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UNIVERSIDADE D
COIMBRA

Elham Gharji

**POWER, SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AND
IDENTITY IN INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY:
THEORIZING REGIONAL ORDER IN THE POST-
SOVIET SPACE**

VOLUME 1

**Tese no âmbito do Programa de Doutoramento em Relações
Internacionais – Política Internacional e Resolução de Conflitos,
orientada pela Professora Doutora Licínia Maria dos Santos
Simão e apresentada à Faculdade de Economia da
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Dedication:

I dedicate this thesis to the memories of more than 150 students whose lives and dreams of getting an education were shattered by terrorist attacks at American University of Afghanistan (2016), Mawood Educational Center (2017), Kawsar-e Danish Educational Center (2020) and Kabul University (2020) in Afghanistan.

Resumo

Esta tese aborda o problema da relativa estabilidade autoritária da ordem regional pós-soviética e a primazia da Rússia neste espaço, desde o fim da União Soviética. A queda da União Soviética, em dezembro de 1991, inspirou argumentos como o do “fim da História”, antecipando que seria inevitável uma transformação democrática liberal no antigo espaço regional Soviético totalitário. Essa transformação poderia ter redefinido a ordem regional e as dinâmicas de poder no espaço pós-Soviético, integrando-o na sociedade internacional liberal ocidental. O colapso económico da Rússia e a derrota ideológica do comunismo no início da década de 1990 poderia, em teoria, permitir uma mudança das dinâmicas de poder regionais em benefício de novos atores globais e regionais.

Contudo, quase três décadas após o colapso da União Soviética, uma transformação profunda parece não ter tido lugar na região, quer em termos de desenvolvimentos democráticos fundamentais, quer em termos de dinâmicas de poder, incluindo a primazia da Rússia na região. Ao invés, com algumas exceções como a Geórgia, a Moldova e a Ucrânia, a região reapareceu como uma fronteira ideológica entre a democracia e o autoritarismo, em que a Rússia assume a liderança regional. Porque é que, após o colapso da União Soviética, não mudaram, nem a ordem regional pós-Soviética autoritária, nem a primazia da Rússia nela?

Esta tese aborda este problema com o objetivo de desenvolver uma nova explicação teórica para a primazia da Rússia e a relativa estabilidade autoritária da região, num contexto de fracasso da expansão da sociedade internacional liberal europeia para o espaço pós-Soviético, após o colapso da União Soviética. Com base na bibliografia teórica da Escola Inglesa das Relações Internacionais e, em particular, no conceito de sociedades internacionais regionais de Flockhart (2016), o estudo analisa a ordem regional pós-Soviética como uma sociedade internacional regional, identificando as normas constitutivas e os valores que definem a região, facilitam o reconhecimento social da Rússia enquanto potência e moldam a identidade da região *vis-à-vis* os elementos fundamentais da sociedade internacional global.

Palavras-chave: Ordem Regional; Rússia; Espaço Pós-Soviético; Sociedade Internacional Regional; Teoria da Escola Inglesa.

Abstract

This thesis addresses a puzzle concerning the relative authoritarian stability of the post-Soviet regional order and Russia's primacy in it after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The fall of the Soviet Union in December 1991 inspired arguments such as the 'End of History', anticipating that a liberal democratic transformation in the former totalitarian Soviet regional space would become inevitable. Such a transformation could have redefined the regional order and the power dynamics in the former Soviet space by integrating it into the Western liberal international society. Russia's economic collapse and the ideological defeat of communism in the early 1990s could in theory enable a shift in the region's power dynamics in favour of new global and regional actors.

However, almost three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, no profound transformation seems to have taken place in the region neither in terms of fundamental democratic developments, nor in terms of power dynamics, namely Russia's primacy in the region. Instead, with a few exceptions like Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the region has re-appeared as an ideological frontline between democracy and authoritarianism, in which Russia assumes regional leadership. Why did the post-Soviet authoritarian regional order and Russia's primacy in it not change after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

This thesis tackles this puzzle by aiming to offer a new theoretical explanation for Russia's primacy and the region's relative authoritarian stability against the backdrop of the failure of expansion of the liberal European international society into the post-Soviet space following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Building on the literature from the English School theory of International Relations on the concept of regional international societies, specially Flockhart (2016), the study investigates the post-Soviet regional order in terms of a regional international society, identifying the constitutive norms and values that define the region, facilitate social recognition of Russia as a power, and shape the region's identity *vis-à-vis* the global core international society.

Keywords: Regional Order; Russia; Post-Soviet Space; Regional International Society; English School theory.

Acknowledgement

This research was made possible through generous funding provided by the European Commission through “CASPIAN - Around the Caspian: A Doctoral Training for Future Experts in Development and Cooperation with Focus on the Caspian Region”, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Networks (ITN-ETN), European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (642709 — CASPIAN — H2020-MSCA-ITN-2014). I am very grateful for the opportunity and thank the European Commission for the financial support, and the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra for hosting me as Early Career Researcher and PhD student. I thank all the faculty and fellows in the Caspian programme for their support, and for the learning opportunities at partner universities and institutions. The programme made the otherwise lonely PhD journey, a truly joyful undertaking full of fun and laughter, and friendships that are going to last long and be fruitful as a professional and scholarly network on the Caspian region.

I am truly indebted to my supervisor Professor Licínia Simão and all the teaching staff at the PhD programme on International Politics and Conflict Resolution, specially Professor Maria Raquel Freire, Professor Paula Lopes, and Professor Daniela Nascimento for their guidance and teaching, and for reviewing and commenting on my thesis. Licínia’s quality supervision made working with her extremely engaging, shaping an intellectual conversation that allowed for imagination and creativity. I am deeply grateful to her guidance and support. I also thank Professor Teresa Almeida Cravo and Professor Alena Vysotskaya Vieira for sharing their thoughts on my research proposal. Professor Rick Fawn of the University of St. Andrews has been extremely kind and generous to me with his time to read and comment on my work at different stages of its development, which I am very grateful for. The Caspian support team André Caiado, Rita Pais and others at Center for Social Studies deserve my special gratitude for their unconditional support throughout my fellowship.

I am grateful for the research stay opportunities at Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University, and thank Professor Alexandra Vacroux, Staphanie Plant, fellows and faculty at Davis Center for their support during my fellowship. I also thank Professor Caroline Andrew for hosting me as a visiting fellow at the Center on Governance of the University of Ottawa. This research would not have been possible without all the support I received from the wonderful staff and colleagues at the OSCE Documentations

Center in Prague. Alice Nemcova and her colleagues were truly amazing. Last, but not the least, I thank Diana Lezhava and her colleagues at Center for Social Science in Tbilisi for hosting me and providing support during my secondment in Georgia.

My family, specially my wife and friend, Roya, who has sacrificed a lot to let me focus on my research, deserves my special love and gratitude. She took care of me, looked after our little twin boys and all the family matters while studying and dealing with the hardships of settling in a new country. She is my hero in life. I cannot close the list without mentioning my mother, Jan Begum Ziagul, who despite being formally illiterate is one of the smartest persons I know in my life. Her wisdom shall guide me all my life. She invested with every bit of her life in my education, sewed and made dresses and spun yarn to pay for my tuition to learn English and attend extracurricular activities. My father, who is sadly not with us anymore, did all what a father can do to support his children. As the first one in my family to go to university, I am forever indebted to my family members who took all the burdens on themselves, allowing and encouraging me to only focus on my studies.

Sometimes, I used to think that it was a mere accident that I happen to be studying, because the time in which I grew up, children in my country could be doing anything other than studying, including taking arms. But no, my journey from school to university is the result of many sacrifices and community investments in the absence of any government or public services. It is enough to mention that someone worked as construction worker under the boiling summer heats in the Gulf States or Iran and deducted a sum of money from their very hard-earned wages to fund my community school in the 1990s. Without them and without a number of visionary community leaders and my school teachers, there would have been no school for me to attend, and no PhD thesis to present today, thirty years after I first went to school. Therefore, I am forever indebted to my community in Jaghori, Ghazni, Afghanistan.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a theoretical attempt to a) conceptualize the post-Soviet regional order in terms of a regional international society, and b) explain Russia's primacy in it in terms of the social dynamics of its recognition as a power in the post-Soviet space.¹ While the attempt is theoretical, the thesis builds on a significant empirical study to address a key puzzle concerning the question of post-Soviet regional order, which is why did the regional order in the post-Soviet space not change with respect to Russia's primacy² in it following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Building on the literature from the English School theory of International Relations, this study investigates the post-Soviet regional order in terms of a regional international society, identifying the constitutive norms and values that define the region, facilitate social recognition of Russia as a power, and shape the region's identity *vis-à-vis* the global core international society. By global core international society is meant the Western-European international society, which has shaped the contemporary international relations and its core social institutions (Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009).

Although International order and international society are used interchangeably in this thesis, because an international society essentially represents an international order, the concept of international order however, is understood to entail more than inter-subjective norms, values and principles i.e. social institutions; it includes elements of power and identity besides the social institutions (Flockhart, 2016) along which regional international orders can be differentiated from one another and from the global core international society. By adopting and slightly modifying a definition of international society offered by Flockhart (2016), the thesis therefore, conceptualizes regional international order in terms of a triad of power, social institutions and identity. The main objective of the thesis is to offer an alternative theoretical explanation for Russia's primacy to other actors in the post-Soviet space and the region's relative authoritarian stability against the backdrop of the failure of

¹ Not including the three Baltic States, Post-Soviet space in this thesis refers to the regional space that encompasses Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Equally important for the concept here is the qualifier of 'post-Soviet'. The 'post' in post-soviet as in post-colonialism conveys a continuum or structural embeddedness rather than an abrupt disconnect with the past (Morozov, 2013). The term 'post-soviet' therefore captures a structural continuity of the region's international order after collapse of the Soviet Union. This structural continuity is central to conceptualization of post-Soviet regional international order.

² See Theoretical Framework chapter for definition.

expansion of the liberal European international society into the post-Soviet space following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The fall of the Soviet Union in December 1991 inspired arguments such as the 'End of History' (Fukuyama, 1992), anticipating that a liberal democratic transformation in the former totalitarian Soviet regional space would be inevitable. In the first years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent, now post-Soviet states, started to adopt liberal normative languages such as democracy and human rights, and initiated a number of political and economic reforms to pave the way for democratic forms of governance. "We have said loud and clear that our goal is incorporation into the community of democratic, market economy states", said Russia's foreign minister Andre Kozyrev as he participated, for the first time, at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) ministerial conference in Prague (Kozyrev, 1992). Foreign ministers of other then newly established states from the region echoed Kozyrev at the meeting expressing their willingness to join the global democratic international society. Uzbekistan's first deputy foreign minister, Fatih Teshabaev stated that "the Uzbek people have the firm intention of building up a state in which democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms and national harmony will be fully realized and which will implement the reforms leading to market economy" (Teshabaev, 1992). Similar statements were made by representatives of other states from Central Asia to Belarus pronouncing their aspirations to join the 'community of democratic states'.

The inclusion of the newly independent states in the then CSCE was to mark entry into the global international society and the liberal international order. As such, it was not only meant to signify recognition of the new states' political sovereignty, but also membership in international society. Their inclusion in the CSCE, which in December of 1994 was transformed into an international organization and renamed as Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as their inclusion in the Council of Europe, was aimed at integrating the former Soviet republics into the European international society and the global liberal market economy. Western projects aimed, at reforms to promote democracy and liberal market economy, were launched throughout the former Soviet regional international space. From 1992 to 2007, for example, the United States of America (USA) spent over \$28 billion to assist democratization and transition to free market economy (Tarnoff, 2007). Although this amount is of limited significance given the time frame, the USA democracy promotion programs were supplemented by European technical

assistance within the framework of the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) from the European Union (EU) including \$1 billion dollar per year (up to \$14.6 billion between 1992 and 2004) (Magylevksi & Atamanov, 2009), representing important contributions to the otherwise limited budgets of these states. The EU's technical assistance was aimed at economic reforms, building civil society, free media and rule of law (Lane, 2007:446). Other projects aimed at promoting global economic connectivity to integrate the region's economy into the global market, with billions of dollars of investment to improve the economic and trade infrastructures in the region.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Western democratization project could have redefined the former Soviet space by integrating it into the Western international order. This would have meant that, as a declining power, Russia could also lose its leadership status in the region, and could have become part of the Western-led international order. Russia's economic collapse and the ideological defeat of communism in the early 1990s could in theory enable a shift in the region's power dynamics in favour of new global and regional actors. However, almost three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, no fundamental transformation seems to have taken place in the post-Soviet space. Today, the initial democratic excitements have given place to mostly consolidated authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space that are defined not by liberal democratic ideals, but a "profound rejection" (Lewis, 2020) of liberal internationalism. The region has re-appeared as an ideological frontline between democracy and authoritarianism, sometimes with global reverberation as witnessed in the context of democratic backslides in parts of Europe and the shrinking in the number of democracies worldwide. Once stating 'laud and clear' the wish to join the 'community of democratic and free market states', Russia has re-emerged as the key challenger to the liberal international order, inspiring the rise of authoritarianism around the world (Lewis, 2020).

The authoritarian backlash in the post-Soviet space has left researchers of the region wonder as to why and how did the region survive the anticipated consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union both politically and geopolitically. This constitutes the core puzzle of this research, which it tackles by offering a conceptual framework to study and analyze the post-Soviet international dynamics in terms of a regional international order as briefly introduced above. The thesis therefore addresses the puzzle by asking why the post-Soviet regional order has not changed fundamentally following the collapse of the Soviet

Union in 1991, particularly with respect to Russia's primacy in the international politics of the region.

The existing literature offers three main perspectives to address the above mentioned puzzle. They include the Russian hegemony perspective, the regional security complex theory, and the new great game theory. The hegemony literature sees the relative stability of the post-Soviet regional order in terms of Russia's hegemonic foreign economic and security policy towards the region (Mayes & Korhonen, 2007; Makarychev, 2011; Allison, 2008; Slobodchikoff, 2014; Rivera and Garashchuk, 2016). Russia's more assertive role in the region in recent years guided by its the "near-abroad" policy has been a major reference point for Russia's hegemony in the region. From this perspective, Russia has maintained the regional order in the post-Soviet and its leadership through hegemonic agendas to prevent Western geopolitical expansion. For example, according to Slobodchikoff (2014:119-120), Russia has built its own security architecture and regional order in the former Soviet regional space "nested within the global order" led by the US. Similarly, other researchers (Mayes & Korhonen, 2007; Smith, 2016; Rivera and Garashchuk, 2016) have argued that regional institutions such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the more recent initiative of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are hegemonic structures and instruments used by Russia to exert its control over the region. Russia's dominance in the region has also been viewed in terms of its energy policies aimed at keeping the energy rich countries in Central Asia and the Caspian dependent on its energy transport infrastructures (Stulberg, 2007; Orbán, 2008).

Regional Security Complex theory (RSC) (Wæver & Buzan, 2003) on the other hand, defines the post-Soviet space, including the Baltic region as a unipolar or "centered" regional security complex defined by Russia's security role in it. Though the theory does not explicitly discuss the concept of regional order, it offers a structural perspective to tackle the puzzle in terms of polarity and explain lack of transformation in the post-Soviet regional order in terms of the absence of a new power to challenge or replace Russia's security role in the region. The perspective offers a somewhat positivist explanation for the relative stability of the post-Soviet regional order particularly in terms of Russia's leadership. Thus, it in some substantives ways complements the hegemony literature by providing a structural perspective on the post-Soviet regional order.

The New Great Game literature explains the post-Soviet regional order in terms of geopolitical rivalries and maintains that Russia's leadership status in the region is being challenged by the emergence of other powers (Blank, 2012; Zabortseva, 2012; Spechler & Spechler, 2011; Suny, 2010) and Russia's role has significantly weakened (Tsygankov, 2011). That means that Russia is no longer the regional hegemon in the post-Soviet space as other powers such as NATO, EU, China, and Turkey have had in many ways to co-exist in the regional space. Deyermond (2009) has described the post-soviet regional space in terms of "a multi-level hegemony" in which multiple hegemony coexist. Thus, in contrast to the hegemony literature and the RSC theory, the Great Game literature suggests that the regional order in terms of Russia's leadership in it has undergone changes since the fall of the Soviet Union, and that the post-Soviet regional order can no longer be defined only in terms of Russia's dominant role in the region.

While all of these perspectives are useful in explaining parts of the puzzle, they seem to be limited in their perspectives. A major problem with these literatures is that most tend to reduce the international dynamics to the question of material capabilities of powerful states, ignoring the historical, social constructivist and normative dynamics of the region. They also portray 'smaller' states in the post-Soviet region as what is often referred to as 'passive recipients' of hegemonic states' foreign and security policies, denying them agency in the international affairs of the post-Soviet region. Such account, as it will be elaborated in this thesis, ignores both theoretical and empirical arguments that acknowledge active participation of smaller states in shaping the region's international order through participating in it, contesting it, or negotiating it.

Given the shortcomings in the existing literature, this thesis offers a study of the post-Soviet regional order from the perspective of English School theory of international relations. Advancing the existing arguments from this perspective (Stivachtis, 2010; Costa-Buranelli, 2014; Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014), the thesis builds on the existing theoretical scholarship in English School theory, particularly Flockhart (2016), and addresses the research puzzle in terms of the concept of post-Soviet regional international society consisting of a triad of power, social institutions and identity.³ Power is conceptualized in

³ Flockhart introduces the secondary social institutions such as formal organizations as the fourth constituting component of international order. As it will be argued in the chapter on theoretical framework, this thesis does not treat formal organizations as an independent element of *regional* international order, because despite being instrumental in shaping regional cooperation and integration, they are not consistent features of regional order due to being open to inter-regional memberships and overlaps. See the details in theoretical framework chapter.

this thesis as the socially recognized the status of the leading state(s), and by social institutions is meant the primary social institutions i.e. norms, principles and values and secondary social institutions i.e. formal regional institutions (Bull, 1977/2002; Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009; Buzan, 2014; 2015; Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Flockhart, 2016). Identity is conceptualized in this thesis in terms of deeper or more permanent feature of regional international societies such as ‘civilizational-self’ and ‘others’ defined by the dynamics of recognition and differentiation of regional international societies including *vis-à-vis* the global core international society. Identity is reflected in the core values and norms including the political systems of regional international societies (Flockhart, 2016:15). The thesis argues that this perspective offers comprehensive conceptual framework to unpack the social dynamics that constitute regional international orders.

The English School perspective treats the post-Soviet states as members of a regional international society that share an interest in preserving the post-Soviet regional order and its constituting norms and values. From this perspective, all the states in the post-Soviet space are active participants of the regional order as they engage in constructing it through consenting to hierarchy or contesting it or its norms and identity. The perspective looks beyond hegemonic dominance of one state to identity shared or common social institutions e.g. norms and values that facilitate power recognition and create shared interests among the post-Soviet states as members of a regional international society. This thesis argues that the proposed framework offers a coherent alternative theoretical explanation for Russia’s leadership recognition, the relative authoritarian stability of the post-Soviet regional order and its identity *vis-à-vis* the global Western-European international order. From this perspective, the post-Soviet regional international order did not undergo fundamental changes because the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Western democracy promotion did not result into transformations in the constituting elements of the regional order i.e. power, social institutions and identity.

To briefly highlight, the regional international order did not change because: a) despite its declining material capabilities, Russia maintained its social status as the power recognized by most post-Soviet states. Russia’ status recognition as power is rooted in its many ‘role identities’ (Murray, 2018) in the region as well as in the collectively shared authoritarian political norms and values in the region; b) the authoritarian social institutions were maintained, reproduced and essentialized to challenge liberal internationalism amid Western politics of conditionality and pressures for liberal reforms; and c) as largely

authoritarian non-European states, the post-Soviet states were externally differentiated from and by the global international society as the ‘unequal other’ based on a set of norms functioning as ‘standard of civilization’ (Gong, 1984; Buzan, 2014; Stivachtis, 2015; Linklater, 2016). The process of ‘othering’ based on ‘standard of civilization’ of the post-Soviet states by the Western international society informed the region’s external identity and politics of self-identification *vis-à-vis* Europe, further re-enforcing and essentializing social boundaries of the region, and co-constructing the region as a distinct social space at the margins of the European international society.

These are some of the tenants in theorizing the post-Soviet regional international order in this thesis. Using the rich conceptual instruments of the English School theory such as the concepts of society, order, social institutions, and ‘standard of civilization’ the thesis primarily approaches the post-Soviet space as a regional international society. But it goes beyond defining it exclusively in terms of social institutions or different interpretation of the common social institutions of the global international society as suggested by some English School scholars (Buzan 2014; Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009); it conceptualizes the post-Soviet regional international society in terms of a regional international order consisting of power, distinct social institutions and identity.

It is important to mention that the post-Soviet space is not a homogenous regional entity and there are significant differences, including in sub-regional levels along all the three elements of the regional order identified above. For example, Russia’s social status as power is contested by some post-Soviet states like Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, where democratic norms and European aspirations make them look considerably different than most other post-Soviet states. The degree of authoritarianism and the extent to which regional norms are shared vary considerably across the region. The post-Soviet regimes vary from consolidated authoritarian states such as Turkmenistan to hybrid and democratizing states such as Georgia and Armenia. In terms of identity too, there are major differences in the politics of self-identification ranging from ‘European’ to ‘Eurasian’ and ‘Asian’, for example. The three outlying pro-European states of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine represent a political and geopolitical sub-group in the post-Soviet space. There are also some well-established sub-regional entities such as Central Asia that nest within the larger post-Soviet regional international order.

Given the intra-regional differences, conceptualization of the post-Soviet space as a regional international society faces a degree of skepticism. The existing literature tends to

define only part of the post-Soviet space such as Central Asia (Buranelli 2014) or the CIS (Pourchot & Stivachtis 2014) as a regional international society. Some others (Kaczmariska 2014) have argued that the post-Soviet states such as Central Asia do not qualify as a regional international society. The thesis will reflect upon these and discuss in details both the literature and the regional nuances in the post-Soviet space as it attempts to theorize the post-Soviet regional order and tackle its core research puzzle.

Research Scope, Significance and Contributions

The research takes a regional approach and includes all of the post-Soviet states except the Baltic states in the study. Despite some significant intra-regional differences, the post-Soviet space as defined in this thesis remains a distinct regional international space that is marked by the prevalence of consolidated authoritarian states in most cases, and Russia's prominent security role. The thesis maps the region's power dynamics, common regional norms values, and identity discourses across the post-Soviet space. The whole post-Soviet space therefore constitutes the research's case and unit of analysis. As such, it does not investigate national dynamics in individual countries. Rather, it looks at general patterns in normative and identity discourses as reflected in the foreign policy statements of the post-Soviet states from 1992 to 2016. This is the timeframe for which empirical data has been collected, but the thesis reflects upon developments in the region from 2016 up to 2020. The international context in which the study is conducted is the post-Soviet states' interaction with each other and with Western states within the OSCE. The OSCE was chosen because 1) it includes all post-Soviet states as members. There is not any other international platform, except the UN that houses all post-Soviet states alongside states from other regions and parts of the world; 2) the OSCE is a unique international platform where one can study the foreign policy behavior of the post-Soviet states in a global stage. Given the OSCE's primary objective of incorporating the post-Soviet space into the European security, market and international society, it provides a unique opportunity to study inter-regional political socializations and differentiations. In addition, the OSCE is built on a model of Western/European⁴ international society aiming at promoting European values and principles in the world. The post-Soviet states' interactions with their Western counterparts within the organization provide an opportunity to analyze the normative debate, norm diffusion and contestations, besides identity discourses in terms of recognition and

⁴ Western international society and European international society are used interchangeably in this thesis because European international society constitutes the core of the global Western international society.

differentiation in international society. All of these are central to the discussion and conceptualization of regional international society, and the question of the post-Soviet regional international order.

In addition, the authoritarian resistance to liberal democratic agenda within the OSCE demonstrates not only the failure of the democratic learning and socialization theory, but also the social limits of expansion theory in international society. The liberal norm contestation and authoritarian resilience of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE represent differentiated inter-regional normative dialogue introducing socio-normative boundaries, power relations and identity in international society. It is within this context that the OSCE offers a unique opportunity to study the post-Soviet states' interactions with Western states that make up the global core international society. The thesis looks at the patterns of recognition and differentiations as constitutive process in regional international societies. Therefore, it focuses on the foreign policy interaction of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE as a venue of research and theorization in international society, and conceptualization of the post-Soviet regional order in particular.

Having stated the above about the scope, thesis does not engage in discussing domestic politics in the post-Soviet states individually, despite discussing authoritarianism that defines the social structure of the region. Nor does it discuss the foreign policies of individual post-Soviet states *vis-à-vis* external actors or with regional actors. Where necessary, it reflects upon the sub-regional and international dynamics that shape the regional dynamics such as sub-regional processes or regional conflicts. It also discusses the rivalries, power projects and competitions for leadership in the post-Soviet space as they remain central to the discussion of power and regional international order. However, the thesis's core focus remains on the analysis of the foreign policy norms of the post-Soviet states, Russia's status in the region and the region's identity *vis-à-vis* Europe. The main concern of the research hence, is to identify dynamics of power recognition, regional norms and principles or regional understanding of the global norms, and the extent to which they are shared across the post-Soviet space.

This research is significant for a number of reasons. The research addresses gaps in the existing literature on the post-Soviet space such as the Russian hegemony argument that highlights Russia's coercive capabilities as a source of order. By engaging in theoretical and empirical debate with the concept of post-Soviet regional order, the thesis highlights the role of the smaller states in the post-Soviet space in constructing, contesting and negotiating the

regional international order, thus, recognizing the agency of the small states in shaping the post-Soviet regional order. It also offers an alternative explanation for Russia's leadership in terms of its relative social status and sources of power recognition through shared norms and identity politics.

Theoretically, it adopts a new framework to analyze international politics in the post-Soviet space. Building on Flockhart's (2016) definition of regional international society, the research attempts to theorize regional international order in the post-Soviet space in terms of a triad of power, social institutions and identity. The operationalization of the concept of regional international order in terms of power, social institutions and identity offers a framework for research in the field of regional international society and regional international order. The thesis, also engages extensively with the relatively undertheorized concept of order in international relations theory. It discusses order in terms of taxonomy of order involving various applications of the term such as world order, global international order and regional international order, and classifies the International Relations (IR) theory accordingly to identify level of analysis in theorizing about order in international relations theory. And finally, it theorizes the concept of regional order and presents it as a level of analysis in studying and theorizing regional international relations.

The regional level analysis constitutes an important contribution to the issue of level of analysis in international relations. Regions constitute a middle level between the state and global international society. As such, it appears as a distinct level of analysis in international politics that measures politics within and among clusters of states within global international society. Referred to as meso-level in sociology, the region constitutes a community of states located between the micro (state) level and the macro (global international society) level. The increasing regionalization of international politics amid declining Western global leadership makes the meso-level analysis increasingly relevant to International Relations' analysis and theorization. By conceptualizing regional international order this thesis contributes to region as a level of analysis in the discipline of International Relations.

The thesis also contributes to the scholarly debates and emerging literature on regional international societies in general and regional international society in the post-Soviet space in particular. Through identifying regional norms, values and principles in the foreign policies of the post-Soviet states, the thesis brings original empirical insight on international society in the post-Soviet space. Most of the existing literatures on the topic fail to offer systematic study of the social institutions of the post-Soviet international society

and how they are different from the social institutions of the global core international society. The existing literature discuss international society in the post-Soviet space either through looking at similarity in behaviors in the United Nations (UN) (Buranelli, 2014) or in the context of formal institutions such as the CIS (Pourchart & Stivachtis, 2014). This thesis however, applies the frameworks developed by Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez (2009), Buzan and Zhang (2014), and Flockhart (2016) to study regional international societies in terms of their social institutions, or different interpretation of social institutions of the global international society, and hence, it brings original empirical insights into the debate on regional international society in the post-Soviet space.

In terms of policy, the thesis contributes to understanding of the complexities of the post-Soviet space in the context of the international failure to promote liberal democratic values and reforms, and integration of the post-Soviet space into the Western/European international society. Countries like Ukraine or those in the South Caucasus or Central Asia have been a focus of policy for the European Union and Western powers ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The EU's Eastern Partnership Agreement and the many of its regional cooperation schemes including its new strategy on Central Asia aim at creating comprehensive connectivity with the region. Alongside the EU, Russia and China are pursuing their own visions of connectivity and integration, which makes the post-Soviet space an international space for regional and global politics. A key focus of policy and scholarly engagement with the post-Soviet space has been on understanding Russia's role and sources of leadership recognition in the region. The analysis of the regional dynamics in this thesis will help to inform and improve policy debates on the post-Soviet space in terms of issues of cooperation and conflict.

Research Approach & Methodology

This research adopts an English School theory perspective to study and analyze regional international order in the post-Soviet space. Though the classical English School theory of international relations is said to lack a clearly laid out methodology (Navari 2009), the overall approach in English School is said to follow a qualitative, inductive research philosophy and epistemology. For example, referring to Bull (1966) and Navari (2009) Buranelli argues that "the ES has been characterised as essentially an interpretive, qualitative and inductive enterprise, based on the study of the discourses and practices of philosophy, history and international law" (Buranelli in Karmazin et al., 2014: 24). However, while being a qualitative research enterprise, English School theory methodology involves diverse

methods of inquiry that range from normative and historical analysis to discourse analysis. As such, the English School is argued to be eclectic or pluralist in its methodology (Linklater, 1990; Little, 2009). What it means is that depending on the subject matters of analysis e.g. international system, international society, or world society as distinguished by Little (2000), the method of inquiry in English School may involve or combine various causal analysis (Buzan 2014: 23, Navari 2009: 4). For example, the concept of *international society* corresponds to rationalism and institutionalism and takes the state as the main unit of analysis, while the concept of *world society* involves normative methods concerning individuals and the humanity at large.

While being eclectic in nature, three research approaches can be identified and associated with English School theory of IR: positivism or ‘soft-positivism’ (Buzan 2014, Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009), constructivism (Buzan, 2004; Devlen, James, and Ozdamar, 2005; Dunne, 1998; Buzan 2015), and interpretivism (Navari, 2000; Buranelli, 2014). The idea about positivism in English School is that the international society is an objective reality whose external existence can be observed in terms of practice of norms and institutions such as international organizations and international law. Interpretivism in English School is mostly concerned with the idea of regional international society in comparative perspective meaning that a regional international society implies a difference from a global international society in terms of either different interpretation of the same norms and institutions, or in terms of a peculiar/different meaning of a norm (Buranelli, 2014). In fact, the very conceptualization of regional international society as opposed to the global(ized) international society presents different interpretation of international society. Therefore, interpretative methods of inquiry are central to the study, analysis and conceptualization of regional international societies and their constituting norms.

Interpretation essentially involves construction. In other words, interpretive inquiry inevitably follows constructivist analysis concerning impact of norms, history, culture or identity in international society (Devlen, James, and Ozdamar, 2005; Dunne, 1998; Buzan 2015). In that sense, English School has a strong constructivist component. In fact, the theory can be regarded as the first constructivist theoretical engagement with international politics long before Wendt’s introduction of constructivism in the field of international relations. The idea of international *society* implies conformity to and maintenance of standards of behavior and expectations e.g. norms and principles that are collectively negotiated or agreed upon for the purpose of making interactions in international relations predictable. Norms and

principles are social constructs in their essences. The relationship between the English School and constructivism has been established earlier by Buzan (2004) who, according to James and Ozgur (2005), linked the increased attention to English school to the rise of constructivism, and by Tim Dunne (1998) who wrote about the ‘invention’ of the international society and English School’s history.

