk and Luhansk, withdrawal of fighters from the zone of conflict, and to establish an economic recovery programme (Minsk Agreement, 2014).

Despite a follow up memorandum, designed to specify the implementation of the Protocol and codify the OSCE's role in monitoring, it had failed by January 2015 due largely to an offensive carried out at the start of that month by Russian backed separatists in Donetsk. As a result, a second protocol was drawn up, commonly referred to as Minsk-II in February 2015. Minsk-II was in effect a repeat of the original Minsk Protocol with additional detail added to the main points of contention such as self-rule in the Donbas, demand for Constitutional reform in Ukraine, and restoration of the Ukrainian state borders to ensure full sovereignty (Minsk II Agreement, 2015). Arguably, Minsk-II complicated the issue of gaining a ceasefire by placing unrealistic demands, which spoke to the very heart of the issue; Russia and the separatists wanted autonomy, Ukraine wanted full control over what it (and the international community writ large) saw as its sovereign territory. In effect the Minsk agreements highlight the critical stand-off between Russia (and the separatists) and Ukraine (and its Western backers) over implementation of international law. Specifically, sovereignty versus self-determination. It is important to acknowledge that there is much discussion on the legitimacy (or lack thereof) of self-determination claims by Russia and Russian backed separatists in Ukraine, and in other regions with Russian culture, ethnicity, and/or territorial dominance. However, in the context of Russia's application of contractual international law, it is relevant to highlight that for Russia, the self-determination argument is valid as Moscow will be working to the letter of whichever sections of the relevant legal frameworks support their position (be that UN or OSCE in this case), and not necessarily to their perceived spirit as understood by the West.

There are stark parallels to the narratives present in the Georgia case study (sub-section 5.2.1) relating to international treaties and obligations. The position Russia takes is that there is "no

alternative to the full and consistent implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 2nd February 2021). This positions the Minsk agreements, specifically their failure, as the lynchpin legal justification for intervention, in a similar vein to the way the 1992 Dagomys Agreement was cited in Georgia in 2008. To Russia, as with Dagomys, the Minsk agreements are a contract "written in black and white" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 7th December 2021). They do "not permit any double interpretation" having been "formulated unambiguously from the first to the last step" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 28th April 2021). Additionally, Russia by the letter of the agreements, is not a party to the conflict and as such reinforces this position to frame the conflict as an internal matter in which the peoples of the Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk) are in conflict with the Ukrainian Government, who are an agent of a Western led wider anti-Russia strategy. The statement that "Kiev is trying to persuade everybody that Moscow is allegedly a party to the conflict, that it supposedly has some obligations under the Minsk package of measures. As if they don't have that document in front of their eyes and can't see whose signatures are on it." (Zakharova, MFA Briefing, 12th March 2021) outlines Russia's official position. As stated previously, the West vehemently disagree with this and believe that "Russia is a party to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, not a mediator" (Zahid, HM Government, 31st August 2021) and therefore Russia must "fulfill its Minsk agreement commitments to pull back forces and weapons from the Line of Contact" (Price, US Department of State, 23rd December 2021).

For Russia, Ukraine's refusal to comply with the terms of the Minsk agreements provides them with evidence that Ukraine is in breach of international law, backed and encouraged by their Western allies. Moscow calls out the Ukrainian President as having "refusal to comply with the Minsk agreements" as an "official position" (Zakharova, MFA Transcript, 29th April 2021) with President Zelensky seeking to change "the current negotiating format by engaging the US, Great Britain and Canada, or changing the format altogether" (ibid). This narrative has a conspiratorial flavour to it, in that co-operation between the Western powers and Ukraine in leveraging different or adjusted versions of the Minsk agreements is to "maintain the sanctions against Russia" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 5th February 2021). For Russia, the US are engaged in being "willing and ready to help with fulfilling the Minsk agreements" only with an "interpretation [that] is completely different from the actual wording" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 2nd December 2021) to support the West's wider anti-Russia agenda. Breaching of

the Minsk Agreements therefore, under Russia's contractual understanding of international law, serves as proof of not only Ukraine breaching international law, but also the Western powers who Moscow asserts is ultimately controlling their strategy. These perceived breaches of international law are linked by Russia directly to the UN through the Minsk Agreements being "enshrined in UNSC resolution 2202" (MFA Transcript, 4th August 2021), voicing their position through the OSCE as a response to "Kiev's never-ending sabotage of the Minsk agreements and its attempts to distort and revise the content and sequence of the steps prescribed therein." (Zakharova, MFA Transcript, 18th February 2021). Russia ties the EU to this co-ordinated breaching of international law too. Accusing the EU of using Ukraine as a tool to pursue their anti-Russian agenda, stating that "The EU has shown the real worth of the rule of law in Europe, having disregarded all the eight criteria of its own "common position" … of defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment" with regards to Ukraine who "does not respect international obligations and commitments" (MFA Transcript, 28th February 2022) as laid down in the Minsk Agreements, and endorsed by the UNSC.

A final point that it is important to make on Russian narratives surrounding the Minsk agreements, is that although there are the parallels with the 1992 Dagomys Agreement in Georgia, and the linking to the UN and OSCE there is a critical difference. In Georgia there was an OSCE endorsed Russian military presence in the country which made them an immediate party to the conflict. This made it somewhat simpler in terms of justification under Moscow's interpretation of international law, as all that was required to intervene would be a viable threat to Russian forces. In Ukraine, it is important for Russia to overtly remain as an intermediary for a justification to intervene based on the failure of Minsk and related UNSC resolution to be legitimate. This leads to Russia's justifications for a much more limited intervention in Georgia being simpler with more clarity in its legal position. Additionally, due to the perception of existential threat Russia has regarding the Ukraine crisis, the justifications surrounding the international treaties play more of a supporting role to the strategic narratives concerning Russia versus the West for its place in the global order as analysed through section 7.3.

7.4.2 Self-determination, the 2014 'illegal' coup, and Nazism

Self-determination justifications in the Ukraine case study material also mirror those observed in the Georgia case study. Russo-centric justifications that apply to Moscow's traditional geographical and cultural spheres of influence have been covered extensively in the Georgia case study, specifically from subsection 5.2.2 onwards and will not be repeated here. However, it is worth re-iterating from the conclusions of that case study that this interest in the human rights and self-determination of peoples with a degree of Russianness (cultural and/or ethnic) becomes crystalised into physical action by a threshold trigger of intolerable Western influence over those regions, areas and/or peoples. In Ukraine this Western influence manifests through what Russia state is the illegal Western backed coup in 2014, and creeping influence over Ukraine from an economic (EU) and military (NATO) perspective to reinforce the Western RBO.

The three interlinked narratives of self-determination, the illegal 2014 coup, and Nazism are presented graphically at figure 21 (below). These narratives that present the Maidan Revolution of 2014 as an illegal Western supported coup, and Ukrainian leadership as being part of a Nazi/Neo-Nazi threat to Russian regions, peoples, and culture inside Ukraine create the conditions for Moscow to act under its constitutional obligations to protect Russians and Russian interests. The Nazism narrative is particularly problematic to accurately analyse the degree of genuine threat felt by Russia from Nazism in Ukraine. Although it is easy to dismiss as disinformation, or propaganda to create support within Russia itself, there is considerable evidence of Ukrainian far right elements fighting on the Eastern front lines, such as the Azov brigades (Engelbrecht, 2022). Whether Moscow's motivations regarding its Nazism narratives are disingenuous or not, the existence of far right, nationalist elements, both political and military provides Russia the opportunity to build useful justifications. Narratives that are not entirely untrue and can therefore be used as a supplementary reason for why Russian interests are being threatened inside Ukraine to audiences that apply a low level of nuance or scrutiny. Ukraine's history of sympathising with Nazism, and contribution to the SS during World War 2 (Berkhoff, 2009), makes this a useful narrative that will at least strike a chord with Russian domestic, if not international audiences.

