THE WAR OF NARRATIVES – PUTIN'S CHALLENGE TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE IN UKRAINE

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Abstract

Rationalist theories have met with difficulties when used to establish credible security governance in multicultural environments for actors possessing a different sense of logic. The case of Ukraine serves as a perfect example of a Hobbesian challenge to a Kantian international system. The present research topic is influenced by the theoretical works of Alexander Wendt and Richard Lebow, and seeks to examine the cultural patterns that influence international systems and their security governance practises. In addition, it is also an attempt to produce contrasting conceptions for interpreting norms, perceptions, and motives. Motives impelled by a Kantian system are divergent from the motives of Hobbesian and Lockean systems. In Ukraine, the Hobbesian political culture, presented by Russia, challenges the Kantian principles of international organisations (UN, EU, OSCE, NATO), which are responsible for the security governance in the postmodern international system. Figuratively, 'the world of Merkel', which is influenced by Western liberal traditions, is opposition to 'the world of Putin', which corresponds to a Hobbesian and Lockean interpretation of international security. A determined Hobbesian actor can pose serious challenges, or even enact permanent changes, to a Kantian international system. With their intervention in the Ukrainan crisis Russian political elites successfully carried out neoconservative postulates of foreign policy, while international institutions (e.g. the UN, the OSCE) have met with serious difficulties in their attempts to introduce necessary measures of effective security governance.

Keywords: *Ukraine, Russia, international system, cultural theory of international relations, political cultures, neo-conservatism*

Introduction

Richard Ned Lebow's[1] *A Cultural Theory in International Relations* provides a theoretical framework for examining international relations in terms of universal drives (appetite and spirit), powerful emotions (fear), and routines (habit). The international order has always been influenced by a dissonance between rational norms and irrational behaviour. In addition to rational (e.g. reason) and irrational (e.g. interest, honour, fear, resentment) motives, there are various powerful cultural paradigms that can also play a significant role in shaping the interactions between international actors. The current paper examines contrasting narratives that may affect the values and preferences of international actors in their specific security environments. As Lebow[2] notes, "a general theory of international relations must be more a theory of process than of structure." This perspective establishes the templates that characterize particular worlds and their subsystems. In this theoretical framework, security environments are constructed areas where the security of the actors operating within the area operates independently from one another.

Regardless of the way people perceive each other, these impressions are often mental constructs, which are manifested in conflicting identities that can be summarized as the *Self* and the *Other*. Nevertheless, the motives for producing such constructs often rely on emotions, which are based on irrational sentiments rather than on rational calculations. Every culture tends to follow its own specific patterns. These patterns can reinforce perceptions of *the Other* and influence the possible subsequent actions in relation to them. The UN-led postmodern system generally follows a Kantian logic of security governance. This means that it aspires to be rational. However, as history has often proven, a Kantian system often must confront Hobbesian, and Lockean challenges, which may reinforce culturally distinctive paradigms. In the Hobbesian security culture, fear is one of the most powerful motivators, and is the natural consequence of a perception of a permanent state of war in the anarchical order of the international system. Conflict between contrasting security narratives, which are built on the reinforcement of a constant state of fear against the *Other* in the affiliated security environments, may culminate in various status conflicts.

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[1] **Lebow, R. N**. 2008. A Cultural Theory of International Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 5. [**Lebow** 2008]

[2] **Lebow** 2008, p. 59.

The latest Hobbesian challenge to the Kantian international system, occasioned by Russia, is particularly manifested in the status conflict between Ukraine and Russia, which is accompanied by the value-related internal conflict between pro-Western and pro-Russian identities in Ukraine. Russia's striving towards gaining greater status in the international system is combined with a fear that the Eastern Ukrainian insurgents will lose their pro-Russian identity. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine perfectly illustrates the fragility of the current Kantian system. The logic of Kantian culture, which emphasizes cooperation instead of conflict, and is associated with friendship-oriented security regimes and arrangements (e.g. security communities, collective and cooperative security arrangements), contrasts with the logic of Hobbesian and Lockean cultures. The author argues that the theoretical principles of security governance are mostly products of the Kantian culture, and are therefore ineffective for Hobbesian and Lockean security environments. The Hobbesian and Lockean environments may expose the deficiencies of the Kantian system and make the whole system more vulnerable.

The Hobbesian challenge initiated by Russia in Ukraine symbolizes the war between culturally opposing narratives, wherein the world of Merkel, which embodies the Kantian logic of an international system, faces the world of Putin, which is shaped by a Hobbesian logic. This conclusion is based on Chancellor Merkel's description to President Obama of her phone conversation with Vladimir Putin during the height of the Ukrainian crisis in March 2014, when she described the President of Russia as possibly being out of touch with reality and living in another world.[3] The Hobbesian conception of international order can be thought of in terms of a revanche of history, or a countervailing wave, and it was precisely this kind of theory that was introduced by Kagan[4] in order to counterbalance Fukuyama's[5] end of history concept from the early 1990s. These contrasting security narratives are strongly substantiated by the current crisis in Ukraine. The Russian security narrative still relies on the success story of the cold-war's competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, while the leading narrative

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[3]   **Baker, P**. 2014. Pressure Rising as Obama Works to Rein in Russia. – New York Times, March 2. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/03/world/europe/pressure-rising-as-obama-works-to-rein-in-russia.html?hp&_r=0> (01.05.2014).

[4]   **Kagan, R**. 2008. The Return of History and the End of Dreams. New York: Vintage Books. [**Kagan** 2008]

[5]   **Fukuyama, F**. 1992. The End of History and the Last Man London: Penguin.

of the Kantian system advances a global security community based on commonly recognized values and beliefs.