The constructivist component of English School or at least, constructivist interpretation of English School features also in the debates on the types of social institutions and their security outcomes. For example, Buzan (2015: 130-131) identifies four types of primary institutions based on historical models: Power Political, Coexistence, Cooperative and Convergence. Power political represents Hobbesian, coexistence represents balance of power or Grotian international society, and cooperative and convergence represent international joint projects and integration and extensive shared values across a range of social and political spheres. Depending on the prevalence of each of these institutions, international relations become a field of meeting the expectation of the primary social institutions. In an international society based on liberal ideas of freedom, cooperation and respect for democratic norms, international relations are aimed at promoting and protecting such values, and fight against what can be considered as threats to those values. This “reflexivity” (Guzzini 2002) between primary social institutions and the typology of international society represent the constructive process between the epistemology (worldviews, belief systems) the ontology (international society).

Given the inherent eclecticism in English School methodologies, it is hard to stick to a single methodological orientation in researching international society. As much as it is a normative concept, international society is both constructivist and interpretive concept. Its observable ontological existence makes it also a ‘softly’ positivist concept. Considering the eclectic nature of subject matter, the methodological approach in this research is inspired by constructivist and interpretive analysis of international society. The constructivist and interpretive analysis offers insights about the social construction of international society in terms of common norms, shared understanding of rules of conduct in international relations as well as identity discourse in shaping the social boundaries of international society.

In adopting constructivism, however, the thesis does not engage in meta-theoretical questions about international society, because the English School as Bull suggest, places “less emphasis on meta-theoretical disputation; and rather more stress on the linguistic, cultural and historical knowledge and resources needed to make sense of the variation of

understandings of international and world society in different periods and places” (Hurrell in Bull, 2002: xix). The thesis uses constructivist analysis to show first, how the authoritarian norms or authoritarian interpretation of international norms construct the post-Soviet regional international society in terms of a sense of shared interests and values among most of the post-Soviet states. Secondly, to show how the dynamics of recognition and differentiation in global international society in the context of the OSCE have externally constructed the post-Soviet’s regional identity.

In other words, constructivist analysis is used to highlight how the post-Soviet regional international society and its regional identity is constructed through interaction with external actors i.e. their European counterparts within the OSCE. This second aspect of constructivist analysis is crucial for the very definition of regional international society, because if a regional international society is believed to exist as a researchable category in international relations, it must be found in interaction with other regional international societies in terms of how they are externally differentiated from each other. This aspect of construction, which focuses on the interactionist processes of social production of identity in regional international societies, is rarely discussed in the literature on regional international societies.

In terms of the specifics of how this research is conducted, this thesis’ primary focus has been on identifying the constitutive norms and values of the post-Soviet regional international order. Norms constitute the main venue of inquiry about international society, first, because “IR is fundamentally a normative enterprise” (Dunne, Kurki and Smith, 2010:140), second, because regional international society is defined primarily in terms of different norms or different interpretations of the global norms (Buzan & Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009; Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Flockhart 2016). In trying to identify and analyze the post-Soviet norms, the thesis engages in extensive textual analysis of foreign policy statements of the post-Soviet states, because norms and values of international politics appear in the use of the language, particularly by diplomats. Researching diplomacy and analyzing foreign policy statements is central to the methods of inquiry in the English School. “[D]iplomatic and foreign policy elites are the real agents of international society” (Dunne, 2010: 143), because there is no state as such, and it is the political elite who make and represent the state in international relations.

While states remain the central agency in international society, the empirical study of states in international society is possible only through observing how the diplomatic

communities and leaders interact with one another; what rules they abide by and what values they believe in. If by international society is meant institutionalization of common norms and interests, international society is then manifested through the inter-subjective of understanding of common norms, values and interests as perceived, observed or promoted by real people- the diplomatic communities. Der Derian (2003) argues that for the empirical study of states therefore, we need to study the diplomatic culture – “ideas and beliefs held in common by official representatives of states” (quoted in Dunne, 2010: 143). Official foreign policy statements of the post-Soviet states’ representatives in the OSCE therefore, provide an excellent and legitimate venue of investigation into the question of post-Soviet regional international order.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

In terms of data collection, this thesis has combined secondary and primary sources. The secondary sources include academic books and articles, research reports, dissertations and publications by policy institutions and governments. Besides news sources or press release where relevant, the main primary sources include foreign ministerial statements by representatives of 12 (identified in footnote 1) post-Soviet states within Council of Ministers of the OSCE. The Council of Ministers of the OSCE is the second highest level of decision making after the Summit of Heads of States of the OSCE, and its core diplomatic venue for foreign policy interaction among states, decision making and negotiation, which provides an ideal context for the study of international society, norm production and contestation, and manifestation of inter-regional interests and identities.

The primary data used in this research have been accessed through a research stay within the framework of the researchers-in-residence program at the OSCE Documentation Center in Prague from September to December 2017. The OSCE Document center houses all OSCE documents such as statements, negotiation documents, meeting proceedings and minutes, reports, agreements and decisions, and functions primarily as the OSCE’s archive. These documents are available to researchers in three categories of ‘open’, ‘OSCE+’ and ‘restricted’ documents. A total of 101 foreign ministerial statements from the representatives of the post-Soviet states delivered between from 1992 to 2016, have been used for analysis.⁵ Statements were selected in two stages:

⁵ The statements from 2017 to 2020 were not available because it would have required physical presence at OSCE Center for Documentation in Prague, which was not possible due to unavailability of additional funding.

- a. Stage one included a random sampling of statements following every three years since 1992 to 2016. In this time period a total of nine ministerial conferences have been convened at the OSCE, and therefore, a total of 108 ministerial statements were expected for analysis. However, because not all countries' statements were available for each selected year, the random sampling ended up with collecting a total of 78 ministerial statements. Some countries either did not deliver written statements during some ministerial meetings or their statements were not made available in the archive.
- b. To compensate the missing statements, a second stage of sampling was adopted to include statements from any other subsequent years for countries whose statements were missing. As a result, an additional 23 ministerial statements were added to the initial sample for countries to increase representation of states whose statements were missing in the random sampling. The sample size is large enough to be representative for the purpose of this research.

In order to complement the textual analysis of the ministerial statements, it was initially planned to conduct a survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews with representatives of the post-Soviet states and 15 randomly selected European states at the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. However, the response rate to interview request turned out to be extremely low because the diplomats required permission for their capitals to take part in the interviews. As a result, only a total of two in-depth interviews and one survey interview were completed in November 2017 in OSCE headquarters in Hofburg, Vienna. The participants, one diplomat from Central Asia and two diplomats from Central and Eastern European states preferred that their countries and their own names remain anonymous in this research, because they were not authorized by their capitals to talk to the researcher. The data from these interviews were used only when relevant to specific context, but not used to generalize any significant analysis.

In terms of data analysis method, this research has used qualitative content analysis for analyzing and reporting the texts. Content analysis is widely used in political science for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. But the quantitative content analysis is criticized for providing little insight about underpinning meanings of words and expressions in texts. Therefore, this thesis has used qualitative content analysis which is “a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005: 1278). It is

“a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material” (Schreier, 2012: 1). The qualitative content analysis used in this research is partially informed by constructivist Grounded Theory approach to textual analysis. However, the thesis takes note of the differences between Grounded Theory and qualitative content analysis in terms of the purpose of the research. While Grounded Theory is focused more on the relationship between codes and categories to build new theories, qualitative content analysis is focused on identifying the patterns of communications (Cho and Lee, 2014). There are no methodological or epistemological conflicts between qualitative content analysis and the English School theory of IR.

The sampled statements have been coded, categorized and then organized by using Excel software to present the results of qualitative data analysis. In comparing codes and categories, the focus has been on identifying patterns, density of concepts and their possible meanings given the context of the text. Three main categories, ‘authoritarian norms’, ‘authoritarian interpretation of global norms’ and ‘identity debates’ were created to organize and group the codes derived from textual analysis. These categories and codes are presented in figures appearing in the empirical chapters on social institutions and identity in this thesis. The method of analysis helped to identify similarities and differences in the foreign policy norms of the post-Soviet space, their commonalities and differences among themselves and the wider OSCE community. It provided valuable and original empirical data to identify and conceptualize the post-Soviet regional international order in terms of its primary social institutions and identity *vis-à-vis* the European international society.

Power was analyzed separately because the statements did not offer explicit insights on the dynamics social recognition of Russia. Instead, the element of power was analyzed in the context of Russia’s role identity, the post-Soviet states’ joint initiatives with Russia and endorsement of its policy proposals within the OSCE, and their normative convergence on key issues. The analysis of the original data on social institutions, identity and power offered the empirical context to identify regional dynamics within the post-Soviet space in terms of normative convergence and divergence in the region, helping the research on the post-Soviet regional international order an empirical testing ground.

Research Layout and Chapters Overview

Apart from this introductory chapter, this thesis is divided into two parts consisting of seven chapters and a discussions & conclusions section at the end. *Chapter I* presents an in-depth analysis of the literature on the question of post-Soviet regional order to situate the

argument of this thesis. It carefully identifies the theories and evaluates their strengths and weakness in the context of empirical discussions regarding the post-Soviet regional order; consequently, it highlights the significance and contribution of the English School approach to the question of post-Soviet regional order. *Chapter II* presents in in-depth discussion on the concept of order in International Relations providing both a review of the theoretical literature as well as conceptualization of regional order as a distinct analytical concept in International Relations. It presents a theoretical debate on the concepts of order, discussing its meaning and applications. It introduces a ‘theory and taxonomy of order’ to help differentiate between concepts such as world order, global order, global international order and regional international order each argued to represent a distinct level of analysis, and their own set of theories in International Relations.

Based on the conceptual and theoretical discussions in chapter II, *Chapter III*, introduces the theoretical framework of this thesis by: a) introducing and evaluating the relevant approaches and theories; and b) providing in-depth discussion on English School theory of IR and the ways this thesis applies it to the study of post-Soviet regional order. Building on the English School’s theoretical constructions this chapter presents a theory of regional order in terms of analytical constructs of power, social institutions and identity, and the way they relate to each other analytically to produce a comprehensive framework for the study of regional international orders. This is the core theoretical and analytical contribution of the thesis. The chapter will explain how these elements of order interact with one another as a theoretically coherent set of variables, and how they can be used as a framework for the study and analysis of the regional order.

Chapter IV sets the scene for discussing the post-Soviet regional international order by analyzing the geopolitical context, regional and global dynamics in the post-Soviet space since the fall of the Soviet Union. It will introduce and map the various geopolitical re-imagining of the region in the context of competing visions, regionalization processes and connectivity projects conceptualized as power projects. In addition to building the material infrastructure of the regional order, regional organizations and connectivity projects presents regional imaginaries, normative and development visions that crucial to social construction and recognition of power. The chapter analyzes regional organizations and connectivity projects as power venues and instruments of power recognition.

Based on the theoretical framework of the thesis *Chapter V* discusses the power element of the post-Soviet regional international order by analyzing Russia’s social status

recognition as the power that shapes the post-Soviet regional order. It identifies Russia's various roles and role identities and discusses how they relate to Russia's social recognition as a power by other post-Soviet states in the region. Besides Russia's other identity roles as power, a key focus of the discussion is on the Russia's normative leadership including in contesting the prevailing liberal norms, and the way authoritarian normative convergence between Russia and the rest of the post-Soviet states facilitates its recognition of social status as the power in the region. Similarly, it discusses how normative divergence with Russia such as the in case of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine leads to contestation of Russia's social status recognition.

Chapter VI provides empirical insights to the discussion of primary social institutions in the post-Soviet space. The primary social institutions include norms, values, practices and principles that inform the conduct of international relations in the post-Soviet space. Based on the analysis of the contents of over 100 foreign ministerial statements from the post-Soviet states delivered at OSCE Ministerial Council meetings, the chapter identifies both a set of regional norms as well as different interpretations of the global norms that help distinguish and differentiate the post-Soviet regional order from the global international society. Thus, the chapter provides original insights into the discussion of the post-Soviet regional order's primary social institutions.

Chapter VII presents empirical discussions on the question of regional identity of the post-Soviet space in terms of: a) internal identity referring to the regional "order's self-understanding, core values and vision expressed through shared norms and social practices" (Flockhart, 2016:15), and external identity in terms of how the region is being seen from outside in the international system. The external identity concerns dynamics of post-Soviet states' recognition and differentiation from and by European states – constituting the core global international society. The dynamics of recognition and differentiation is analyzed through the lens of English School concept of 'standard of civilization' involving certain practices of conditionality, norm based distinctions, and the sense and sentiments of 'othering' of the post-Soviet states by European international society.

And finally, the thesis ends with a brief Discussions and Conclusions, discussing answer(s) to the central research question, key findings, theoretical and empirical contributions, limitations and questions for future research pertinent to the theoretical and empirical aspects of this thesis.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the existing literature on the post-Soviet space does not directly engage with the question regional order. Slobodchikoff's (2014) 'Building Hegemonic Order Russia's Way' is the only book that directly addresses the issue of regional order. However, among those discussing the regional dynamics in the post-Soviet space either conceptually or empirically, three approaches and arguments can be identified: The Russian hegemony literature; the Regional Security Complex (RSC) literature and the English School theory literature. Another body of literature consists of the new great game theory, which was briefly reviewed in the introduction chapter. This chapter offers an in-depth discussion of the three above mentioned literature and examines their empirical and theoretical strengths and weakness. While each body of the existing literature contributes to understanding the international dynamics in the region in a particular way, the English School theory, here it is argued, offers a more comprehensive theoretical perspective to both conceptualization of post-Soviet regional order and explanation of the puzzle this research is dealing with.

The Russian Hegemony literature

The Russian hegemony literature considers Russia's hegemonic foreign and security policies towards the region as the main explanatory factor in describing the post-Soviet regional order. Such hegemonic policies are discussed in the context of various Russia-led institutional frameworks involving building of regional security architecture such as Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), political mechanisms such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and/or economic integration such as the Eurasian Economic Union (*EAEU*) (Mayes & Korhonen, 2007; Rivera and Garashchuk, 2016). Institutional frameworks such as these have been considered to have the functions of promoting regionalism and regional integration around Russia's leadership. This body of literature can also be called hegemonic regionalism and integration literature as they focus on the strategic link between regionalism, regional leadership, and hegemony.

There are a handful of studies that advance the Russian leadership argument. Among those directly connecting institutional frameworks to hegemony is Slobodchikoff's (2014) book. Slobodchikoff writes about how Russia shapes the regional order by devising specific institutional mechanisms and bi-lateral and multi-lateral treaties with post-soviet states. By analyzing Russia's various treaties with countries in the region, Slobodchikoff argues that Russia uses "bilateral and multilateral cooperation to develop a security architecture that provides order, stability and predictable behavior for both Russia as a

hegemon and the weaker states in the region” (Slobodchikoff, 2014: xiv). By providing a network analysis of bi-lateral and multi-lateral treaties that Russia has developed with the states in the post-Soviet space, Russia, according to Slobodchikoff (Slobodchikoff, 2014: 119-120) has built its own security architecture and regional order in the former Soviet regional space “nested within the global order” led by the US. Similarly, other researchers (Mayes & Korhonen, 2007; Smith, 2016; Rivera and Garashchuk, 2016) have argued that regional institutions such as the CIS, CSTO and the more recent initiative of the *EAEU* are hegemonic structures and instruments used by Russia to exert its control over the region.

With Russia being considered as the main security provider for the region, the Russian hegemony literature portray other post-Soviet states in the post-Soviet regional space as surviving through ‘bandwagoning’ with Russia (Allison, 2008). In military terms, Russia’s military bases in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and particularly its use force against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine since 2014 have been used as examples to demonstrate Russia’s military role in ensuring dominance and deterring states’ ambitions to challenge the status quo in the region. Russia’s dominance has also been viewed in terms of its energy policies in the region aimed at keeping the energy rich countries in Central Asia and the Caspian dependent on its energy transport infrastructures (Stulberg 2007; Orban 2008).

Russia’s hegemonic policies towards the region, researchers have argued, combine elements of hard and soft power. David Lewis (2015) looks at Russia’s relations with Kyrgyzstan after 2010, and argues that Russia ensures its hegemony by integrating its various policy means such as military and security mechanisms i.e. CSTO; political mechanisms i.e. promoting pro-Russian politicians and financing their political campaigns, and influencing national agendas; economic means i.e. projects such as the *EAEU*, and public diplomacy involving the creation of pro-Russia local think tanks, NGOs, youth groups and media. By analyzing all these elements in the Russian foreign policy towards Kyrgyzstan, Lewis argues that “the outstanding feature of these policies has been the ability to combine state-led political, military and economic policies, together with actions aimed at producing symbolic, discursive and ideational effects” (Lewis, 2015: 75).

While Russia’s hegemonic agenda towards the post-Soviet space cannot be entirely dismissed, looking at the region through Russian hegemony lens alone seems to be problematic in both empirical and theoretical levels. In other words, the post-Soviet regional order cannot be reduced to Russia’s hegemonic agenda alone. The Russian hegemony argument portrays other states in the region in some sort of new colonial relationship with

Russia, or at least as passive recipients of Russian foreign policy. As it will be discussed, there is plenty of empirical evidence to show that smaller states in the post-Soviet space have the capabilities to make independent choices, and at some points, manipulate big powers in their interests. Theoretically, the Russian hegemony argument is simplistic and reductionist, and thus limited in perspective.

The limits of the Russian hegemony argument

Empirically, the Russian hegemony argument is challenged by a number of facts and arguments that suggest the states in the post-Soviet regional space enjoy considerable national sovereignty to protect their interests and make independent foreign policy choices. Even those arguing for hegemony (Slobodchikoff, 2104) acknowledge the negotiating capacity of weaker states *vis-à-vis* Russia and other powers. In fact, Russia's material resources to impose a hegemonic dominance over the post-Soviet space are limited and externally constrained and challenged by materially more capable actors such as the EU or China.

Many of the hegemony literature refer to CSTO as Russia's military mechanism to govern the post-Soviet space. But CSTO is a weak regional institution whose function is limited by bi-lateral political considerations. This was evident in 2010 during the Osh violence in Kyrgyzstan when Russia refrained from deploying peace keeping forces despite calls for help from Kyrgyzstan. Russia was not in favor of intervening in the situation due to fear of backlash from Uzbekistan (Troitskiy, 2015:16), indicating that Russia's role in the region is significantly constrained by the role of other state in the region. Ten years later, this became even more visible in the context of the 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, where CSTO chose not to intervene in defense of Armenia – a member of CSTO and Russia's military ally. Though the official justification for Russia could be that Nagorno-Karabakh was not part of the proper Armenia, thus, the CSTO was not obliged to defend it, the real reason was the fact that Russia's choices were effectively constrained by Azerbaijan and its close relationship with Turkey.

The role of the CSTO, which is often considered as Russia' military instrument of hegemony remains to be after all not so central to the region. Historically, the CSTO did not follow a Russian hegemonic vision either. As discussed by Troitskiy (2015) one of the main constituting security elements leading to the establishment of the CSTO was Russia's own internal security concerns. CSTO was negotiated with countries in Central Asia upon growing concerns about spillover effects of the conflict in Afghanistan. After a number of

terrorist incidents that took place in Central Asia in late 1990s, and early 2000s, Central Asian states were extremely concerned that the *Jihadi* groups and radical Islamic movements in Afghanistan might pose threats to the security of these countries. At the time, Russia was already fighting a war in the North Caucasus and it perceived instability in Central Asia as something that could further empower violence in Chechnya (Troitskiy, 2015). This was one of the main reasons for Russia's CSTO idea, and it was primarily concerned with fighting terrorism and extremism, separatism, and protecting the Central Asian borders against potential threats from Afghanistan that could eventually threaten Russia's internal stability. The CSTO therefore has not been Russia's hegemonic design, nor did Russia have the resources for such a hegemonic vision. In fact, Russia's resources for leadership through integration the post-Soviet space around itself have been limited and "they are insufficient to fulfill its leadership ambitions" (Makarychev, 2011:6). This is evident in CSTO's inability to make any major collective action. CSTO's inability to act as regional security architecture is indicative of the fact that countries participating in it have sufficient agency to challenge its agenda, should they find it not in their interest. This was demonstrated by Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the organization in 2012 implying that Russia cannot dominate its agenda.

Researchers have argued that Russia's hegemony in the region should not be understood in absolute terms. Rather, its hegemony in the region varies over time and over space within a "continuum from hierarchy to anarchy" that suggests its hegemonic presence "varies in forms and thickness" (Gayoso, 2009:238). Using Adam Watson's (1990) idea that the international system changes over time and between the two ends of anarchy and hierarchy there is a varying and fluid system of subordination and independence, Gayoso (2009: 249) argues that Russia's relationship with states in the post-soviet space shall be understood as "multiple hegemonies" suggesting "fluctuation" over time. By comparing Russia's foreign policies in different time periods since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gayoso argues that under Yeltsin Russia had more of an "imperial" intention towards the former soviet space than Putin, but Russia's regional hegemony in general has been challenged both externally by actors such as NATO, EU, US, Turkey and Iran and internally by states' willingness in the region to distance themselves from Russia in international politics such as Georgia and Moldova (Gayoso, 2009: 249).

In line with Gayoso's arguments, Troitskiy (2012) argues that Russia did not have a well-defined strategy towards post-Soviet space until 2010. Before 2010, Russia had an often "fragmented, reactive, and even self-contradictory" policies towards central Asia, for

instance (Troitsky, 2012: 8). After 2010, Russia's policy towards parts of the region such as Central Asia had to adopt "a strategic shift" from its previous role of acting as regional "mediator" towards following the "logic of hierarchy" and principle of "divide and rule" (Cooley and Laruelle, 2013), by taking sides in regional conflicts such as supporting Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's hydropower projects, which Uzbekistan has opposed for years (Cooley and Laruelle 2013:1). Though in the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh Russia moved back to the role of 'mediator' in the South Caucasus too, Russia followed the "logic of hierarchy" and "divide and rule" for a long time by supporting Armenia against Azerbaijan. In addition to demonstrating Russia's adaptation to regional dynamics, these examples indicate that Russia faces considerable constraints in the region regarding imposing its hegemonic dominance.

The discussion on Russia's foreign policy constraints in the region demonstrates that most post-Soviet space have the sovereignty and necessary agency to act as independent players in the international politics of the region. As such, Russian hegemony argument is challenged by plenty of evidence demonstrating that smaller states in the post-Soviet space have sufficient agency to act upon their national interest. Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan's various engagements with external powers such as the US, the EU and China demonstrate these state's foreign policy capabilities. Uzbekistan for example has been switching between partnerships with Russia and the US at various points in the 2000s. Azerbaijan has extensive relations with Western powers as well as regional powers such as Turkey. Kazakhstan, which is mostly considered as one of the closest allies of Russia stood firmly to defend its national sovereignty when Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov demanded on March 15, 2018 that Kazakhstan's visa relaxation allowing US citizens to visit and stay up to 30 days without a visa should be coordinated within the EAEU. Kazakhstan's ministry of foreign affairs responded by saying that "Introducing or abolishing visa requirements for foreign citizens is the right of any sovereign country.... When they outlined the agreement on the creation of the EAEU, member states...agreed that issues related to national sovereignty be excluded from the group's competence" (RFL/RL Kazakh Service, 2018).

Azerbaijan's energy deals with Western countries, and Turkmenistan's energy projects with China and the South Asian nations such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline demonstrate that despite some degree of dependence on Russia's energy infrastructure and trade with Russia, states in the region are acting

independently to develop trade relations with other external powers. In fact, the states in the region have the agency not only to challenge hegemonic agenda, but also play off external powers in their interests. For example, in January 2011, Azerbaijan pledged to supply its gas to the Southern Corridor. In the same month, the country concluded a contract with Gazprom allowing Russia to purchase Azerbaijan's gas. According to analysts, "these developments were indicative of the fact that most local actors are eager to play more than one game at a time..." (Makarychev, 2011: 5). The same is true about most other countries in the region. In 2015, Russia was the 4th export and import partner for Kazakhstan preceding France. The top partners were Italy, China and the Netherlands, respectively (World Bank, 2015). In 2015, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States were the top three investors in Kazakhstan's economy (Abbasova, 2015). Kazakhstan's trade relations with China are also expanding. China is the biggest consumer of Kazakh oil. The two countries have expanded trade relations, including establishing a cross-border free trade zone despite that it has been one of the main partners within the *EAEU* (Shaperd, 2017). Except for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan's huge dependency on remittances from Russia other countries' economic exchanges with external markets have been expanding.

The post-Soviet states expanding relations with external powers, some at the expense of Russia, are indicative of not only their degree of independence from Russia, but also the fact that Russia does not remain the region's economic hegemon. Though the extra-regional trade diversification is a relatively new development and Russia was the most important trade partner for the countries in the region for most of the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the region cannot be defined in terms of economic dependency on Russia. Russia, for instance, does not dominate Central Asian or the Caspian markets. In terms of economic systems too, Russia lacks regional governance regimes to shape the region's economic system. Empirical evidences demonstrate lack of such Russia-led regional trade governance and regimes. Though the *EAEU*'s Custom Union is an important regional trade governance initiative, the trade relations between countries in the region happen to be largely bi-lateral, and the intra-regional trade is considerably limited. A regional hegemony demonstrates a certain level of coherence or coordination in regional economic structure and regimes; something that is visibly missing from the post-Soviet space.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the region has been increasingly disintegrating with a very poor record of intra-regional trade (Magilovksy, 2012) over the last two decades,

which in turn is indicative of the fact that neither Russia, nor any other power in the region, has been able to integrate the post-Soviet space around a regional economic agenda. Economic data on the Intra-regional trade intensity for Central Asia and South Caucasus indicate that there has been more than 50% drop in the degree of trade intensity for the period between the years 2000 to 2016, indicating that the regional exchange of good and economic integration has been steadily decreasing in the region (Asian Development Bank, 2018). Such data sharply challenges the idea of a regional order integrated around a regional hegemony. Regional hegemony implies greater integration, regional economic governance, and intra-regional exchanges, which are increasingly absent in the post-Soviet space.

To sum up, despite acting as an integrative power, Russia's resources are in fact limited for enforcing a hegemonic regional order in the post-Soviet space defined around its material capabilities. The argument about Russian hegemony therefore, is more of an attribute than a fact. When it comes to specific material and political interests, Russia cannot force smaller states into accepting its ideas. As demonstrated above, states in the region have sufficient agency to act upon their national interests and ensure their sovereignty while trying to balance their relationship with regional powers. In some cases, even smallest post-Soviet states have demonstrated to be highly capable of playing off powers in their own interest. This was demonstrated in the context of Kyrgyzstan negotiating agreements about the US airbase in Bishkek in 2009-10.

Conceptual limits

The conceptual limitation of the hegemony perspective concerns the utility and theoretical strength of the concept of hegemony itself as it is applied to the question of post-Soviet regional order. It is argued here that despite being analytically strong, the concept of hegemony lacks the explanatory power in terms of explaining the nature of the relationship beyond dynamics of dominance and coercion in the context of Russia's relationship with other post-Soviet states. The hegemony analysis attributes the regional order almost exclusively to Russia's hegemonic material and coercive power. However, regional order theoretically, is produced not through coercion, but through participation and cooperation by and with smaller states who are active participants of the order. Order comes from participation rather than subjugation. Hegemony perspective may describe patterns of cooperation and participation in terms of co-optation; nevertheless, the perspective remains pre-occupied by domination dynamics, and hence ignores dynamics of participation as reflecting collective interest.

As Kupchan has argued, order emerges “from consensual bargain between core and periphery, not from coercion. The core engages in self-restraint and agrees to subject the exercise of its preponderant power to set of rules and norms arrived at through multilateral negotiation. In return, the periphery enters willingly into the core’s zone of influence” (Kupchan, 1998: 42–43). This is also reflected in Slobodchikoff’s (2014) and Descalz’s (2011) works both of whom argue that the regional order in the post-Soviet space is mutually negotiated between Russia and the smaller states in the region to become mutually beneficial for all. Regional order therefore, reflects negotiated rules and collective interest. It cannot come or be maintained by coercion; order needs to be legitimated because, as Bull (2002) argued, an absolutely unjust order is not sustainable.

Regional order may reflect elements of hegemonic rule-settings. In other words, rules and institutions may be produced by leading/hegemonic states, however, once such rules are accepted by a collection of states as means governing the international interaction, they are owned collectively and the leading states cannot change them as they wish. For example, the Westphalian rules of non-interference and territorial integrity make an integral part of every state’s understanding of the international system despite the fact that they were developed at a certain point in history by specific group of states representing a certain worldview. The post-Soviet space, for instance, presents some of the strongest advocates of Westphalian rules. A more recent global example of hegemonic states failing to dominate international institutions is US’s withdrawal from the United Nations’ Human Rights Council. On June 19, 2018, the US announced its withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council after it continuously failed to change what the U.S. envoy Nikki Haley called “anti-Israeli bias” in the council. The US for long was widely believed to have dominated the UN institutions. The U.S. withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council followed waves of criticisms by the Council of the US immigration policy, particularly separation of children from their parents at the US borders. This is an example of collective ownership of rules and institutions of international society where hegemonic powers fail to completely undermine in their favor.

Regional order as expressed through rules and institutions, functions the same way. It is maintained through collective participation and ownership. The ambitions of powerful states within a regional order are constrained by collective ownership and upholding of the rules and institutions. This collective ownership of rules and institutions requires a concept other than hegemony to grasp dynamics of participation and cooperation as well as

constraints. The concept of 'hegemony' is not useful for this purpose. For example, the concept of hegemony cannot explain why the states in the post-Soviet space have been relatively less receptive of Western hegemonic influence compared to ones that bring them closer with Russia, while, materially speaking, the Western powers such as the EU appears to be far more powerful than Russia. If states in the region are more receptive of the Russian 'discursive and ideational' influence than other actors such as the EU in the region, the relations between Russia and the post-Soviet states cannot be defined in terms of hegemony alone. Understanding dynamics of that relationship requires new frameworks, and the hegemony literature is limited and not sufficient in explaining the post-Soviet regional order.

The Regional Security Complex (RSC) literature

The other existing perspective on the post-Soviet regional order is the RCS theory. The central argument of the RSC theory does not concern the question of order explicitly as it is considered to be a theory of regional security not of regional order; however, it has a particular view on and understanding of the post-Soviet space as a 'centered regional security complex' with Russia being its single pole. As such, the theory basically, proposes polarity as the principle of order. The logic of polarity in this perspective reinforces the Russian hegemony argument at structural level.