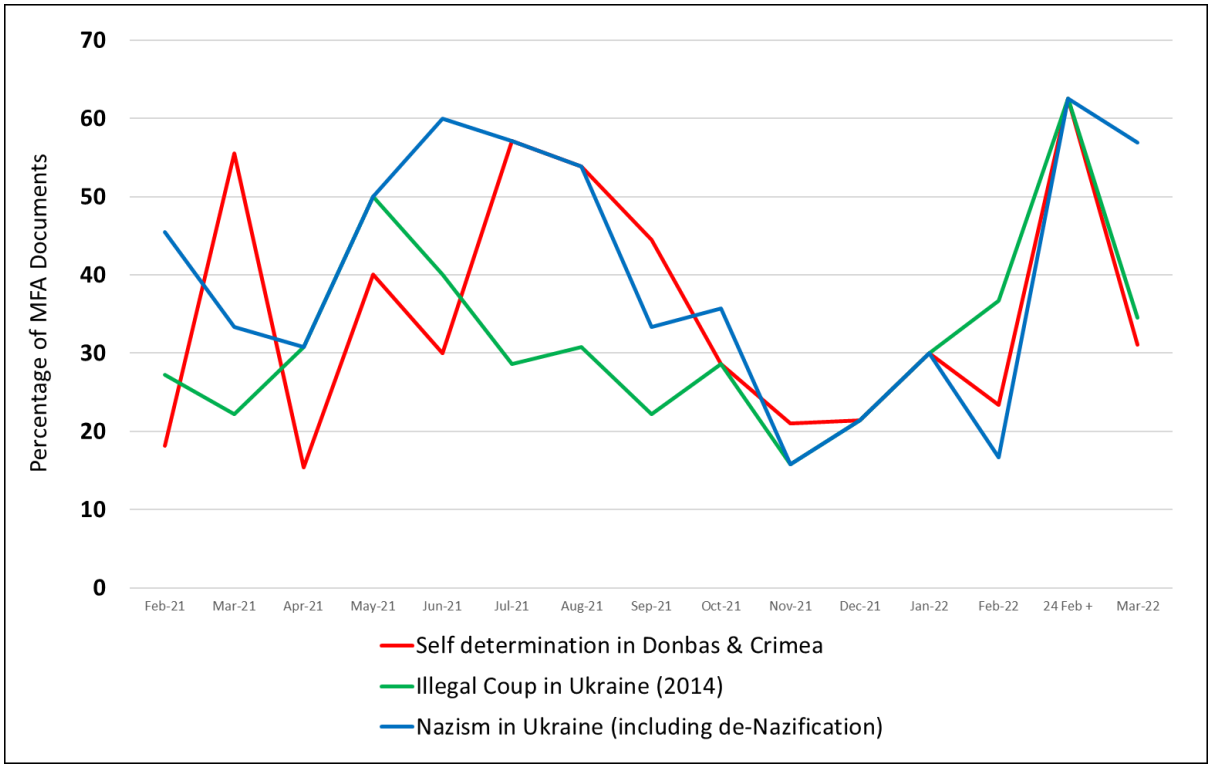

Figure 21. Self Determination, Illegal Coup & Nazism narratives in dataset 4.

When presented graphically on a month-by-month basis, the self-determination, illegal coup, and Nazism narratives broadly align in terms of relative prevalence. The obvious exception being in March 2021 when a dramatic spike in the self-determination narrative occurs. This is time coincident with the publication of Decree 117/2021 dated the 24th March 2021 that amended the Ukrainian Constitution to formalise that "Within three months, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine shall develop and approve a plan of measures for the implementation of the Strategy of De-occupation and Reintegration of the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol." (Office of the President of Ukraine, Decree 117, 2021). Decree 117 formalises Ukraine's position that the Donbas region and Crimea will not be ceded to Russian influence and occupation. The document essentially draws a line that pre-2014 borders must be fully restored, and no Russian State influence can remain inside the borders of Ukraine. The overt support that Ukraine received from the West, including the G7 summit (cited in section 7.3) almost certainly reinforced Moscow's understanding that the battle for influence between the West and Russia in Ukraine was at a critical point, and that the status quo of a Crimea under Russian governance and the Donbas region in frozen conflict that had developed since 2014 was under substantial threat. The

other notable trend in the narratives comes between November 2021 and January 2022 where they all drop significantly in their prevalence. However, this is explained by this being the point where Russian narratives change markedly away from those concerned with resolution through dialogue and implementation of the Minsk agreements towards ultimatums surrounding security guarantees (as detailed in 7.3.4 of this chapter). At this point it is almost certain that Moscow felt that the situation had gone beyond being able to be resolved without a military solution. The high importance of self-determination, and linked human rights narratives, demonstrated over two case studies that Russia's fundamental position regarding collective sovereignty and obligation to the protection of Russian peoples is that it is an existential issue. Therefore, the way these narratives present are providing both a legal basis through self-determination and the coup, as well as a moral obligation to fight against resurgent Nazism.

7.4.4 Ukraine as a militarised US vassal

This final sub-section addresses an important justifying narrative that relates to directly undermining Ukrainian sovereignty. This narrative presents Ukraine as being so aligned with the West that it has become a Western vassal. This reduces Ukraine and President Zelensky to a Western proxy, used as a tool to degrade and damage Moscow's position and influence in International Society. As figure 22 (below) shows, this is a narrative that develops in March 2021, and one that links closely to others concerning the militarisation of Ukraine. The militarisation narrative also contains Russia's belief that security in Europe can only be secured by a de-militarised Ukraine. A Russian briefing given in November 2021 that reflects the culmination of these narratives states that "NATO is openly and very actively, using any means available, trying to involve Ukraine in the implementation of their "containment" plans regarding Russia… The West does not view Ukraine as a sovereign state but rather as an instrument" (Zakharova, MFA Transcript, 17th November 2021).

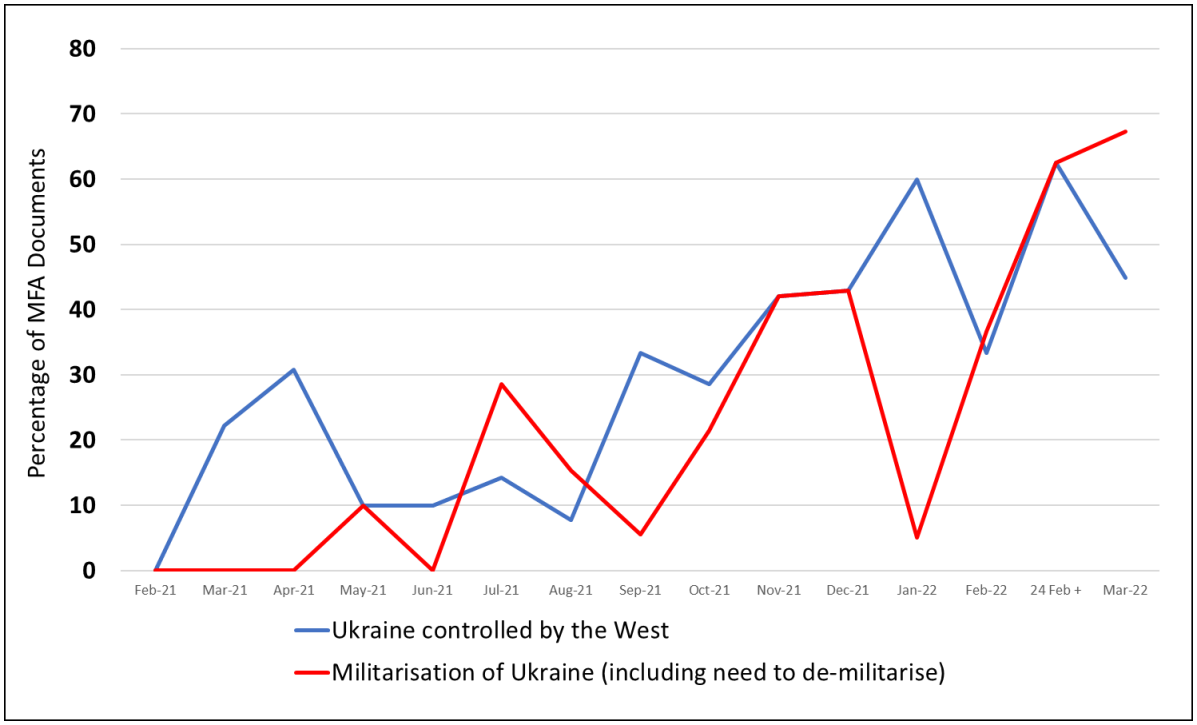

Figure 22. Ukraine controlled by West versus Militarisation narratives

The creation and development of this narrative as a key theme running throughout the year leading up to conflict is another example of narratives either being created or given increased prominence following the publication of Decree 117/2021. Although there is not enough data to prove direct causality of the creation of the militarisation narrative to the publication of Decree 117/2021, the correlation warrants identification as an area for future study as a potential point of no return on the path to war. What is relevant to this thesis is that Decree 117/2021 almost certainly creates a situation where there are now two competing legal frameworks, one within the Russian Constitution, and one within the Ukrainian Constitution that obligate both parties to act to protect their notions of sovereignty. For Russia, it is to retain its influence in the traditional regions it feels are critical to its collective sovereignty, justified by the protection of Russian cultural and ethnic interests. For Ukraine it is now constitutionally committed to reclaiming territory it, and the Western led international community at large, feels has been illegally occupied by Russia.