International systems and their political cultures

The point of departure in this theoretical debate is derived from the three types of political cultures that were identified by Alexander Wendt.[6] The Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian cultures can be considered ideal types, and are subsets of the social values that originated from the Western civilization.[7] These cultural frameworks help to determine the functional paradigms of international systems and describe the basic behavioural patterns assigned to distinctive international actors within the system. The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 has been the traditional symbolic demarcator of a modern international system based on the sovereignty of states. There are also certain dependent paradigms that characterize the nature of international systems. Three of them: stability, polarity and culture of the system are displayed in table 1.

Table 1. International systems and their political cultures[8].

Modern International System	1648–1991		
1. Westphalian order	1648–1815	unstable multipolarity	Hobbesian
2. Concert of Europe **a)**	1815–1914 1815–1854	stable multipolarity	Lockean
b)	1854–1871	unstable multipolarity	Hobbesian
c)	1871–1914	unstable bipolarity	Hobbesian
3. World War I	1914–1919		
4. Versailles system	1919–1939		
a)	1919–1936	unstable liberal society	Kantian
b)	1936–1939	unstable bipolarity	Hobbesian

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[6] **Wendt, A**. 1999. Social Theory in International Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [**Wendt** 1999]

[7] *Ibid*., p. 250.

[8] **Mölder, H**. 2010. Cooperative security dilemma – practicing the Hobbesian security culture in the Kantian security environment. Tartu: Tartu University Press, p. 94.

Table 1. Continuation

Modern International System	1648–1991		
5. World War II	1939–1945		
6. Cold War	1945–1991	stable bipolarity	Lockean
Post-modern International System	1991–		
a)	1991–2003	stable liberal society	Kantian
b)	2003–	unstable liberal society	Kantian
Bush's challenge	2003–2008		Hobbesian
Putin's challenge	2014–		Hobbesian

The first international systems were actually based on European systems, which had expanded throughout the world via the colonial conquests of the European powers. From the 19th century, international systems were developed to resemble Western systems after the successful wars of independence in North and South America, the Meiji reforms of 1868 in Japan, which marked the end of its isolation, and with the emergence of new actors capable of engaging in international relations. The postmodern system that followed can be identified as a global phenomenon that developed after the collapse of the colonial system during the 20th century. The first international systems were usually unicultural entities adhering to European or Western traditions, norms and patterns. Prior to the First World War existing ideological differences had no influence on the foreign policies of various actors, and it is only after 1917 that ideological struggles became an important underlying component of international conflicts.[9] The multicultural origin of the postmodern system makes it more comprehensive and less manageable as cultural heterogeneity may reinforce contrasting identities, which are not subordinated to the interests of global community.

The unicultural background of earlier international systems favored universal explanations for international relations. It was only at the end of 20th century that some scholars, such as Samuel P. Huntington, realized that cultural variations also influence international relations.

> *In the scholarly world, the battle has thus been joined by those who see culture as a major, but not the only influence on social, political, and economic*

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[9] **Peterson, M. J**. 1982. Political Use of Recognition: The Influence of the International System. – World Politics, Vol. 34, Issue 3 (April 1982), p. 327.

behaviour and those who adhere to universal explanations, such as devotees of material self-interest among economists, of 'rational choice' among political scientists, and of neorealism among scholars of international.[10]

Up to the 20th century, the system of international relations was strongly influenced by a Hobbesian culture. The basic tenets of this system are derived from the works of English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and his book *Leviathan*, which was published in 1651. In it Hobbes promotes the idea that the world lives in a state of constant anarchy and relations between actors are unregulated. The Hobbesian culture originates from the concept of a state of nature, and sees conflicts originating from three main principles – competition, diffidence and glory. Hobbes and his disciples assumed that states continually seek ways to maximize their power. A war of all against all (*bellum omnium contra omnes*) is the fundamental cause of an anarchical security environment and the only way to avoid violence is to impose absolute power.

According to Alexander Wendt[11], a Hobbesian culture is based on three assumptions: 1) states deal with other states that are similar; 2) other entities are enemies and therefore pose a threat to life and liberty; 3) In their reciprocal relations states utilize war, threats, surrender, and power balancing. Consequently, states and their national interests dominate in international relations, and international institutions are deprived of an independent role in the international system. Collective interests for peace and stability do not exist, and states interact with the rest via power capabilities. These paradigms constitute the basic principles of the realist school of IR theory and the Hobbesian security culture. The latter follows a self-centred and competitive view of international society, where enmity is part of the natural relationship between actors, and wars are widely practiced normative political measures.

The Lockean culture values the status quo above power enhancement. This means that maintaining stability is an important political guideline for the Lockeans. It is also important to consider the circumstances under which "Leviathan" was written. Seventeenth-century England was experiencing a civil war where insecurity, force, and survival were part of everyday life. John Locke, who lived a half century later, observed a more stable England and argued that "although state of nature lacked a common sovereign,

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[10] **Harrison, L. E.; Huntington, S. P**. 2000. Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress. New York: Basic Books.

[11] **Wendt** 1999, p. 268.

people could develop ties and make contracts, and therefore anarchy was less of a threat."[12] The Hobbesian tradition is similar to the Lockean in that it describes international society as an anarchical body, which is manifested in competing nation-states. It seems, however, that the main difference between these two cultures is that Locke advances the ideal of a stable international system, whilst the Hobbesian world stresses the mercurial and conflict laden nature of international relations. In the context of international relations, stable systems may mitigate the negative effects of an anarchical international order. Hobbes posited that individuals and the state have made a social contract in order to avoid an anarchic environment. Locke also stresses the necessity of a contract between individuals in order to set up a sovereign.[13]

In his essay from 1795, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, Immanuel Kant proposed a totally different cultural approach, in which the general the principles of conflict and competition are replaced by the principles of cooperation and friendship among international actors.[14] In his essay, Immanuel Kant established the general principles for constructing an international society by emphasizing peaceful relations between actors, establishing peace among representative democracies, building economic interdependence, and enacting international rule of law.[15] Kant theorized that an international society with benevolent common values could engender the emergence of a common identity. This is the foundation of the Kantian security culture. He proposed a war-free federation of liberal states that would emphasize human rights, pursue perpetual peace, and respect the supremacy of international law.