RSC theory defines a 'security complex' as a "set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another" (Waever and Buzan, Wilde, 1998:201). It further emphasizes "durable patterns of amity and enmity" (Waever and Buzan, 2003: 45) to imply the social constructivist component of Regional Security Complexes. Given these, Waever and Buzan (at time of their writing) considered the whole of the post-Soviet regional space, including the Baltic states and Belarus as one "centered" RSC with Russia being its only pole. The RSC theory sees the Post-Soviet space as "the most complicated case" with sub-complexes such as Central Asia and the Caucasus that could be potential RSCs in their own rights (Weaver and Buzan, 2003:137), implying the possibility of emergence of new RSCs within the post-Soviet RSC, and changes in the RSC as a result of 'internal transformation' (the arrival of new regional powers and disintegration) as well as 'external transformation' (the expansion of an outside power).

Several researchers (Mozaffari, 1997; Peimani, 1998; Allison and Jonson, 2001; Freire and Simão, 2008; and Troitksiy, 2014) have used the RSC framework to analyze regional security in various post-Soviet contexts. These researchers have used the RSC

theory to either define the region and its complexes, or to analyze patterns of conflict and cooperation and international relations of the region. Muzaffari (1997:9) debates the idea of the regional security complex in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and considers them as “separate, but externally connected security complexes” (Mozaffari, 1997:9). The factors that connect these complexes are identified by Muzaffari to be Russia, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. Based on the analysis of the international politics of Central Asian states, Peimani (1998) as well as Allison and Jonson (2001) argued that Central Asia must be defined as a separate regional security complex that has its own poles. In most cases, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been referred to as the Central Asia’s security poles (Troitskiy, 2014).

Jonson (2006:15) by analyzing Tajikistan’s foreign policy believed that Central Asia itself had developed its sub-regional security complexes, arguing that “Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan” constituted a sub-complex of the larger Central Asian RSC. Makarychev (2011) looked at the security and international political dynamics around the Caspian Sea and called it “great power” region. A “great power” is a RSC where global powers influence the form of international security interactions. The RSC in the Caspian according to Makarychev includes the five littoral states of the Caspian Sea and Turkey, surrounded by Russia and the European Super-Complex.

Freire and Simão (2008) by discussing the conflict and cooperation dynamics in South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) that were earlier identified by Waever and Buzan as a sub-complex, argued that such inter-dependency is “extended in fluid and dynamic patterns to include other state and non-state actors varying according to the issues at stake” (Freire and Simão, 2008: 49). They proposed to see the regional dynamics in the South Caucasus within the context of the Wider Black Sea regional space. And finally, Troitskiy (2014) contemplated that Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan may form a super-complex influenced by security dynamics in South Asia.

While the RSC theory offers a solid theoretical framework for analyzing regional security in the post-Soviet space, its application on the question of regional order faces certain limitations. In the light of empirical research discussed above, the post-Soviet regional order cannot be understood in terms of polarity alone. Though the process of ‘amity and enmity’ that shapes the RSC indicates the constructive aspect of security complexes, the theory is largely dismissive of social institutions in the making of the regional orders. As discussed next, the RSC theory appears to be largely silent on the question of norms and its

stance on the role of institutions is contradictory. Moreover, the existing literature from this perspective suggests a great deal of variation in interpretation and identification of RSCs, which in addition to indicating a deal of ambiguity about what is exactly is meant by RSC, demonstrates a fundamental methodological and empirical challenge: where to find and how to study a Regional Security Complex? In other words, there is no clarity on methods of investigating an RSC in terms of its object of analysis or ontological references. This is discussed next in terms of limits of the complex logic.

The limits of the RSC logic

In applying the RSC theory into the question of regional order, several problems can be identified. The existing literature indicates that there is a great deal of variation in the way RSC is understood and applied in the context of the post-Soviet space. This variation in interpretation and application for defining the post-Soviet regional order in terms of Regional Security Complex demonstrates an important problem in the RSC theory as a research agenda. There is a high degree of ambiguity particularly in terms of identifying an RSC, defining its boundaries, and its empirical/ontological references. This constitutes a methodological challenge before the RSC theory, and makes the concept as a highly ambiguous one that has often led to various subjective categorizations. The core question here is how to know if a collective of states forms an RSC, and where exactly and when in terms of space and time i.e. history a security complex starts and ends?

In other words, there is no means to empirically test the theory. The RSC appears to be entirely a subjective research construction whose existence and nature cannot be verified by any objective reference either to foreign policy decision makings or regional institutional designs. For example, an analysis of foreign security policy of states is unlikely to reveal that RSC logic in foreign policy making has indeed affected decisions. In other words, the whole idea of RSC is not testable by actual reference to states' decision making practices or discourses. This makes the application of the RSC theory to the question of post-Soviet regional order problematic, and methodologically ambiguous.

The methodological ambiguity of the RSC has implicated its operationalization as a research agenda, leading not only to conflicting research conclusions on the post-Soviet region, but also undermining the foundation of the theory that RSCs do not overlap or are "mutually exclusive" (Waeber and Buzan, 2003:48). In fact, the existing studies on the post-Soviet space from RSC perspective indicate varying and overlapping boundaries of regional and sub-regional complexes. For example, Freire and Simão (2008) define the south

Caucasus and the Black Sea as sub-complex, while Makarchev (2011) defines the Caspian involving Central Asia and the South Caucasus as sub-complex with Turkey and Iran being part of it. Jonson (2006) defines a new sub-complex within Central Asia involving Uzbekistan Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Similarly, Troitskiy's (2014) analysis indicate significant overlaps between the post-Soviet RSC the European super-complex, the Middle Eastern RSC and the South Asian super-complex. All of the existing studies challenge the fundamental assumption of RSC theory that regional securities are mutually exclusive. In fact, Inter-regional linkages that connect securities of one region with another such as China and Afghanistan's connections with Central Asia do create security overlaps.⁶

Moreover, studies on regionalism indicate that regional boundaries are not necessarily shaped by the logic of Security Complexes; regions' security interconnectedness and their social boundaries are continuously shaped and re-shaped by political, economic and security processes including through regional organizations that are not built upon the logic of complex. For example, inter-regional linkages concerning 'sectors' of security that promote issue-based cooperation and conflict in specific policy areas such as dealing with non-traditional security threats i.e. terrorism do not strictly follow the logic of RSC. In most cases, such policy areas redefine the boundaries of regions through joint regional cooperative mechanisms such as regional organizations. Regional institutions can have transformative impact on regions and their membership. One example of it can be the European institutions that facilitated EU integration.

It is important to note that Waever and Buzan do not see the role of regional organizations as defining feature of RSCs. They argue that "an RSC is not defined by membership of organizations or by agreement on belonging together" and it is to be defined "by negative dynamics i.e. by being each other's security problem" (Waever and Buzan, 2003:430). As an example, they refer to the Baltic States, which they argue, while being "part of the west for most other purposes", are part of the post-Soviet RSC according to Waever and Buzan because of their security concerns with Russia. (Waever and Buzan, 2003:430).

Buzan and Waever further argue that "[r]egional organizations do not always, or even usually, line up with RSCs, and so have to be treated with caution as evidence for them"

⁶China's role in South Asia due to its strategic partnership with Pakistan is another example of regional security overlap, contrary to the assumption that region's securities do not overlap. Though according to Waever and Buzan, China as a great power can be involved in various regions, the China-India-Pakistan relationship make a regional security complex, not a sub-complex of East Asian or South Asian RSCs.

(Buzan and Waever, 2003: 233). However, they also state that “[h]ow cohesive the RSC is also depends on joint action at the regional level. One approach is to look at formal organisations” (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 317). These two statements seem to be contradicting one another; although in the latter statements they are focused on an RSC “cohesiveness”, they nevertheless indicate that “joint action at the regional level” and “formal organizations” are important in configuration of regional patterns of political and security relations. This is why the authors so frequently speak of the CIS as one of the structures within the post-Soviet RSC.

In addition, Waever and Buzan talk about the Southeast Asian security regime in terms of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to demonstrate RSC in that region. For example, Waever and Buzan argue that “[t]he ASEAN states managed to shelve the disputes among themselves, effectively forming a weak subregional security regime whose members agreed not to pursue their disagreements by force” (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 135). This contradicts their previous argument that regional organizations are not necessarily a feature of RSC. Such contradiction reveals significant confusion about RSC theory’s arguments particularly in terms of what constitutes an RSC and how it configures materially.

Waever and Buzan (2003) continuously refer to ASEAN in terms of a region, whereas ASEAN is a regional organization. If ASEAN can be used interchangeably with South East Asian RSC, then regional organization can be thought of RSCs’ boundaries. That can complicate the argument of the RSC because regional security organizations challenge the logic of ‘mutual exclusivity’ of the RSC theory as they often bring a diverse group of states from various geographic regions of the world. They could also be instrumental in transforming security relations beyond the positivist and somewhat static notion of RSC. As discussed in case of ASEAN the formal institutions such as the ASEAN are instrumental in shaping regional relations beyond patterns of ‘amity and enmity’.

In the post-Soviet context, though most regional integration projects and instruments such as the CIS failed to bring the region together (Sakwa and Webber, 1999; Hansen 2015; Kramer, 2008), the region is part of various regional organizations such as the SCO, the OSCE and various regional connectivity projects. Regional organizations such as the CIS and SCO are crucial not only in supporting region’s political unity, but also in creating ties with extra-regional powers such as China, for example. The SCO for instance has been redefined the security relations in Central Asia beyond the RSC logic by not only

creating geographic overlaps between the post-Soviet space and China along various security sectors, but also by making it hard to conceive Central Asia's regional security independent of the China's growing role in the region both in economic and security terms. This is not to argue that China has acquired a leading role in the region, but to suggest that a regional overlap between China and Central Asia has developed over the last two decades, and that considerably challenges the RSC logic.

Back to the discussion of post-Soviet regional order, the RSC theory offers little help in understanding and explaining the regional dynamics in the post-Soviet space. The theory's core argument on the post-Soviet space as 'centered' regional security complex defined around Russia's security is challenged by the existing literature that show significant regional overlap between the post-Soviet and other RSCs. This makes the logic of complex less useful as a framework to conceptualize regional order, because the overlaps among various RSCs could also suggest that the post-Soviet space consists of multiple orders as opposed to one.

Moreover, the RSC over securitization of the discussion on regions fails to address the normative and ideational features of regions, which are crucial in conceptualization of regional orders. The discussion of order cannot be conceived independent of regional institutions and norms. RSC theory is surprisingly silent on the normative factors. Though one can assume that "securitization and desecuritization" patterns as discussed in Waever and Buzan's earlier reformulation of the security complex (Waever, Buzan and Wilde, 1998) could be inclusive of the normative factors, their theorization of regions fails to substantively address the political and security norms and values that define regional relations and social boundaries. Where Waever and Buzan make a direct reference to norms is in the conceptualization of "security regimes" meaning that "fears and expectations are restrained by agreed sets of rules of conduct, and expectations that those rules will be observed" (Waever and Buzan, 2003: 491-492). However, as discussed in the context of ASEAN above, the authors do not consider a security regime to be a feature of RSC.

Another context where Waever and Buzan (2003) remotely address issues of norms is their discussion on type of states and their impact on security outcomes, but their discussion is mostly concerned with issue of: a, how sovereign (within a spectrum of *weak* and *strong*) states are in terms of their internal cohesion or "empirical sovereignty" (Jackson, 1990); and b, whether states are pre-modern, modern or post-modern. (Waever and Buzan, 2003: 22-23). Though they acknowledge the different security outcomes related to types of

states, they do not fully engage with the normative issues in their RSC theory. The question of norms is essential to the discussion of regions including their security relations. Therefore, the RSC theory's focus on polarity is insufficient in explaining regional configurations of order. RSC theory's understanding of order is primarily shaped by its conception of polarity, which essentially indicates relative distribution of power. This is evident in Waever and Buzan's discussion on the transformation of RSCs as result of arrival of new power.

And finally, like the Russian hegemony argument, the RSC perspective, particularly its conception of the post-Soviet region as a single RSC defined around Russia's security role tends to deny other post-Soviet states the agency to act upon their interests, shape, and contest and or negotiate the regional order. In that sense, the RSC literature fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of the post-Soviet regional order. The polarity logic suggests as if smaller states in the post-Soviet region are trapped in RSC logic, which subjugates them to Russia's security role. This, as discussed in the context of the Russian hegemony argument, is not true. The post-Soviet regional order is equally shaped by the active participation of post-Soviet states. Considering these, the RSC theory fails to provide a convincing response to the question of regional order in the post-Soviet space. The theory also has significant methodological shortcomings which are discussed in the context of the approaches to regional order in the chapter on theoretical framework of this thesis.

The English School literature

The English School literature analyzes the international politics of the post-Soviet space in terms of the concept of regional international society. By regional international society is meant a group of states bound by common or inter-subjective understanding of the shared rules, norms and identity, which differentiates them from other regional international societies such as the European global core international society (Bull, 2002; Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Flockhart, 2016). This perspective offers a new understanding of the region, while overcoming some of the problems with Russian hegemony and RSC literature, particularly concerning the role of the smaller states in shaping the regional order as well as the normative and ideational aspects of region.

While the perspective on the post-Soviet space as a regional international society is relatively new and developing, the English school theory has longer history dealing with the region. The classic authors of the English School theory had looked at the former Soviet Union as an example of an international system and Russia's role in it as a 'civilizer' of the former Soviet Union into the European international society (Bull and Watson, 1984).

Recent contributions from English School perspective deal mostly with conceptualization of CIS and Central Asia as a regional international society. Debates in the existing literature concern not so much the utility of the approach, but the conceptualization of post-Soviet space or parts of it as a regional international society. Researcher's views on this vary. For example, Katarzyna Kaczmarek (2014) rejects the applicability of the term 'regional international society' to Central Asia, arguing that, Central Asia is an example of where international society has not emerged; the geographic space is represented by weak states with limited state capacity to control violence and consolidate statehood. For Kaczmarek "International society relies on a well-functioning, capable state, one which is not only willing but also able to engage in tightening its relations with its neighbours" (Kaczmarek in Katmazin et al, 2014: 96). According to her there are ideological differences i.e. democratic and authoritarian visions and in their elites' aspirations and self-identification in terms of regional identity. Considering these, Kaczmarek concludes that Central Asia does not demonstrate the definitional features of an international society.

Other researchers (Costa-Buranelli, 2014; Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014) have argued that Central Asia can be broadly be defined as a "regional international society" not so much in terms of their intra-regional coherence, but in terms of similar behavior within the global international society. Filippo Costa-Buranelli by analyzing speeches, documents and voting behavior of Central Asian representatives in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) argues that the five Central Asian states "endorse the same norms and agree on a number of them" (Costa-Buranelli, 2014:140). These norms include the typical Westphalian norms such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, international law and diplomacy. While their intra-regional "meeting of minds" is seldom, the Central Asian republics "speak the same language and abide by the same institutions" in the international level Buranelli argues (Buranelli, 2014: 140). According to him, Central Asia demonstrates a classic pluralist Westphalian international society marked by their common understanding of the norms and institutions of international politics i.e. international law, diplomacy, sovereignty etc. and their resistance to external intervention.

Similarly, Georgeta Pourchot and Yannis A. Stivachtis (2014: 75) argue that the Central Asian countries "constitute a sub-global regional international society" in the English School theory sense. Using Watson and Bull's conceptualization of international society in terms of a "spectrum" between weak-strong international system, Pourchot and Stivachtis look at the CIS as an example of regional institution representing an international

system or “thin” form of international society. By analyzing “1. The extent of dialogue and consent to common rules and institutions among states; 2. The nature of the conduct of interstate relations; and 3, Recognition of common interests in maintaining agreed upon arrangements” (Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014: 72), Pourchot and Stivachtis argue that Central Asia represents a regional international society, understood as thin international system within the spectrum of “hegemony-dominion” structure in terms of Russia’s primacy in it (Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014: 73).

While the existing literature from the English School perspective offers a fresh insight on the region, they also come with certain shortcomings including lack of clarity on criteria concerning social boundaries of regional international society in the post-Soviet space. For example, most writings (Kaczmarek, 2014; Buranelli, 2014; Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014) focus on Central Asia alone without sufficient justification for why Central Asia has been singled out from the rest of the post-Soviet states. Perhaps, as implied from Pourchot and Stivachtis’s article, because Central Asian states have tried mostly to balance their relations between great powers such as the EU and Russia and guard their national sovereignty to consolidate their statehood while some other post-Soviet states such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have been pursuing pro-Western aspirations. This criterion does not sufficiently justify the choice to define Central Asia as a distinct case in post-Soviet space, because Azerbaijan falls in the same category of states that have tried to balance between regional powers, but Azerbaijan is not considered as part of the Central Asian regional international society.

Pourchot and Stivachtis (2014) see differences between Central Asian states and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine from the perspective of Russian hegemony-dominion spectrum. For them those with greater Russian influence constitute a society, while those further away from Russia in this spectrum do not. However, in terms of relations with Russia, countries like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are located in the furthest end of the spectrum together with Moldova and Georgia in terms of the presumed degree of independence from Russia. This makes the Pourchot and Stivachtis’s criteria for defining regional international society in the Central Asia even more problematic. Moreover, Pourchot and Stivachtis speak of Central Asia as regional international society by looking at the CIS as a regional organization without clarifying how the CIS can be a case for Central Asian regional international society, or why other members of the CIS are not part of this international society. Referring to Buzan’s (1993) argument that regional organizations may reflect the

existence of a regional international society, Pourchot and Stivachtis argue that the CIS can be considered as such regional structure where member states have been socialized and developed the conduct of inter-state relations, common interests and arrangements to maintain agreements.

Regional organizations such as the CIS are regarded as secondary social institutions of an international society. Theoretically, the convergence of states within a regional organization can indicate shared interest and intersubjective understanding of a regional identity. From a constructivist point of view states' interaction and socializations within common institutions such as the CIS may also lead to common normative and foreign policy preferences. However, findings from research on CIS member states' foreign policy behavior show the opposite. Flemming Splidsboel Hansen (2015) looks at whether or not the CIS member states' foreign policy preferences converge in global stage. By analyzing the voting behavior of the CIS countries within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Hansen concludes that CIS member states' policy preferences are divergent, particularly in relation to Russia as the most important actor within the CIS. CIS member states' distance from Russia in voting alignments on resolutions (those passed by absolute majority) suggests that on a scale of 0-100 per cent, the voting distance from Russia of the CIS countries varied from 13 for Belarus to 30 for Moldova in UNGA session 2013. Other countries remained in between these two extremes with fluctuating distance from Russia throughout 1992-2013.

Hansen analyzes the voting records from every second UNGA session starting from September 1992 and ending September 2013 for all (12) CIS members including Ukraine, Georgia and Uzbekistan. The cases considered in the study include only resolutions passed by majority. By analyzing the voting behavior of the CIS member states, Hansen finds that disagreements among CIS states have been increasing since 1992 and the CIS individual states have taken divergent views on global issues. The level of agreement (where all CIS member state has voted yes, no, or abstained unanimously) on resolutions has been very low; the highest level of agreement has been in the 57th session where they took same position on 44 per cent of the resolutions. For all other UNGA sessions the level of agreement has been between 25-35 per cent (Hansen, 2015:72).

Hansen's findings suggest to important conclusions: first, that socialization and interaction with the CIS has not after all, led to common political and normative preferences, and as such, the findings challenge the constructivist expectations on socialization and policy

convergence. Second, findings demonstrate that Russia's role within the CIS has not translated into a source of power to dictate foreign policy choices of the CIS members. This provides an empirical evidence against the hegemony literature because it demonstrates that "Russia has not controlled foreign policy behaviour of the CIS member states" at least in the UNGA (Hansen, 2014:76).

Back to English School literature, Hansen's findings are significant for the argument of the regional international society too. For CIS to be considered as a regional international society, it should also demonstrate that its members more or less pursue similar interest and foreign policy preferences and share common norms and values. Hansen's findings show clearly the opposite. But there is an important nuance in discussing regional international society in the context of CIS; the CIS is a platform for interaction between members within the post-Soviet space. It is highly likely that states within the CIS have divergent views and interests in intra-regional relations than inter-regional relations. This thesis's findings suggest that the regional international societies are born in interaction with other regional international society or global international society. Regions are less aware of their identities when they interact intra-regionally. Common patterns of behavior and shared interests and identity emerge as result of inter-regional interactions. Thus, regional international societies are formed through a combination of internal and external social processes. External processes such as dynamics of differentiations from the global international society are instrumental to regional awareness. The internal social processes such as shared identity, values and interests may develop in response to external processes.

As it will be discussed in the context of the post-Soviet states interaction within the OSCE, there is significant normative convergence among the post-Soviet states, except for the three 'aspiring European states' of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine whose voting behavior within the UNGA seem to also have diverged from other post-Soviet states. This also indicates that the post-Soviet states behave differently in different contexts. Their lack of policy convergence within the UNGA may be tied to that fact that they are not strongly differentiated or treated as the 'unequal other' within the UN. Therefore, their regional identity as post-Soviet largely authoritarian states is less relevant to the UN, while it is a critical aspect of their interaction with European states within the OSCE. The OSCE has a greater and more visible presence in the post-Soviet space compared to the UN as an agency. The UN as global international society is far more diverse in terms of regimes and normative orientations and the states appear more in their individual sovereign capacity than their

regional identities. This could also imply that regional international societies become more aware of their shared interests and identities when they closely interact with other regional international societies. In other words, their differences and similarities become more visible in their inter-regional interactions where normative and identity issues function to divide and define the social boundaries of regional international societies. The empirical chapters of this thesis will shed more light on these dynamics of differentiations along normative and identity divides.

Conclusions

In light of the above literature review, the English School literature appears to offer a promising alternative perspective on the question of post-Soviet regional international order. The English School's concept of "society" has both the analytical and explanatory theoretical power to tackle the central puzzle of this research, which is primarily about why the regional order in the post-Soviet space did not undergo a transformation over the last three decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The other two main perspectives, namely the Russian hegemony and RSC theory literature are insufficient in explaining the social dynamics that constitute and sustain the regional order in the post-Soviet space. In addition to conceptual and theoretical limitations and shortcomings, both attribute the regional order to Russia's security role and disregard the role of other post-Soviet states and the social processes such as norms and shared interests in shaping the regional international order in the region. The English School perspective allows us to go beyond hegemonic stability and polarity to discuss regional order in terms of social institutions that facilitate mutual understanding and reflect shared interests.

The concept of regional international society is particularly powerful in explaining why other powers' effort to promote their hegemonic rules and dominance over the post-Soviet space did not succeed. Even in terms of socialization impacts, the post-Soviet space has been part of the European led liberal institutions such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe; however, these institutions did not succeed in liberalizing the regional order in the region. Contrary to this, there have been significant cases of authoritarian diffusion in the post-Soviet space over the last two decades. The hegemony and RSC arguments offer little help to understand these nuances in the international politics of post-Soviet states. The English School literature provides the necessary conceptual tools to unpack the international dynamics in the post-Soviet states including the normative and identity issues that are crucial in the making of the post-Soviet regional international order. The next chapters provide

greater theoretical and empirical context for conceptualization of the post-Soviet space as a regional international society.

PART I

II. REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER: A CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

Regional order is a specific conceptualization of order in international relations or more broadly in the social science literature. Despite being at the core subject of IR, the concept of order itself remains to be one of the most under-theorized concepts in IR. Except for the English School, the IR literature rarely engages with the concept despite it being at the core of the discipline, directly or indirectly. This chapter provides a conceptual discussion on order and how it is understood in social science and IR specifically, and introduces taxonomy of order and their relevant IR theories. A key contribution of this chapter is conceptual differentiation between many formulations of order such as world order, global order, international order and regional order, which are argued to present not only distinct levels of analysis, but also theorization.

The concept of order

The word *order* has many meanings. Depending on the fields of specialization as well as the subjects in discussion, order is defined in terms of different issues or variables. In its everyday usages, the meaning of *order* varies from a request for supply of a service e.g. ordering food in/from a restaurant to *order* as arrangement of objects in a setting e.g. the order of chairs in a classroom. Oxford dictionary defines the word as “the arrangement or disposition of people or things in relation to each other according to a particular sequence, pattern, or method” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). It further offers at least nine specific definitions and usages of the word depending on fields of knowledge e.g. religion, military, biology, mathematics etc. Definitions include *order* as “a rank in religion and the military”; a “written direction of court or judge”; “a particular social, political and economic system” and so on (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018).

In terms of philology, the English word “order” is said to be coming from the Latin ‘ordo’, and it has been argued that the Latin word *ordo* in turn could have come from the “Indo-Germanic root ‘or’, which may have indicated an upward movement (cf. the Latin word *orior* to indicate the rising of the sun...” (Orsi, 2012:19). In its ancient usages, *order* is said to have meant also line of soldiers in the battlefield, military ranks or the military formation itself. In the military history in Central Asia the word *ordo* (or Urdu – not to be mistaken with Urdu language) meant military or armed forces, and it is used in the same meaning today e.g. Ordu-e – Milli Afghanistan (Afghanistan National Army).

As a single term, *order* maybe defined simply as arrangement displaying appropriateness. However, it is the social application of the term that concerns this research and therefore, the concept must be defined in terms of what it means to social scientists. As a social science concept, *order* has been at the center of philosophical and theoretical debates since the antiquity. According to Rengger “[f]rom Greek tragedy and philosophy, to Roman conception of *imperium*, and *auctoritas*, medieval notion of trusteeship and the complex interrelation of law, power and order, to the natural lawyers of the Renaissance...” *order* has been “a constant and highly contested theme in political, philosophical and theological reflections” (Rengger, 2000:1-2). Contestations and debates about *order* concern a number of political-philosophical questions about the nature of *order* in terms of what it is, where it comes from, and how it should look like. Discussions on *order* focus on various empirical and normative issues in terms of which order is studied and conceptualized.

A review of the literature shows that the concept of *order* in social sciences is defined in terms of at least nine issues or variables including cooperation, conflict, stability, peace, norms, institutions, hierarchy and power. Moreover, there are at least six formulations of the concept, which indicate levels of analysis and issues of concern. These formulations include social order, political order, world order, global order, international order, and regional order. While each of these constructs share a common denominator involving some of the issues or variables listed above, they represent and reflect different configuration of *order* and its elements at different levels of human societies.

Conflict and *cooperation* are two principle issues that define social order in its empirical sense. The presence of conflict is often associated with lack of *order* and the presence of cooperation is often associated with *order*. It is particularly so in the realm of international relations. A society is thought to enjoy *order* where there is a high degree of “cooperation and coordination” in pursuit of common goals. Michael Hechter and Christine Horne (2009: 1) argue that “for social order to arise and be maintained, two separate problems must be overcome. People must be able to coordinate their actions and they must cooperate to attain common goals”. Cooperation and coordination become possible when there is common or inter-subjective understanding of societal goals. Cooperation and coordination become difficult when such an agreement is absent. This can be the case for ideological revolutions and other conflicts.

Moreover, “coordination requires that people develop stable expectations about others behaviors” (Hechter and Horne, 2009:1) Stability is a key factor in understanding

order both in empirical and theoretical senses. In fact, as a social term, *order* is often used to mean *stability* and *peace* in social relationship. Stability is central to the definition of order for Alfred van Staden (2007: 15) who defines order as:

“...any regular or discernible pattern of relationships that are stable over time. In other words, there is order when, and to the extent that, human relations are predictable and controlled. This shorthand definition focuses on *stability* as the main characteristic of the concept, as well as the overriding goal of policies which pursue this.”

As mentioned, *order* is also understood in terms of *peaceful societal relationship*. The definition of *order* as peace can be traced to classical political theories, particularly to Thomas Hobbes’s ideas about “social contract” as a solution to the problem of war in the state of nature. Based on Hobbes’s ideas, *order* comes in the form of a “social contract” to establish peaceful relationship in a human society who otherwise must experience a “war of every man against every man” in a “state of nature” due to men’s “restless desire for power” (Hobbes, 2008: 84). Although Hobbes (Hobbes, 2008: 84-85) speaks of peace not *order*, his conceptualization of peace, as ‘social contract’ provides the framework for much of the contemporary conceptualization of *order*. Social contract implies covenant involving principles, laws, norms and agreements that provide personal security as well as security of property and dignity to humans who would otherwise be subjected to death and destruction in the ‘state of nature’.

The idea of social contract has informed a rich body of contemporary literature that seeks to define *order* as function of *power, norms and institutions*. Huntington (1968) for example defines order as a function of rules and institutions. Similarly, Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier (2012:18) define order as “governing arrangements among the units of a system, including their rules, principles and institutions, which are designed to make interactions predictable and to sustain the goals or values that collectively are salient”. In the same manner, Hedley Bull (2002: 6) defines order as patterns of activities “closely connected with the conformity of human behaviour to rules of conduct, if not necessarily to rules of law”.

Although not all scholars who define *order* in terms of norms, rules and institutions necessarily link their contributions to Hobbes, their formulation of definition of *order* as compliance with norms, rules and institutions in many ways reflect Hobbes’s ideas about social contract, particularly given that norms themselves are ‘social contracts’. As such, the social contract theory provides one of the first theoretical frameworks for understanding *order* as a complex process of developing norms, rules and institutions to make the transition

from the *state of nature* to *state of order* possible. While institutions as such are not discussed in Hobbes's social contract theory, he nevertheless theorizes social contract in terms of the relationship between subjects and a sovereign. The sovereign e.g. 'the Leviathan', which basically represents the state for Hobbes, is an integral part of his social contract theory.

In addition to implying institutions, the element of 'sovereign' or the state in social contract theory represents power. Power is both a source for war and an element of peace. According to Hobbes, while the 'restless desire for power' in humankind leads to war of all against all, the 'transfer of rights' to use that power to a 'sovereign' entity becomes the foundation of peace. Power has been central to the conceptualization of *order* particularly in some international relations theories. The realist tradition of thinking in international relations has particularly focused on the factor of power in defining *order* in terms of *hierarchy* and structure of the international system (Waltz, 1979), balance of power (Walt, 1985), relative distribution of power (Acharya, 2007), and hegemony (Kindleberger, 1979; Gilpin 2001). For example, Gilpin (2001) saw *order* as the product of political leadership by a hegemonic power who has the will and the political, military and economic resources to maintain that order. Earlier, Kindleberger (1973) had argued that stability or maintenance of *order* requires long term support from a hegemonic power with economic, political, and military capabilities to take a leadership role and set the rules and norms of conduct. In the hegemonic stability theory, power is not only a central element of *order*, but also the element that sets norms and rules. The relation between norms and power has been discussed in-depth by critical theory scholars (Simon, 1982; Belier and Morton, 2004; Bruff, 2011; Diez, 2013).

It is rather fascinating that the origin of the English word *order*, the Latin word *ordo* as applied to the military formation reflects almost all issues and variables discussed in relation to the definition of *order* in social science. *Ordo* or the military is a social organization that embodies norms and rules, cooperation, coordination, disposition of power and hierarchy as well as war and peace. As military jargon "the use of *ordo* possibly gave rise to uses denoting the different political and social statuses of the Roman population" (Orsi, 2012:19), and it gradually started to mean social classes; a definition of *order* in sociology that refers to social strata and social classes, demonstrating power relations, disposition and distribution of values and resources.