By Russia assigning the status of Western puppet to Ukraine, Moscow undermines the very essence of Ukrainian sovereignty, labelling it as a state that no longer controls its policies. Therefore, when aligned to other narratives concerning the rise of Nazism, and the illegality

of the Maidan Revolution as a coup in 2014, then from Russia's perspective it further justifies Ukraine's status as having limited sovereign rights. The fact that Moscow feels empowered to treat Ukraine as a proxy also ties into the established perspective Moscow has on such states in its near abroad. Due to the intra-civilisational view Russia places on Ukraine as a traditional satellite state that ensures Russian security and sovereignty, the ceding of influence there to the West is a zero-sum issue in which it either retains full control, or brings the NATO threat to its border.

The militarisation narrative that closely follows that of Ukraine as being controlled by the West is a further reinforcement by Moscow that the threat from Ukraine is also one from the wider Western coalition of nations seeking to constrain Russian influence and power. The wide support and close links with NATO that Ukraine has developed is used to support Moscow's narratives that Ukraine is being used by the West as a tool of NATO aggression. The neutrality of Ukraine is key to Russia's European security strategy, and it is a long-held belief that NATO encroachment into what Russia would consider its civilisational area of influence would lead to an inevitable conflict with NATO, and thus nuclear conflict. By the logic of Russia's interpretation of the International Society as a civilisation based multipolar order, its contractual understanding of international law, and the perspective this gives on sovereignty, territoriality, and obligation to protect its own civilisational space, the conflict in Ukraine becomes the logical end state (to prevent a future nuclear war with NATO), or arguably self-fulfilling prophecy.

7.5 Ukraine case study conclusions

The Ukraine case study catalogues the chain of events that has ultimately led to the breakdown of the Russia-West International Society. The research shows how Russia and the West understand themselves to be locked in a competition for the ideological soul of global order, underpinned by polysemic understandings of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. This battle for global order is based on the fundamentally different values and perspectives applied to primary institutions as outlined in section 3.5 of chapter 3 and throughout the case studies. All three case studies are connected by the competition between the Western vision for an International Society ruled by the

democracies versus Russia's multipolar, civilisational worldview. It is this connection that creates the incredible consistency observed by both Russia and the West in holding their values positions on international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights in the context of Russia-West International Society. The fact, as highlighted by the Ukraine case study, that these value positions are so fundamental to respective worldviews imparts an existentiality onto the consequences of failure to uphold each position. For the West, ceding to the authoritarian, civilisationally focused Russia is a threat to the democratic RBO on which the primacy of the democracies relies. For Russia, the ceding of its civilisational remit, and power over those areas of traditional influence would create a circumstance where core Russian identity is lost, and therefore constitutes a real and present danger to the existence of the Russian civilisation. This impasse, manifested as polysemy in primary institutions is the thread that runs through this research. From the context provided through chapters 1 and 2, to the utility of the ES in understanding institutional interplay and polysemy in chapter 3, to the extensive analysis of primary source data across three case studies, the consistent thread of civilisational multipolar vs democratic RBO sits at the heart of the polysemy observed. The conclusions that follow for the Ukraine case study demonstrate the most extreme manifestation of the civilisational vs democratic impasse across the research. Culminating in the collapse of Russia-West International Society, and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022.

There are six conclusions from the Ukraine case study. The first relates to the commonalities that exist between the three case studies. Despite the competing visions for global order that escalate the Russia-West values impasse considerably during the period of this case study, the basic value and hierarchy applied by Russia to institutions is extremely consistent throughout the whole nineteen-year period covered by this research. The data in the Ukraine case study, when compared with Georgia and Syria, further reinforces the assessment that Russia's interpretations of international law, sovereignty, human rights (Russo-centric), and how they use secondary institutions to support and regulate their position in international law are genuinely held, long standing beliefs. The evidence across nearly 2 million words of MFA data and the considerable body of additional primary sources analysed, shows that international law stands out as the clear master institution for Russia against which all others play a supporting role. The supporting institutions remain relatively stable and remarkably

consistent in their ratio to international law. This conclusion also has wider implications with regards to Russia's foreign policy being bigger than just the personal choices of President Putin. Although he has been present throughout this whole period, his outlook has vastly changed from that of attempting European co-operation in the early years, to the present position of declared conflict. The fact that there is such consistency in how institutions are being interpreted does suggest a cultural and/or deep-rooted ideological position that is likely to endure after Putin. An important consideration if and when (and history would suggest this is more likely to be a when) Russia-West relationships get the opportunity for a political reset.

The second conclusion is that during times of intra-civilisation conflict, human rights (Russo-centric) and/or sovereignty narratives rise substantially when compared to peacetime or inter-civilisational intervention. During intra-civilisational conflict in Georgia and Ukraine these narratives as a ratio of international law narratives appear as 86% and 90% respectively. This is contrasted with 56% and 52% in peacetime Georgia, and Syria (inter-civilisational conflict) respectively. This provides a metric for predicting the likelihood of Russia undertaking a military intervention. That being when a near twofold increase in their narratives concerning human rights, related to areas they consider to be within the Russian civilisation, occurs. Additionally, it shows that Russia appears to prioritise human rights in an inter-civilisational military intervention, and peacetime intra-civilisational context to the same level. This reinforces that Russia's approach to human rights and R2P is entirely concerned with protection of Russian peoples outside of the humanitarian obligations in areas they consider to be in the inter-civilisational space.

The third conclusion is that this case study contains evidence that suggests two key turning points in the collapse of the Russia-West International Society can be proposed. Firstly, that the slide towards inevitable conflict, based on how Russia interprets and reacts based on its civilisational worldview, commences with the publication of Decree 117/21 in which reunification of Ukraine (to include Crimea) was written into Ukrainian domestic law in March 2021. The subsequent support from the West, notably the G7 from which Russia were ejected following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, almost certainly escalated the existentiality of the situation for Moscow. It is worth noting that from Russia's perspective, by Ukraine writing this decree into law, and with Moscow's understanding of Ukraine as part of the Russian

civilisation, a legal situation then occurs where both Russia and Ukraine are obligated to act on their respective positions. To Russia, this Decree was almost certainly interpreted as contrary to international law based on the terms of the Minsk agreements. The second key turning point can be seen from December onwards where Russian narratives change markedly to ultimatums regarding security guarantees. It is reasonable to assess that this is the likely point at which decisions had been made at the highest levels of the Russian Government that invasion was inevitable, failing a complete backdown by the West.

The fourth conclusion is that it is incredibly difficult to verify whether the Russian justifications for intervention in section 7.4 are genuinely held beliefs. It is very easy to either over-assess their importance to Russian interpretations of International Society and its institutions or to dismiss them entirely. Some of the justifications remain consistent with those seen in the previous case studies such as the importance placed on treaties and legal frameworks. Others appear more focused on creating narratives for domestic audiences such as the threat of Nazism.

The penultimate conclusion is related to the collapse of secondary institutions and is that the West's linking of RBO to protection of democracies and the UN was perceived by Russia as a direct attempt to manipulate international law to support democratic expansion at the expense of the rising multipolar powers. This includes co-ordinated constraining of Russia's influence and power in International Society by a US led Western coalition of democratic states. This is significant as the primacy that Russia has placed on the UN shown in all the case studies has aided in maintaining the continued, albeit limited thin pluralist, functioning of Russia-West International Society. When the RBO, perceived by Russia as part of a wider anti-Russia agenda is directly tied to protection of democracies then Russia has their preconceptions about the West as belligerent, contradictory and ideologically expansionist reinforced. Additionally, the linking of the RBO as the way in which the West seeks to implement the UN Charter then by association links the Charter to democracy. This is hugely problematic as, from the Russian perspective, this is the West messaging that it is committed to using the UN to spread democracy, alongside its own institutions such as NATO and the EU at the expense of other powers that do not conform to Western liberal democratic values. This is unacceptable to Russia, as firstly the UN Charter contains no mention of democracy,

and secondly the West has overtly stated that Russia is one of the two primary threats (as well as China) that the democracies need to cohere their efforts to combat and contain.