The Hobbesian culture is oriented towards maintaining anarchic relationships between international actors. Its doctrines (bandwagoning, coalition-building, arms races) are designed to enhance standing in the international system. The Lockean culture recognizes that rivalry and competition exist in the international system, but at the same time seeks to stabilize the anarchical order of the system through doctrines that pursue balancing, the creation of alliances, or maintaining neutrality. The Kantian culture attempts to

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[12] **Nye, J. S**. 2009. Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History. New York: Pearson Longman, p. 4.

[13] **Holsti, K. J**. 1996. The State, War, and the State of War. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 46.

[14] **Wendt** 1999.

[15] **Russett, B.; Oneal, J. R. and Davis, D. R**. 1998. The Third Leg of the Kantian Tripod for Peace: International Organizations and Militarized Disputes, 1950–85. – International Organization, Vol. 52(3), p. 441.

disassociate from anarchy and surmises that the influences of an anarchical international order will be diminished if cooperative regimes, which favour peace and complex interdependence are promoted. While the Hobbesian and the Lockean culture both originate from idea that there exists a competitive logic in international relations, the logic of the Kantian culture presupposes that the implementation of measures that will create more trust between international actors can ameliorate its most detrimental elements.

Table 2. Ideal types of political cultures[16].

Cultures	Hobbesian	Lockean	Kantian
Environment	unstable anarchy	stable anarchy	community
Systemic requirements	conflict	conflict	cooperation
Motives	fear	appetite	reason
Positioning with others	enmity	rivalry	cooperation
Social interactions with others	war	competition	friendship
Polarity	polarity	polarity	non-polarity
Stability	unstable	stable	stable/unstable
Doctrines	coalition-building, arms-racing, bandwagoning	balancing, neutrality ally-seeking	peace, complex interdependence

The ancient Greek philosophic schools of Plato and Aristotle concluded that appetite, spirit, and reason were the three fundamental human drives. In reality, these fundamental drives are frequently accompanied by a fourth and very powerful drive – fear. Fear has always had an immense role in shaping the interactions and multifunctional relations between the constructed identities of the *Self* and the *Other*. Basic motives are aspects of different political cultures. A basic motivator in the Kantian culture is reason, which stresses that actors should be able to subordinate their relative interests to the common good. The Lockean culture emphasizes the motive of appetite, wherein actors compete with each other in order to achieve their relative gains. In the Hobbesian culture, the main driving force is fear, with actors seeking greater security in a state of perpetual war. Spirit, however, is a universal motive that is common to all of the political cultures. Although Lebow admits that

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16 **Mölder** 2010, p. 34.

> *Spirit has not made the basis for any paradigm of politics or international relations... A spirit-based paradigm starts from the premise that people individually and collectively seeks self-esteem /.../ that makes people feel good about themselves, happier about life and more confident about their ability to confront its challenges.*[17]

In the 1990s, a movement towards a Kantian society was clearly visible in international relations, and there was a strong international response to the actions that ran counter to it (e.g. the Gulf war, the Yugoslavian wars). Often, during the transition period from one system to another, or even afterwards, an international system will retain some of the cultural influences of the previous system. This phenomenon may elicit challenges, as various actors desire a return to earlier cultural patterns. The vulnerability of the postmodern international system is summarized in the following arguments: 1) the international system is no longer a Western system and has become culturally heterogeneous; 2) the global system may encompass various cultural environments, which manifest cultures other than those of the system; 3) any challenger to the international system has an advantage over the existing system because it is able to take the initiative and force the whole system to adapt accordingly.

The postmodern international system – Merkel's world

The postmodern international system, figuratively called Merkel's world, emerged in the 1990s. The new system adhered to the principles of the Kantian political and security culture, and endorsed cooperation and democratic principles among international actors who would constitute a peace-oriented international society. However, in the postmodern system there remained several culturally contrasting environments, which did not cohere with the Kantian culture endorsed by the international system. These anomalous environments followed a distinctive set of political cultures based on rivalry and enmity instead of the Kantian principles of cooperation. The Kantian system was committed to the maintenance of peace and security within the affiliated Lockean and Hobbesian environments, but the culture of fear has remained a driving force in the arrangement of long-standing relationships for many self-constructed security environments such as the

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[17] **Lebow** 2008, pp. 60–61.

Middle East, the Caucasus region, India, Pakistan, and the Korean Peninsula, as well as others.

The European Union embodies the Kantian principles of democratic peace "by adopting Immanuel Kant's recipe for perpetual peace: representative democracy; international law and organizations i.e. enlargement of existing institutions by new members; and the development of free trade."[18] The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 and the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) created the opportunity to launch a security community-building initiative in the European Union and to gradually build a complex interdependency that could transcended the traditional security dilemmas faced by Europe, which historically had produced many wars. With the adoption of the Copenhagen criteria in 1993, the European Union was able to establish a normative mechanism to measure the eligibility of potential candidate nations for accessing the European Union. The Copenhagen criteria followed the Kantian tradition of the European political culture, and established a set of liberal democratic norms to be adapted:

> *Membership requires that candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.*[19]

As the new European security environment relied on an institutional framework to maintain peace in Europe, an attendant credible security governance framework became necessary. Security governance is a postmodern phenomenon. International security management has shifted from a state-centric approach, with formal institutions, towards a more flexible and diverse arrangement.[20] Theories explaining security governance emerged in the 2000s in order to advance ideas as to how the European states could

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[18] **Lucarelli, S**. 2002. Peace and Democracy: Rediscovered Link. The EU, NATO and the European System of Liberal-Democratic Security Communities. – NATO Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Individual Research Fellowship Final Report. Available at:
<http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/00-02/Lucarelli's.pdf> (23.03.2015).