In short, it is possible to synthesize the concept of order as the *dynamics* of interactions in *human societies* with respect to issues of *conflict and cooperation*. The italics in

this definition are central to this conceptualization; the word *dynamics* in this definition describes, first, the characteristics of order which is not a static condition e.g. there is no absolute state of war or absolute state of peace. Order rather is a quality, not a condition of war or peace. Some kind of order is always present in the social processes, and even wars are surprisingly *ordered* social processes. Second, the word dynamics implies the social contents of order and what it entails in terms of factors and actors affecting the order. Such factors and actors are best represented in the concept of society, which, among many things, imply social norms, values and rules of conduct as well as institutions of power. *Human societies* in this definition, is a concept inclusive of states. The word *conflict* and *cooperation* are the opposite structures marking the two ends social processes and their dynamics in relations to which *order* is generally studied in social science. With exception of ‘world order’ which is primarily a normative philosophical concept discussed next, this conceptualization applies to constructs such as ‘political order’, ‘social order’, ‘international order’ and ‘regional order’.

Order in International relations theories

Most IR theories are not so much concerned with the phenomenology of *order* in terms of what it is or it is not. Rather, they concern how order is ensured as a condition of peace and/or stability v.s. a condition of war. As such, most IR theories are concerned with what Rengger (2000) describes as ‘managing order’ rather than conceptualizing or theorizing *order*. Despite being a central topic in IR, the existing literature rarely provides a comprehensive theory of order. By far, the English School theory of international relations is the only theory that offers an extensive discussion on *order*, including conceptualizing it as a ‘central problem’ in international relations.

In his important book written on the subject of *order* in international relations and political theory, Rengger classifies IR theories’ approaches to the problem of *order* in terms of three arguments: the balance of power, society, and institutions. Rengger discusses ‘emancipation’ as the fourth argument that offers mostly a critique of *order* and includes critical theories and post-structuralism. For Rengger, the ‘balance of power’ argument includes primarily realism, and the ‘society’ argument is mostly about the English school theory of international relations. The argument about ‘institutions’ include liberalism and liberal institutionalism in general.

Rengger’s book is one of few original contributions to the discussion of order in IR theories. However, his classification of the IR theories in terms of the three mentioned

arguments may draw some criticism in terms of the boundaries of such classifications. For example, the ‘balance of power’ argument is a central concept for both realism and English school theory. Therefore, the balance of power and the society arguments overlap here. As Rengger has also noticed, some of the English School scholars (Butterfield and Wight 1966; Wight, 1992) also focus on the balance of power as an institution of international society. Similarly, the line between the ‘society’ and ‘institutions’ arguments is also thin particularly that the former considers formal institutions, international laws and organizations as central components of international society. Within the ‘society’ argument, there are different takes on the question of *order* along the pluralist and solidarist divides with the latter tending mostly towards liberalism and normative theories that connect English School with the ‘institution’ argument. There are also important synergies between classical realism and English school: classical realism, for example Thucydides and Morgenthau placed great importance on the question of society and norms as elements of *order*. Morgenthau for example, talks of the role of culture e.g. “politeness and cultivation” and common system of arts and laws and manners” that made international politics in eighteenth century Europe more stable than later periods in the history (Morgenthau, 1948: 159-66). Therefore, for Morgenthau, *order* depended on the strength of such sense of community standards.

Such important synergies between classical realism and English School theory, which sees *order* as function of common norms, rules and standards of practice, makes Rengger’s classification of IR theories less coherent or inconsistent. While classification of the arguments can still be valid, Rengger’s classification of the IR theories along balance of power, society and institutions argument is not completely valid because of the above mentioned overlaps. An alternative way to classify IR theories approaches to the question of *order* is to organize them according to taxonomy of order, which can help differentiate IR theories not in terms of their arguments, but levels of analysis and theorization. This approach which is presented next is helpful also for conceptual differentiation of variety of formulation of the concept of ‘order’ in the IR literature. In the following, I introduce this taxonomy and explain how it can help to classify IR theories regarding the question of order.

Introducing theories and taxonomy of order

The discussion on order in IR literature often fails to make conceptual distinction between several terminologies involving a number of distinct concepts such as *world order*, *global order*, *international order*, and *regional order* among others. This taxonomy represents not only different analytical categories, but also different levels of analysis. In the

existing literature many of these concepts are used interchangeably, which is incorrect from a theoretical perspective. Thinking about them in terms of taxonomy of order helps not only to distinguish them conceptually, but also helps to identify and group together their corresponding IR theories. Based on this taxonomy, classical realism, liberalism and the pluralist English School can be regarded generally as theories of *international order*. Structural realism, Marxism and critical theory are theories dealing with question of *global order*, while normative and solidarist English school theories are essentially theories of *world order*. *Regional order* is often out of independent discussions in mainstream IR theories. However, the emerging English School literature on the concept of regional international society provides conceptual resources to conceptualize regional order as distinct level of analysis in IR. Following taxonomy of order as a framework, the following provides a discussion of the various concepts and formulations of order in IR literature.

World order

The concept of *world order* is an analytical construct mostly in political philosophy and political science. Its usage in political science is often associated with the discipline of international relations, where it is sometimes used interchangeably with the concept of *global order* and *international order*. Some of the earliest definitions of *world order* did not differentiate between the two concepts. One such definition of *world order* was provided at the conference on The Conditions of World Order held June 12-19, 1965, in Bellagio, Italy, where according to Swazo (2002:45) “five possible meanings of “world order” were operative: (a) order as an arrangement of reality, (b) order as the relation between the parts, (c) order as the minimum condition for existence, (d) order as the minimum condition for co-existence, and (e) order as the conditions for good life.” This definition provides both descriptive and normative definition of *world order*. The definition was proposed by Aron Raymond, who according to Hoffmann (1966: 458) eventually suggested disregarding the last definition of order “as the condition for good life” and instead focusing on the minimum condition for co-existence. The focus on the condition for co-existence implies states co-existence in the world and thus, the definition of world order as proposed by Raymond concerned essentially, order among states or *international order*.

In much of the contemporary definitions too, the concept of *world order* is used to refer to the arrangement of inter-state relations. Kissinger (2014) speaks of *world order* in terms of very specific inter-state arrangements that became a feature of global politics since

the Westphalian peace treaty. Though Kissinger states that a “truly global world order” (Kissinger, 2014:2) has not existed, the Westphalian order which emerged from Europe gradually became recognized across regions of the world. It implies that Kissinger broadly understands the concept of *world order* in terms of ideas, principles and institutions that define and regulate the conduct of international politics in a world primarily composed of states. As such, what is meant by *world order* in Kissinger’s argument implies *international order* too.

But, there are certain conceptual differences between *world order* and *international order*, which are important to take note of. In terms of the literature, *world order* is a jargon in political philosophy while *international order* is a jargon in the field of international relations. In the political philosophical sense, the concept of *world order* refers to the debate concerning ‘good’ or a “good life” in a global human society (Hoffmann, 1966; Swazo, 2002). Therefore, it is primarily a normative concept. As a normative concept, the definition of *world order* concerns the way ‘life’ as an inclusive concept, shall be organized on the planet in favor of a universal good that ensures and secures sustainability of humanity and the planet (Swazo, 2002). Swazo for example, states that:

World order scholars seek a good, a common good, whether their approach to international society is grounded in legal positivism, natural law tradition, contractarian thought, cosmopolitanism, or ideological agnosticism. They seek to preserve and secure for human posterity a planetary commons and a planetary existence (Swazo 2002:2).

Bull (1997:19) also differentiates between concept of *world order* and *international order* by arguing that by “world order I mean those patterns or dispositions of human activity that sustain the elementary or primary goals of social life among mankind as a whole. International order is order among states”. As a normative concept *world order* refers to the organization or arrangement of human society in terms of moral values and standards of behaviors and practices in regards to humans and the planet Earth. It is essentially about how the human society shall be organized to avoid crisis including wars and the danger of extinction caused by human factors such as the irresponsible engagement with the environment and its resources. Questions of *world order* concerns “all aspects of social praxis” including politics, economy as well as the use of “scientific methods to guide the life of society” (Gadamer, 1966: 572) and defining an “end” or a purpose for life. Compared to the concept of international order, which will be defined next, the concept of *world order* is a bigger category taking individuals as the units of order as opposed to states (Clark, 2005).

The concept of *world order* therefore concerns not how things are, but how things should be, implying that the concept is primarily concerned with the idea of justice (Staden, 2007).

In terms of the relevant IR literature, the concept of *world order* relates to a body of literature in IR that deals with moral and ethical questions in conducting international affairs. These can broadly be understood as normative IR theories. Normative IR theories are also called “international political theory” (Linklater, 1990; Brown, 2002) which basically extends the arguments in political philosophy to the realm of international politics. Normative IR theories do not make a distinction between national and international politics and are focused on the universality of moral principles that shall not be confined by international borders. As such, they are concerned with the question of humanity and thus, offer a cosmopolitan perspective on the question of *order* as the human condition (Linklater, 1990; Brown, 2002, Swazo, 2002). Harsh realities of the world such as famine, poverty, genocide and inequality in distribution of global wealth are major issues concerning global justice that normative IR theories address.

In other words, normative IR theories are not concerned with the question of *order*, but the question of “*just-order*”. *Order* in normative IR theory perspectives, therefore, is essentially a question of justice. There are certain moral principles that need to be followed to maintain justice in the world as the ultimate objective of *world order*. Even wars need to be conducted in “just” manner (Walzer, 1992). For example, Walzer in his most famous book on the idea of justice in conducting wars argued that soldiers at war have moral duties to protect the rights of the civilians and act responsibly in dealing with the enemy. “[T]he structure of rights stands independently of political allegiance; it establishes obligations that are owed, so to speak, to humanity itself and to particular human beings and not merely to one’s fellow citizens” (Walzer, 1992: 158). The question of *order* for normative IR theories therefore, is sought in terms of creating and strengthening moral norms that shall be preserved universally. From this perspective, international conventions and laws such as international human rights regimes that aim to protect individual human beings against state violence are central to preserving a just *order* in the world.

The focus on institutions, individuals and non-state actors is a landmark argument of classical liberalism. Thus, classical liberalism can be regarded as a theory of *world order*. Concerned with ‘perpetual peace’, Kant (1795/1970) proposed global adoption of a ‘republican constitution’ with ‘cosmopolitan laws’ as well as international trade based on such laws as the basis of sustainable peace among republics. Otherwise, as Kant (1970:105)

famously argued, peace would look like “a vast grave where all the horrors of violence and those responsible for them would be buried”. *Order* therefore, is understood by classical liberalism in terms of the primacy of international laws, international organizations such as the UN as a global entity, and other international organizations that function in the interest of a global society of individuals, not of, merely, the states.

An important element of *World order* is its level of analysis. As highlighted above, the concept of world order concerns moral questions concerning the human condition. As such, it concerns the individual human beings and the fate of the planet. The centrality of individuals and that of non-state actors and the primacy of international law for classical liberalism make it a theory of *world order*. Rengger (2000) for example, speaks of liberalism as a theory of *world order*. Rengger defines liberalism in terms of five attributes or ‘aspects’ as he calls it: ‘liberalism fear’ meaning the fear of arbitrary government e.g. states, ‘constitutional liberalism’, ‘individualism’, and ‘cognitive liberalism’ meaning the ideas of the European enlightenment and “the belief in methods of inquiry” in science and the universality of scientific results (Rengger, 2000: 105-107). While the last aspect, ‘cognitive liberalism’, has been less of a defining feature of it, a ‘liberal order’ has been most generally defined in terms of the three first aspects. At least, globally, liberalism has aimed at strengthening role of the non-state actors, focusing on promoting democratic values and reforms to enhance citizen’s participation in decision making, and putting individuals as the units of international politics and that of international law, instead of states.

Liberalism offers a cohesive theory of *world order* by focusing on the centrality of international organizations in international relations, republican constitutions e.g. democracies, and international trade. This has been the classic liberal formula for global and ‘perpetual peace’. International organizations such as the UN play important role in creating and promoting shared norms and interests; international trade enhances economic interdependence and thus, produces shared material interests; and democracy creates similar governance structures and ensures that people make the decisions. Arguing that democracies do not fight each other, liberalism focuses on the role of promoting liberal democratic values, liberal institutions, and international trade as the basis of international peace (Kant, 1970; Mintz and Geva, 1993; Starr, 1997).

Global order

The concept of *global order* is sometimes used interchangeably both with the concepts of *world order*, and *international order*. But in terms of analytical purpose, it is

closely understood and associated with the latter. In the existing literature *global order* is broadly understood in terms of global governance “the processes through which governance occurs on a worldwide scale.” (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992:1) According to Rosenau, (1992: 5) “global order consists of those routinized arrangements through which world politics gets from one moment in the time to the next”. These ‘routinized arrangements’ “may or may not derive from the legally and formally prescribed responsibilities [...]” (Rosenau 1992:5). In this definition, *global order* means global governance arrangements, which include international laws, international regimes, international organizations and institutions e.g. United Nations, World Trade Organizations, International Monetary Fund etc. Understanding *global order* in terms of such global institutions and processes is evident also in contributions made by Stubbs and Underhill (1994), and Held (1995) among others.

Some other scholars have discussed the concept of *global order* in terms of “ideas and institutions” (Archarya, 2018). Acharya (2018) uses *global order* interchangeably with the concept of *world order*, which may not be correct considering the conceptual differences highlighted earlier. But, the use of *global order* interchangeably with the concept of *international order* is quite frequent in the existing literature. The interchangeable use of the terms can be justifiable given that mechanisms of global governance such as international regimes and institutions are integral part of international relations and therefore, *global order* and *international order* can be defined as mutually inclusive concepts. In the English School literature, global order is sometimes used to refer to global social order in terms of the social institutions of the international community (Hurrell, 2008). However, the classic authors of the English School did not use the term as a substitute for international order or international society. For example, Bull did not speak of *global order* even once in his book *Anarchical Society*.

Despite the conceptual overlaps in the existing literature, *global order*, however, must be understood in terms of two meanings that are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but are analytically distinct: *global order as polarity* and *global order as global governance* of inter-state relations. Therefore, it is important to specify which of these are meant by the term when using it. *Global order as polarity* refers to global distribution of power. In other words, it is the structure of international relations that is most famously understood and debated by structural realism (Waltz 1979, Mearsheimer, 2001), Marxism and world system theory (Wallerstein, 1974). *Global order as global governance* refers to the global processes and institutional arrangements that facilitate cooperation and global decision making

involving states. *Global order* as *global governance* of inter-state relations can be conceptualized as *global international order*. A major perspective on this understanding of *global order* is neo-liberalism/liberal institutionalism and English school. These two meanings of the term are discussed in the following:

Global order as Polarity

Global order as polarity is essentially about great power relations. Polarity concerns the distribution of power at the global level. While multi-polarity defined the international system from the beginning of the Westphalian system, it was ended by the second world war in 1945. After the WWII, the global system became bi-polar with USA and the USSR dominating the world politics throughout the cold war period until the collapse of the USSR at the end of 1991. The post-Cold war *global order* has been defined in terms of uni-polarity, with the US being the only dominant global power though an emerging literature are discussing the end of American global hegemony (Acharya, 2018a; Cooley, 2017; Mazarr, 2017, Haass, 2017; Falk, 2016).

Discussing *global order* in terms of polarity basically means that *global order* needs to be sought in terms of balance of power among great powers. “Balance of power” is a key term associated with structural realism in IR, and also English school theory. Philosophically, structural realism starts with classical realists’ Hobbesian belief about human nature as power seeking; like Hobbes Morgenthau argued that the struggle for power is “inseparable from social life itself” (Morgenthau, 1948: 17-18). Politics, including international politics, Morgenthau believed was inherently about power. While in domestic politics, the struggle for power is ritualized though norms, institutions and laws, the struggle for power in international politics remain anarchical; it is “a brutal arena where states look for opportunities to take advantage of each other” (Mearsheimer, 1994-95). In such a system, realists argue that states tend to further build up their capabilities to secure themselves or deter other states. This, according to realism is a continuous feature of international politics.

The struggle for power requires that states seek ‘balance of power’; “a general social phenomenon to be found on all levels of social interaction” (Morgenthau, 1958: 49). While ‘balance of power’ might increase tension among states, it creates ‘deterrence’ and makes international politics more predictable because it can deter war if challengers see no advantage to gain at war. This is the core argument of defensive realism, which argues that states seek ‘balance of power’ to ensure security (Waltz, 1979; Glaser, 1997; Van Evera,

1999; Taliaferro, 2000). While the struggle for power could continue among great powers, it will continue to face acts of balancing at all ends. As such, balance of power becomes a standard behavior of great powers. Waltz (1979) argued that international relations are shaped by great power interactions that dominate and define the structure of the international system. From this perspective 'order' is primarily a question of "balancing" between great powers. According to Waltz, smaller states are engaged in "bandwagoning" with great powers. Waltz famously argued that it is the balancing behavior not bandwagoning that is "induced by the system". Polarity and balance of power among great powers therefore, are the heart of discussion of global order in structural realism.

Global order is essentially a system level concept. Its corresponding IR theories are those that directly deal with system level analysis. As explained, structural realism is a major theory that deals with the question of *global order* in terms of global distribution of power. Other theories include world system theory which defined world politics in terms of hierarchy composed of core and peripheral zones of the world (Wallerstein, 1974). The Western capitalist states (initially, the North-Western European states such as England, France and Holland) played a central role in the global economy and politics while some other regions of the world remained under exploitation of the external powers and played peripheral role in the international politics. Similarly, Marxist theory of international relations focused on the global distribution of wealth and control of means of production by capitalist states who acquired dominance at the expense of poorer nations (Anievas, 2010; Callinicos and Rosenberg, 2008, Berki, 1971). These theories therefore, can be regarded as global order theories, which are concerned with system-level analysis.

Global order as global governance: the concept of global international order

The conceptualization of *global order* as *global governance* shifts our focus away from polarity and great powers to international arrangements that facilitate decision making and international interaction among states. In this sense, the concept is directly concerned with the question of *international order*. The concept of *international order* has often been used interchangeably with both concepts of *world order* and *global order*. However, it is important to note that by *international order* is meant order among states. This centrality of the state as opposed to individuals or international organizations is important in defining the *international order*. In other words, states make the unit of analysis in *international order*. The concept of *international order* "is directed at stable and peaceful relations between

states; it is primarily concerned with military security – the elimination or repression of physical state violence” (Staden, 2007:15).

In this exclusive sense, the concept of *international order* refers to order among states. Hedley Bull, a core reference in English School theory defined the concept of *international order* defines it as “a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society” (Bull, 1977: 8). Bull makes it very explicit what the concept is supposed to mean: “international order is order among states” (Bull, 2002:19). Bull does not call it *global order* and avoids the term throughout his book *The Anarchical Society*. In this narrow sense, the concept of *international order* is different from concepts of *global order* as *polarity* and *world order* as defined earlier.

In terms of IR theories, *international order* makes the subject of discussions those with explicit focus on centrality of states in international relations. State-centric theories include realism – both classical and structural realism-, English School and neo-liberalism. While there are considerable overlaps among all theories of IR in regards to all taxonomies of order explained in this section, some groups of IR theories find major synergies at one level than another. For example, classical liberalism is more concerned with the question of non-state actors, individualism and ‘fear’ of the statist order to recall Rengger, while neo-liberalism is state-centric. Neo-liberalism “like structural realism considers states to be unitary, rational, utility-maximizing actors who dominate global affairs” (Sterling-Folker in Dunne, Kurki and Smith, 2010: 117). Therefore, liberalism is more a theory of *world order* while neo-liberalism is a theory of *global order* as *global governance* of inter-state relations or simply, the *international order*. Similarly, while both realism and structural realism focus on state level analysis, neo-realism, as explained earlier, is primarily about polarity and great power politics, and thus, its concerned more on system level analysis.

Despite sharing the belief in the centrality of states, state-centric theories of IR see *international order* very differently. A standard reference for realism, both classical and structural, is the concept of ‘anarchy’. *Order* in realism is essentially a question of effective central authority. In the absence of a central authority in international relations *order* is a permanently missing phenomenon as states are constantly working on their power capacities to ensure their security. It is important to note that classical realism does not see ‘balancing’ as a source of *international order*. Morgenthau for example, saw order in terms of social and moral standards and a strong sense of community. Balancing may increase tension among states and may trigger war. However, ‘balancing’ can help *international order* in a particular

way: the idea of ‘balance of power’ is essentially about creating some degree of *stability* or *predictability* in terms of what to expect from states. The ‘balance of power’ has gradually become a sustained and shared understanding between major powers in conducting their relations giving it more stability in terms of how to understand international relations.

This argument is most famously and most comprehensively advanced by the English School theory of international relations (Bull, 1977/2002; Watson, 1992; Buzan, 2001; 2004; 2014; 2015; Linklater and Sugami, 2006; Dunne, 1998). English School draws on the historical analysis of development of international relations in terms of shared understandings and practices that have transformed the otherwise, anarchic nature of international relations, into a structured or somewhat orderly system. English School theory argues how certain practices such as ‘balance of power’ in international relations have become a standard behavior for states in international relations (Butterfield and Wight, 1966; Bull, 1977; Bull and Watson, 1984; Watson, 1992). In the congress of Vienna for example, “[t]he preservation of a balance of power was elevated to the status of an objective consciously pursued by international society as a whole [...]” (Bull, 1977:35). As such, it became an institution of international society without which “...the ‘softer’ elements of international order (international law, international organizations, the existence of shared values) would be so many castles in the air” (Hurrell in Bull, 1977: viii). Rengger (2000:38) argued that “[t]he centrality of ‘balance’ as a way of thinking about international order is thus made manifest in many aspects of the thinking and practice of international relations over the last 200 years”. Institutions such as balance of power, diplomacy, war, international law etc, have shaped common understanding of practices and principles of international relations. They constitute the social institutions of what English School calls the international society. The idea of society of states implies the existing of a social order among states sustained though conformity to standards of behavior and expectations.

Neo-liberalism, while maintaining that the international system is anarchic and state-centric, argues that states are rational entities that do not always and only seek power and conflict. States have other ‘preferences’ (Moravcsik, 1997) that require cooperation. The international system according to neo-liberals demonstrates moments of cooperation more than conflict and therefore, cooperation is not only possible, but also actively pursued by states as a matter of collective reasoning or rationality. International cooperation becomes possible when states “adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others” so that “the policies actually followed by one government are regarded by its partners

as facilitating realization of their own objectives” (Keohane, 1984:51). This condition, according to neo-liberalism is facilitated through multi-lateral institutions crafted by governments to pursue and advance shared interest, and international regimes to regulate the international relations by introducing regulatory environment for interaction and decision making. International regimes which consist of “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms rules and decision making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (Krasner, 1983:2) provide an institutional structure and hence, *order*, to the otherwise, anarchic relations among states in the international system.

Regional Order

The concept of regional order is part of the taxonomy of order in IR that was discussed above. Like other concepts above, the concept of *regional order* represents both a level of analysis and analytical category. Moreover, it is also a distinct analytical construct reflecting geographic peculiarities of *order* that IR theory has, generally speaking, overlooked. In terms of definition, some scholars have defined *regional order* exclusively in terms of power dynamics, conflict and stability. Acharya, for example believes that regional order is “geopolitical concept” that “refers mainly to the balance of stability and conflict” (Acharya, 2018a). Lake and Morgan (1997:12) have defined regional order as “the mode of conflict management within a security complex.” The geopolitical understanding of the term implies that regional order relies primarily on distribution of power. It is understood as a “power asymmetry” in a “regional international system composed of a regional great power and a number of small powers” (Zimmerman, 1972: 18). Some scholars have defined regional order in terms of the extension of a great power’s influence into the peripheral zones through ‘consensual bargaining’. Kupchan (1998: 42–43) argues that regional orders emerge “from consensual bargain between core and periphery, not from coercion. The core engages in self-restraint and agrees to subject the exercise of its preponderant power to a set of rules and norms arrived at through multilateral negotiation. In return, the periphery enters willingly into the core’s zone of influence”.

However, regions represent more than geopolitics and balance of power; regions are constellation of states representing not only power, but also social and normative bounds due to geographical proximity. The *order* in regional setting does not depend only on power, but inter-subjective understanding of the conduct of international affairs. Leifer (1986:1-2) for example, defines regional order in terms of “the existence of a stable structure of regional

inter-governmental relationships informed by common assumptions about the bases of inter-state conduct”. Leifer argues:

It is possible to argue that the general pattern of the regional balance in East Asia in terms of distribution of power embodies a measure of stability from a sense of prudence. But it is not the same as a viable regional order which requires more than just a rudimentary code of inter-state conduct. It requires also the existence of a set of shared assumptions about the interrelationships among resident and external states (1986: 152).

Therefore, the concept of *regional order* is not a mere geopolitical concept; it is a much richer concept representing regional peculiarities of international order. Acharya recommends using the concept of ‘regional world’ instead of *regional order* to capture the various dynamics of regions from geopolitics and economics to culture, regionalism and regional institutions that shape stability and cooperation in regions (Acharya, 2018a:80-81). However, the “regional worlds” does not seem to offer a good substitute for the concept of *regional order* because “world” represents a much bigger category compared to region. In this regard, the English school’s concept of ‘society’ seems to offer the best conceptual alternative to “worlds”. As discussed later in this chapter, the concept of *regional international society* brings several analytical strengths to the concept of *regional order*, which in addition to power dynamics include shared norms and notions about order, and some forms of common social institutions. It represents what Buzan (2014:13) calls “intersubjective understanding” of rules and norms of inter-state interaction that “not only condition [states’] behaviour but also define the boundaries of a social system”.

An important question regarding the concept of *regional order* is that how is it different from the concept of *international order*. A general answer is that it is not fundamentally different. *Regional order* is a conceptual tool to understand the configuration of international order in regional settings given regions’ specific dynamics and characteristics. Although both *international order* and *regional order* involve order among states, the concepts are nevertheless different from each other in the sense that the latter gives a characteristic to the former e.g. specific group of states within the wider international system. Moreover, the concept of *regional order* introduces a new level of analysis in international relations that is significant. While *international order* means order among states involving all states in the international system, *regional order* means that there are sub-systems in the wider international system. As such, it is significantly different from the concept of international order.

A useful way to capture both difference and similarities of the concepts of *international order* and *regional order* is to revise or modify both concepts in terms of *global international order* and *regional international order*. This revision/modification captures not only the ontological difference between the two concepts, but also the significantly important issue of levels of analysis. By *global international order* is meant international order at global level, involving *global order* as governance of inter-state relations explained above under the second meaning of the *global order*. Calling it *global international order* can also help to differentiate between the concept of *global order as polarity* and *global order as governance*. *Regional international order* refers to international order at regional level. Regional politics are also international politics because it involves relations among nation-states. However, there are regional variations in the way international politics is organized across the world.

This modification is significant in some other respects too: *global international order* suggests that some notions of *order* have globalized such as the Westphalian notion of sovereignty and territorial integrity, while *regional international order* implies that some such notions have not been globalized or have remained regional such as Chinese notion of “harmony under heaven” or the Islamic notion of “Caliphate” and “Umma” in the historical context of Islamic empires in the Middle East, parts of Asia and Africa. Kissinger (2014), by arguing that there has not been a “truly global world order” offers a perspective on how different regions of the world have had different conceptions of *order*, which can support the differentiation between *global international order* and *regional international order*. *Global international order* in this context depicts the process of globalization of norms, principles and identities that have once been regional. This is the core of the *Expansion of International Society* (Bull and Watson, 1985) argument that describes the historical development of the models, principles, institutions and practices of international relations.

In terms of IR theories, the concept of *regional order* does not feature in mainstream IR theories as a major concept because of IR’s primary focus on global politics. Its usage in international relations can generally be linked to the rise of regionalism in world politics. Regional international order entails a specific taxonomy of order and level of analysis in international relations, which requires its own theories. Most of the mainstream IR theories offer little theoretical insight to the discussion on *regional international order*; classical realism does not touch upon the question of regional order, while structural realism more directly deals with global order than the regional level order (Waeber and Buzan, 2003: 6-

7). Liberalism's main focus is on individualism, cosmopolitanism, international law and institutions.

Of the mainstream theories, neo-liberalism and English School are the main IR theories that can be applied to the study of regional international order with the latter being the most important one offering a comprehensive theoretical framework, which is also making the main theoretical framework for this thesis. Other IR approaches that have been applied to the question of *regional international order* are Hegemonic Stability Theory (HTS) (Kindleberger, 1973; Keohane, 1984; Gilpin, 1987), and Watson's (2007) Pendulum Theory which has also been used to analyze regional international politics within the framework empire-anarchy continuum. The HST argues that stability or maintenance of an international order requires long term support from a hegemonic power with economic, political, military capabilities to take a leadership role and set the rules and norms of international affairs. Robert Keohane and Robert Gilpin have further advanced the theory. For Keohane (1984:132) dominance of a hegemon in an international system, who controls valued goods such as raw materials and has the comparative advantage over weak states, such as the production of advanced technology, leads to the establishment of strong international regimes by the hegemonic power that ensures order. Similarly, for Gilpin (1987), international order is the product of political leadership by a hegemonic power who has the will and the political, military and economic resources to maintain that order.

HST can be successfully applied to *regional international order*, where the focus is on the regional powers or regional hegemonic powers and their relations with smaller states. In an increasingly regionalized world, regional powers become the focus of power-centric analyses. However, in empirical terms, regional dynamics are much more complex than it can be reduced to the material power of regional hegemons. As explained in the second part of this chapter, regional orders are subject to contestations and re-negotiations by smaller states and material power alone cannot produce regional international order.

Another power-centric theory that can apply to the study of regional international order is Watson's pendulum theory. Watson (2007) by analyzing the history of international relations argues that international relations swing between two extreme ends of a continuum: a world government e.g. empire and anarchy. In between these two ends are dominion, suzerainty, and hegemony. While the international system swing between the two extremes, Watson argues that general tendency is towards hegemony. This perspective has been applied to regional contexts by some researchers among which Saivetz (2012) who used the

framework to explain Russia's relationship with other post-Soviet states. Watson is one of the main figures in the English School theory as well. The English School theory's perspective on regional international order is discussed in the theory chapter of this thesis.

Conclusions

The conceptual discussion on the concept of order provided in this chapter demonstrated that despite being the central theme of international relations, IR theories' understanding of the term is largely inconsistent. A common understanding of what is meant by order, and particularly, how to achieve order in international relations, is absent. That is primarily because different IR theories engage in different levels of analysis. For example, the focus on *international institutions* as source of order is a common theoretical point of departure for both liberalism and neo-liberalism. But, in some very specific aspects the two streams of the theory vary from each other, rather in substantive way: liberalism tends to decrease the role of the state by focusing on international law, non-state actors and individuals as subjects of international law, while the state remains a central focus on neo-liberalism. The same is true for realism. While both realism and structural realism focus on the central role of the state and *balance of power*, the latter is more concerned with great power relations and questions of polarity than international relations as such.

The above discussion offers a framework in terms of taxonomy of order to help not only distinguish the various formulations of the concept of order in terms of levels of analysis, but also classify IR theories according to that taxonomy. While the conceptual overlaps are an inherent component of IR theories, organizing IR theories in terms of the above discussed taxonomy can be helpful to clear some of the existing problems in IR theories concerning the question of order, particularly the interchangeable use of the various formulations of the concept of order in IR. As discussed above, there is considerable ambiguity about the concept of order, particularly in terms of the various formulations of it in the IR literature. Concepts such as world order, global order, international order and regional order present not only different analytical constructs, but also level of analysis and theories. Differentiating between them is crucial for understanding the discussion on regional order, which is a distinct concept and level of analysis in its own right.