The final and most important conclusion of the Ukraine case study is that it demonstrates how polysemic interpretations of international law, sovereignty and territoriality between Russia and the West has led to the collapse of the Russia-West International Society, where both sides openly acknowledge that important common values are not shared. What the case of Ukraine highlights are the clear incompatibilities between Russia and the West in their competing visions for global order and opposed ideological perspectives. The West's desire for upholding state sovereignty through the spread of a democratic RBO versus Russia's civilisationally focused multipolar vision are rooted in the polysemy present in the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights as observed throughout all the case studies. In February 2022, these normative differences and immovability from both sides on their respective ideological positions led to a critical point of failure in the Russia-West International Society. Insurmountable differences that showed the limits of secondary institutions, such as the UN and OSCE, to regulate Russia-West interactions and their ultimate failure to prevent the descent into war.

Chapter 8
Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

The research contained within this thesis has primarily sought to evidence and develop an understanding of polysemy in primary institutions in the context of the Russia-West International Society. During the period that this research has been conducted (2018-2024), seismic changes have occurred in Russia-West relations, with associated and unprecedented global challenges to the US-led, Western-domination of international affairs. At the time of writing, the West was stating that the democracies are in a battle for the nature of global order with the autocracies (including Russia) in both their rhetoric and written policy. A battle that Russia recognises as a zero-sum contest between the multipolar powers and a US led hegemonic RBO. The breakout of conventional war in Ukraine has put this competition for the future of global order into stark focus and reinforced to both Russia and the West that the issue is an existential one. The war in Ukraine essentially a symptom of the underlying ideological impasse that has been evident in the polysemy that has been inherent in Russian and Western interpretations of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. Whether the incoming Trump administration continues to advocate for an RBO, which it is unlikely to do based on its policy promises, will almost certainly dictate whether US-Russia, if not Western-Russia, rapprochement will occur.

To assess whether this thesis has met its objectives, through the research questions and hypothesis, this conclusions chapter is structured into three main sections. The first gives the thesis conclusions, set against the research questions, objectives, and hypothesis. The second section provides an assessment of the both the empirical and methodological contributions. The final section provides details of the future areas for study identified.

8.2 Thesis conclusions

The research in this thesis has generated six conclusions that extend our understanding of Russia's interaction in, and with, International Society. This is particularly in relation to how Moscow's understanding of institutions from a civilisational perspective can be used to explain the apparent contradictions (from a Western perspective) in the way Russia views and implements international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. The conclusions also show, at least in part, that Russia is applying a hierarchy to which institutions matter most. The evidence also shows that the Russia-West International Society has developed from a thin pluralistic society into a combative international system. Prior to outlining these conclusions in full, it is first important to recap what the research questions set in chapter 1 are:

The first is ***How does the normative position of Russia observed across the Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine case studies give understanding into the interpretation of primary and secondary institutions?***

The second question is ***Which institutions matter to Russia, and does a hierarchy of primary and secondary institutions exist? If so, how does this compare to Western understandings?***

And the third is ***How do the case studies help to illustrate how the Russia-West International Society has developed with respect to pluralism and solidarism?***

Conclusion one is that polysemy is clearly evidenced through **Russia's positivist/contractual understanding of international law, which it treats as its master institution; at odds with the West's democratic interpretation**. The datasets across three-case studies reinforce the importance of international law to Russia in providing the contractual rule sets by which all of the other primary institutions must function. When understood that different rules apply, based on whether the context is intra- or inter-civilisational then the adherence of Moscow to its interpretation of international law provides a great degree of predictability in its behaviour with its interactions with the West. For Russia, the contractual nature of

international law puts substantial importance on secondary institutions to help regulate interactions with other states, as well as providing tangible legal justifications to enable Russia's normative obligations to protect civilisational interests in its near abroad. A position that the West often interprets as Russia being unpredictable, aggressive, and contradictory in its implementation of international law; specifically relating to the West's perception of inconsistency in Russia's application of sovereignty and territoriality. Both Russia and the West cite the primacy of the UN as fundamental to international law but have significantly different understandings of how the UN protects global order. For Russia, the UN Charter is a legal document to be taken literally on the assumption that global order is civilisationally diverse in nature. For the West, the UN provides the foundational legitimacy for pursuing and maintaining the dominance of a democratic RBO.

Conclusion two is that **between Russia and the West there is significant polysemy in understandings of sovereignty and territoriality, including how they relate to human rights.** The root cause of this polysemy, as with international law, originates from the fundamentally different understandings of International Society that Russia and the West have; civilisational/multipolar versus democratic RBO. For Russia, sovereignty and territoriality in the intra-civilisational case studies of Georgia and Ukraine is applied in the context of those states being part of a wider Russian collective, not fully independent states. Consequently, in Georgia and Ukraine, for Moscow, sovereignty and territoriality are inseparable from human rights and the domestic policy in their constitution. Policy that obligates the Russian state to protect populations that are Russian by ethnicity, culture, or history within traditional civilisational areas of interest (i.e., the post-Soviet states). This position effectively de-links sovereignty from territoriality and blurs the borders between Russia and the states of Georgia and Ukraine in the regions that have high levels of Russian cultural, ethnic, and/or historical territorial links (South Ossetia, Abkhazia, the Donbas, and Crimea). In the case of Georgia where the conflict is limited, controlled, and being pursued on a relatively small scale, sovereignty only applies to the Georgian government and not the state borders. This also allows Russia the ability to apportion blame to the Georgian government for breaking extant treaties, attacking Russian soldiers, and human rights violations; all ultimately serving as legal justification for the Russian military action in August 2008. The Western position in Georgia is that sovereignty and territoriality cannot be de-linked, and that Russian actions contravene

an interpretation of international law based in the protection of individual rights and the inviolability of sovereignty in states that are democratic and/or in the process of Westernisation.

The case of Ukraine is more complex than Georgia due to the existentiality discussed in conclusion one as an effect of the civilisational versus RBO battle for global order that both Russia and the West openly agree is occurring (from their varying perspectives). Although Russia is applying the same interpretations of sovereignty, territoriality and human rights to Ukraine as in Georgia, the scale of the political and military escalation through 2021 leads to manifestations that are more extreme. For Russia, the constitutional commitment that Ukraine has made on reunifying of Ukraine (through Decree 117) to include the Donbas and Crimea coupled with overt Western narratives on Ukraine's freedom to join NATO and the EU led to Russia effectively divorcing sovereignty from the Ukrainian government entirely. This was justified on the basis that Ukraine's government have no legitimacy, are the product of a Western backed coup in 2014, and now constitute nothing more than a US puppet. The Western position remains consistent as per Georgia, that sovereignty and territoriality cannot be de-linked, there was no coup, and Russian justifications for intervention or invasion cannot be justified through international law based on the values of the RBO.

In Syria, an inter-civilisational intervention, Russian and Western positions are somewhat reversed in the inviolability of sovereignty. For Moscow, in an area outside of its civilisational remit sovereignty is sacrosanct and protected by the UN Charter. They form their legal arguments based on the Assad regime being the only legitimate government in Syria who must invite any intervention for it to be legal, and not in breach of Syria's sovereignty and territoriality. Additionally, Russia's approach to non-Russian human rights appears to be to perform the humanitarian obligations it has as a signatory to the various international treaties and conventions to which it is a party. There is not the ideological aspect seen in Georgia or Ukraine, nor does there appear to be the same level of obligation to protect the individual rights of members of a different civilisation. For Moscow, human rights in Syria is an internal matter for their government and/or the Arab civilisation to address, not for the Russian civilisation to dictate. The Western perspective in Syria is that the Assad regime, through its failure to protect its own people, including accusations of direct government led human rights

abuses, means that the Assad government is no longer protected by the principle of the inviolability of its sovereignty. For the West, it is legitimate to intervene on humanitarian grounds, against a regime exerting policies on its people that the Western democracies normatively disagree with.

Conclusion three is that prior to the Ukraine conflict, **secondary institutions have been able to provide a regulative effect, maintaining limited cooperation in Russia-West relations.** This is despite the polysemy inherent in international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights. The second part of this conclusion is that **the limits of this regulative effect was reached in the latter stages of 2021** as the escalation over Ukraine led to the collapse of the pluralist Russia-West International Society into an international system between December 2021 and February 2022. The extensive use by Russia and the West of secondary institutions in which they are equal status partners speaks to the importance of such organisations. Both sides consistently invested in continued dialogue through the UN and OSCE in Georgia and Ukraine, and the UN and Joint Russia-US legal frameworks in Syria. This is despite major values differences, manifesting as polysemy in primary institutions. The fact that until an existential escalation was perceived by Russia over Ukraine, which arguably is more about the zero-sum battle for global order perceived by both Russia and the West, evidences that secondary institutions have substantial power in holding together a thin and pluralistic International Society that has major differences in relative normative positions. The fact that this regulative effect did not survive the escalation surrounding Ukraine, must not detract from the impact secondary institutions have had on the preceding 17 years over which the other case studies span. It also provides some hope that this regulative effect can be restored without having to make unrealistic normative movements on respective positions on primary institutions.