[19] **Presidency Conclusions**. Copenhagen European Council 1993.
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop_en.pdf> (27.04.2015), p. 7. A. iii.

[20] **Bevir, M.; Hall, I**. 2014. The Rise of Security Governance. – Interpreting Global Security. Ed. by M. Bevir, O. Daddow, and I. Hall. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 31–61.

address transnational security threats.[21] Hobbesian and Lockean systems benefit from an anarchical order of international system and must shape their policies to control the anarchical order (e.g. by balance of power, collective defence or concert). These systems however, have retained certain

> /.../ inherent limitations, the most important of which is a preoccupation with the military aspect of security and the unspoken assumption that all states share the Westphalian preoccupation with autonomy and the aggregation of power.[22]

The theory of security governance offers an alternative to the Westphalian mindset, which is more closely aligned with the Kantian model of security management. Many postmodern forms of security governance propose a departure from the anarchical system and an acceptance of the role of non-state actors in security management.

The European Union is a recently conceived mechanism designed to effectively implement a Kantian method of security governance in a post-modern international system. The political strength of the European Union is manifested in the France-Germany axis, which was created already during the Cold War and prefers the use of diplomatic measures for peace management over the achievement of outcomes through military hegemony, which is the method stressed by the Hobbesian and Lockean systems. The spirit of the 1990s – which is considered the golden age of the Kantian culture, has been maintained in the European security environment largely due to the willingness of France and Germany to retain it. Because of the Kantian principles adopted by the influential members France and Germany, the European Union is seeks to maintain a stable peace in Europe and avoid the escalation of international conflicts that are favored by the Hobbesian challengers. Despite the numerous setbacks, France and Germany consistently attempt to maintain dialogue with Russia and are proponents of the value-based integration of the Eastern European states into the European Union. When George

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[21] See i.e.: **Kirchner, E. J.; Dominquez, R**. 2011. The Security Governance of Regional Organizations. London and New York: Routledge; **Kirchner, E. J.; Sperling, J**. 2007. Global Security Governance: Competing Perceptions of Security in the 21st Century. London: Routledge; **Krahmann, E**. 2003. Conceptualizing Security Governance. – Cooperation and Conflict, Vol. 38(1), pp. 5–26; **Webber, M.; Croft, St.; Howorth, J.; Krahmann, E**. 2004. The Governance of European Security. – Review of International Studies, Vol. 30(1), pp. 3–26.

[22] **Kirchner, E**. 2014. Theoretical Debates on Regional Security Governance. – EUI Working paper RSCAS 2014/40. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/31117/RSCAS_2014_40.pdf?sequence=1> (26.04.2015).

W. Bush launched his challenge to the Kantian international system in 2003 with the invasion of Iraq, it was France and Germany that led the opposition.

Merkel's outlook on the world in 2014 is a tangible continuation of the spirit of the 1990's that champions diplomatic solutions rather than demonstrations of power, and the espousal of rivalry and enmity in international relations. If the present system intends to retain its Kantian norms and make them accepted by all, it must continue to advocate for their further implementation, and not to be provoked by challengers calling for changes. In an interview with the Estonian media, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier stated:

> I emphasize it again and again that foreign policy has to ensure that such agreements as the Minsk Agreement could operate, even if the implementation and execution of it is extremely difficult. It is important not to give interviews and complain that everything has failed, but to be ensure that parties of the conflict, who signed the agreements will adhere them.[23]

After the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia found itself in a profound internal and external identity crisis.[24] Initially, Russia was an important cooperative partner for the West, although it never adopted the Kantian system. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the analyst Ted Hopf[25] wrote that there were two alarming threats to the West: 1) the nuclear proliferation and loss of Russian control over the former Soviet nuclear weaponry; 2) the resurrection of Russian military power, wherein Russia's insecurity would compel it to over-arm itself against potential adversaries. Hopf[26] mentioned a potential security dilemma with Ukraine "that would be exacerbated and fueled by governmental abuses of ethnic minorities and denial of democratic and civil liberties." He advocated for the introduction of codes of conduct for the former Soviet republics in order to minimize threats to Russia's insecurity. In some respects Ted Hopf could be considered something of a prophet by suggesting that Russia's insecurity might lead to the emergence of a classical

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[23] **ERR News** 2015. Eestisse saabunud Frank-Walter Steinmeier ERR-ile: tuleb sundida konflikti osapooli kokkulepetest kinni pidama (Frank-Walter Steinmeier: To force the parties of the conflict to respect the agreements). <http://uudised.err.ee/v/eesti/b7a2e96e-93f5-4156-b861-ab04d4f3fb8b> (25.04.2015).

[24] **Larson, D.W.; Shevchenko, A**. 2010. Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy. – International Security, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 63–95. [**Larson, Shevchenko** 2010]

[25] **Hopf, T**. 1992. Managing Soviet Disintegration: A Demand for Behavioral Regimes. – International Security, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer, 1992), p. 58.

[26] *Ibid*.

security dilemma between the former Soviet republics and Russia, which would afterwards be followed by another security dilemma between the West and Russia.

When most international peace operations, with minor exceptions, fell under the mandates of the UN Security Council and while the rest of the world was building a security framework led by the United Nations[27], Russia was instead successfully establishing a kind of alternative security subsystem. This system maintained its sphere of influence in areas of the former Soviet Union, which were witnessing many conflicts, but placed the onus of responsibility for sustaining peace and stability, upon the Commonwealth of Independent States and its security pillar the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The Civil wars in Tajikistan, Georgia, Moldova, and Russia, including the secessionist conflicts pitting Abkhazia and South Ossetia against Georgia, Transnistria against Moldova and Chechnya against Russia, as well as the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region were all conflicts that Russia managed to contain. Russia was also able to pre-empt the involvement of external entities typically associated with the sphere of peace settlement. The diverse regional security governance practices of the post-Soviet areas evolved methods of resolution that were altogether different from those used by NATO and the European Union to resolve the Yugoslavian crisis.