The above conceptual distinctions are important for theoretical discussion and analysis of regional international order, which is the main focus of this thesis. The mainstream IR theories often fail to provide a proper framework for studying regional order. Having differentiated it from other formulations of order in the IR literature, this thesis uses

regional international order as opposed to global international order throughout this thesis to refer to a distinct conceptual category that represent regional peculiarities within the global international order. The next chapter offers an in-depth theoretical discussion of theories of regional international order.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Region as unit of analysis: a brief survey of theories and approaches

As discussed in the conceptual discussions in the previous chapter, regional international order represents a peculiar notion and level of analysis in IR which requires its own theoretical frameworks to study it. With the rise of regionalism in world politics several perspectives that deal directly with the question of regional international relations have been developed in IR literature. These perspectives include regionalism and integration, Regional Security Complex theory, The New Regionalism theory, and English School theory. ‘Security Community’ can be another approach to the study of region, and some scholars (Koschut, 2014; Acharya, 2001; Bøås, 2000; Adler and Barnett, 1998) have used the framework to study developments in regions. However, Security Community is type of *order* rather than a theory of *regional international order*. A security community basically means that international affairs of a region or groups of states are completely de-securitized. Therefore, security community is a concept depicting a condition of peaceful relations, hence, a type of *order* among a group of states.

Of the main perspectives mentioned above, the RSC theory was discussed earlier in the context of the literature on post-Soviet studies. While being a major theory of region, the RSC theory fails to capture the normative and ideational features that make up a regional order. Hence, the theory was argued to offer limited perspective on theorizing regional order in the post-Soviet space. The regionalism and integration perspective is not a theory per se. Regionalism and integration is the overarching idea or principle – referring to the process and politics of regionalization of security and economy, region building and identity building. As such, it is not a single theory of regional order as such. Fawcett defines regionalism is an “ideology” aimed at pursuing and promoting “common goals in one or more issue areas” in a given region, and it “ranges from promoting a sense of regional awareness or community (soft regionalism), through consolidating regional groups and networks, to pan- or sub-regional groups formalized by interstate arrangements and organizations (hard regionalism)” (Fawcett 2004: 431). A classic example of regionalism involving building of regional order is integration in Western Europe, after 1945. Instigated by US Administrations, the creation of NATO in 1949 and of the European Communities in 1957 served the dual purpose of containing the threats emanating from the Soviet bloc and of consolidating a Western identity around these two institutions. Another example includes the politics of regionness in Latin American, which was aimed at building of a regional

identity of “Latin Americanness” *vis-à-vis* the USA based on a singular Latin American community defined in terms of Hispanism or Catholicism (Emerson 2014: 567).

Regionalism and integration, therefore, are elements of regional order and thus, subjects of analysis in regional order studies, not a theory of regional order as such. A theory of regional order will look at regionalism and regional integration as processes of order making. These processes often bring competing visions and regional imaginaries. These different visions and imaginaries are, thus, subject of analysis in regional order as different ideas of order. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, they make up the power dynamics involving the discussion of regional order.

The New Regionalism Theory (NRT) (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000) deserves greater attention, because the perspective offers an interesting view on regional order in terms of regionness - the process through which a region is transformed from a ‘passive object’ to an ‘active subject’ that can articulate a common interest (Hettne and Söderbaum 2000:461). This perspective offers a framework for understanding order as social cohesiveness and articulation of a common interest, which is interesting because it creates a synergy between NRT and the English School. The theory also speaks of the concept of regional society, which is at the heart of theorization in English School literature. However, the theories rather lineal and evolutionary understanding of the region makes it an entirely abstract approach to the study of region with little empirical relevance.

For example, In the process of ‘regionness’, Hettne and Söderbaum (2000: 465-470) have identified five levels of development. The first level is the existence of *Regional Space* that is understood as “a primarily geographical unit, delimited by more or less natural physical barriers and marked by ecological characteristics.” The existence of a regional space is regarded to be foundational because region cannot be considered in isolation or in vacuum. Second, *Regional Complex* is understood as “increased social contacts” or widened “translocal relations—positive and/or negative—between human groups and influences between cultures ‘little traditions’ that is also understood as ‘conflict formation’ or ‘regional (in) security complex’.” Third, *Regional Society* is understood as the “transcendence of national space” through which different actors appear at a societal level and make “use of a more rule-based pattern of relations”. Fourth, *Regional Community* is understood as “a convergence and compatibility of ideas, organizations and processes within a particular region.” Finally, the emergence of a *Region-state* is understood as the highest level of

integration or the ultimate outcome of the process of regionalization whose “cultural heterogeneity can be compared to the classical empires.”

The five development phases of region described by the NRT concerns “regionnes”, meaning how cohesive a region is. Although it does not address the question of order explicitly, the main point of the theory concerns the presence and absence of a region in terms of ‘sense of community’. The reference to ‘sense of community’, which is also central to the concept of order in classical realism and English School makes the NRT an interesting approach. However, the theory’s lineal and evolutionary description of regionness makes it rather too ideal-typical and even an entirely abstract project. In empirical terms, no region resembles evolution from regional space to regional state, not to mention that the idea of regional state is essentially redundant or meaningless because a regional state is basically a state, not a region anymore. In other words, if a larger state develops, it will simply take over the meaning of region because the region will be replaced by a state or federal state such as the USA Canada or Russia. The question then whether the NRT is a theory of region or a theory of nation-state?

While NRT offers a useful conceptualization of regional order in terms of ‘sense of community’, its lineal and evolutionary understanding of region lacks ontological validity. Thus, the approach remains largely abstract and empirically unsupported. The EU in some way resembles this development, but whether the EU is a state or a confederation of state, or an international organization can be contested. This thesis argues that the English School theory of international relations offers a better perspective and the necessary conceptual tools to study regional international orders, and tackle the central puzzle of this thesis concerning the relative stability of the post-Soviet regional order in terms of Russia’s continued primacy since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Introducing the English School theory

After years of neglect, the English School theory of international relations is re-emerging as one of the main theoretical frameworks in the study of international relations and security as well as regional international politics. It is re-emerging in the face of many previous criticisms including its rejection as an IR theory. For example, in his article in the *Review of International Studies* Jones (1981) called for the closure of the English School arguing that it does not offer a theory of international relations and has “cut itself off the classical theme of political thought” (Jones, 1981: 2). Jones also believed that the body of work produced by the British Committee did not reflect the British liberal tradition of

economic and political studies. Therefore, Jones suggested the English School to be closed. However, three decades later, the English School is now re-emerging and being recognized as an important social theory of international politics and security with wide range of application potentials. The revival of the English School is credited to many scholars, particularly Tim Dunne (1998) who wrote his PhD thesis on the history of the English School, and Barry Buzan (2011) who called for the revival of the English School 30 years after Jones had called for its closure.

The name 'English School' was given by Roy Jones (Jones, 1981) to a body of work initially produced by the members of the British Committee on The Theory of International Politics, which was created in 1959 and brought together a team of distinguished scholars of the time among them, Herbert Butterfield, Adam Watson, Martin Wight, and Hedley Bull. There has been some debate about the accuracy or appropriateness of the name "English School" given that some of the most prominent figures in the school's tradition of thinking were not English. For example, Hedley Bull was Australian and Charles Manning, the founding professor of the department of IR in LSE and who is believed to have influenced the work of the British Committee was a South African.

However, the term "English School" has now been generally accepted by scholars as referring not to the nationality of the scholars who contributed to shaping this tradition of thinking, but to the English institutions (Cambridge, Oxford and LSE mainly) where this perspective was developed as result of over three decades of discussions on core principles and history of international politics. Therefore, the English School shall not be equated with the British Committee; while the British Committee was largely an exclusive group, the English School does not have fixed boundaries (Dunne, 1998:5).

Today, the English School encompasses works of a diverse group of scholars and researchers who are working to revise/revisit and/or further advance the theoretical and methodological arguments of the English School theory as well as finding new areas of its application such as in international security and regional level analysis of international politics. The English School literature today includes a wide range of research programs that look into historical, social, and normative dynamics of international politics as well as international security. An emerging body of literature includes analysis of regional international politics from this perspective.

The English School is not a single theory of International relations. It is rather a 'cluster' of Ideas (Linklater and Suganami, 2006) converging around concepts such as

international society as opposed to international anarchy. Some scholars such as Waltz (1998) dismissed Bull and Wight's writings as a theory, perhaps seeing them not fitting the positivist definition of the theory (Dunne in Dunne, Kurki and Smith, 2010:138). Whether the English School is a theory or not depends on the definition of the theory. In the north American sense of the term, a theory is mostly understood in terms of a proposition or 'a testable hypothesis' that seeks to explain a causal mechanism, while the European understanding of a theory lies in a systematic organization of a field in terms of inter-related concepts and categories (Buzan, 2014a: 24). The English School theory is a theory in the European sense of the term. Moreover, it is a theoretical inquiry that can be also called as a synthesis of the mainstream IR theories on one hand, and a distinct historical and sociological approach to the question of order in international relations on the other hand. Therefore, it remains to be both theoretically and methodologically eclectic while having its own specific novelties in terms of a number of concepts including the concepts of *international society* itself. Robert Jackson introduces English School as:

A variety of theoretical inquiries which conceive of international relations as a world not merely of power or prudence or wealth or capability or domination but also one of recognition, association, membership, equality, equity, legitimate interests, rights, reciprocity, customs and conventions, agreements and disagreements, disputes, offenses, injuries, damages, reparations, and the rest: the normative vocabulary of human conduct (Jackson 1992:271).

The English School is built around some fundamental similarities in views and writings of not only members of the British Committee, but also those outside the committee such as Manning and Carr who shared the traditions' core assumptions and theoretical points of departure e.g. the international society, role of history and norms in the development of the international politics (Dunne, 1998). Considering that the English School is has been a collaborative intellectual project, diversity of opinion has been a major feature of the school. The most notable classic division within the tradition is the pluralist and solidarist orientations. The *pluralists* focus on 'co-existence' and diversity of ideas, values and views on politics across different states and societies whose stable relations require respect for states' sovereignty and independence, while *solidarists* focus on the idea of global justice or 'just order' in international society. This conceptual division introduces also a methodological difference along the pluralist –solidarist divide in English School with pluralism focusing more on empirical order and solidarism being occupied mostly by normative discourse. Methodologically, the pluralist orientation focuses on the idea of state as the central actor, and institutions such as the international laws that govern inter-state

interactions. The solidarist orientation goes beyond the state level analysis and considers the world society- the society of humankind at large- as its main concern. Such divisions, which trace back to modern intellectual debates, have defined the development of the English School theory by giving it normative, historical and social-constructivist dimensions. It is a tradition of thinking that can be internally diverse and eclectic in nature, while being externally distinct in terms of its social approach to the study of international politics.

Linklater and Suganami (2006:43) identify three orientations within the ES tradition: structural, functional and historical. The *structural orientation* focuses on the institutional dimension of the international politics. The *functional orientation* focuses on the role of norms and rationalism or the sociological aspects of international relations. The *historical orientation* focuses on the historicity and historical development of international politics and its institutions as well as the ideas that have shaped international politics. These orientations are not necessarily representing divisions but highlighting dimensions of the English School theory. Often, the works of key figures of the school, Hedley Bull for example, include both structural and normative discussions. In fact, the English School can successfully reconcile theories and concepts from other traditions and disciplines. Therefore, it is sometimes regarded as a middle-ground theory between other dominant theories such as realism and idealism which offers “a synthesis of different theories and concepts” and “purports to offer an account of IR which combines theory *and* history, morality *and* power, agency *and* structure (Dunne, in Dunne, Kurki and Smith, 2010:135).

The English School theory is known in terms of three core concepts such as the *international system*, *international society*, and *world society*, which are often referred to as the triad of key concepts (Buzan, 2014; Cutler 1991; Little 1995). According to Buzan (2014: 12) *international system* “is about power politics among states and puts the structure and process of international anarchy at the centre of IR theory”. *International system* is more commonly understood in terms of anarchy, and as such, it is at the heart of other mainstream theories such as realism and neo-realism. Sometimes, the concept of *states-system* or *system of states* are used to refer to *international society* (Buzan, 2014: 12). However, Bull distinguishes system of states from international society. According to him a “system of states is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another’s decisions, to cause them to behave - at least in some measure - as parts of a whole” (Bull, 2002: 9). International society, discussed in greater depth in the next section, represents a case for common interests, values and institutions that

go beyond contact among states. While they are not interchangeable, the two concepts relate to each other in the sense that the existence of an *international society* presupposes the existence of an *international system*. An international society cannot form if states do not interact with each other.

In other words, the existence of an international system is a necessary condition for forming of an international society, but it is not sufficient. The *system of states* shall also be differentiated from the *international system* as defined above. *World society* refers to the society of individual humankind that transcends states or national societies. According to Buzan (2014: 13) “*world society* takes individuals, non-state organizations and ultimately the global population as a whole as the focus of global societal identities and arrangements and puts transcendence of the state system at the centre of IR theory”. Other concepts include *social institutions* (primary and secondary) and *standards of civilization*, which are defined next in close connection with the concept of international society and are central to the arguments of the English School.

The English School Argument: International Society

As described above, the central concept of the English School theory is the concept of *international society*. The concept constitutes the theoretical niche of the English School, and “its main focus” (Buzan, 2014b:13). It is the single, most important concept that presents also an argument in itself: the argument that beyond the “formally anarchical” structure of world politics, there is a “substantively orderly” “society of states” (Linklater and Suganami, 2006: 35). This view is radically different from the realist understanding of international politics which sees the world in terms of anarchy. By proposing the concept of *society* the English School theory offers an alternative view to that of realist interpretation of international politics.

In terms of definitions, Hedley Bull, one of the classic authors of the English School defines *international society* as “a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, [that] form a society in the sense that they 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” (Bull, 1977/2002:13). Similarly, Barry Buzan, one of the key contributors to the revival of English School in the last two decades, defines international society as “the institutionalization of shared interests and identity amongst states and the creation and maintenance of shared norms, rules and institutions amongst them” (Buzan, 2012: 36).

The above definitions of international society indicate that international society is understood in terms of at least three elements or components. *First*, international society is a society composed of **states**. In other words, states are the building blocks or core institutions of international society. This makes the English School theory largely a state centric theory of IR. However, the centrality of states in this definition does not completely exclude other actors such as groups, NGOs and INGOs and individuals. International organizations such as the specialized bodies within the UN and other global entities play an important role in international society, where they are recognized as actors, negotiators or even initiators of regulations and international regimes. Together with states, these non-state actors form what Andrew Hurrell (2007) calls “complex governance” of world politics where non-state actors –right groups for examples- and networks of private companies – or private powers- play significant roles in (re)shaping the international society and act as part of it. Individuals too, play a fundamental role in international society. In fact, the concept of states is closely connected to individuals such as diplomats and leaders who “are the real agents of international society” (Dunne, in Dunne, Kurki and Smith, 2010:143). The reference to the central role of *states* in Bull’s definition of international society involves the practice and recognition of sovereignty (Dunne, 2010:143). This concerns the leaders and diplomatic representatives acting as sovereign actors and representing their respective states in relation to each other. It is important to note that while states remain the main unit of analysis in international society, they are studied in terms of the interactions of leaders and most importantly in terms of diplomatic community bound by a diplomatic culture. Therefore, the states are the diplomatic communities, and the agency of state is understood in terms of the agency of those representing the states.

Second, international society is composed of a group of states “bound by common set of rules”. Common set of rules imply that inter-state interactions are more or less institutionalized or governed by a set of **social institutions**. Social institutions are an integral part of the concept of international society. Two types of social institutions have been identified in the English School literature: primary social institutions and secondary social institutions. Primary social institutions are broadly defined in terms of norms, principles and values that govern the conduct of international politics. They refer to “deep and durable social practices” that have “evolved” rather than been “designed” and they “define not only the basic character of states, but also their patterns of legitimate behaviour in relations to each other” (Buzan, 2014: 16). Examples of *primary social institutions*

include principles such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, balance of power, international law, diplomacy and war. These are classic examples defining a Westphalian international system as Bull (2002) and Buzan (2014) introduce. Values and principles such as human rights, gender equality, environmental security or even market can be regarded as *primary social institutions* of liberal international society. Primary social institutions constitute the international order as a condition for achieving the common goals and secure shared interest. In a constructivist sense, they also inform the conduct of international affairs, set the standards of expectations, and define the legitimate and the illegitimate action.

Secondary social institutions refer to formal international and intergovernmental organizations that are crafted by states for “functional purposes” (Buzan, 2014:17). They are products of the primary social institutions to promote shared interest and common goals of states member to an international society. Examples in Liberal-Capitalist international society include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organizations. Institutions such as the United Nations, Human Rights regimes and other international organizations that are created to promote or protect specific interests are other examples of secondary social institutions.

The *third* element of international society is **Identity**. Identity is embedded in the idea of society of states defined as “institutionalization of shared interests and identity” (Buzan, 2012: 36). In Bull’s definition, the idea of “group of states” that conceive themselves to be “bound by common rules and share in the working of common institution” implies the element of identity in international society, particularly where international society is defined in terms of dynamics of membership i.e. inclusion and exclusion. The idea of international society as ‘bound by a common set of rules’ distinguishes between states who share those ‘common set of rules’ and those who do not. This constitutes the social boundaries of international society, and defines the identity in terms of peer-recognition and membership in international society. Identity therefore, is a key component of the definition of international society (Dunne et al, 2010: 143). Identity as membership is embedded in the idea of international society as an inter-subjective understanding and awareness of common values and interests. This awareness is the source of identity in international society.

Buzan states that “society of states” refers to a shared or “intersubjective understanding” of rules and norms of inter-state interaction that “not only condition [states’] behaviour but also define the boundaries of a social system” (Buzan, 2014:13). This means that international society is not an inclusive concept. Rather, it involves an exclusive social

contract based on membership and standard of behavior. As Wight (1991:137) argues similar to that of national societies, international society is constituted by its own social contract. This social contract allows for practices of inclusion and exclusion which is central to identity debate in international relations. For example, based on certain standards for defining membership in international societies, some states may not be recognized as equal-sovereign members of international society by member states and not be treated as such. Contemporary examples may include unrecognized states e.g. Abkhazia, South-Ossetia or territories such as the Palestine. Nineteen century example includes China, which was not recognized by European states as an equal sovereign state despite the existence of economic interactions among them (Dunne, 2010: 143). As such, membership in the international society defines also the identity of ‘others’ who are not seen as part of the community.⁷

Identity as membership in international society is most clearly characterized in the context of the English School’s rather problematic concept of *standard of civilization* referring to practices and standards of behaviors e.g. cultural traits conceived to be unique to members of certain club of states, in this case, the European international society. Historically, the term “comes from international law and diplomatic and international legal practice, where it became deeply embedded during the nineteenth century” (Buzan, 2014: loc.457). Although the vocabulary of “standard of civilizations” is no more in use in the international discourse, the politics of it in terms of various conditionality put ahead for membership in certain groups of states and international organizations remains in practice.

As controversial as it may be the *standard of civilizations* refers to a hierarchical representation of states and peoples in relation to membership in specific clubs of states or even international society. Classifications such as “civilized” and “barbarian” that once were used to “gatekeep on entry to European, and later Western, international society” (Buzan, 2014a:17) in the nineteenth century are vivid example of how international societies and membership to them were conditioned to states observing certain norms and behaving in certain ways. Stivachtis (2008: 80) has argued that “despite the major changes that have occurred, the standard of “civilization” has remained an international practice as well as a benchmark against which the attitudes and policies of states are assessed. Nowhere can this

⁷ The example of China touches upon the distinction above on the difference between “system of states” and “society of states”. In the example of China- Europe relations in the nineteenth century, the interaction between the two civilizations demonstrated the existence of a system of states, but the European states did not recognize China as an equal member of international society.

be seen more clearly than in the EU policy of membership conditionality. Such dynamics of inclusion and exclusion closely relate to the question of identity in international society.

International Society and international order

The three elements or components of the concept of international society elaborated above interplay to present international society in terms of **orderly relations** among states as opposed to anarchic system of states. Therefore, the argument of society is essentially about order in international relations, because to assume that states are “bound by common rules” i.e. social institutions and identity is to claim also that international relations take place in a social space and are thus regulated. In other words, IR does not happen in a social vacuum. This is a fundamental argument of the English School theory, which describes international relations in terms of order as opposed to anarchy. Therefore, international society represents international order and vice-versa. The concept of *order* cannot be delinked from the concept of international society, because is an integral part of the construct. In fact, the very concept of international society is aimed at addressing and defining order as the central problem of international relations (Bull, 2002; Ikenberry, 2012). Contrary to realism (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979) that defines international politics in terms of “static” systemic anarchy (Slobodchikoff, 2014) English School literature defines international politics in terms of order (Bull, 2002).

While representing international society, international order a distinct concept in English School theory too. A detailed discussion on the concept of order in international relations was presented in earlier in this thesis. To shortly recall, Bull defines order “a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society” (Bull, 2002: 8). At the most basic but universal level, these primary goals include protection against violence, truth or sanctity of promises, and stability of possession of property (Bull, 2002: 4). According to Bull, order in international society implies a social order understood as patterns of activities “closely connected with the conformity of human behaviour to rules of conduct, if not necessarily to rules of law” (Bull, 2002: 6). Order is the outcome of playing by the “common rules” that define the international society. “Common rules” could include a wide range of normative values and institutions that are socially productive; they create a system of expectation involving rationalism that may lead to some degree of trust and predictability. It is rational for the states to follow rules because their presence makes inter-state interaction somehow predictable. A common set of rules e.g. equality, sovereignty, respect to territorial integrity

etc., fill the content of a system of expectation that can be conceptualized as the ‘social structure’ of international society.

‘Structure’ in English School theory refers to the normative-institutional framework of inter-state interactions as opposed to realist understanding of the term which refers to the distribution of material capabilities. As Linklater and Suganami argue, the “word ‘structure’ is more closely associated with institutional framework of the world than with its polarity” (Linklater and Suganami, 2006:44). This is the essence of rationalism in the English School literature. States as entities interested in maintaining common rules as acts following reason and the fact that common rules make interactions predictable. It is possible that the common rules are not abided by all and in all times. Consequently, order is not a quality that is a constant feature of international politics. However, it is a sought-after social end, because it is irrational of the states to undermine all rules as it endangers stability, security and predictability of inter-state interactions; something that is too costly to deliberately work for. This is the basis of conceptualizing international society as orderly relations among states in global politics. Order, therefore, is an integral part of the construct of international society. Flockhart (2016) uses international order and international society interchangeably, which, given the discussion above, is justifiable because order implies society and society implies order as one constitutes the other. In this thesis, international society and international order are, therefore, understood to be one and the same in terms of their definitions and purpose.

From International Society to International Societies: The Concept of Regional International Society

A recent development in the English School literature concerns the study of regions. While Bull and Watson (1984:1) recognized the presence of “several regional international systems” in the world “each with its own distinctive rules and institutions, reflecting a dominant regional culture”, the classic English School literature, generally speaking, paid little attention to or even neglected the regional level analysis of the international society (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez (2009). Over the last decade, several research programs have focused on *regional international societies* such as the European international society (Stivachtis and Webber, 2011; Diez and Whitman 2002), Middle Eastern international society (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009), East Asian international society (Buzan and Zhang, 2014), and Central Asian international society (Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014; Buranelli, 2014).

This ‘regional turn’ (Buranelli, 2014) in the English School is important for both empirical and theoretical reasons. Empirically, “[c]ases such as the European Union suggest that clearly differentiated regional-level international societies can and do exist alongside and within the global-level one” (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: ix). According to Buzan, “[t]he empirical record suggests that different regional international societies can build on common global international society foundations, as they have done in Europe, the Islamic world and Southeast Asia (and earlier amongst the communist states)” (Buzan, 2004:18). With the rise of regionalism in IR and the emergence of centers of power across different regions of the world, international politics takes place increasingly within various ‘international societies’ as opposed to international society in singular form. In addition to being sub-global entities, these ‘international societies’ can be differentiated in terms of primary social institutions e.g. norms or the inter-subjective understanding of the norms, and questions of identity. They co-exist along the global core Western international society, interact with each other, and overlap in some regards while being distinct in some other respects.

Indeed, the global core international society as we know it is the result the globalization of a specific regional international society – the Western European international society. This indicates that a (regional) international society can both globalize and shrink depending on various material and non-material (normative-ideological) forces and factors. In fact, the story of international society as discussed in the classic English School literature is the story of expansion of the European regional international society (Buranelli in Ales Karmazin et al 2014). Therefore, the argument about regional international society is rooted in the history of international society itself.

The new research program on regional international societies underlines the regional nature of international society on one hand, and the differences in social organization of international politics across regions of the world on the other hand. This challenges the assumption about the homogeneity and universality of international society (Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Ales Karmazin et al., 2014). It is about understanding that there are differences in the way international societies are organized across different regions of the world. These differences can be mapped in terms of difference in the primary and secondary institutions i.e. norms, or different interpretation of the global norms (Buzan and Zhang, 2014, Buranelli, 2014), and as this thesis argues, in terms of power dynamics and identity.

Researching Regional International Societies

While it is becoming increasingly common to assume that there are regional variations in the way societies of states work, a research framework on how to identify and study regional international societies remains underdeveloped. The principal research agenda about regional international society is find out “whether or not significant, distinct international social structures exist at the regional level”, which can be differentiated from the global international society (Buzan and Zhang, 2014: 1). To find out, English School scholars have proposed certain frameworks for research. Buzan and Conzalez-Palaez, (2009) and Buzan and Zhang (2014:3) offer to study regional international societies in terms of “primary institutions” e.g. “sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, balance of power, international law, nationalism, human equality and suchlike”. By focusing on primary institutions the English School, they argue “sets out detailed criteria with which both to characterize types of international society and to differentiate regional international societies from each other and the Western–global one” (2014:3).

In studying the primary institutions as a framework for regional international society, the focus concerns on whether a region has its distinct norms i.e. that are different from the global international society, or it has a different understanding/interpretation of the same norms i.e. institutions (Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Buranelli, 2014; Karmazin at el., 2014; Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009). Illustrating this in the context of international human rights law, Lasmar at el. (2015) argues that “some norms, principles and values of international society that are taken for granted as being universal are in fact subject to specific regional interpretations” (Lasmar at el, 2015: 471). Lasmer further argues that different interpretation of such norms, principles, and values create “regional systems of norms” that are different, but nested within the global international society. This, first and foremost, concerns the regionalization of the global norms. The regionalization in this context means adopting global norms within a regional understanding and interpretation.

Focusing on the primary institutions, Buzan and Zhang suggests studying and characterizing regional international societies “in terms of four general attributes: their degree of differentiation from the Western–global core, their degree of differentiation from neighbouring regional international societies, their degree of internal homogeneity and integration, and their placement on a pluralist solidarist spectrum (is the principal governing logic of the region power political, coexistence, co-operation or convergence?)” (Buzan and Zhang, 2014:3). The ‘differentiation’ here refers to the difference in the primary institutions

in terms of how they are interpreted and also whether or not a region has its own distinct primary institution(s) i.e. norms. This is one approach for studying regional international society, which has been used in the existing literature.

Another approach focuses on secondary institutions i.e. regional organizations as a framework for studying the regional international society. This has been used in the context of South East Asia by looking at the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Narine, 2006; Quayle, 2013), and in the post-Soviet context in terms of the CIS (Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014). The EU is another example of institutional approach to the study of regional international society. Buzan (1993) argues that regional organizations may reflect the existence of a regional international society. Using this, Pourchot and Stivachtis argue that the CIS can be considered as such regional structure where member states have been socialized and developed the conduct of inter-state relations, common interests and arrangements to maintain agreements. Connected with primary social institutions in terms of values and norms they carry and promote, the secondary institutions can be used to analyze the social cohesion and integration within a region. Secondary institutions can be used to measure “1. The extent of dialogue and consent to common rules and institutions among states; 2, the nature of the conduct of inter-state relations; and 3, recognition of common interests in maintaining agreed upon arrangements” (Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014: 72). Strong cohesion along these parameters could indicate the presence of a regional international society as a “thin” form of an international system.

A third framework for studying regional international society can be found in Trine Flockhart’s article *The Coming Multi-Order World* (2016). Flockhart looks at “similar internal/domestic settings” among members of a supposed international society to define an international society. According to her:

The central question to ask when assessing if a cluster of states can be said to be an international society has to be if the participating states share a common interest in maintaining the order. Such a shared interest is likely to be more robust if they also share similar internal/domestic settings and when participating state benefit from staying a member (Flockhart 2016:15).

This perspective is useful in two important ways: first, it provides a research guide by looking at similarities in internal/domestic settings i.e. governance system of states. The domestic settings can reflect also norms and values – primary institutions. Domestic settings here can reflect the secondary social institutions. Second, Flockhart’s approach goes beyond international society as a primary IR/foreign policy and links it to the way international

societies are organized domestically. This provides a theoretical link between the domestic settings i.e. social structures and values and external relations of states and how they (states) relate to each other in a substantive way to create a shared interest. The existing literature speaks mostly of international society in foreign policy terms. Flockhart's conceptualization links the foreign policy aspect of the international society to the domestic social structure to create a more coherent understanding of international society as a socially embedded phenomenon in terms of the domestic structures of states.

This thesis builds on the above framework, by advancing Flockhart's framework in particular. In doing so, it looks not only at the primary social institutions, but also power and identity elements of regional international society as a means to theorize regional order in the post-Soviet space. As discussed above, international society and international order are one and the same. Therefore, this thesis defines regional international order primary in terms of regional international society, because the two are intertwined and mutually inclusive, and co constitutive of one another so that the conception one of is not possible without the other.

The two concepts of *society* and *order* are linked in another substantive way, which concerns the types of international societies. The types of international societies primarily represent the types of international order. Buzan (2014) identifies four types of international societies based on their social institutions. These are *Power Political*, *Coexistence*, *Cooperative* and *Convergence*. "Power political" represents Hobbesian/realist international society; the "coexistence" represents balance of power/pluralist or Grotian international society, and "cooperative and convergence" represent international joint projects, integration and extensive shared values across a range of social and political spheres (Buzan, 2015: 130-131). Buzan's typology of international societies is based on Wight's three traditions explained earlier in this chapter: The *Machiavellian realism* that views international relations in terms of conflict; the *Grotian rationalism*, which views the world as a society of states governed by the international law; and the *Kantian revolutionism* that is aimed at creating a global "just" community of mankind.

However, Buzan (2014:12-13) presents Wight's three tradition of thinking in terms of the triad of international system, international society and world society. He perceives the *Machiavellian realism* to represent the international system; *Grotianism/rationalism* to represent the international society; and *Kantian revolutionism* to represent the idea of world society. For Wight the triad represented first and foremost the history of ideas that affected

international politics. A major conclusion here is that the prevalence of each of these traditions of thinking would impact the type of international order in a constitutive way. This is the essence of constructivism in IR and so it is of the English School. The Westphalian order for example, demonstrates a form of social order among states governed by Westphalian norms and principles e.g. non-intervention and sovereignty, territoriality etc. The idea of international society, thus, represents primarily the idea of international order.