Conclusion four is that **Russia's normative position and associated narratives regarding institutions is extremely consistent over all the contexts of the case studies** (both intra- and inter-civilisational). This conclusion validates the research in this thesis as being based on genuinely held, long term beliefs and interpretations rather than cynical justifications to legitimise a material agenda. Additionally, although Putin has in some way been leading the Russian government (as President or Prime Minister) over the whole period, the consistency

reflects that the Russian normative position cannot be easily reduced to the product of one man, and suggest these values would highly likely survive the end of the Putin era. This is also reinforced through the same narratives being seen in the primary source material used from the 1990s, and the evidence in the existing literature that reinforces that the Russian normative perspective has substantial roots beyond Putin. The consistency of narratives also provides some insight into the hierarchies that Russia places on institutions. The limited number of institutions identified has answered the question concerning which institutions matter most to Russia, and given some insight into a priority order. However, as there is considerable flexibility in secondary institutions, no meaningful hierarchy of can be given other than to say that the UN has primacy, followed closely by any other institution or treaty in which Russia either has equal status, or is needed to suit a particular legal argument. In terms of the overarching institution narrative themes across all of the case study research there are effectively two hierarchies, split into the intra- and inter-civilisational contexts. As discussed in conclusion two, international law acts as the master institution in all contexts. The remaining hierarchy in inter-civilisational contexts (in which the Russian civilisation is under no threat) sees those secondary institutions that support Russia's position in international law taking second place with sovereignty third and human rights a distant fourth. In the intra-civilisational context, Russo-centric human rights overtake secondary institutions as the main support for Russia's position in international law. As discussed extensively throughout this research, in this context human rights interlinks with sovereignty and territoriality into the interconnected interpretation outlined in conclusion three. Secondary institutions maintain relative consistency in terms of ratio to international law as present in inter-civilisation contexts.

The fifth conclusion is that **all of Russia's interpretations of the institutions of International Society are rooted in a civilisational perspective on global order**. The evidence across the three case studies demonstrates a clear difference in interpreting primary institutions based on whether Russia sees the context as intra- or inter-civilisational. From Moscow's perspective, intra-civilisational concerns any geographic region that contains a degree of Russian interests, whether historical, cultural, ideological, or ethnic. The case studies in the intra-civilisational space (Georgia and Ukraine) show clear and consistent interpretations of international law, Russo-centricity in applying human rights, and an understanding of

sovereignty and territoriality based on those states being critical to Russia's collective sovereignty. Collective sovereignty being the concept whereby the wider Russian civilisation, with Moscow at its centre, ensures its security and position as a great power in global order by maintaining dominance over its near abroad; shielding it from the external threat that comes principally from the West and NATO. The Western counter position whereby any state recognised as independent by the international community is at liberty to choose its own security arrangements sits in direct opposition to the Russian worldview, at least in the two former Soviet states covered in this research. The fact that the West further ties its position on the inviolability of sovereignty, and freedom to choose security arrangements, directly to Georgia and Ukraine reinforces to Russia the existentiality of the growing impasse in Russia-West relations. This is due to the West citing the Ukraine conflict as essential to protecting the RBO in the battle between the democracies against the autocracies. Russia's civilisational perspective, tied to the belief that the West is attempting to constrain the rise of a multipolar order through its stated fight with the autocracies reinforces for both Russia and the West that the other is seeking a zero-sum ideological victory over the other in the battle for global order. The Ukraine case study catalogues the ultimate manifestation of the escalation that occurred surrounding this ideological impasse through the invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022, and the associated collapse of the pluralist Russia-West International Society into an openly combative international system.

The sixth, and final, conclusion is that **through the understanding gained on the polysemy in primary institutions, the regulative effect of secondary institutions, and the civilisational perspective versus RBO, greater accuracy in predicting Russian state behaviour in its foreign policy is enabled.** In basic terms, when analysing Russia, it must first be assessed whether the context is intra- or inter-civilisational. Secondly, against the intra- versus inter-civilisational context it is then possible to assess what legal obligations Russia is under from its contractual perspective of international law. This guides all subsequent behaviour related to sovereignty and its limits, flexibility of territoriality, and to what degree human rights will factor. Finally, this determines how much regulative power secondary institutions are likely to have in maintaining dialogue and creating compromise despite differing values.

The six conclusions above meet the four research objectives and reflect a wide range of evidence from the case studies that supports the hypothesis of the thesis. Firstly, it has been demonstrated that substantial polysemy has been present in the institutions of the Russia-West International Society and that military intervention case studies have proven a useful vehicle for evidencing this. Secondly, a clear hierarchy of institutions has emerged from the Russian perspective, but it is difficult to define the respective Western position with clarity. What comes through in the Western narratives is that whilst international law has substantial importance, it cannot be determined as the master institution in the same way as with Russia. As previously stated, the West's perspective on international law is based on reinforcing the democratic RBO in direct competition to autocratic powers. This raises the potential that democracy is the primary driving factor in the Western narratives. However, this would require substantially more analysis to prove and is likely to be subject to significant change through the policy platform outlined for the incoming Trump Presidency in 2025 where the US backing of a democratic RBO is likely to vastly reduce. Thirdly, the evidence shows that the polysemic nature of the Russia-West International Society was to some degree regulated and enabled by key secondary institutions in which both Russia and the West have significant investment; most importantly the UN. The UN's importance is reinforced by the effective collapse of the Russia-West International Society at the point that both sides accept that each has a different interpretation of what the UN is for, based on differing interpretations of primary institutions, and competing visions for a future global order.

Although the ideological impasse that emerges from the research suggests an inevitability in conflict between Russia and the West, it is proposed here that it is the polysemy, and misunderstanding of the interpretations of primary institutions that has led to the conflict that Russia-West relations are experiencing at present. Russia-West conflict need not be inevitable, and prior to the existentiality that grew around the Ukraine crisis, secondary institutions were able to maintain a thin pluralist International Society. Understanding Russia's civilisation perspective and normative positions on the primary institutions is critical to any Western policy maker, military practitioner, and/or academic seeking to better understand and influence Moscow's actions.

8.3 Contributions

8.3.1 Empirical

The primary empirical contribution of this research has been outlined within conclusions 1-3 and 6 above. Adding to a small body of work (see Buranelli, 2013) concerning the potential for polysemy in the institutions of International Society. The case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine in this research have demonstrated that **significant polysemy exists in the Russia-West context in the primary institutions of international law, sovereignty, territoriality, and human rights.** This contribution demonstrates that at least in the case of the Russia-West International Society that the decline in relations is rooted in competing visions between pluralist civilisational multipolar and democratic RBO which impacts how sovereignty, territoriality and human rights are respectively interpreted and applied. The second element of the empirical contribution regarding polysemy is that despite it being present across a range of primary institutions, secondary institutions have historically been able to create a regulative effect to maintain a functioning pluralist Russia-West International Society. As discussed in conclusion three, this also includes the point of normative divergence at which point secondary institutions can no longer function.

There are also an additional three minor empirical contributions that add to, and reinforce existing bodies of work. The first of which is that **the case study research has provided a greater understanding of Russia's civilisational perspective, and answered the question of whether multipolarity is a significant factor in driving Russian foreign policy**. Across the reviewed literature, there is not a general agreement on the importance of Russia's civilisational and multipolar perspective to driving its policy. What the case studies show, as outlined in the individual chapters and overarching thesis conclusions, is that Russian interpretations of primary institutions change dependent on whether the context is intra-civilisational (in Georgia and Ukraine), or inter-civilisational (in Syria). The perception of the of Ukraine conflict as existential between the Russian civilisational/multipolar order versus the Western democratic RBO provides the starkest manifestation of Russia's uncompromising commitment to its multipolar vision across the material researched. It also demonstrates that

for Russia, the ideological protection of its civilisational and multipolar vision for global order is not only important, but critical to its identity as a great power against the threat of further Western expansion. A degree of existentiality that has seen Russia commit to conventional war through the invasion of Ukraine, as well as accept the effective collapse of the Russia-West International Society.