The European Union is a purely Kantian institution, which certainly will lose if the Kantian system of security governance is withdrawn and the world system returns to a Hobbesian or Lockean arrangement. In the current Ukrainian conflict, the European Union, which represents the world of Merkel, must compete with Putin's world, and the battleground between these two culturally distinctive worlds is Ukraine. If the ambitions of the Hobbesian challengers becomes actualized in the loosely connected multipolar union of nation-states with competing interests, and if the strategic contests between the great powers reappears, it will make a stable peace extremely vulnerable. A strident challenge against the Kantian international system is evidenced by Russia's characterization of the role of the European Union in the Ukrainian conflict, and their allegations that the association agreement between the European Union and Ukraine was the catalyst for the conflict. The current challenge clearly demonstrates that, at this time, Russia and pro-Russian forces regard not only NATO as a hostile organization, but also the

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[27] On some cases, this mandate was given by the UN Security Council afterwards, following the intervention (e.g. Kosovo 1999, Iraq 2003).

European Union together with its Kantian tools of security governance, as it too was added to the list of systemic opponents.

From Bush's world to Putin's world

Another countermovement seeking to overturn the Kantian international system originates from a competing narrative that can be figuratively called "Bush's world". In its own way this worldview contributed to the rise of Putin's world in the international political landscape in 2014. Bush's world initially forced itself into the European security environment before the Iraqi intervention of 2003. The neo-conservative ideology that is central to Bush's world, and which embraces the concept of transatlanticism, created a rift in the Western security community as the system became divided between the transatlanticists supporting the hegemonic approach to global security, and the euro-centrists who preferred to adhere to the previous course of gradual development towards a Kantian society through the reinforcement of cooperative regimes. During Bush's challenge to the Kantian world order, Europe was divided between a euro-centric orientation, which opposed the challenge (France, Germany, Belgium, and later Spain) and a transatlantic orientation, which supported the challenge (notably the United Kingdom, Poland and Denmark, but also most of the Eastern European nations). A split emerged between the nations that recognized the United States as the leader in the world hegemony, and the nations that perceived the United States as an important security partner in the non-polar international system.[28]

Putin's challenge to the Kantian international system is a follow-up to the neoconservative revolution of Bush. An advocate of the neoconservative worldview, Robert Kagan[29] (2008) wrote in his *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*, that after a decade of nations disappearing or amalgamating, and with the vanishing of ideological conflicts, as well as cultures disappearing due to free trade and communication networks, the world started to again normalize with struggles for honour status and influence. According to Kagan, it may be worth considering a rearrangement of the global, international society in light of the challenges posed by Russia, China and radical Islam to the Kantian world that was established in the

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[28] See also **Mouritzen, H**. 2006. Choosing Sides in the European Iraq Conflict: A Test of New Geopolitical Theory. – European Security, Vol. 15(2), pp. 138–139.

[29] **Kagan** 2008.

1990s. If these challenges are perceived as the 'normal way' to operate within
the international system, Putin's world can be easily justified.

The neoconservative wave in the United States was sustained by two
powerful emotions: honour and fear. It was an attempt to revive a *The Hunger
Games*[30] mentality, which had traditionally defined international politics in
the 19th and 20th century. In recent years, the various slogans that invoke
history, and emphasize the East-West confrontation during the cold war, have
played a key role in Putin's challenge against a world he probably does not
understand. Western interference in Russia's sphere of influence has become
a popular narrative advanced by Russia's media channels. On the world stage
it becomes a multi-act play where Putin takes the role of the comfortable
antihero opposed to the West, and plays it according to the rules formulated
during the cold war. The main difference between Bush's challenge and that
of Putin's, is that the US neoconservatives were fighting for US hegemony,
but Putin's dream is to revive a world of multipolarity, in which Russia
belongs to the club of great powers.[31] A problem for the postmodern inter-
national system might be that Putin's challenge profits some circles of the
Western political elites, whereas the Kantian system does not benefit many
of the influential actors.

The Russian military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer has stated that the leaders
of both Russia and the West are children of the cold war and a return to
history is not something unnatural for them. Moreover, military interests are
always very tangible: a predictable situation satisfies all parties, and it allows
the military industrial complex to request budget increases for maintaining
the military industry and for developing the new technologies. According
to Felgenhauer, the Russian General Staff and the Pentagon, who once
stood toe to toe, are both happy, because it means that a new generation of
nuclear submarines and rockets will be born.[32] Nevertheless, such nostalgia
for the good old cold war days with its stable rules of the game that were
tightly controlled by the two centres of power is misguided. The tendency is
to describe Putin's Russia in terms similar to those that were used to char-
acterize the Soviet Union, but these two worlds are actually completely

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[30] *The Hunger Games* is a trilogy of novels written by Suzanne Collins (2008–2010), which
describes a dystopian post-apocalyptic world, which practices games for survival.

[31] **Larson, Shevchenko** 2010, p. 93.

[32] **Tammsaar, R**. 2015. Venemaa perimeetri kaitsest. [Interview with Pavel Felgenhauer]. –
Diplomaatia, märts 2015. <http://www.diplomaatia.ee/artikkel/venemaa-perimeetri-kaitsest/>
(21.03.2015).

different. This, however, does not make them any less dangerous. Accepting Russia's challenge and a longing to turn back history, makes peacemaking in Ukraine a very complicated process for the West. Russia simply does not want there to be peace, at least in the short term, because unrest in the region successfully challenges the system that Russia hopes to change.