Considering the conceptual unity of international order and international society, this thesis uses the existing frameworks for the study of regional international society to study regional international order in the post-Soviet states. In doing so, the thesis further builds on the existing approaches, namely Buzan and Zhang's (2014) and particularly Flockhart' (2016), by synthesizing them in terms of a triad of power, social institutions and identity as an approach to the study of regional order, not only in the post-Soviet context, but more generally as a research agenda. The following introduces this framework as the main research framework of the thesis.

Researching Regional International Order: Introducing the triad of power, social institutions and identity framework

Flockhart suggests that an “ideal-typical international society can be thought of as a cluster of sovereign states (usually) converging around a leading state, where the society will be defined by power and identity and by its primary and secondary institutions” (Flockhart, 2016:15). Based on this definition, Flockhart defines society or international order in terms of four components of Power, Identity, primacy institutions, and secondary institutions. According to Flockhart, these four components are interconnected. “Change can occur in any one of the four component parts, but change in one component is likely to transplant to other components as all four are interlinked and have at least a degree of mutual constitutiveness” (Flockhart, 2016: 16). Flockhart's conceptualization of international society or international order offers a new theoretical framework particularly for studying regional international orders.

This thesis adopts Flockhart's conceptualization with a slight modification. The thesis excludes the secondary social institutions from the framework for two reasons: firstly, the concept of social institutions is inclusive of both primary and secondary social institutions. Secondary social institutions aim mostly at materialization of the shared normative, material and ideational interest of international society that rooted in the primacy

social institutions. Secondly, in the context of regional international societies, secondary social institutions, despite being crucial to materialization of shared interests, are a less consistent feature of regional order because they are often open to inter-regional membership. For example, the OSCE as secondary institution of international society consists of countries stretching from Russia to North America. Similarly, the SCO includes states regionally as diverse as China, post-Soviet states and South Asia. Regional organizations often overlap regionally both in terms of geographical membership and normative and ideational interests and values. Moreover, because they represent also power, regional organizations represent diverse, and sometimes, conflicting interest, regional imaginaries and identity discourse. Therefore, secondary institutions are not consistent or coherent features of international society. This is illustrated in the discussion on regionalism and region organizations in the post-Soviet space in the next chapter of this thesis.

Considering the above, this thesis modifies Flockhart's conceptualization of international order by excluding secondary institutions, and offers a triad of power, social institutions and identity framework to conceptualize and research regional international orders. The triad of power, social institutions and identity offers a comprehensive analytical framework, which helps not only research and identify regional international orders, but also differentiate them from one another and *vis-à-vis* the global core international society or international order.

Of the triad of power, social institutions and identity, social institutions were defined in details above. Here, power and identity and their relations with social institutions are explored in greater depth. Flockhart (2016:15) defines power and identity as the following:

The power component is derived from the material capabilities and resources available in the order – perhaps but not necessarily provided by the order's leading state. Power [is] a function of the ability of the order (or its leading state) to provide public goods and meet common challenges. The power component also includes soft power derived from nonmaterial factors such as internal cohesion through a stable identity and shared interests and magnetism through attractiveness and legitimacy. Moreover, the power component will also be a function of the strength and effectiveness of the order's primary and secondary institutions.

The identity component is derived from the order's self-understanding, core values and vision expressed through shared norms and social practice. The identity may be rooted in religion, culture, ethnicity or ideology or other strong identity signifiers. The identity is also likely to be reflected in the internal domestic governance arrangements.

Although “not necessarily dominant, as it is for realists,” *power* “is a key feature in English School thinking “(Buzan, 2014:26). It is in many ways a key element of international society in the English School literature. In the English School theory, power is almost

exclusively discussed in the context of two fundamental institutions of international society: The *balance of power* and *great power management*. Both terms refer to the relationship amongst big powers/actors in international relations. The idea of *balance of power* is essentially about creating some degree of stability and predictability in terms of what to expect from the powerful states. But it is also about ensuring that the social conventions of international society are upheld by all members, particularly the big actors. Balance of power is the hard element of international society without which “...the ‘softer’ elements of international order (international law, international organisations, the existence of shared values) would be so many castles in the air” (Hurrell in Bull, 1977: viii).

Balance of power is an institution of international society and a central element of order. Rengger (2000:38) argues that “the centrality of ‘balance’ as a way of thinking about international order is thus made manifest in many aspects of the thinking and practice of international relations over the last 200 years”. In the Congress of Vienna for example, “[t]he preservation of a balance of power was elevated to the status of an objective consciously pursued by international society as a whole...” (Bull, 1977:35). That is how *balance of power* became a social agreement or “social convention” (Bull, 2002; Little, 2007; Buzan, 2014).

Perhaps, it is the concept of *great power management* where power is more directly talked of as a key element of order. *Great power management* refers to the role of powerful states in shaping the international order. Power in this context, refers to the recognition of great powers “to have, managerial responsibility for international order” (Buzan, 2014: 114; see also Watson 1992: 138–262). The practice traces back to the Treaty of Vienna (1815) and the Congress of Europe which recognized the legitimacy of the great powers and their interests in the international system. The practice “continued through the League of Nations after 1919 and the UN Security Council after 1945, both of which embodied a hybrid structure with sovereign equality recognized in the general assembly of all members and the legalized hegemony of the great powers in the smaller council” (Buzan, 2014:103-104). Bull states that:

...the notion of a ‘great power’ [...] and of its special rights and duties, came to express a new doctrine of the hierarchy or grading of states, in place of the old hierarchy of inherited status and precedent, based on the facts of relative power and the consent of international society, and was formally expressed in the Concert of Europe (Bull 2002:36).

He further states:

...great powers are powers recognised by others to have, and conceived by their own leaders and peoples to have, certain special rights and duties. Great powers, for example, assert the right, and are accorded the right, to play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole (Bull 2002:196).

According to Bull the concept of great power management depicts the “special position” of great powers in international society as endorsed by members of international society (Bull, 2002:40). Thus, such a special position is socially earned and is based on the “consent of international society”, not by mere material capabilities. This perspective helps to conceptualize power as a ‘social status’, based largely on consent to hierarchy, peer-recognition and legitimacy rather than the coercive capacity alone (though coercive capacity plays a critical role too). The conceptualization of power as ‘social status’ offers a new perspective on defining and analyzing power in international society.

Defining power as socially recognized status of a leading state allows us to theorize power in relation to other core elements of international society, namely, social institutions and identity. As evident in Flockhart’s definition above, power as ‘social status’ is produced, reproduced, and maintained through norms, values and identity discourses that facilitate its recognition. It is in that sense that power turns into an element of order both globally and regionally. In the regional context, it concerns the social status of great powers in a region defined in terms of specific institutions and identity that facilitate social recognition. This has two dimensions: externally, power as ‘social status’ concerns recognition by great powers of ‘spheres of influence’ of another great power in a region. Bull argues:

Great powers contribute to international order not only by unilaterally exploiting their preponderance in particular areas of the world or among particular groups of states, but also by agreeing to establish spheres of influence, interest or responsibility. The simplest and most common function of these agreements is to confirm the great powers concerned in their positions of local preponderance, and avoid collision or friction between them (Bull 2002:212).

The recognition of the sphere of influence concerns the external recognition of power as a ‘social status’. However, such a status shall also be recognized by members of a regional international society where a great power is thought to have influence. This concerns the internal dimension of social recognition of power. By ‘social status’ is meant social recognition of the role of the leading state in a regional international society in terms of its legitimacy to lead and the potential for other states to converge around it for collective political and security interests. In other words, power becomes an essential element of regional order when it is recognized by states participating in the regional international

society. Such status originates from shared interest, values and principles that generate social recognition for the leading state. Hence, power is closely linked with social institutions.

As Flockhart argues, power and social institutions interact closely to produce the regional order. In the regional context, social institutions are central to the 'attractiveness' or 'legitimacy' of power. As 'socially recognized status', power in part, rests upon the very social institutions of an international society, because social institutions i.e. norms, values, principles etc facilitate collective recognition or 'social status' of a leading state by building shared interests. The link between power and social institutions is significant for the analysis of regional order, particularly in the context of growing overlaps amongst great powers' regional presence. In the context of globalization, great powers' reach goes beyond their traditional spheres of influence and there are often many great power projects in a regional context at the same time. In this context, power as the special position or 'social status' concerns the question of 'primacy' of one actor in a regional international society over others. According to Huntington (1993:68) primacy "means that a government is able to exercise more influence on the behavior of more actors with respect to more issues than any other government can." In IR literature, primacy is often defined in terms of material such as military and economic capability of leading states. For example, Drezner (2013:45) has defined it as "a distribution of military capabilities in which one country faces no current on emergent peers on any significant battlefield". However, in the context of this thesis primacy is defined in terms of the inclusive concept of power that depicts the social recognition of role played by a leading state in international society. Such recognition necessitates non-material sources such as norms and values that facilitate the social recognition of the leading states' status. Therefore, the thesis defines primacy primarily in terms of power – the social recognition of the status of the leading state i.e. Russia in the post-Soviet space.

Social institutions and *power* interplay also with the question of *Identity* – making it another central element of regional order. Identity was discussed earlier as the third element defining the concept of international society. This thesis defines identity as dynamics of recognition and differentiation, which primarily mean membership in international society in terms of sharing the same institutions i.e. values, norms and interest. It has both internal and external dimensions. Internally, identity refers to the politics of self-identification as belonging to an imagined collective-self manifested in terms of an international society. This membership is embedded in inter-subjective understanding and awareness of common values and interests. Common interests and values bind states

together and generate awareness about a collective-self, giving further content to the idea of international society. As Flockhart (2016:15) suggests, identity is “derived from the order’s self-understanding, core values and vision expressed through shared norms and social practice. The identity may be rooted in religion, culture, ethnicity or ideology or other strong identity signifiers. The identity is also likely to be reflected in the internal domestic governance arrangements” (Flockhart, 2016:15).

Externally, the question of identity refers to dynamics of recognition and differentiation by the global core international society. It primarily concerns the practice of exclusion or ‘othering’ of certain states or community of states at the global stage. A key reference for the external dimension of identity in regional international societies is the English School’s concept of *standard of civilization* as discussed earlier in this chapter. The standard of civilization functions to differentiate certain states or groups of states from the global core Western international society based on their differences in primary social institutions and identity. This social differentiation that is aimed at gate-keeping the international society lead to the external construction of another regional international society that becomes the global core international society’s ‘constitutive other’. This shapes the external identity of regional international societies. The external identity of a regional society may be defined also in terms of its power reference, meaning in whose ‘sphere of influence’ a region is which great power a regional international society is most generally identified with.

As the third constitutive element of regional international order, identity completes the triad of regional order by giving it a collective-self. This collective-self is often cherished in terms of certain values and civilizational discourse such as ‘Europe’ or ‘Europeanness’, ‘Africanness’, or ‘Latin-Americanness’ gradually leading to essentialization of social boundaries of regional international societies. Like, power, identity rests upon the primary social institutions and is an integral part of it. Power, social institutions and identity reinforce one another to create a regional order that can be differentiated from global international order. As such, the triad of power, social institutions and identity come together and produce a coherent theory of regional order.

This triad offers a framework for understanding and researching dynamics of regional orders across many regions, particularly the post-Soviet space. Dynamics of continuity and change in regional orders can also be analyzed from this perspective. The triad offers a theory of regional order both in terms of conceptual coherence and logic (theory

in the European sense of the word) and causal relations/explanatory power (theory in the American sense of the word). The main proposition of the theory in terms of theory-empirics relations is that a change in regional order requires changes in power dynamics and discourses on identity and social institutions. In the post-Soviet space for example, the conflict in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) reflect close theoretical and empirical linkage along the triad of regional order: challenge to Russia's position i.e. 'social status' is accompanied by discourse of 'Europeanization' and normative debates e.g. democracy and human rights in these countries. While this is further explored in the following three empirical chapters, the theoretical and empirical coherence of the triad of power, social institutions and identity serves as a comprehensive theory of regional international orders with considerable potential to be used for regional level analysis beyond the post-Soviet space. The proposed theoretical framework overcomes some of the problems with other approaches identified above that take region as a level of analysis. The perspective helps to improve our understanding of *regional international order* in terms of elements that are missing in RSC theory such as social institutions and norms while offering a less evolutionary perspective on the concept of region compared to that of NRT by, at the same time, recognizing the role of smaller states in shaping the regional international orders. Applying this framework to study the post-Soviet regional international order, the next chapters offers in-depth discussions on power, social institutions and identity dynamics that make up the post-Soviet regional international order.

PART II

IV. THE POST-SOVIET REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER: CONTEXT & DYNAMICS

The Politics of Regionalism and the Quest for Regional Order

The post-Soviet regional space is marked by the existence of varieties of ‘competitive regionalism’ (Allison, 2004) and regionalization processes. Aimed at region building, regionalism and regionalization projects are central to the question regional order. While the promotion of regionalism and regional cooperation and/or integration world-wide emerged as a form of protection of the nation-state in an age of economic globalization (Katzenstein, 1977; Ethier, 1998), it was simultaneously pursued by great powers as means to sustain their political influence in an increasingly regionalizing international order (Zagorski, 2015; Troitskiy, 2019; Zala, 2019). For example, Zagorski, (2015) has argued that for Russian, regionalism has served an instrumental purpose of maintaining and deepening its influence in the post-Soviet space.

In the post-Soviet space varieties of regionalisms and regional cooperation frameworks exist that demonstrate both features of ‘great power management’, and regional or ‘aspiring powers’ (Troitskiy, 2019) competition for regional leadership and social status recognition. As such, they become critical to both question of regional order and English School theory. The English School literature looks at regional organizations as secondary social institutions of international societies. They are designed to create and promote shared interests and act as venues for socialization and articulation of common values and identities. They also intend to shape the regional governance and security structures, and thus, they are critical to the discussion of ‘great power management’, which is also a central concept in English School and an institution of international society.

Varying in scope and membership, varieties of regional organizations - some with greater success and some less successful- are active in the post-Soviet space. Representing also the region’s geopolitics, these organizations introduce conflicting visions for the region’s development, social boundary and identity. For the leading and sponsoring states, these organizations are platforms for cultivating political support and legitimacy and thus, they function as power venues. At the same time, they are infused with imaginaries and visions for a regional order involving diverse economic, political and security norms and

values to shape the primary social institutions in the region. Although not all are equally significant, there are a number of such regional organizations in the post-Soviet space such as the CIS, SCTO, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) *EAEU*, Organization for Democracy and Economic Development- GUAM, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and Turkic Council among others. Besides these regional organizations, there is a number of trade and economic connectivity projects such as the European Union supported Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), the Chinese New Silkroad Economic Belt known also as One Belt One Road or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), among others.

These institutions and projects are critical to the question of regional order because they envision a regional international society by involving the questions of power, social institutions and regional identity. While some of these regional institutions and projects share similar visions, some other pursue different and even conflicting regional imaginaries. Those sponsored by great powers in particular demonstrate dynamics of ‘great power management’ and managerial roles and responsibilities. This makes regional institutions and projects in the post-Soviet space a central aspect of discussion on power as one of the constituting elements of regional order. They represent power projects and are aimed at boosting social recognition of status of the leading or sponsoring states. This chapter provides a survey of these regional organizations and regional connectivity and cooperation projects in the post-Soviet space to contextualize the discussion on the post-Soviet regional order. As it describes the varieties of regionalism and integration projects in the post-Soviet space, the thesis looks at them as means to garner power recognition and promote specific regional imaginaries concerning the region’s identity and its social boundaries.

Common Wealth of Independent States

Having its headquarter in Minsk, Belarus, the CIS is a regional intergovernmental organization, which was established by heads of states of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine under the Belavezha Accord signed in Belarus on December 8, 1991. Therefore, it briefly co-existed with the Soviet Union, which was declared dissolved on December 26 of the same year when the Soviet Union’s President Gorbachev stepped down. The CIS was to be regarded as the successor mechanism to the Soviet Union aimed at keeping the unity among the now independent republics.

The Belavezha Accord stated that the CIS would be open to former Soviet Republics to join. On December 21, the former Soviet Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan,

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine signed the Alma-Ata Protocol to join the CIS. By 1993 when Georgia also joined the CIS, It included almost all of the former Soviet Republics with the exception of the three Baltic States. Currently, the CIS has nine members. Georgia withdrew in 2008, and Ukraine stopped participating at CIS in 2018, both as the result of conflicts with Russia. Of the current nine, Turkmenistan is a not a full member, but it has been regularly participating at all CIS meetings as an associate state. This is due to the fact that Turkmenistan has not ratified the CIS Charter, which defines full membership based on the ratification of the Charter. Another founding member that did not ratify the Charter was Ukraine. All other CIS participating states have ratified its Charter.

The CIS Charter sets up the structure of the organization, its institutions, their functions, the rules and the statutes of the CIS. The CIS has five Charter bodies that include Council of Heads of State, Council of Heads of Governments, Council of Foreign Ministers, Council of Defense Ministers, Council of Commanders-in –Chief of Frontier Troops, Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and Economic Court (Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2019). It has three executive bodies that include an economic council, an executive committee that acts as the secretariat, and a council of permanent plenipotentiary representatives of the CIS participating states under the Charter and other bodies. It has several other institutions such as a counter-terrorism center, inter-state bank, inter-state statistical committee and several other that define the area of cooperation among the members (Commonwealth of Independent States, 2020).

Major areas of cooperation under the CIS have been military and economic cooperation. The CIS Charter states the purpose of the organization to be “accomplishment of cooperation in political, economic, ecologic, humanitarian and other spheres;” and “the all-round balanced economic and social development of member states within the framework of common economic space, the interstate cooperation and integration” (Commonwealth of Independent States, 2020). The organization has been pursuing –though with limited success- the idea of regional integration though some researchers including Pogrebinsky (2011) have argued that the CIS was not intended to promote integration and have called it a platform for “cooperation without integration” (cited in Saivetz, 2012).

Apart from its failure to deliver on its promise, the CIS helped Russia re-claim leadership in the region following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The CIS gave birth to the idea of the *EAEU* and the *CSTO*, both of which are important in shaping the regional

cooperation structure in the region. The CIS's Inter-Parliamentary Assembly has also played an interesting role in – though limited, but still important for normative reasons- the legal convergence among the member states. The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly's mandate is to develop model laws, recommendations on other legislative instrument and best practices for subsequent approval by the Assembly and even the National Parliaments if member states wish to. The legal convergence within the CIS countries will be discussed as a matter of primary social institutions in the next chapter. The CIS has also a Free Trade Agreement proposed as early as the establishment of the CIS, but signed only in 2011, by Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Moldova and Armenia. Ukraine has left the agreement and Azerbaijan has not ratified the agreement and thus, does not participate in it.

The CIS has been a key feature of the post-Soviet regional configuration after the breakdown of the Union of the former Soviet republics. As discussed previously in this thesis, some scholars (for example, have even thought of the CIS to represent the post-Soviet regional international society. Pourchot and Stivachtis (2014) argue that the CIS can be considered as a regional structure where member states have been socialized and developed the conduct of inter-state relations, common interests and arrangements to maintain agreements. According to these authors the CIS can be used to analyze the social cohesion and integration within the region. Secondary institutions i.e. regional organizations can be used to measure “1. The extent of dialogue and consent to common rules and institutions among states; 2, the nature of the conduct of inter-state relations; and 3, recognition of common interests in maintaining agreed upon arrangements” (Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014: 72). Strong cohesion along these parameters could indicate the presence of a regional international society as a ‘thin’ form of an international system.

A regional international society, or not, the CIS has been a political platform for dialogue as the region was to redefine in its post-independence path. As it was demonstrated by its quick formation, most of the former Soviet republics considered cooperation with Russia as crucial for the region's stability, while some, like the Baltic States chose not to join it. As a political platform for dialogue among the newly independent states, the CIS in many ways helped the reconfiguration of the region following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Though it failed to prevent conflicts in the region including in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia and Ukraine, the CIS played a significant role as a forum for political consultation to facilitate a “civilized divorce” (Kubice, 1999:237) and peaceful transition to independence

in a region prone to violent conflicts due to unresolved borders issues and national overlaps in terms of ethnic composition among other factors.

Although the CIS has failed to assure the post-Soviet integration (Sakwa and Webber, 1999; Olcot, Aslund and Garnett, 1999; Kubice, 2009) it is nevertheless an important mechanism through which post-Soviet Russia has been trying to re-assert itself as the leading state to bring the region together around itself, and pursue its ‘great power management’ role in the region. If not an integration force, the CIS has undoubtedly been a framework of legitimization for Russia’s leadership as the leading state in the post-Soviet space. Leading an organization in itself can be an expression of power as it demonstrates political capital and influence to convince a number of independent states to follow the leading state’s wish to form a union, even if such a union reflects shared interests.

Collective Security Treaty Organization

The CSTO has its origins in the CIS and was created first time as the CIS Collective Security Treaty, which was signed in 1992 in Tashkent by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus joined in 1993. The treaty which was set to last for five years came into effect in 1994. In 1999, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan did not sign the protocol to renew their membership. Uzbekistan had joined the GUAM in 1997⁸. It rejoined CSTO in 2006, only to leave it again in 2012. In 2002, the Collective Security Treaty was developed into a regional organization –Collective Security Treaty Organization.

The CSTO is a military organization, a sort of military alliance among six former Soviet states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation and Tajikistan). Afghanistan and Serbia became observer states within the organization in 2013. Its main mandate is to defend the member states against external threats and military aggressions as well as fighting terrorism. The CSTO Charter sets the objective of the organization as “maintaining and nurturing a close and comprehensive alliance in foreign policy, military and military technology fields, and the sphere of countering transnational challenges and threats to the security of States and peoples” (Collective Security Treaty Organization, 2019). The organization conducts joint military exercises and maintains, since 2009, a Rapid Reaction Force intended to fight military aggression, conduct anti-terrorism

⁸ GUAM is a regional organization consisting of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova as member states.

operations as well as combating transnational crime and drug trafficking. In 2010, the member states approved a declaration to create a CSTO Peace Keeping Force (Collective Security Treaty Organization, 2019).

The CSTO is regarded as the “basis for an effort at competitive regionalism” (Allison, 2004:471) in a region that attracted other actors and players after the fall of the Soviet Union. With Russia being its main source of funding and personnel, the CSTO is a regional military organization “seen as a counterbalance against NATO” (Zhengyuan, 2010: 46). Although, as the conflict in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 demonstrated, the CSTO has been largely ineffective as a regional security structure, it has been the only major military organization that has actively pursued military cooperation among regional states and has been keeping active military structures and forces in the region. However, the CSTO has played a key role in supporting Russia’s effort to play the role of a security provider for the region. Despite being sometimes stuck by bilateral issues, the CSTO has been a platform where Russia as the largest military power in the region has pursued some form of regional governance mechanism, amid increasing pressure from external players. The CSTO has not been able to materialize Russian hegemony, but it has offered Russia the means to cultivate cooperation of other member states in support of its leadership in the region following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As a military organization dominated by Russia, the CSTO has sought to create a regional security structure, particularly in Central Asia where the Shanghai Cooperation Organization⁹ (discussed next in this chapter) has been trying to pursue such a role. In 2007, the CSTO signed an agreement with the SCO to broaden cooperation on issues of security including crime and drug trafficking. In fact, the agreement was Russia’s preemptive response to the growing role of China in the region. Russia’s objective was to channel the military-security agenda of the SCO through the SCTO, which allows Russia to play the leadership role in the security of the region, preventing China from pursuing such an aspiration. This further demonstrates the power dynamics as it depicts the many layers of competition for leadership in the region.

Eurasian Economic Union

Established through its founding treaty signed in May 2014, EAEU aims at developing a “higher level of integration” in the post-Soviet space (Putin, 2011). Its official

⁹ SCO consists of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

website defines the EAEU to be an “international organization for economic development” providing for “free movement of goods, services, capital and labor” and “pursues coordinated, harmonized and single policy in the sectors determined by the Treaty and international agreements within the union”, which includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation (eaeunion.org, 2020). Though it was originally proposed by the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Russia has taken on the vision as part of its Eurasianism, focused not only on economic development, but also power recognition and geopolitics pursued through connectivity. Western officials have viewed the EAEU as Russia’s strategy to reposition itself in the region after the fall of the Soviet Union. In 2012, the then-US Secretary of State stated that “[t]here is a move to re-Sovietise the region. It’s not going to be called that...It will be called Eurasian Union and all of that. But let’s make no mistake about it. We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it” (Clinton cited in Clover, 2012).

Although the Western responses to the EAEU, such as the above statement, could reinforce the New Great Game idea, from the English School perspective, they are aimed at undermining Russia’s great power status and managerial role in the post-Soviet Union in the context of its discourse on multipolarity. Analysts have argued that the EAEU is a project designed to reposition Russia as a significant pole of regional development and a reference in a multipolar world (Popescu, 2014). As such, the EAEU is fundamentally a power project aimed at both fending off external projects as well as re-asserting a central role for Russia in regional governance, economic and political development of the region. In this context, for the Russian Federation, the EAEU is serving an instrumental purpose of maintaining and deepening its influence in the post-Soviet space (Zagorski, 2015) while allowing Russia to position itself as power in the wider Eurasian continent. The EAEU follows the logic of Eurasianism in Russian foreign policy. “Geopolitics is a key element in Russia’s and, to some extent, Kazakhstan’s Eurasianism” and it is linked with the term “Sovereign Democracy” as a reflection of resistance to Western pressures for democratization (Azizian and Bainazarova, 2012:378).

As a power project, the EAEU facilitates a leadership role for Russia in the post-Soviet space, where it is increasingly challenged by other external actors after the fall of the Soviet Union. It also offers Russia the mechanism through which to re-claim its status as the power in the region and resist external projects by offering also an alternative to states facing Western pressures. The case of Armenia illustrates particularly well this dynamic, as the

country abandoned the negotiations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the EU, in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, in order to become a member of the Eurasian Economic Community and the Customs Union (Gardner, 2013). The shift in Armenia's policy took place due to various geopolitical and socioeconomic factors including Russia's more assertive role in the region (Ter-Matevosyan et al, 2017) and the significance of its support to Armenia in the context of the Karabakh Conflict. The shift however, indicated also dynamics of power recognition and Russia's primacy in the region amid East-West rivalries in the context of great power connectivity projects. This indicates that social recognition of power happens on the basis of realist calculations too, where small states choose one power over the other as a matter of strategic balancing. The interest alignments in such contexts are demonstrations of primacy and endorsement of social status of a power. Armenia thus joined the EAEU despite having no land or functioning railroad connection to any other member of the EAEU, and particularly Russia, and despite the main volume of trade being with the European Union. For many Armenians, including many in the business sector, this was an unavoidable surrender to Russia (Giragosian, 2015).

The Kyrgyz membership in the EAEU demonstrates yet another interesting dynamic that can be analyzed in terms of the pulling factor or power gravity. Kyrgyzstan initially resisted adhering to the Customs Union of the EAEU, since this would impose important costs in their economic relations with China. The decision to join the EAEU came however as a result of various political and security considerations that require closer relations with Russia. This can be called the power gravity factor, when small states pursue regionalism as a matter of "bandwagoning" with bigger powers (Alison, 2008). Bandwagoning is a function of power gravity, and power gravity is a product of social recognition of the leading states. The EAEU is in many senses pursuing such recognition for Russia as the leading power in the region. While the scope of the EAEU is limited and its members are few, at its core it carries the vision of a re-imagined Eurasia defined in terms of Russia's central role in it.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Established on 15 June 2002 in Shanghai, the SCO history dates back to the mid-1990s, with the creation of the 'Shanghai Five' with membership of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The 'Shanghai Five' was designed to settle territorial issues between these countries, following a similar meeting initiated between the

USSR and China back in 1960s. The ‘Shanghai Five’ annual summits took place between 1996 to 2001 until the summit in Shanghai marked the birth of the SCO with three founding documents, including the ‘Declaration on the Creation of Shanghai Cooperation Organization’, ‘Shanghai Convention on Fight against Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism’ and a technical Joint Statement about Uzbekistan becoming part of the organization.

The following year in Saint-Petersburg another Heads of States’ meeting produced two key documents: Declaration of the Heads of States-Members of the SCO as well as the Charter of the SCO, which became the foundational documents of the organization. Finally, the Moscow Summit of 2003 resulted in the creation of the SCO Secretariat in Beijing and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. The main perceived threats discussed during that summit were related to terrorism and extremism and extremist organizations in the region (Lateigne, 2018). By January 1st, 2004 the institutional formation of the SCO was complete with the Council of the Heads of States, Council of the Heads of Governments and the Councils of Head of MFAs.

In 2012 the member-states signed an agreement to provide Afghanistan with an observer-status within the organization and offer Turkey the status of the partner in dialogue. In 2015 the procedures for joining of India and Pakistan had been initiated and in 2017 both became members. In 2015, Afghanistan officially applied to become member of the SCO.

In addition to the councils of heads of states, council of heads of governments, council of Foreign Ministers as the governing institutions, the SCO has two permanent bodies: SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent. RATS has the status of a legal entity and the main function of this body is to coordinate the efforts of all SCO member states in combating terrorism, separatism and extremism – developing proposals for combating terrorism, collecting and analyzing information, forming a data bank on individuals and organizations supporting criminals, assisting in the preparation and conducting operational search and other measures to combat these phenomena (Lateigne, 2018). In 2005, the SCO established the SCO Interbank Consortium as a tool to assist in the implementation of economic cooperation projects that were approved by the SCO states. The members of the Interbank Consortium include the Development Bank of Kazakhstan, the State Development Bank of China, *Vnesheconombank*, the National Bank of Tajikistan, the National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity of Uzbekistan (SCO, 2020).

Formed as a security organization to fight against the “three evils” of terrorism, extremism and separatism, the SCO pursued building of a regional security architecture in post-Soviet Central Asia involving Sino-Russian cooperation. However, its security role has been limited by a power dynamic involving the two main military powers. Russia likes to keep the military leadership for itself and pursues such a role bilaterally with countries in the region. Putin’s last visit to Kyrgyzstan resulted in agreements to enhance and enlarge its military base in Kant (RFE/RL, 2019). Russia keeps its military units in Tajikistan too. The SCO’s security role, therefore, is limited in military terms as Russia continues to keep that role largely for itself or to the CSTO as a regional structure (Lateigne, 2018). A “Russian phoenix” (Weinstein, 2007) as it is called by some, the CSTO is central to Russia’s leadership role in the region, particularly in the security field. Therefore, Russia is particularly careful in regards to the expanding security role of the SCO. In 2014, Russia offered a merger between CSTO and SCO at a Dushanbe Summit of Heads of SCO States, which was not welcomed by China. In fact, Moscow’s push for enhancing security ties and creating a new power pole through the CSTO-SCO merger or cooperation was to counter the Chinese vision of using the SCO as an instrument for economic development (Salimov, 2014). Even the much feared ‘color revolutions’ of Kyrgyzstan that prompted Russia to tighten the security cooperation did not have the same resonance with China. Moreover, the events in Georgia in 2008 alarmed Beijing, which pursues the principle of the territorial integrity. Interestingly, China turned towards Tbilisi and signed a first Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with a post-Soviet state in 2015. Moreover, Russia’s Ukraine crisis and military activities in Luhans and Donesk have further made Beijing uneasy, declaring that this particular issue ought to be solved through UN means, but taking a non-aligned stance in general. Evidently, the bilateral divide between Beijing and Moscow and a certain double-game will further have its impact on the development of SCO.