The second minor contribution links to the above in that through understanding Russia's civilisational perspective**, it becomes possible to predict Russian foreign policy behaviour with greater accuracy, dependent on whether the context is intra- or inter-civilisational**. This is specifically relevant to likelihood of military intervention due to the case studies used for this research. This contribution is also outlined in conclusion six (above) so will not be repeated here. However, a graphical representation of the process that emerges for predictive analysis of Russian behaviour is included below as a flow chart at figure 23. This graphic is included in a distilled and deliberately reduced format to communicate the concept simply. It is not a replacement for the considerable work required behind each stage in the flow, using the methodological process this thesis contributes. It is also likely to be developed further with additional case study material.

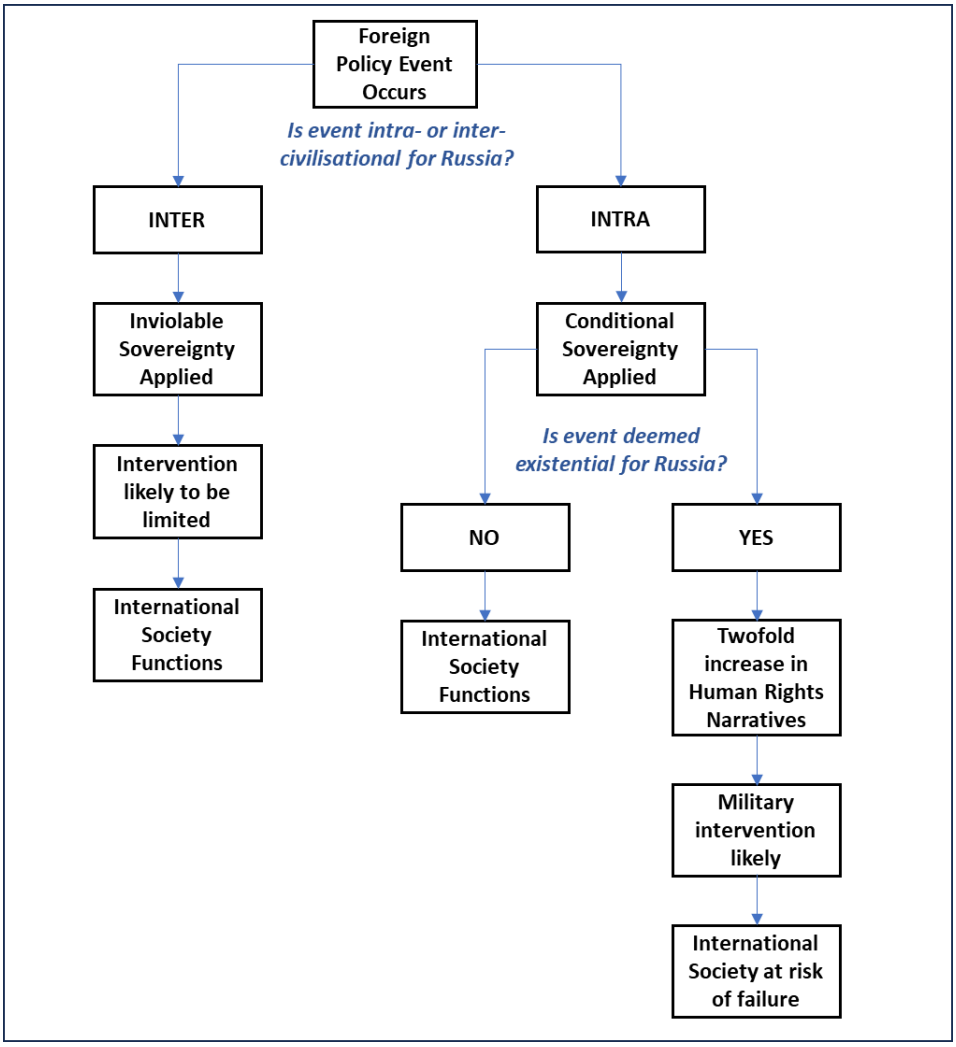

Figure 23. Flowchart of Russian foreign policy decision making: intra- versus inter-civilisational

A third minor empirical contribution is that the high levels of consistency observed in Russian normative interpretations of primary institutions provides additional evidence to support the body of work discussed in chapter 2 that proposes **that Russian foreign policy cannot be adequately explained as equitable to the personal actions of a particular leader**, in this case Putin (see Trenin, 2014; Gunitsky and Tsygankov, 2018). The consistency seen throughout not just the 19 years of case study material, but also the supplementary sources in the literature review and the historical primary sources used in the Ukraine case study (that date to the 1990s), show that Russia has been applying international law, conditional sovereignty, and Russo-centric human rights to a high degree of consistency over a long period of time; indicative of these perspectives being part of a wider cultural and normative position of a system which Putin is a part and practitioner of, rather than its sole creator.

8.3.2 Methodological

The methodological contribution has been achieved through the successful proof of concept of the original analytical method developed for this research, and how it has contributed to the practical employment of the ES. The method (below at figure 24) is unique across the literature, specifically in its abilities to be repeatable across multiple contexts and cases, and in handling large volumes of source data efficiently to direct the complex and nuanced qualitative assessment required by the international relations discipline.

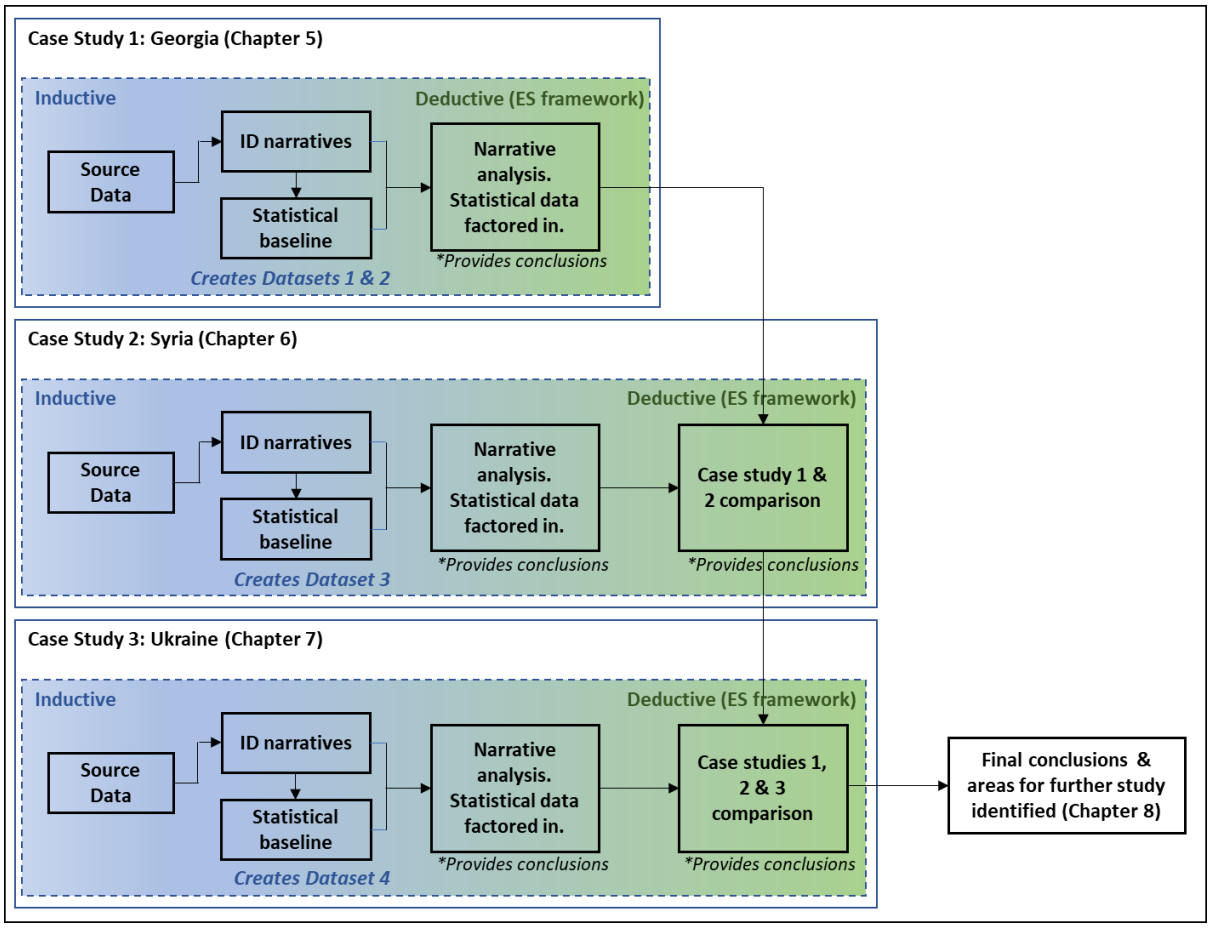

Figure 24. Analytical Method Graphic

The method has achieved its aims of enabling the vast and often unmanageable scope of the ES by ensuring that the analytical/theoretical perspectives most relevant to the actors involved (in this case principally Russia) are analysed, not those that are deemed most important to the analyst conducting the research. The method has contributed a viable and

repeatable method to applying the core tenets of the ES, specifically in understanding the nature of International Society and institutions. It has also been successful in mitigating Western centrism and highlighting the polysemy of primary institutions by working from the foundation that no normative positions in the Russia-West International Society are taken for granted as universal, and by seeking to make no moral judgement and/or apportion blame for the events that occurred in the case studies of Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine. In this respect the method has proven to have great utility in minimising both the conscious and unconscious bias of the analyst when researching the military interventions contained within the case studies; events that have potential to be extremely emotive subject matter.