The growing passive involvement of international institutions in Ukraine may indicate that international society is becoming frustrated with Merkel's world and prefers the spectacle of Hollywoodesque war games to the mundane implementation of stable security governance. Public discourse is often very effective in proclaiming the need to raise military expenditures, but it is mostly silent when it comes to promoting peace management. These children of the cold war are also quite reminiscent of *The Children Of The Corn* from the famous short story by Stephen King[33], in that both believe in s mythological power that is shaped by ideology and both feel a kind of nostalgia towards a stable system with clear polarities. This brave new world permeates the Hollywoodesque world, where the good guys permanently fight with the bad guys, and always win. The Hollywoodesque world order both creates and demonizes anti-heroes (e.g. Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi, Osama bin Laden, Vladimir Putin). But these anti-heroes may in fact become actual heroes for those who are disappointed in the current system. The Hobbesian challenge emphasizes continual preparation for wars rather than attempting to prevent them. Armed conflict is perceived as a normal way of life within the Hobbesian system.

At the cusp of the 21st century, the neoconservative movement in the United States initiated a countermovement against the Kantian international system. The neoconservative revolution was initiated after the Islamic terrorist attacks against the United States in 2001 with a global campaign termed the "Global War against Terrorism". This was followed by the Iraqi intervention in 2003. The main postulates of the neoconservative foreign policy are defined by Irving Kristol[34] and include: the necessity of patriotism; that world government as a terrible idea; that statesmen should have the ability to accurately distinguish friend from foe; the protection of national interests both at home and abroad; and the necessity of a strong military. All of these

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[33] *The Children of the corn* is a short story of Stephen King (1977). This narrative is used for making the parralel, where the author intends to refer that the return of history also means the return to world of ideologies that ruled during the 20th century.

[34] **Kristol, I**. 2003. The Neoconservative Persuasion. – Weekly Standard. <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=3000&R=785F2781> (02.04.2014).

postulates described by Kristol also apply to Russia today. Robert Kagan's[35] remark that Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus, garnered a significant response from the world's public audience. The neoconservative movement sought to use a globally dominant position to restructure international systems in a way that would be advantageous to the United States.[36]

Peter Beinart[37] has noted some of the similar ideological patterns that are shared by both the US neoconservatives and President Putin. The first is an obsession with the spectre of appeasement. This is combined with a perception of the nation as being continually bullied by adversaries. After attacking Iraq in 2003, the US neoconservatives declared that the era of American weakness had ended. This was paralleled a decade later when, after annexing Crimea, Putin declared that the era of appeasement is over and "Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from." The second is that both ideologies are strong advocates for "democracy," "freedom," "self-determination" and "international law", as long as those principles do not obstruct national power. Putin regards to the anti-Russian government in Ukraine as illegitimate, which is similar to the attitudes of US neoconservatives towards the Chauvist (pro-Chavez) governments in Latin America, or the Islamist governments in the Middle-East. Third, the neoconservatives do not understand economic power, and for them it is separate from military and foreign policy issues. For decades, the neoconservatives advocated for the expansion of the US's global military footprint and urged it to boost its defence budget. Similarly, Putin fights for the geopolitical glory of Russia, yet ignores the economic welfare of Russians.

Russia is an international actor with increasing power that seeks to be recognized as a great power.[38] Its provocations may prove dominant over the existing system, because it seeks to rearrange the order of things by creating an altogether new order, and it desires to overturn the status quo. In such a situation Putin's world could prove victorious, not because it is better, but

[35] **Kagan, R**. 2002. Power and Weakness. – Policy Review. <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/zselden/course%20readings/rkagan.pdf> (20.04.2015), p. 1.

[36] **Kanet, R. A**. 2008. New US Approach to Europe? The Transatlantic Relationship after Bush. – International Politics, Vol. 45, p. 351.

[37] **Beinart, P**. 2014. Vladimir Putin, Russian Neocon. – The Atlantic, March 24. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/03/vladimir-putin-russian-neocon/284602/> (29.04.2015).

[38] **Lebow, R. N**. 2010. The Past and Future of War. – International Relations, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 243–270.

rather because it takes the initiative.[39] For example in the 1930s, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Soviet Union, and others took the initiative by challenging the Versailles system led by the League of Nations, and eventually destroyed it. Challengers to Merkel's world rely on the Orwellian slogan "War is good, peace is bad"[40]; and in the conflict between the *Self* and the *Other*, intolerance against the *Other* is highly valued by societies that are based on collectivist-linked ideologies. Just as American national pride was the driving force in the US neoconservative revolution, Russian patriotism also reinforces the Putin's world.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 had a significant influence on Russia, as its sphere of influence shrank, and the country's prestige and competitiveness in several strategic areas, including the military and economic spheres decreased. These processes galvanized a strong revival of Russian nationalism, which became ingrained in Russian society and then reached its zenith during Vladimir Putin's presidency. While the US neoconservatives advanced the idea that Americans are from Mars and the Europeans from Venus and dreamed of the military hegemony of the United States, Putin's challenge produces slogans such as: "Liberals are bad, conservatives are good," and stressed the conflict between the traditional values of the righteous *Us* and the decadent values of the *Others*. In Putin's world, liberalism symbolizes a negative value. The Russian political narrative often assigns negative connotations to *liberasts*, *inregrasts* and *tolerasts* in order to ridicule a liberal world-view and to distinguish their own "righteous" views from those who represent liberal, multicultural or tolerant views.

Neoconservatism adopted several representational strategies that professed to represent the "common sense" of the majority of Americans and claimed to speak for the "real America" that was ignored by the dominant liberal culture.[41] Irving Kristol claims that:

> *Neoconservatism aims to infuse American bourgeois orthodoxy with a new self-conscious vigour, while dispelling the feverish melange of gnostic humours that /.../ has suffused our political beliefs and tended to convert them into political religions.*[42]

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[39] **Krastev, I**. 2014. Putin's world. – Project Syndicate. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ivan-krastev-blames-the-west-s-weak-response-in-crimea-for-empowering-russia#AK0vzVbmtIUQCseG.99> (30.04.2014).

[40] Novels of George Orwell *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949).

[41] **Williams, M. C**. 2007. Culture and Security. Symbolic power and the Politics of International Security. New York: Routledge, p. 108. [**Williams** 2007]

[42] **Kristol, I**. 1983. Reflections of a Neoconservative. New York: Basic Books, pp. xiv–xv.