Facing a resistant Russia to the SCO’s security vision, China is increasingly using the SCO as an instrument for its economic vision. Over the last couple of years China has increased its efforts to instrumentalize the SCO for its grand economic projects such as the Belt and Road initiative (Rab and Zhilong, 2019). But, it faces resistance from Russia and some other states such as Kazakhstan who are concerned with the Chinese economic takeover of Central Asia. However, China continues to use the SCO as a complementary structure for its economic and trade agenda. Trade and economic cooperation was a big theme of the 2018 SCO Summit, where the heads of states of the SCO members released a

Joint Statement on Trade Facilitation, highlighting “simplifying customs procedures and formalities related to goods import, export and transit, improving transparency and cooperation among border agencies, accelerating the flow of customs clearance of good” (SCO, 2018).

This is a clear sign that the SCO is becoming increasingly focused on economic developments in the region. China has also been pushing for a free trade zone area in the SCO region. In 2010, China proposed to establish an SCO bank, and it has been following on the idea since. Though with the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), the idea of SCO bank could sound redundant, it is reported that the member states have reached basic consensus on establishing the bank “the only difference is now on its operation model” (Xiaonon, 2018). If established, the SCO bank could support the funding needs of the smaller economies within the organization.

Housing four nuclear powers and almost a half of the world’s population the SCO emerges as one of the largest security organizations in the world, constituting a major structure in the emerging multi-polar world. Converging with China on their interest in challenging the Western global order, Russia has been supportive of the SCO’s role globally. In 2008, Russian President of Academy of Geopolitical Problems proposed that the SCO should constitute ‘the world’s second pole’ (Ivashov, 2008). Regionally however, Russia has been mindful of SCO’s growth and has tried to counter balance it by maintaining the CSTO’s lead as the region’s main security structure as a mechanism to guard Russia’s primacy in the post-Soviet space. While Russia uses the CSTO to ensure its military leadership, China uses the SCO to enhance its economic role in the region and gradually turn the entity into a structure to support Chinese leadership in regional connectivity and economic integration.

Whether the SCO could facilitate a power shift in the post-Soviet space e.g. Central Asia or not, depends on many other factors including how is the region is converging with China on normative grounds. China has been also promoting a number of normative discourse such as the ‘three evils’ (terrorism, extremism and separatism) and the ‘Shanghai Spirit’ (mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, civilizational diversity and striving for common development) (SCO, 2001; Ambrosio, 2008), which are interesting. However, Russia’s presence within the organization helps it not only keep China in check, but also use the SCO equally for its own power projection, where it leverages its regional leadership in the post-Soviet space such as within the CSTO, CIS and EAEU against China.

GUAM- Organization for Democracy and Economic Development

Formed in October 1997, initially as the Advisory Forum during the second Council of Europe meeting in Strasburg, it brought Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine together to work closely with Western powers to promote democracy and economic development. In 1999, Uzbekistan joined. In 2001, it was further developed to form the GUUAM Association through the Yalta-Charter signed by the heads of the participating states. Uzbekistan withdrew from the association in 2002 (Blua, 2002) and joined the CIS in 2006. GUAM was finally founded as an organization through its Charter signed in 2006 in Kiev by the heads of states of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (GUAM, 2019).

Like other formal regional organizations, GUAM has formal institutions and governing bodies consisting of Council of Heads of States, Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Council of National Coordinators and Council of Permanent Representatives. It also has a Secretariat, a Parliamentary Assembly, and Business Council. GUAM's main goals according to the organization's website are:

strengthening of democratic values, ensuring the supremacy of law and respect for human rights; ensuring sustainable development; strengthening international and regional security and stability; deepening European integration for the creation of a common security space and the enlargement of economic and humanitarian cooperation; developing of socio-economic, transport, energy, scientific, technical and humanitarian potential; stimulating of political interaction and practical cooperation in fields of mutual interest (Organization for Democracy and Economic Development- GUAM, 2019).

GUAM was believed to be founded to counterbalance the CIS and Russia's role in the post-Soviet space following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Blua, 2002). However, Russia avoided framing it as such probably as an attempt not to antagonize the GUAM states (Today.AZ, 2006). But, in fact GUAM was largely an effort to establish close relations with the west at the expense of Russia's leadership in the region. In 2006, the former Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko stressed "It is hard to overvalue cooperation between our countries in the field of security given the current conditions, with the threats of terrorism, aggressive separatism, and organized crime. Under these conditions, GUAM must focus on cooperation with the EU and NATO" (Today.AZ, 2006). Ukraine also suggested establishing a GUAM Peace Keeping Unit, perhaps as an attempt to work towards a joint military strategy for GUAM countries to counter balance the CSTO, or even provide peace keeping functions in the region that relies on external forces, mainly Russia.

The armed conflict of Russia in Georgia in 2008, and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, would push GUAM further towards an anti-Russian character. In 2014,

Russian, which was the main language of GUAM, was replaced by English to symbolically demonstrate the direction of the GUAM (RFE/RL, 2014). However, the presence of Azerbaijan, which has maintained fairly balanced relations through “multi-tiered hedging behavior, which encompasses elements of both balancing and bandwagoning” with Russia (Valiyev and Mamishova, 2019: 1), prevented the GUAM from turning into an organization seeking a full scale anti-Russian agenda. But, given the European aspirations of the rest of the member states, GUAM nevertheless has been a venue for closer cooperation between its members and the west, including NATO and the US.

GUAM has been a major instrument for NATO’s push into the South Caucasus, which “has been a major flashpoint of contention between NATO and a resurgent Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union” (Antonopoulos, Valez and Cottle, 2017:366). GUAM keeps special working relations with the United States within the framework of GUAM-United States cooperation schemes. The United States at times, has pursued assertive regional policies in the Caucasus, where “both Washington and Moscow tend to define their interests in such a way as to ensure that their relationship in the region will be contentious” (Nation, 2007: vii). US’s interests in GUAM include keeping Iran in check in the region (Nichol, 2008), besides its interests in the energy sector and countering Russia’s influence in the region.

Though largely a weak and under-delivering institution, GUAM is contributing to the power dynamics in the post-Soviet space in two specific ways: first, it is one of the few regional organizations that seeks cooperation among former Soviet republics not only independent of, but also in opposition to Russia’s leadership in the region. As such, it seeks to realize the sovereignty and independence of post-Soviet member states while challenging the status quo *vis-à-vis* Russia. The very idea of GUAM also means that the member states no longer recognize Russia’s leadership in the region. Second, it offers a venue for expansion of cooperation between GUAM countries and the Western rivals to Russia’s influence and leadership in the region. By aiming to emerge as a regional mechanism to counter Russia’s influence in the region such as contemplating the idea of a GUAM peacekeeping forces, the GUAM have intended to challenge Russia’s great power’s claim to ‘sphere of influence’ and great power managerial responsibility. However, its prospects for such a role remain to be considerably limited.

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

While most of the regional organizations in the post-Soviet space are relatively new, ECO was founded in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. In 1992, the six former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan joined the organization alongside Afghanistan as new members. ECO has the status of a regional intergovernmental organization with governing bodies including the Council of Heads of States, the Council of Ministers, the Council of Permanent Representatives, Regional Planning Council and Sectoral Ministries Meetings. ECO's Secretariat is located in Tehran, Iran. Turkey hosts its Economic Bureau and Pakistan its Scientific Bureau.

The main objective of the organization is declared to be “the sustainable economic development of its Member States and the Region as a whole” (Economic Cooperation Organization, 2019). Towards that end, ECO established in 1993 a Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI), with participation of the national chamber of commerce and industries of the member states. In 1995, the three founding members (Iran, Pakistan and Turkey) agreed to establish the ECO Reinsurance Company, but it has not been finalized yet. In 2005, the three founding members also established the ECO Trade and Development Bank (based in Istanbul and with a branch in Karachi and Tehran), which became operational in 2008, but not all ECO member states are part of it. Azerbaijan, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan joined in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively.

As a regional organization, ECO's role has been marginal in shaping in the regional dynamics. Despite years of existence, the organization has failed to deliver according to its key objectives. In 2003 the ECO member states signed the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) to foster, support and boost regional trade based on common principles, and to re-enforce economic cooperation among ECO member states through the elimination of non-tariff barriers, reduction of tariff and concession (ECO, 2003). However, the implementation of the agreement has not been smooth as lack of political consensus and willingness among states continues to impact the development and performance of the organization. ECO's Summit Meetings are held often with years of delay. For example, no Summit Meeting was held between 2012 and 2017. Given Iran's leadership in the organization, most member states are cautious of their engagement to avoid backlash in their relationships with the US, particularly as the country has been under international sanctions.

Despite its failure as a regional intergovernmental organization to promote regionalism and economic cooperation, ECO remains to be a key instrument for Iran to fight

its regional and international marginalization amid Western pressures, as well as to sustain its regional relevance in the wider Caspian. The strategic vision behind ECO, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was to redefine the regional dynamics around the leading role of three key Muslim actors, namely, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. Now, with Pakistan being a member of the SCO, and Turkey devising other means of cultivating leadership in the wider Caspian such as the Turkic Council (discussed next), Iran seem to be the only country strategically invested in the organization as a means of regional recognition. As such, ECO's part in the power dynamics of the region is significantly marginal.

Turkic Council

Founded in October 2009, the Cooperation Council of the Turkic Speaking States or the *Turkic Council* is an 'international organization' aiming to "promote comprehensive cooperation among Turkic speaking states" currently including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey (Turkic Council, 2019). In 2018, Uzbekistan also participated at its summit meeting in Kyrgyzstan, where President Mirziyoev expressed willingness to join the organization and stated that "[w]e are happy and ready to become a part of this organization and propose the Uzbek city of Khiva to be the capital of the Turkic Council" (RFE/RL, 2018).

Like other regional organizations, the Turkic Council has a formal governing structure including Council of Heads of State, the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Council of Elders, the Senior Officials Committee and the Secretariat, based in Ankara. The organization is said to be constructed on "four main pillars of common history, common language, common identity and common culture" (Turkic Council, 2019). Therefore, it can be regarded a Pan-Turkic organization aimed at unifying the Turkic speaking nations of Central Asia and Azerbaijan around the leadership role of Turkey. Though it is said to have been proposed initially by former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the organization is an instrument of regional leadership for Turkey, which has historically been one of the three major empires alongside the Russian and Persian empires in the region. Like most other regional organizations, the Turkic Council has not been a major success in terms of a platform for regional cooperation, but as a political platform, it has been an expression of power and aspiration for regional leadership by Turkey in the post-Soviet space. Therefore, alongside other regional mechanisms and organizations, the Turkic Council shapes the overlapping and multi-layered and dynamic configuration of the region and its power dynamics.

Connectivity as Power Projects

In addition to the regional organizations discussed above, other means of regionalism and regionalization exist in the post-Soviet space, most devised by external powers to advance not only their influence, but also re-define the region around different centers of power. Most of these regional connectivity projects entail re-imagination of the region both in terms of economic and political norms, and regional membership and boundaries. Given that most are sponsored by external powers, they constitute part of the ‘competitive regionalisms’ and power projection practices to enhance regional power recognition, and envision a regional order for the post-Soviet space. Therefore, they are important for the discussion of regional order in the post-Soviet space because besides shaping the power dynamics, these projects aspire to promote certain economic values and identity debate in terms of how the region is being conceived as a community of states. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the post-Soviet space has been at focus of several regional cooperation, development and connectivity initiatives. The revival of the ancient Silk-Road has been a shared narrative in almost all of these initiatives, but each initiative seems to promote different visions depending on donors, regional and global actors’ interests.

Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia

Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) is a connectivity project linking the EU with 14 countries including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Romania, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan via a series of transport linkages through sea, road, train and aviation (TRACECA, 2019). It is one of the very first Western projects to be launched in the early 1990s, and endorsed at a conference in Brussels in 1993 with participation of ministers of trade and transports of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Other members joined the program between 1996 and 2009. TRACECA envisions Pan-European connectivity projects to integrate the Eurasian economy around the EU’s trade and connectivity agenda (TRACECA, 2019). It has pursued the vision through a multi-model transport and connectivity program, while seeking to integrate other regional cooperation mechanisms within the program as a leading project.

With the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), which includes some post-Soviet states such as Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia a cooperation framework called the Black Sea Synergy was developed between the EU and BSEC. The

EU sought to link BSEC with TRACECA in an effort to potentially merge the former within the European regional connectivity and cooperation agenda. In 1997 a joint BSEC and TRACECA conference was organized in Tbilisi, that brought together trade and transport ministers from 16 countries who “expressed wish to integrate TRACECA and the Black Sea Countries within the Trans European Network” (TRACECA, 2019). One of the main outcomes of the conference was the establishment of a Ministerial Committee tasked to function as a platform for the Pan European Transport Conference in Helsinki in June 1997, in addition to developing concrete projects and actions. The Helsinki Conference declared the Black Sea region “as a Pan European Transport Area, which will further develop the TENs outlet to the East” (TRACECA, 2019). Although TRACECA is a transport and connectivity project involving a diverse group of states, the Pan-European nature of the project and, most importantly, the exclusion of Russia from the project disclose the nature of TRACECA as a European power project aimed at enhancing the EU’s role in the post-Soviet space soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

It is rather interesting that while being initiated and funded by the EU, TRACECA was designed in such a way that it could accommodate the historical narratives of regional connectivity in Eurasia such as the Silk Route (Gorshkov and Bagaturia, 2001). For example, in 1998, a presidential Conference was held in Baku at the initiative of the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Georgia and participation of presidents of Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova Romania, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan and representatives of 32 countries and 12 organizations. The conference was titled ‘TRACECA – Restoration of the Historic Silk Route’ (Gorshkov and Bagaturia, 2001). The revival of the Silk Route has been a joint narrative of almost all connectivity projects in the region, perhaps due to its historic identity that unites countries from China to Europe. However, donors’ visions for the many Silk Route initiatives vary significantly depending on their geopolitical interests.

Eastern Partnership (EaP) and EU-Central Asia Cooperation agreement

In the post-Soviet space, the EU’s involvement can be examined in the context of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched in 2009 as a joint policy initiative concerning the EU’s relationship with its six Eastern neighbours of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It aims at “strengthening and deepening” EU’s relationship with these countries by supporting economic development and market opportunity, good governance, regional connectivity and energy efficiency as well as people-to-people contacts (European Commission, 2018). In the Eastern Partnership

summit which took place in Brussels in November 2017, the EU endorsed 20 key deliverables for 2020 in the areas of cooperation identified above. The EaP follows a comprehensive model of engagement with the partner states, combining bilateral and multi-lateral mechanisms, including the European Neighborhood Instrument, which is “the key financial instrument for cooperation with the EaP countries during the period of 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2018). The EU’s Eastern neighbors participate also in all other initiatives such as the Erasmus+, TAIEX, Twinning, SIGMA and the Neighborhood Investment Facility as well as in Cross-Border Cooperation programs.

By pursuing economic integration and political association with the post-Soviet states, the EaP envisions the expansion of the ‘European Security Community’ into the post-Soviet space (Simão, 2018) the realization of which could fundamentally change the regional order in the post-Soviet space. Strengthening the EU’s role and position in the international politics of the region, the EaP could redefine the power dynamics in the post-Soviet space by facilitating the EU’s influence and power recognition *vis-à-vis* Russia. Makarychev and Devyatkov (2014) define the EaP as a geopolitical game arguing that the “EaP has made the EU increasingly assertive in its challenge to the status quo that Russia pursues with regard to states of the region”. The range of economic and mobility incentives offered by the EU, particularly through the Association Agreements, have had significant geopolitical implications for the region as witnessed in the context of conflict in Ukraine in 2014. The EU’s vision of political association and economic integration has led to development of European aspirations in the region among political elites as well as some segment of the society in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

In 2007, the EU launched its first strategy for Central Asia with the purpose of enhancing its cooperation with states in the region in the areas of rule of law, education and environment. Since then, the EU has “increased its development cooperation, and established cooperation mechanisms” with the region (Boonstra et al., 2019). The EU has allocated over €1 billion between 2014-2020 in areas such as the rule of law, environment, water, trade and border management” (European Commission, 2019) and is enhancing its cooperation multilaterally as well as bilaterally. In 2015, the EU signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan and is currently negotiating to sign one with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. These agreements aim at strengthening EU’s relations with Central Asia through enhancing cooperation in areas of political dialogue, economic development, democratization and transition to free market economy (European

Commission, 2016). In 2017, the EU started to work on a new strategy for Central Asia. In May, 2019, the EU adopted a document ‘European Union and Central Asia: New Opportunities for Stronger Partnership’, to become the new EU-Central Asia strategy, which focuses on “Central Asian states’ capacity to overcome internal and external shocks and enhancing their ability to embrace reform”; and “supporting economic modernisation, promoting sustainable connectivity, and investing in youth” (European Commission, 2019). The strategy emphasizes promoting sustainable regional cooperation and connectivity in the region, including the integration of Afghanistan into the cooperation mechanisms with Central Asia. Launching the joint *communiqué* on the new strategy, the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini stated that Central Asia “*is becoming more and more strategic, amid positive internal and regional dynamics, as well as increasing global challenges that demand a strengthened partnership*” (Verdesoto, 2019).

Despite its growing efforts to expand cooperation with the post-Soviet space, the EU’s reach and objectives in the post-Soviet space however, remains externally circumscribed. The external factor concerns both Russia’s role in the region, and the post-Soviet states preferences. The 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh showed the limits of EU’s ambitions by allowing Russia to act as the main external actor to mediate and eventually act as peacekeeper, *de facto* recognizing Russia’s great power claim to a ‘sphere of influence’ and ‘great power management’ responsibilities. This is critical to the discussion of power in regional international order. The issue of post-Soviet states’ preferences concerns the limits of cooperation with the EU as pursued by the states in the region. For example, of three pro-European states EaP states of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have signed the Association Agreement with the EU, while Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus have not. These choices closely reflect the regional dynamics regarding the post-Soviet states’ relations with Russia as power in the region.

Although, the EU has been aiming at creating, enhancing a political space supportive of the EU’s role in the post-Soviet space including through the EaP, its impact on re-shaping the post-Soviet regional order has been externally circumscribed by Russia’s role and social recognition in the region. It appears also that the EU’s ambitions are limited in nature, which defines internal limitations for EU’s vision of a transformed regional order in the post-Soviet space. For example, the EU’s denying of membership opportunity for the EaP partner states has undermined EU’s objective of “consolidating a shared political community” (Simão, 2018:67). The EU’s limits of engagement and lack of ambition beyond

normative transformation of the region encourages a shift in status quo evaluation in the region in favor of Russia, many post-Soviet states see little prospects in the EU's potential to counter balance against Russia.

Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation

Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) is another major investment that draws a different regional boundary for the region. CAREC is a multi-donor economic and infrastructure development project that started in 2001. CAREC brings together a set of diverse countries from Pakistan and China to Azerbaijan and Mongolia. Ten countries, including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and the People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are members of CAREC. The project is supported by six multilateral institutions that include the Asian Development Bank, The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Monetary Fund, the Islamic Development Bank, the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank. Since its inception in 2001 and until the end of 2014, the project invested \$24.6 billion in transport, energy, and trade facilitation sectors paying for 156 projects (CAREC Report, 2014). The main objective of the program is to promote and facilitate regional cooperation in transport, trade, energy and other key sectors of economic development in 'region'. The program is currently supporting six economic corridor development projects that link almost all the member countries to Eurasian markets and to the ports in Karachi and Gwadar, in order to connect the economies of the region to global markets. CAREC 2020, the strategic framework of the program that was adopted in 2011 is an ambitious investment plan that seeks to integrate economies of the region and link the landlocked countries to the global market through economic transport corridors (CAREC, 2019).

As one can notice, the regional vision of CAREC is much different from that of EAEU. If fully realized, CAREC pulls the entire region out of Russia's traditional zone of influence. CAREC crosses EAEU at its geopolitical ends to bring a totally new understanding of how the region should be imagined, and eventually constructed to link it to the global market. These geopolitical imaginaries are inherent in almost all regional development projects. Whereas EAEU tries to bind regional economies to Russia, CAREC's main effort is on stretching the former soviet geography towards South Asia. By introducing a new regional imaginary that aims at detaching Central Asia from Russia's 'sphere of influence' CAREC can be analyzed in terms of vision for redefining regional order in the

post-Soviet Central Asia. However, the project lacks the necessary institutional framework to initiate a radical shift in the existing regional order.

Belt and Road Initiative

The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is rather a recent development. Launched in 2013, it is the largest and most ambitious economic and connectivity project linking China to the rest of the world through Eurasia, South East Asia, the Middle East and Africa, by building a transport network and infrastructure involving both maritime and land-based connectivity. It is also to promote education, culture, and investments in energy and technology. Though it is an initiative that pursues a global agenda linked to the rise of China as a global power, it can significantly change the regional environment in the post-Soviet space too. The land based connectivity part of the agenda goes through Central Asia to Europe. China has already emerged as a major player in Central Asia through both SCO and financial loans to states such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The BRI is linking the region to China in a much larger scale. This has resulted in suspicions among other actors in the region, namely Russia. Russia has been concerned with BRI for obvious reasons. As China rises economically, Russia feels increasingly overwhelmed and thus, it fears the loss of its status as the power in the region (Standish, 2019; Goble, 2020) Though the two countries have developed significant trade and security ties over the last one decade, the Chinese power project makes Russia feel vulnerable to Chinese growing influence in the region. Some analysts have argued that Russia and Kazakhstan's Eurasianism is primarily linked with their concerns over the rise of China. "The Eurasian Union therefore can be considered as an attempt toward enhanced regional partnership designed to deal with new economic and geopolitical challenges driven by the rise of China and decline of Europe (Azizian and Bainazarova, 2012:378).

In 2015 during the SCO and BRICS's joint summit in Russia, China proposed to merge the EAEU into the BRI (TASS, 2015). If realized, this could have been a major blow to Russia's leadership and status in the region as one of the main actors aiming at organizing the region's economy around itself. Russia, being already nervous about the Chinese ambition in the region, refused the Chinese proposal to merge the EAEU into the BRI, because the EAEU has become a signature project for Russia's great power status and power recognition project in the region. The negotiation however, resulted into an agreement which is significant to Russia as much as it is for China in terms of their mutual recognition. In order to accommodate Russia, China suggested declaring the two connectivity projects – the

BRI and the EAEU – as complementary regional connectivity initiatives (TASS, 2015), allowing for the EAEU to keep its own identity while earning mutual recognition and endorsement from the BRI.

This makes an interesting case for great power management in terms of recognition of spheres of influence of Russia by China. By declaring the EAEU to be complementary to BRI, the two powers accommodated each other's interests by forming a new form of power recognition that inhabits in cooperation rather than non-interference. In contrast, the EU's EaP is aimed at undermining Russia by engaging with other post-Soviet states. As a result, China appears to be advancing its influence through working with Russia, while the EU's policy has led to antagonizing Russia, which has been largely counter-productive to its objectives in the region. These two approaches have also shaped Russia's response to EU and China. Russia has responded the EU's antagonism with open further confrontations, while it has sought to cooperate and accommodate China. Russia is increasingly facing the harsh reality of China's rise in the region as well as in the global stage. Therefore, it chooses not to confront China but to use cooperation as an opportunity for its recognition as well as enhancing multipolar global order. Similarly, China uses the opportunity to accommodate Russia in its power projects, and in return ensure Russia's endorsement for BRI that further legitimizes China's role and status in the region, if not as the leading state at least as the other significant player in the region.

Though a global project, BRI envisions a totally different regional order in the post-Soviet space; one that is integrated around China's economy and rise as a global player amid the declining liberal international order. Considering the largely authoritarian and illiberal normative structure of the region in most part, the post-Soviet space is generally conducive to illiberal visions for a global order which will grant greater recognition for an authoritarian regional international order in the post-Soviet space.

International North-South Transport Corridor

Established in September 2000 in St. Petersburg, the INSTC is a major joint connectivity initiative of Iran, India and Russia “for the purpose of promoting transportation cooperation among the Member States” (Global Infrastructure Connectivity Alliance, 2019). To date, eleven more countries have joined the project and they include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman and Syria. Bulgaria has joined as observer. Given the scope of the project in terms of geographic coverage, the INSTC is a significant competitive connectivity project if not rival to other

initiatives in Eurasia. Considering India's leading role in the project alongside Iran and Russia, the INSTC is likely to position itself as a power project in the context of growing appeal of the BRI, against which India and Russia have their geopolitical concerns. India has been critical of the China-Pakistan-Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is part of the BRI and intends to link China to the Indian Ocean through Gwadar Port in Pakistan. The corridor runs through the disputed Kashmir area, which India considers its territory occupied by Pakistan (Kantha, 2017).

In reaction to CPEC, India has been keen on developing the Chabahar Port together with Iran and Afghanistan, which grants India a transport link to Central Asia via Iran and Afghanistan. Chabahar connects India to Central Asia through Iran and Afghanistan and bypasses Pakistan. Afghanistan and Iran have been pushing for the project for a long time, until it was inaugurated in December 2017 (Business Standard, 2017). At the beginning, India was mindful of investing in Chabahar due to Iran's relations with the west amid the US sanctions (Ramachandran, 2014). However, India got increasingly interested in the Chabahar port when CPEC was announced, and after Afghanistan ensured that the project would not come under the US sanctions. In November 2018, when new the list of sanctions against Iran was announced by the US, the Chabahar port was exempted from the sanctions for the sake of *"Afghanistan's economic growth and development as well as our close partnership with India"* the US department of States noted (World Maritime News, 2018). With the INSTC being actively pushed by India and Russia, Chabahar will likely be merged into the INSTC (Ramachandran, 2014). A merger between INSTC and Chabahar could improve India's positioning in the region amid rivalry with the Chinese supported CPEC project. This also gives Iran an opportunity to enter an alliance with Russia and India amid its international marginalization, and to define its position within the Eurasian connectivity schemes covering the post-Soviet space.

Conclusions

The varieties of regionalism and connectivity projects offer various visions for the post-Soviet regional order. In theory, regional organizations serve as secondary institutions of regional international order, and as such, they are critical in examining the post-Soviet regional order. The international politics of regionalism in the post-Soviet space engages not only in fostering cooperation in key areas of interests, but also in promoting sense of community, and defining and re-defining the social boundaries of the region. This is crucial for the discussion of regional society and institutionalization of common interests and

identity. The varieties of regionalism and regionalization projects in the post-Soviet space imagine the region around different centers of power, values and visions for the region. For example, while institutions such as the CIS, CSTO or EAEU attempt to keep the region tied to Russia's leadership role, other projects such as the TRACECA or CAREC aim at imagining the region without Russia being part of it. Some other institutions such as Turkic Council are explicitly infused with identity geopolitics. This makes the regional environment in the post-Soviet space and the quest for a regional order geopolitically highly competitive.

Regional institutions as well as great power sponsored projects aim at defining the region around different powers, norms, regional imaginaries and identities. Depending on their visions and interest, regional powers use various ideas about regionalism to position themselves regionally. Russia for example uses a comprehensive approach involving military, political and economic means through the CIS, CSTO and EAEU, while China focuses increasingly on economic means. Turkey instrumentalizes identity politics to assert itself as a leader through the Turkic Council, while the EU and Western sponsored projects aim at integrating the region into the Western global international order.

While the regional and great power sponsored projects have contributed to power dynamics in the post-Soviet space, they have not necessarily resulted into equal social recognition for their leading or sponsoring states. This means that material capabilities are crucial, but not enough for defining regional leadership status. Power recognition in international society is contingent on how the material capabilities of a state translate into common normative and ideational interests in international society. This process defines power as social status recognition by international society. Among others, this highlights the central role of other states in international society in the making of a power. This is explored in the next chapter in the context of the discussion on Russia as power in the post-Soviet space.

V. THE MAKING OF THE POST-SOVIET REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER: POWER

Russia as Power

As demonstrated by the competitive regionalisms discussed in the previous chapter, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the declining of Russia's economic status invited other regional and external players to seek influence and regional leadership in the post-Soviet space. The players included the Western powers such as the EU and the US, and regional actors such as China, India, Turkey, Iran. The EU started to expand their influence through promoting liberal values and free market economy and invested in several connectivity as well as political reform projects. Regional actors such as Turkey and China have also been pursuing regional leadership, sometimes at the expense of Russia. China is largely a new comer, but increasingly gaining ground in the post-Soviet space through various connectivity projects and funding schemes. This chapter argues; while each of these actors enjoys a degree of influence in the region, Russia appears to have maintained its primacy despite the challenges it faces from the Western powers i.e. the EU and the US in parts of the post-Soviet space such as in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. The chapter maps Russia's sources of social recognition in the post-Soviet space as it aims to conceptualize Russia as the power that shapes the post-Soviet regional international order.

Historically, significant parts of the post-Soviet space such as the wider Caspian region have been under the influence of either the Russian, Ottoman or Persian empires whose relations have been very complicated in the past. Turko-Russian conflicts make up one of the longest series of wars, and include 13 major clashes in history.¹⁰ Russian and Persian empires fought five wars with each other in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia.¹¹ Modern Turkey and Iran have vast material and political interest in the region, some of which directly clashes with Russia including in the area of energy geopolitics. However, the relationship among Russia, Turkey and Iran has been fairly cooperative over the last almost three decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Aliriza, Alternman and Kuchins, 2013).

¹⁰ These wars took place in 1676–81, 1687, 1689, 1695–96, 1710–12, 1735–39, 1768–74, 1787–91, 1806–12, 1828–29, 1853–56 and 1877–78. See 'Russo-Turkish wars', *Encyclopedia of Britannica* [online]. Available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Russo-Turkish-wars> (accessed 23 December 2020).

¹¹ These wars took place between 15 and 17 centuries in 1651-1653, 1722-1723, 1796, 1804-1813, 1826-1828. See 'Russo-Persian Wars', *Encyclopedia.com* [online]. Available at <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/russo-persian-wars> (accessed 23 December 2020).

After the fall of the Soviet Union, though both Iran and Turkey have sought to expand their influence in the region for ‘regional power status’ and influence (Hale, 2002; Herzig, 2004; Turbakov, 2005; Kouhi-Esfahani, 2019) including through ECO and Turkic Council as discussed in the previous chapter, their relative influence *vis-à-vis* Russia remains considerably limited. In recent years however, Turkey has become more assertive, which become more visible in the context of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 where it turned into a significant regional player (Gauthier-Villars, 2020) by imposing a certain outcome including peacekeeping role. Iran has also been seeking to expand its regional standing and role in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by offering to mediate between Azerbaijan and Armenia with both of which Iran maintains good relations (Kouhi-Esfahani, 2019), but its peace-making efforts were not successful (Mahmudlu and Abilov, 2018), failing its regional leadership ambitions.