The method also provides an original way to solve the definitional issues concerning the institutions of International Society. As discussed in chapter 3, there are substantial problems with understanding what institutions need to be analysed, and which matter most when assessing International Society. Many prominent writers have sought to solve this issue by creating definitional frameworks, or lists of which institutions exist in a given International Society (see Buzan, 2004; Holsti, 2004; Spandler 2015; Parrat, 2017; Navari 2018; Knudsen 2018). Where this method differs is that it assumes that no specific institution must be analysed, and that the source data determines which institutions emerge in each case study. This answers the fundamental question of which institutions matter most, in a context/actor dependent way. This provides mitigation against confirmation bias on which institutions carry the most importance, whilst also not assuming the results of the research will be the same in all contexts, and with all actors. Although the scope of this research did not allow for wider exploration of international societies other than the one that existed between Russia-West, with the further caveat of being primarily invested in understanding the Russian perspective, the case study data does show that Russia and the West prioritise different institutions, as well as having different interpretations. This has substantial implications for future study of other actors across global International Society. Specifically pertaining to understanding it as a web of regional or sub-global societies and systems that overlap and interlink dependent on where their compatibilities converge, and/or where secondary institutions maintain enough power to regulate cooperation.

8.4 Future research

Throughout the course of the research, five areas for future study have emerged that are both reflective of the potential for expansion of the thesis material, and some limitations and inefficiencies that became evident during conducting the research.

The first area relates directly to the massive volumes of data required to be processed for the quantitative element of the method. This has both time implications as well as requiring a considerable analytical effort to remain consistent throughout the whole period of research. As a result, **it would be beneficial to investigate the potential for automation of the statistical quantitative element of the method**. There are clear challenges as any software designed to automate the process would have to be able to interpret the language in the source documents, and be able to understand whether the content was pertaining to institutions. The method is not a keyword collation exercise and as such any automation efforts would need to be trialled extensively against manual controls to assure the automation was providing an accurate representation. This is technically possible, and if created would also apply a further layer of mitigation against biasing the research through the human interpretation of the statistical data, ensuring total consistency in how institutions are being identified and categorised.

The second is that the method, through proving its repeatability **should be applied to comparisons with other actors across International Society.** Wider application of the method would allow for greater analysis of both sub-global and global international societies and systems. This would ultimately provide insight into where international societies and systems link, overlap, and fall into conflict. If the process could be sped up through elements of automation, the method has significant potential to shed light on complex inter-state interaction and help explain the conditions for, and likelihoods of war and peace.

The third area for future study enables the second (analysis of other actors) and would be enabled by the first (automation). This is **the creation of baselines for how actors across international societies are interpreting institutions, including critically which institutions**

matter most. A comprehensive catalogue of baseline data which could then be applied to the qualitative element of the method which would significantly enhance both the speed and breadth of the analysis. The caveat being that without automation the creation of baselines is unlikely to be viable due to the time sensitive nature of the subject matter, and potential for interpretations of institutions to change. This is particularly relevant if studying actors that have high levels of political instability or states that undergo a radical political transformation.

The fourth area for future research is distinct from the first three in that it is not linked to further application of the analytical method. Instead, it relates to **a detailed study to articulate the Russian civilisational perspective of global order, and what it believes the other civilisations to be.** There is some information contained within the case study primary sources that explicitly state perspectives such as Russia being one of the three branches of European civilisation "the European Union, the American branch and the Russian branch" (Lavrov, MFA Transcript, 24th September 2008) as well as implying the Arab civilisation from the Syria case study. However, beyond these details the rest of how Russia perceives global order is not able to be gleaned from the research conducted. Understanding this perspective further, as well as understanding if other actors, such as China, are understanding the global order from a civilisational, or other non-Western perspective, would prove indispensable to understanding normative differences, and their consequences across actors that do not conform to the democratic state centric model that the RBO represents.

The final area for future study concerns the specific analysis of a single event within the Ukraine case study. **The correlation of Decree 117/21 (that wrote into the Ukrainian constitution the obligation to reunify the country to pre-2014 borders) with the apparent perception of existentiality from Moscow in the decline in relations warrants further study**. The Ukraine case study material is not sufficient to prove causality of the Decree to the invasion on 24th February 2022, but the correlation does indicate that this event may constitute a watershed moment for Russia-Ukraine relations from which there was no turning back. A turning point that it is logical to hypothesise led to Russia perceiving that an inescapable impasse had been reached, and that war was inevitable to prevent Western expansion into Russia's region it relies on for collective sovereignty.

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Appendix A - Datasets 1 & 2 (Georgia MFA References)

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Appendix D – Georgia Basic Statistical Data

Dataset 1 - 7th - 12th August 2008

Narrative Theme	Occurrences across Dataset 1 (27 Documents)
Reference to violation of International Law by Georgia through violation of treaties and agreements.	23
Reference to violation of International Law by Georgia through wider principles of international community (i.e. UN Charter).	18
Reference to Georgian Human Rights violations.	38
Reference to Georgia's unwillingness to sign new international agreements on non-use of Force.	21

Dataset 2 - 23rd November 2003 - 6th August 2008

	Nov-03*	Dec-03	Jan-04	Feb-04	Mar-04	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04
Total Number of Documents	14	17	13	12	11	12	17	28	38	9	4	10
Specifically about Georgia	9	9	11	6	10	11	14	24	31	8	4	7
Mentions Georgia part of a different topic	5	7	2	6	2	1	3	4	7	1	0	3
Theme 1 - Law (Contractual)	8	9	7	5	5	8	10	18	27	9	1	2
Theme 2 - Human Rights (Russo-Centric)	2	3	2	2	0	5	4	2	6	2	1	1
Theme 3 - Importance of Sec Inst (WTO/EU/NATO)	6	7	4	2	1	1	3	5	5	1	1	3
OSCE mentioned or direct meeting	2	3	1	0	0	0	4	3	8	1	0	0
UN mentioned or direct meeting	1	3	3	6	1	3	6	5	7	1	1	0
Use of regional institutions (CIS/BSEC etc…)	6	3	6	6	2	3	2	4	8	3	1	3
Common Culutral ties/importance of relations Mentioned	7	6	3	6	1	2	6	7	4	0	0	4
External interference Mentioned (including expansion/double standards)	4	2	0	1	2	0	1	4	1	0	0	1

* From 23 Nov only

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Dataset 2 - 23rd November 2003 - 6th August 2008

	Nov-04	Dec-04	Jan-05	Feb-05	Mar-05	Apr-05	May-05	Jun-05	Jul-05	Aug-05	Sep-05	Oct-05
Total Number of Documents	10	10	11	13	18	8	17	10	4	6	6	10
Specifically about Georgia	10	4	6	8	14	8	13	7	3	5	6	6
Mentions Georgia part of a different topic	0	6	5	5	4	0	4	2	1	1	0	4
Theme 1 - Law (Contractual)	6	7	9	6	9	5	5	2	1	3	3	7
Theme 2 - Human Rights (Russo-Centric)	2	2	3	1	3	0	4	2	0	0	2	2
Theme 3 - Importance of Sec Inst (WTO/EU/NATO)	3	4	5	6	1	1	1	2	1	2	0	3
OSCE mentioned or direct meeting	1	6	3	5	4	1	4	1	1	0	0	1
UN mentioned or direct meeting	2	2	5	3	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	4
Use of regional institutions (CIS/BSEC etc...)	1	3	4	6	1	1	2	1	0	2	1	3
Common Culutral ties/importance of relations Mentioned	4	2	2	2	0	0	3	1	0	2	0	1
External interference Mentioned (including expansion/double standards)	0	2	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1