Similar ideological patterns have appeared in Russia's political discourses during Putin's presidency. The Russian neoconservatives demand even more decisive measures in foreign policy. Every nationalist movement shares xenophobia in common. The common denominator between both of these movements is that both make a clear distinction between *Us* and *Them*.[43]

Michael Williams[44] concludes that in contrast to designations assigned to liberals such as doubt, self-loathing and indecision, a neoconservative foreign policy is committed to the defence of domestic virtue, the protection of American values and society, and a maximization of American power. Likewise Russian values and the maximization of Russian power are often present in the speeches of President Putin. These speeches are used to mobilize the Russian people against an external threat and enhance national cohesion during a time of crisis.[45] An overt opposition to NATO's enlargement provides a focal point for nationalist consolidation efforts in Russia. Prior to the renewal of the great power politics between the nations, Russia made several attempts to present the OSCE as an alternative forum to NATO.[46] However, in the light of last developments in international relations, Russia is gradually distancing itself from the alternative institutionalist approach and now seeks a return to the great power games.

The Hobbesian offensive in Ukraine

Patrick Cockburn's[47] recent book "The Rise of Islamic State" analyses the rise of an altogether different and powerful force with the potential to destabilize the political status quo in the Middle East. In his review of the book, Jason Burke concluded that "western policymakers have shown little but wishful thinking and inconsistency in dealing with the conflict in Syria or the in Iraq supposed peace for several years."[48]

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[43] **Laine, V**. 2015. Nationalism is a double-edged sword. – FIIA Comment, No. 1 (January 2015). <http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/472/nationalism_is_a_double-edged_sword/> (26.04.2015). [**Laine** 2015]

[44] **Williams, M. C**. 2007, p. 117.

[45] **Laine** 2015.

[46] **Williams** 2007, pp. 85–89.

[47] **Cockburn, P.** 2015. The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution. Verso Books.

[48] **Burke, J**. 2015. The Rise of Islamic State review – the story of ISIS. – The Guardian, 9 February 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/09/rise-of-islamic-state-patrick-cockburn-review-isis-new-sunni-revolution> (20.03.2015).

Moreover, these words also apply to the situation in Ukraine, where no one is able, nor are they willing to make credible steps towards resolving the conflict. The inconsistency of Western policies in Ukraine has led to a situation where Russia uses the conflict in order to advance a Hobbesian offensive against the Kantian world, while simultaneously offering the West a backdoor to a successful return to the cold war-like polarized system. The successful challenges to the Kantian systems moves the international status of Russia to the next level, and satisfies the populace's constant clamouring for its national rebirth as a great power.

Wars are usually the result of a long series of provocations between conflicting parties. These provocations must accumulate before being followed by an actual declaration of war, or the actual crossing of a border.[49] This is exactly what happened in Georgia's conflict with South Ossetia in 2008. In Ukraine, before the armed clashes erupted in the Eastern provinces, there had been a continual escalation of violence since November 2013 that began at the Maidan square in Kiev. From November 2013, to April 2014, the West was inconsistent in implementing the credible security governance for Ukraine that could have prevented the ensuing war. The annexation of Crimea by Russia created a scenario where leaders had to fall back on wishful thinking, simply hoping that the Russian authorities would not go through with incorporating Crimea into the territory of Russia. Later the rest of the world finally accepted that the loss of Crimea was the price to pay for maintaining peace. Lebow[50] concludes that the most aggressive actors are those that desire greater status, and those that are already dominant powers, but still seek hegemony. This is confirmed by the appearance of neoconservative challenges manifested in Putin's world (as a rising power) and in Bush's world (as a dominant power).

In terms of the Hobbesian security environment, the current conflict in Ukraine is reminiscent of a typical proxy conflict from the cold war wherein the great powers are not directly involved, but rather make use of proxy warriors who are dependent upon their patron's support (e.g. Vietnam, Afghanistan) in order to further their cause. In the proxy conflicts of the cold war, the belligerents were the mindless tools of the great powers, who prosecuted their own petty squabbles within the larger framework of the bi- or multipolar confrontation. The belief that wars are natural part of strategic games between great powers is still widely accepted in Eastern Europe, which

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[49] **Lebow** 2010, p. 254.

[50] *Ibid*., p. 258.

explains their readiness to go along with Hobbesian challenges against a Kantian system. Bush's challenge, also known as the *Pax Americana*, became a very popular concept among the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, where the fall of Marxist ideology produced a surge of nationalism, as well as other more or less extremist ideologies. Within Germany, extremist ideologies found fertile ground in the Eastern part of Germany, which had been formerly under Communist control.[51]

In Russia, nationalist sentiments, which quickly replaced the Communist ideology, are gathering in strength, although paradoxically, some Soviet symbols have been appropriated by the nationalist movement. The majority of Russian society harbours anti-Western feelings. Similar to the Arab societies during the Arab Spring movement, the liberal opposition that criticized the Crimean annexation, and the conflict in Ukraine, constitutes a tiny minority in Russia. The most well organized opposition group in Russia consists of extremist movements of communists and nationalists. If the West accepts the challenge initiated by Putin, it will demonstrate the weakness of the Kantian peace process, and will doom the concept of security governance to failure. The major task of the West is to convince Putin that he too will fail, because that the forces following him are even more radical and more conflict-oriented. In Ukraine, international institutions should take charge of the crisis resolution and undertake active diplomacy in order to implement the Minsk agreements as neither side can hope to achieve a military victory, and a long-term crisis will affect not only Ukraine, but also Russia as well, because in the long-run, economic sanctions are effective.

There are some obvious differences between the Russia-Georgia conflict of 2008 and the Ukraine conflict of 2014–15. In 2008, a direct conflict between two internationally recognized states – Georgia and Russia emerged. As this conflict occurred within a clearly defined interstate framework, the West was able to negotiate peace settlements. But in the case of Donbass, a proxy war has ensued without the direct involvement of Russia or Russian forces. This allows Russia to distance itself from peace management. Officially, Russia and Ukraine are not at war, or even in conflict and they continue to practice bilateral diplomatic and economic relations, just as if it were peacetime. Russia supports the rebels in Donbass, just as it did it earlier in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, so to what extent Russia is able to control the pro-Russian forces fighting in the Eastern Ukraine remains

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[51] I.e. the Pegida movement was born in Dresden, and the National Democratic Party of Germany won five seats in the Landtag of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, etc.

unclear. The involvement of international organizations in the peace management process, including the OSCE as the primary underwriter of the Minsk Agreements, remains complicated as the rebels can use their unrecognized status to their advantage.

Russia's policy towards the crisis in Eastern Ukraine is altogether different from its Crimean policy. In the case of Crimea, Russia actively intervened in the political process, resulting in Crimea's annexation in March 2014. Nevertheless, Russia keeps a much lower profile in the Eastern Ukraine, and has not shown any intentions of incorporating the area into Russia. The pro-Russian rebels are comprised of volunteers and the insurgency receives moderate support from Russia that keeps the conflict going. This state of affairs could be explained by a long-term political goal of destabilizing Ukraine, which would compel it remain within a self-constructed sphere of influence. Russia would like to establish itself as a responsible regional power, whose influence on the area of the former Soviet Union republics is indisputable, with the only probable exception of the three Baltic states. This strategy is based on Russia's sense that it cannot join Western structures (e.g. the European Union, NATO). Consequently, it denies that the interests of other countries in the Post-Soviet area may be divergent from their own interests and that others may wish to join.[52] During the conflict with Georgia in 2008, Dmitry Rogozin[53] compared the NATO aspiration of Georgia's to the parking of an alien military vehicle near the Russian borders, and Sergey Lavrov insisted that Georgia's desire to join had more to do with American aspirations rather than Georgia's internal state interests.[54]

Conclusions

Distinctive cultural environments and conflicting narratives may produce status conflicts between the status quo powers and hegemonic, or rising powers. As certain actors may fear a loss of their respective positions within

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[52] **Aron, L**. 2014. The front line of Russia's home front. – American Enterprise Institute, March 6, 2014. <http://aei.org/article/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/europe/the-front-lines-on-russias-homefront/> (16.06.2014).

[53] In 2008 Dmitry Rogozin was Russia's ambassador to NATO, and is now the Deputy Prime Minister. Sergey Lavrov is the Foreign Minister of Russia.

[54] **George, J. A., Teigen, J. N**. 2008. NATO Enlargement and Institution Building: Military Personnel Policy Challenges in the Post-Soviet Context. – European Security, Vol. 17, No. 2&3, June 2008, pp. 350–351.

the system, it may incite them to challenge valid systems. Others are simply interested in boosting their status in order to achieve more benefits from a re-arrangement of the international order. The Russian security narrative resurrects the spirit of the cold war competition between the East and West, with Russia continuing to present itself as an alternative power to the United States in a polarized world. Security governance practices are difficult to implement in Ukraine, because the post-Soviet area has been excluded from the Kantian security governance environment since the 1990s, and some actors in Ukraine's security environment do not recognize norms and practices that are inherent to the Kantian political culture. Russia seems to be the only external power able to influence the decision-making process of self-proclaimed People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, but it has been extremely passive in enforcing peace management and in its support of the implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

There are obvious similarities between the US neoconservative movements and the foreign policy initiatives undertaken by the President Putin in Russia. For US neoconservatives the intervention in Iraq was a demonstration of American military power and an attempt to return to a more Hobbesian arrangement in international relations. The crisis in Ukraine is a litmus test for the neoconservatist policies of President Putin and his supporters. Neoconservative postulates adopted in the United States, and later in Russia, have resulted in emotional narratives emphasizing honour, interest, and fear combined with resentment caused by disrespect for their status claims. Consequently, for the Russian neoconservatives, the crisis in Ukraine must demonstrate to a wider audience that the Kantian system of security governance is an ineffective mechanism that does not work. This would then justify Russia's claims that its status as a great power should be respected by the West, foremost the United States and the European Union. The neoconservative ideology stresses a defence of domestic virtues and the maximization of power capabilities in order to enact a foreign policy that can assure the defence of national interests. If the current Hobbesian challenge against the Kantian system is successful, a return of history may come to haunt such countries as Armenia, Belarus or the Central Asian republics who will be subject to Russia's sphere of influence and remain behind a new iron curtain.

The main problem in producing credible security governance practices for Ukraine is that the West, including the European Union, does not have a master plan for dealing with Russia, or the possible intentions of President Putin, or his attempts to escalate the status conflict with the West. The

Western policy towards Russia is reminiscent of a situation described in the by Dino Buzzati in his novel *The Tartar Steppe*[55], wherein the West accepts the Hobbesian challenge offered by Russia, acknowledges that wars are inevitable mechanisms of international politics, and so then must wait for the Russians to attack instead of using all possible measures to prevent the attack. The massive outpouring of extreme nationalism that currently prevails in the public discourses of Russian society does not facilitate a comprehensive peace management plan, nor does it encourage mainstream theories of security governance. It is easy to criticize or even demonise the Russian president, but the question must be asked: what comes after Putin? The key issue in the current intercultural conflict lies not on Putin's personified intentions, but on the preparedness of majority of the Russian society to adapt to the Kantian international system. If they identify themselves as "the Others" in the postmodern system, then security governance has no chance. The experience of the Arab Spring movement shows that the majority of the Arab societies were not prepared for Western liberal democracy, and it seems that at least for the moment, Russia is not either.

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[55] Novel of Dino Buzzati *Il deserto dei Tartar* (the Tartar Steppe) was firstly published in 1940.

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