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Dataset 2 - 23rd November 2003 - 6th August 2008

	Nov-05	Dec-05	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06	Jul-06	Aug-06	Sep-06	Oct-06
Total Number of Documents	5	15	3	15	7	8	5	9	12	4	17	16
Specifically about Georgia	3	9	2	10	5	5	4	5	9	3	14	7
Mentions Georgia part of a different topic	2	6	1	5	2	3	1	4	3	1	3	9
Theme 1 - Law (Contractual)	4	5	1	10	2	3	4	6	7	1	9	6
Theme 2 - Human Rights (Russo-Centric)	0	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	3	0	4	3
Theme 3 - Importance of Sec Inst (WTO/EU/NATO)	2	7	1	4	4	2	0	4	3	3	5	8
OSCE mentioned or direct meeting	0	9	1	5	0	0	1	1	1	1	6	2
UN mentioned or direct meeting	0	3	1	2	2	1	3	3	4	2	12	8
Use of regional institutions (CIS/BSEC etc...)	2	4	0	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	7	6
Common Culutral ties/importance of relations Mentioned	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	1	0
External interference Mentioned (including expansion/double standards)	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	2	1

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Dataset 2 - 23rd November 2003 - 6th August 2008

	Nov-06	Dec-06	Jan-07	Feb-07	Mar-07	Apr-07	May-07	Jun-07	Jul-07	Aug-07	Sep-07	Oct-07
Total Number of Documents	8	4	5	1	5	10	3	3	1	7	9	2
Specifically about Georgia	3	1	4	1	4	6	2	2	1	6	7	2
Mentions Georgia part of a different topic	5	3	1	0	1	4	1	1	0	0	2	0
Theme 1 - Law (Contractual)	1	2	2	0	3	1	0	1	0	2	4	0
Theme 2 - Human Rights (Russo-Centric)	3	2	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	1
Theme 3 - Importance of Sec Inst (WTO/EU/NATO)	4	3	0	0	3	7	0	1	1	1	5	1
OSCE mentioned or direct meeting	0	3	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	5	0
UN mentioned or direct meeting	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	1	1	1	5	1
Use of regional institutions (CIS/BSEC etc...)	2	1	0	0	2	5	2	1	1	1	2	1
Common Culutral ties/importance of relations Mentioned	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
External interference Mentioned (including expansion/double standards)	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	1	0

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Dataset 2 - 23rd November 2003 - 6th August 2008

	Nov-07	Dec-07	Jan-08	Feb-08	Mar-08	Apr-08	May-08	Jun-08	Jul-08	Aug-08	Totals
Total Number of Documents	20	4	4	7	6	20	22	13	14	4	596
Specifically about Georgia	18	1	4	7	3	13	12	12	13	4	436
Mentions Georgia part of a different topic	2	3	0	0	3	7	10	1	1	0	158
Theme 1 - Law (Contractual)	9	2	1	5	3	16	10	5	8	3	308
Theme 2 - Human Rights (Russo-Centric)	3	0	0	1	0	6	5	0	2	1	104
Theme 3 - Importance of Sec Inst (WTO/EU/NATO)	8	2	0	3	4	15	16	6	11	1	203
OSCE mentioned or direct meeting	5	0	0	0	0	1	6	3	4	1	108
UN mentioned or direct meeting	10	1	0	2	1	12	13	3	8	0	166
Use of regional institutions (CIS/BSEC etc...)	4	0	0	1	1	5	4	2	1	0	142
Common Culutral ties/importance of relations Mentioned	1	0	2	3	0	2	12	0	1	0	94
External interference Mentioned (including expansion/double standards)	0	0	0	1	2	4	4	2	0	0	56

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Appendix E – Syria Basic Statistical Data

	30 Sep - Oct 15	Nov-15	Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	**Totals**
Total Number of Documents	55	31	51	25	72	27	**261**
Russia in Syria by Request	10	4	4	2	6	1	**27**
West not in Syria by Request	5	1	3	2	3	1	**15**
Syrian owned political process	27	18	28	19	29	12	**133**
Primacy of the United Nations	29	20	35	19	45	17	**165**
Preference for Co-operation (Russia & West / International Partners)	30	16	19	4	36	16	**121**
Focus on Islamists & Terrorists	36	27	36	14	40	16	**169**
Counter Daesh specific mention	31	21	23	9	27	11	**122**
Criticism of Western regional policies	15	11	14	5	20	6	**71**
Assad is the legitimate leadership of Syria	14	12	13	5	7	4	**55**
General commentary on International Law	11	8	16	1	16	7	**59**
Russia's place as a co-ordinator of an international anti terroritst effort	5	7	10	4	10	1	**37**
Chemical Weapons process	7	2	6	1	6	1	**23**
Humanitarian Assistance (required by the UN)	5	9	3	8	22	10	**57**
Terrorist/opposition Use of CW	4	1	4	0	1	2	**12**
Information Attacks on Russia	7	5	8	4	10	4	**38**
General commentary on Human Rights	6	2	4	1	2	3	**18**
Protection of Syrian Soveriengty	12	7	10	4	16	2	**51**
Geneva Comminque	25	11	14	2	6	1	**59**
Intra Syrian Talks	[redacted]			16	22	15	**53**
Vienna Framework/Process	12	17	26	10	13	[redacted]	**78**
Su-24 Shoot Down by Turkey	[redacted]	10	16	1	8	1	**36**
Illegal Turkish Actions	[redacted]	4	10	4	12	5	**35**
International Syrian Support Group	[redacted]	14	32	9	35	15	**105**
Munich Agreements	[redacted]				7	[redacted]	**7**
US - Russia Joint Statement (Based on Munich Agreements) - Ceasefires	[redacted]				6	17	**23**

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Appendix F – Syria Basic Statistical Data

	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	24 Feb +	Mar-22	Totals
Total Number of Documents	11	9	13	10	10	7	13	18	14	19	28	20	30	8	58	**268**
Preference for Co-operation	7	2	4	4	7	2	8	10	6	4	8	6	2		3	**73**
Failure of Secondary Institutions/treaties (as in no hope for their implementation)														6	40	**46**
Primacy of the UN	6	4	6	6	6	3	7	7	9	7	12	9	12	4	26	**124**
Security Guarantees (for Russia)											14	17	18	3	20	**72**
Principle of non-Interference	9	3	5	1	4	1	3	5	2	4	8	8	11	1	12	**77**
Nazism in Ukraine (including de-nazification)	5	3	4	5	6	4	7	6	5	3	6	6	5	5	33	**103**
Militarisation of Ukraine (including need to de-militarise)	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	3	8	12	10	11	5	39	**94**
Minsk Package / Minsk Agreements	5	2	7	4	6	3	7	12	4	14	19	14	16	6	18	**137**
Ukraine refusing to implement international agreements	2	4	7	2	1	2	4	9	4	11	12	9	13	6	14	**100**
NATO - Russia relations (including expansion)	4	3	6	5	5	3	9	6	8	13	18	16	18	4	27	**145**
Ukraine NATO membership / MAP	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	1	2	7	7	6	1	11	**41**
Special Status of Crimea & Donbas	6	5	2	1	1	1	5	2	6	5	8	7	7	5	21	**82**
Removal of Russia Culture in Ukraine	2	3	3	3	3	4	3	11	1	2	6	5	3	2	18	**69**
Western Hypocrisy	4	3	5	2	3	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	2	4	15	**60**
Illegal anti-Russia Sanctions	4	6	8	5	5	3	5	7	3	6	9	6	6	4	27	**104**
Multipolar vs Unipolar Global Order	2	0	6	3	5	1	5	8	5	6	11	7	4	2	29	**94**
Rules Based Order Replacing International Law	2	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	4	5	7	4	2	1	12	**62**
Co-ordinated Anti-Russian Agenda (US Led)	3	4	7	4	6	5	7	8	6	11	13	11	13	4	46	**148**
Illegal Coup in Ukraine (2014)	3	2	4	5	4	2	4	4	4	3	6	6	11	5	20	**83**
Self determination in Donbas & Crimea	2	5	2	4	3	4	7	8	4	4	6	6	7	5	18	**85**
Ukraine as a US vassal / Western Handlers Narrative	0	2	4	1	1	1	1	6	4	8	12	12	10	5	26	**93**

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