Perhaps, a more significant player than Turkey and Iran are the Western powers i.e. the EU and the US, which have sought to influence the domestic and foreign policies of the post-Soviet space particularly in Ukraine and the South Caucasus through significant diplomatic, normative and material investments (Freire and Kanet, 2012; Bechev, 2015; Nitoiu, 2017). The promotion of Western democratic norms has been a key instrument of influence (Averre, 2009; Delcour, 2013) that is crucial for the discussion on the post-Soviet regional international order. As discussed in the context of the EaP and Association Agreements, the EU has been pursuing to expand the European security community in the region (Simão, 2018), and the liberal order ideals with relative success. The EU’s relative influence particularly in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which have been in open conflict with Russia, is critical for the discussion of power in the post-Soviet regional order. The EU, and for that matter, the Western powers in general have considerable recognition in these countries perhaps as means to balance against Russia. The Western support to GUAM was marked a significant effort to contain Russia in the region at the beginning (Nation, 2007; Antonopoulos, Valez and Cottle, 2017). Researchers have argued that the EU is competing with Russia over a great power status in the region (Nitoiu, 2016), and have framed the conflict in Ukraine as a new Cold War between the Russia and the West (Monaghan, 2015; Black & Johns, 2016) to underline the confrontational aspects of their engagement in the region. Makarychev and Devyatkov (2014) have characterized the EaP as a geopolitical instrument to redefine the status quo in the region.

However, while there are certainly aspects of confrontation between Russia and the West too, there is little evidence to suggest that the Western powers such as the EU are seeking to assume regional leadership in the region with an aim to undermine Russia's primacy. For a decade (2003-2013) prior to the conflict in Ukraine, Russia and EU relationships were characterized as 'strategic partnership' (Casier, 2019) indicating that the two were not always adversaries trying to expand their influence in the region at the expense of one another. Indeed, scholars have argued that the EU's policy towards the region is aimed primarily at securing its Eastern borders through stabilizing economy and political situations in its EaP partners (Christopher and Jeonniemi 2007; Averre 2009) rather than aiming to redefine the status quo with respect to Russia's primacy in the region. In fact, the conflict in Georgia (2008) and most significantly in Ukraine (2014) in part demonstrated the limits of the Western powers' regional ambitions in the post-Soviet space. Russia's decisiveness and the Western powers' inability to confront Russia in Georgia and Ukraine led to only reinforcing Russia's primacy in the region. Russia's primacy in the region was not only ensured through its military decisiveness in the context of the war in Georgia and Ukraine, but also its role in great power managerial responsibility most recently in the context of its mediation and peace-making role in Nagorno-Karabakh (2020), which has further enhanced Russia's recognition of its primacy in the region.

Therefore, while the Western normative and diplomatic influences in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are crucial to the normative debates concerning the question of post-Soviet regional order, those influences have not been materialized (yet) in terms of a power dynamic that could redefine the post-Soviet regional order or undermine Russia's primacy in the region. Most importantly, the EU's normative success in these countries has been constrained by their "limited democratic developments" (Nilson and Silander, 2016:44), and regional powers' contestations (Christou 2010). The Western powers' influence elsewhere in the post-Soviet space including Azerbaijan, Belarus and in the Central Asian republics remains considerably limited (Payrouse, 2017), where an authoritarian normative convergence creates greater social recognition for Russia's leadership status. This chapter explores and elaborates on Russia's various sources of recognition that helps it position itself as the actor that constitutes the power component of the post-Soviet regional international order.

Conceptualizing Russia as Power: The Parameters of Social Status Recognition

Power was defined earlier in terms of social recognition of ‘status’ a leading state in international society. As social status, power comes not solely from material capabilities, but also from an inter-subjective recognition of the leading state’s role in a given international society. This is a fundamental element of definition of power as part of the triad defining regional orders. Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth (2014:7) define status as, “collective beliefs about a given state’s ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout)”. A more comprehensive definition that grasps also the social or inter-subjective understanding of the status is offered by Murray (2018:46) who defines status as a:

‘recognized identity’, not the acknowledgment or acceptance of a state’s characteristics or capabilities. Despite a state’s desire for and material capacity to take up a particular role in international society, it cannot simply assert its social status: only when recognized does it assume the authority it needs to secure the identity it seeks.

The question of social status recognition implies also that whereas material capabilities are the necessary component of power, they are not sufficient to support a materially capable state’s aspiration for leadership role in international society. The ‘social status’ of a leading state to act as ‘the power’, requires social recognition of a power’s identity and role in an international society. As Oliver Kessler and Benjamin Herboth (2013:159) have argued in the context of states’ identity, the social recognition of a state as a power also “depends on whether other states represent [it] in a similar way”. This means that the recognition of state as a power, and hence, its ‘social status’ is ‘inter-subjective’ (Murray, 2018) defined as well as redefined, contested, produced, and reproduced by other states (Markell, 2003) than merely by a state’s ‘private aspiration’ (Murray, 2018). Power as ‘social status’ concerns the “role identity” (Murray, 2018) of a leading state in a regional international society. ‘Role identities’ according to McCourt, (2014:12) “are inherently social; they only exist in relation to other actors and draw their meanings from the shared social order”.

In the English School literature, a key reference to power as social status is the concept of ‘great power management’, which constitutes an institution of international society in classic English School theory. The concept of ‘great power management’ assumes a set of ‘special rights and duties’ (Morgenthau, 1973, Bull, 2002) for great powers to “play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as

a whole' and the responsibility 'of modifying their policies in the light of the managerial responsibilities they bear' Bull, 2002: 196). The concept therefore, reflects a socially recognized status for great powers. Such status is most prominently reflected in the concept of sphere of influence, which considers certain regions of the world as an area of managerial responsibility of a given great power, e.g. Russia's leadership in the post-Soviet space. The widely used concept of 'sphere of influence' in Russian foreign policy discourse regarding the post-Soviet affairs is aimed at calling for recognition of such Russia's great power status and its role in the post-Soviet space by other great powers. Therefore, power as social status recognition requires peer-recognition in international society. Peer-recognition is an important aspect of power that shapes the external dimension of social recognition of power. In other words, power as 'social status' involves social recognition both regionally by members/participants of a regional international society, and externally by other powers at the global level. Whether Russia status in the post-Soviet space can be defined as power, depends partly on recognition of its status as power by the other great powers, and the global international society.

External (global) Recognition

Russia's external status recognition concerns primarily its 'great power' self-perception and its claim of 'sphere of influence'. Russia's status claim as great power is rooted in the 'great power management' as a social institution of international society according to classic English School theory. Tracing back to the 19th century Congress of Vienna, which basically defined the institutions of the international society (Zala, 2016: 372) 'great power management' introduced a managerial role and responsibility for great powers in the international affairs. This managerial role included also acting as guarantor of international peace and special recognition of the great powers in the international society. In 21st century, however, the managerial roles of great powers have been challenged by the arrival of a "no-one's world" (Kubchan, 2012) or 'G-zero world' in which no one power currently has the "clout to impose a solution" (Bremer, 2012:6, quoted in Zala: 369). Rising powers with different sets of values and norms are increasingly challenging the historical Western international society and its institutions, leading to the assertion that 'the idea of great power managerialism... needs to be consigned to history' (Biesly, 2012: 94).

However, despite the changing global structure, "the managerial role of the great powers", institutionalized by the settlement of Vienna in 1815 as an institution of international society, "continues to exist in one form or another to this day" (Zala: 2016:

367). In fact, with changing global power dynamics more states tend to seek such social status. But, such recognition has not been granted easily because sources of great power recognition are not material only; great power recognition often requires normative and ideational qualifications. In other words, a great power is not a great power simply by its economic and military superiority; it shall also be recognized by peers in terms of its moral-normative standards. The example of China and Japan demonstrates this dynamic well. Both Japan and China possess the attributes of a great power (Suzuki, 2008); Japan has been the second largest economy after the United States for years until China replaced it recently. China in addition to being the second largest national economy in the world is a permanent member of the United Nation's Security Council, but both Japan and China are unhappy about their international standing *vis-à-vis* the Western powers i.e. the US and the European powers, and feel that they are not treated or respected as great powers. Harris states: "not only does China not believe it has the status that its characteristics should entitle it to, but many non-Chinese observers would agree" (Harris, 1998:2, quoted in Suzuki, 2008: 46). Therefore, Suzuki characterizes Japan and China as 'frustrated powers'.

Russia has had the same feeling about its international standing, and therefore, most of its foreign policy efforts over the last two decades have been analyzed in terms of seeking status recognition as great power (Neumann 2008; Tsygankov, 2012b; Larson and Shevchenko, 2014; Smith, 2014; Nitoiu, 2016). Great power status has been a recognition that Russia has been seeking for much of its history as an imperial power (Neumann, 2008; Smith, 2014), and more so in recent years because Russia's declining material status after the fall of the Soviet Union, its descend into internal conflicts such as the Chechen wars had played important role in its non-recognition as great a power (Smith, 2014). From this perspective the spread of conflicts in the post-Soviet space such as in Nagorno-Karabakh, and particularly in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine –where Russia's managerial role has been opposed intra-regionally has also undermined its great power. However, these conflicts could be argued to have also contributed to its *de facto* recognition externally. Despite regionally challenging Russia's influence the conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine and Russia's assertiveness in there against the backdrop of Western powers' inaction has led to reinforcing Russia's primacy and *de facto* recognition of its claim of 'sphere of influence'. The 2020 conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh where Russia played the role of the regional peacemaker and mediator further contributed to its managerial status in the region, which could be interpreted as *de facto* recognition of Russia as a great power.

While Russia's assertiveness in the post-Soviet space might have reinforced its regional primacy and de facto recognition of its great power role and claim of 'sphere of influence', its status as a great power has been challenged by the Western world in another fundamental way: the non-recognition of its governance system or political culture. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has been increasingly challenged by the Western world, which has been seeking expansion of the liberal democratic values into the post-Soviet space. The promotion of liberal European values has often come with strong criticism of Russia's governance system and its record of rights and freedom, which continuously undermined not only Russia's governance model, but also the great power status it claims to have. Neumann, for example, argues that "Russia's lack of social power to have its regime type accepted as being on a par with European ones is the key problem hampering Russia's quest for recognition" (Neumann, 2008:128).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia, like other post-Soviet states entered a number of liberal European international organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe and tried to work closely with the European states as equal partners. However, socialization within these organizations did not result in 'conformity' to European rules and values – or 'standard of civilizations' that defined the European international society. This also meant that Russia was not recognized as having an equal status. Russians felt that "Russia is accorded lower status" in the European organizations such as the OSCE "than the great power status, which most Russians believe should be theirs" (Smith, 2014: 355).

Facing non-recognition as 'great power' or the status it thinks it must have in international society, Russia has responded by a variety of means to assert its decisive role. From actively challenging NATO and EU expansion to Eurasia and getting involved in major conflicts in the Middle East such as in Syria to disinformation campaigns, Russia has been going global in challenging the global liberal democratic order (Kanet, 2018; Laruelle, 2020; Bennett and Livingston, 2018; Kendall-Taylor and Shullman, 2018). Kendall-Taylor and Shullman (2018) argue that "[s]ince 2014, Russia has been taking the fight to Western democracies".

Russia's involvement in the conflict in Syria for example was in part to re-assert itself as a military might, while at the same time, extending support to Bashar Al-Asad against the backdrop of a Western campaign to topple his 'authoritarian' regime. Support to authoritarian regimes has been a key field of Russia's response to the problem of non-recognition particularly from the normative perspective. Over the last decade in particular,

Russia has entered an active norm contestation game aimed at discrediting the liberal international norm and liberal international order. As discussed next, Russia's norm contestation has been aimed equally at boosting its status regionally by shielding the authoritarian regimes in the post-Soviet space against Western criticism.

The Power to Confront: Russia's Norm Contestation as Means of Social Recognition

Suzuki (2008:49) argues that “in order to be ‘socially recognized’ by peers, aspiring great powers shall play the ‘recognition game’, which is to comply with rules and values of the great powers until they are “seen as a ‘good citizen’ that is willing to protect and propagate the rules of the society may become a crucial means by which it can demonstrate its worthiness as a ‘legitimate great power’”. Russia seems to have been doing completely the opposite: Russia has been playing a different game – the contestation game – to confront the liberal international order and its values, perhaps as an attempt to discredit the Western international society's ‘standard of civilization’. By playing the contestation game, Russia has not only been trying to deny the Western powers the moral authority to set the international norms, but it has also been seeking recognition for leadership in the emerging global liberal norm contestation amid declining liberal international order.

Russia's main problem of external recognition concerns its fundamental difference from the ‘cultural Europe’ that defines the global liberal international society. Russia considers itself to be part of “classic Europe” (Laruelle, 2017), but amid Western criticism of its regime, it has been seeking an autonomous identity defined around its discourse of ‘Eurasianism’. A key component of the discourse on Eurasianism has opposition to moral universalism that defines the European international society. As such, Russia's Eurasianism in the normative aspect of its identity is rather ‘rooted illiberal conservatism’ demonstrated most significantly in Russia's discourse on ‘Sovereignism’ (Laruelle, 2020). Much of Russia's norm contestation practices, which will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter, are in fact aimed at introducing Eurasianism as a cultural-normative identity *vis-à-vis* the West.

By rejecting liberal universalism, Russia has been aiming to position itself as a leader in democratic norm contestation as means to respond to its non-recognition by the liberal core international society. Russia has created a strong norm convergence with China, which has been actively working to undermine Western democracies over the recent years (Heijmans, 2017; Chhubra, 2019; Rogin, 2019). Both are sharing the leadership of the SCO, where they are united in their fight against the ‘three evils’ of terrorism, extremism and

separatism. The SCO is increasingly taking a normative character by talking about the ‘Shanghai Spirit’, which characterizes as an attitude of mutual trust, equality, consultation, respect for diversity of culture, and the desire to develop cooperatively. The ‘Shanghai Spirit’ resonates strongly with Russia’s emphasis on equality and its civilization discourse of Eurasianism.

While, China and Russia may have diverging interests including on the role of the SCO, they share a common interest in disrupting and discrediting the liberal international order and its ‘standard of civilization’ that denies them recognition as great powers on normative grounds. It is in this context that the Russian-Chinese alliance to undermine democracy worldwide becomes of strategic significance to Russia. The Sino-Chinese alliance against Western democracies not only strengthens Russia’s chance of positioning itself as a leader in Western norm contestation, but also grants it a recognition by China, another ‘frustrated great power’ (Suzuki, 2008). As Kendall-Taylor and Shullman have argued, “[b]ecause Moscow and Beijing gauge their power in relation to the United States, they view weakening Western democracy as a means of enhancing their own standing” (Kendall-Taylor and Shullman, 2018: 1).

Russia’s liberal norm contestation is accompanied by a variety of other means to undermine Western democratic norms. From the alleged meddling in the US elections in 2016 and elsewhere in Europe, to the so called ‘hybrid wars’ and disinformation, Russia has been taking to the fight against the Western democracies (Heijmans, 2017; Kendall-Taylor and Shullman, 2018; Chhubra, 2019; Rogin, 2019). Russia’s efforts are further empowered by the ‘declining liberal order’ (Acharya, 2014; Acharya, 2017; Cooley, 2017; Mazarr, 2017) and it is taking the opportunity to position itself as the leader, not only in the post-Soviet space, but also globally. Its intervention in Syria in support of the Syrian regime has re-asserted it as a military might to materially qualify for recognition as great power.

Russia’s all-out effort to seek the status of a great power has supported its normative challenge too. It seems that Russia’s efforts are gradually paying off as after years of trying and failing in its liberalization agenda, Europe is relaxing its discourse of rights and democracy in the post-Soviet space. For example, in his visits to Tajikistan in 2019, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk praised Rahmon’s leadership and his role in his country’s security as well as in the region and world, while emphasizing his role in achieving security and protecting human rights in Tajikistan (Leyts, 2019). Similarly, amid crackdown on peaceful protestors during the Kazakhstan’s presidential election in 2019,

Donald Tusk congratulated the Kazakh new president on his election without mentioning a thing about the rights abuse and the police violence against peaceful protestors (Leyts, 2019). In fact, in practice the EU had abandoned rights and freedoms with regards to its relations with the post-Soviet authoritarian states long ago by buying into the discourse on regimes security of those countries. Regime security has been a standard authoritarian norm to resist democratic interference in the post-Soviet space.

Russia's contestation game of liberal norms has earned, if not the great power status for it, but recognition of the authoritarian values that unite Russia and most of the authoritarian regimes in the post-Soviet space. This is discussed in-depth in next chapter of this thesis. Tolerance to authoritarianism within liberal institutions such as the OSCE has led to 'normalization' of authoritarian norms and their relative recognition. Russia's contestation game has been aimed in part at overcoming the problem of external recognition of its role as an authoritarian great power in the post-Soviet space. It has been seeking that role by claiming a normative leadership through contesting the democratic norms and 'validating' authoritarian regimes amid Western pressures, and by doing so, mobilizing support from the authoritarian states in post-Soviet regional international society.

Internal (regional) Recognition

While, Russia has been facing barriers to its social status recognition externally, it has been relatively successful in preserving primacy internally in terms of its regional recognition. This however, does not mean Russia's status in the post-Soviet space has gone unchallenged. Regionally, Russia's position is challenged in Georgia and Ukraine, and constantly re-negotiated elsewhere in the post-Soviet space as states seek to balance and diversify their external relations. Russia's position is challenged through actors and projects seeking expansion of influence as discussed in the previous chapter. While these contestations have led to some regional breakaways such as in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, they, however, have not shifted the regional power dynamic in favour of other actors. The lack of arrival of a new power in the post-Soviet space has left the regional order – in terms of Russia's primacy – relatively stable, meaning that despite facing challenges, Russia has been able to maintain its primacy, and consequently its role as a power that defines the post-Soviet regional order. This is due to a number of role identities that Russia has been accumulating for itself. These roles, which are identified below work as part of a whole to facilitate Russia's 'social status' as the 'big brother' in the region:

a. Russia as an Integrative power:

Makarchev (2011) argued that Russia lacks the resources for leadership in the Caspian. In fact, Russia's resources favouring integration are very limited compared to other actors such as the EU and China. Economically, Russia cannot compete with China in the allocation of resources for regional integration and development. However, despite its relative material weakness Russia has been playing the role of one of the main integrative powers in the post-Soviet space regardless of its practical achievements. On the practical aspect, none of the other actors including the EU, who has invested in regional projects and forums, have achieved their regional integration goals in the post-Soviet space. While the region remains one of the least integrated, Russia has been one of the main actors pursuing a central role in regional integration, within the multi-lateral frameworks such as the CIS, the CSTO and the EAEU. Russia has continuously sought integration of the post-Soviet space's economy and security structure under its leadership namely within these institutions, thus helping its regional positioning *vis-à-vis* other actors in the region.

The social status of an integrative power does not come only from the material resources, but from the trust and the promise of leadership. In practice the Russia-led organizations such as the CIS and CSTO have considerably underperformed in terms of its objectives, but the participating states nevertheless continue to gather under these structures not so much because these organizations are efficient, but mostly because of "bandwagoning" (Allison, 2008) with Russia as the lead state. By participating in Russia-led regional organizations, the member states engage in social recognition and endorsing of Russia's role for regional leadership.

Those refraining from participating at such regional structures do the opposite. The withdrawal of Ukraine and Georgia from these organizations as a way to oppose Russia's role in the region demonstrates this very well. Materially, their withdrawal as well as Uzbekistan's from the CIS in the past did not have tangible consequences for these countries. Ukraine and Georgia's withdrawal came as a result of open conflict with Russia and opposition to its role in the post-Soviet space. This demonstrates that the participation of most states in the Russia-led regional frameworks of cooperation is not so much about material benefits as it is about 'bandwagoning' with Russia in political terms. This has granted Russia social recognition for its 'status' within the regional hierarchy. While the practical achievements of Russia's regional integration schemes have been marginal, the status of Russia as an integrative power does not come from its performance or remunerative

resources only; it is rather invested in the promise of leadership, supported by Russia's other roles, which push the other post-Soviet states to 'bandwagon' with Russia.

b. Russia as a punitive power:

The concept of "punitive power" comes from Johan Galtung (1973).¹² Marlene Laruelle (2017) has used the framework to discuss Russia's role in Central Asia. It refers to a state's military superiority and destructive capacity. According to Laruelle (2017: 7), "Russia is the only country that is capable of wielding punitive power in the region". While the punitive power refers to the Russia's military potential, for Laruelle it has "symbolic weight" though its potential has also been well tested in the context of Russia's conflict with Georgia and Ukraine. As Laruelle notes, the punitive power concerns not only military superiority alone. Economic leverage or 'retaliation' through economic threats can also define a state's punitive power. While the post-Soviet states' economic dependency on Russia and hence, Russia's economic retaliatory power varies from country to country, it nevertheless can threaten many countries in terms of halting bilateral cooperation agreements in the area of energy particularly and other areas including labour migration (Laruelle, 2017).

While material aspects of power are not the only determinant of power, it is a necessary condition for a power to be able to perform the roles expected of a power to play. Russia's punitive or coercive capacity as the largest military in the region contributes to its 'social status' in the post-Soviet space. Powers are socially recognized not on the basis of their positive attributes only. Their deterrence capacity is equally important in their recognition. Russia's coercive capacity has prevented regional breakaways in the post-Soviet space, and where it breakaways have happened such as in Georgia and Ukraine, Russia's coercive power has limited the extent and regional implications of those breakaways. States in Georgia and Ukraine may be actively contesting Russia's role and legitimacy in the post-Soviet space, but they also recognize the punitive power of Russia.

¹² Johan Galtung uses a framework to study powers' influence in terms of their 'remunerative, punitive and ideological' powers. This has been used by Marlene Laruelle(2017) to study Russia's influence in Central Asia. This framework offers limited scope for the study of a power's role identity. 'Remunerative' for example is less comprehensive than 'integrative', which conceptualizes the dynamics of relations concerning a power's role in a region in respect to non-material leadership capacity. In addition, Galtung's framework offers limited tools to understand other functions of a power such as the mediating role and security provider role. Therefore, I have used the current framework to accommodate the scope of Russia's role in post-Soviet space

Recognizing Russia as a source of ‘threat’ can also support its ‘social status’, particularly when it’s punitive power remains unmatched.

The Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 re-affirmed Russia’s decisive military role in the post-Soviet region. While these conflicts also indicate dissatisfaction with the regional order in terms of Russia’s role, Russia’s aggressive posture re-asserted its dominance. This sent a strong message to other states in the region, who feel largely defenceless against Russia given Western allies’ failure to react in Georgia and Ukraine. This has led to a collective recognition of Russia’s punitive power in the post-Soviet space that systematically supports Russia’s other roles in the region.

c. Russia as security provider and peacemaker:

Thanks to its punitive capacity, Russia has been able to define for itself the role of a security provider in the region. This is due to its military leadership and technology in the region. The CSTO has been devised by Russia to cultivate regional leadership in terms of its role to lead a collective defence system and expand its security role in the region by positioning itself as the its military guard. Regardless of its efficiency and achievements, the CSTO is the only military organization in the post-Soviet space that brings a considerable number of the post-Soviet states together. Most of these countries depend on Russia in terms of military technology and defence needs, making Russia the largest exporter of arms to the region, especially Central Asia (Barabanov, 2018). Russia’s role as security provider can be best illustrated by its military bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. While Russia’ does not have military bases in other post-Soviet states, its leadership of the CSTO and overall military potential makes it the likeliest of all other powers to perform the role of a security provider for the region, particularly to states most vulnerable to threats of extremism and state collapse due to internal turmoil. This is one of the key sources of Russia’s ‘social status’ recognition in the region.

The capacity to provide security supports also another role for Russia, which is the role of a mediator and guarantor of peace. Russia has been acting as the mediator on several conflicts. It helped to bring the Tajik civil war (1992-1997) to an end, in which Russia’s role is considered to have been one of most important factors leading to an agreement (Lynch, 2001:58). In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, although it secretly supported Armenia, Russia remains a key mediator in the Minsk Group.¹³ When the conflict broke out again in 2016,

¹³ The Group's permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, and Turkey, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Russia brokered a ceasefire between the representatives of the warring sides in Moscow (Dyomkin and Lowe, 2016). And finally, Russia played a key role in bringing the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh to an end. Russia's deployment of a peacekeeping mission to enforce the Azeri-Armenian ceasefire or Armenia's troops withdrawal from parts of Karabakh confirmed Russia's important role in maintaining negative peace in the post-Soviet space.

Mediating conflicts has been a key aspect of Russia's diplomatic quest for great power recognition globally. Beyond the post-Soviet space, Russia has been seeking that role in the Middle East with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and more recently in Yemen (Ramani, 2018), Syria (Rasmussen, 2018) and in neighbouring Afghanistan (Ferris-Rotman, 2018). When a conflict erupted between India and Pakistan, in early 2019, Russia offered to mediate there too. Of course, Russia's mediation role in the region as well as in the world is aimed at ensuring its own interest; it has not been a neutral player in most of the conflicts and has sought to mediate including in Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh and even in Afghanistan, where it has been focusing on bringing the Taliban onto the regional and global diplomacy against strong opposition from the Afghan government (Mashal and Higgins, 2019).

In the post-Soviet space, Russia's mediation role overlaps with its role as a security provider. When the conflict broke out in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010, the Kyrgyz government called for Russia's intervention. As discussed earlier, the intervention did not happen due to political consideration concerning Russia's relations with Uzbekistan, but there remains a belief that Russia may be able to act to restore peace upon arising of conflicts in the region as demonstrated in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2016, and particularly in 2020. In 2020, Russia became instrumental to the deal by offering to send a Russian peacekeeping mission into Karabakh. While Russia's refusal to step in defence of Armenia with which it has military alliance within the framework of CSTO was perceived as a betrayal by many Armenians, Russia's role in ending the war largely re-enforced Russia's position in the region as a mediating and peacekeeping power.

d. Russia as normative power:

Russia's role as a 'normative power' is probably the most important aspect of Russia's 'social status' in the region. Referring to the ability to "shape what can be 'normal' in international life" (Manners, 2002 in Laruelle, 2017), Russia's normative power rests upon the 'social institutions' of regional international society in the post-Soviet space, which is the subject of discussion in the next chapter of this thesis. Here, it is briefly discussed to highlight Russia's non-material resources of power and thus, its 'social status' in the post-

Soviet space. Laruelle uses Galtung's concept of 'ideological power' to discuss Russia's normative power in Central Asia and states that:

“Russia's ideological influence is probably one of the most powerful assets and the one that most profoundly shapes Central Asia's social fabric, although at very different levels for each of the five societies. But it is also the power that is least state-sponsored and state-controlled on Russia's side. This leverage is based on complex social mechanisms and historical patterns....” (Laruelle, 2017: 1).

At a systemic level, Russia's normative power in the region can be linked with the socio-historical processes that have shaped the development of international affairs in the region in which Russia has played the role of a 'civilizer' – to employ the English School terms for the role of a what this thesis calls a “socializer” state. This process has helped to make the political environment conducive to Russia's normative discourses today.

Russia's leadership of the regional organizations such as the CIS, CSTO and the EAEU has been instrumental in promoting, if not policy convergence in global stage (Hansen, 2015), considerable normative socialization among Russia and the member states of these organizations. The CIS for example has an inter-parliamentary assembly, which among other functions, develops model legislations for member states. Inspired by Russian laws, the legislative emulations in Central Asia for example can be noticed in several areas ranging from counter-terrorism to anti-gay and anti-NGOs laws. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan for instance, governments proposed anti-gay laws to their respective parliaments, which were explicitly based on the Russian laws (Laruelle, 2017). The same happened with regards to the bills on restricting NGOs. The anti-gay law passed through the Kyrgyz Parliament, while the anti-NGO law got passed by both parliaments. The same is true about counter-terrorism laws. In May 2019, Edward Lemon, a scholar of Tajikistan reported that 79% of Kyrgyzstan and 56% of Tajikistan's laws are identical to the Russian laws on terrorism and extremism (Lemon, 2019). Lemon and Antonov (2020) compared 43 legislations in three areas of terrorism, extremism and operational searches and found strong similarities among the legislations of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The findings point at significant normative convergence among these countries. Though Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan's laws have lower resemblance to those of Russian laws on terrorism, normative convergence among the post-Soviet states is widespread in various other legal practices such as regulations on NGOs, norms concerning LGBT rights and freedom of media. LGBT rights are the single most important demonstrative issue for legal and normative convergence that goes beyond the legislations and reflects norms and values at the level of the primary social institutions of the post-Soviet space.

Though not always, Russia is the leading actor in most cases to shape the normative environment in the post-Soviet space. Under Russia's leadership in the CIS, the CIS Election Monitoring Organization (CIS-EMO) has been established with a double function of creating new standards for elections to "validate the current political status quo" by mimicking "international validation" practices, and contest the Western standards by supporting "elections held in the post-Soviet countries against critical assessments by the OSCE" (Laruelle, 2017: 1). Such authoritarian standards and practices travel fast through most of the post-Soviet space and are quickly implemented by most states in Central Asia as well as in Azerbaijan. This is evident in promoting state-sponsored parties such as the United Russia and *Nur Otan* for the purpose of manipulating electoral process, or in extension of presidential terms, in some cases for life, for leaders in power in Central Asia.

Perhaps, the most important aspect of Russia as a normative power lies in its ability to counter the Western normative agenda by instrumentalizing international law principles such as sovereignty and equality. It is through contesting the Western norms that Russia introduces itself as a norm producer in the region. Russia's contestation of EU values in the area of democracy and rule of law has been a source of its own re-definition as a normative power in the post-Soviet space. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Western pressure for liberalization of the political space led to resistance by the Russian political elites who sought ways to counter the promotion of liberal democracy in the post-Soviet space by inventing normative concepts such as 'sovereign democracy' (Surkov, 2006). Rooted in the idea of the 1990s "managed democracy", which proposed the need for the elites "to control the electoral choices of the masses", sovereign democracy "goes a step further by limiting the list of elites who are eligible to steer the masses" (Liik, 2018: 2). However, at a more normative-philosophical level, the tenet of the idea of 'sovereign democracy' emphasized not only on the principle of sovereignty, but also on the fact that it is undemocratic to impose external values on the sovereign will of another nation. This become the principle normative argument on the basis of which, Russia as well as some other post-Soviet states legitimated policies to ban foreign NGOs and civil society and rights groups.

As a norm contestant, Russia has engaged in a critical assessment of Western norms by highlighting the political interests underlying norm promotion. Romanova notes:

Initially Moscow sought to demonstrate that the normative power argument was developed to cover the EU's *realpolitik* (interest-based) intentions and that the EU has not been consistent and coherent in its implementation (Romanova 2009). Moscow avoided substantive discussions and was mostly on the defensive. Recently this approach has been modified and rendered more complex through reporting on human rights in the EU, prepared by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID). As a result, Russia

has increasingly challenged the [Normative Power Europe] NPE, showing how the EU does not live up to what is expected from a normative power. Furthermore, these reports also provided a platform for Moscow to develop an alternative normative concept, which draws extensively on conservatism. In doing this, Moscow challenged the universality of the concept that the EU promotes (Romanova 2016:372).

As such, Russia, by contesting the European norms, has increasingly shaped its own normative power in the post-Soviet space. From ‘sovereign democracy’, which resisted Western pressures Russia has gone on the offensive spectrum of engagement with the West to claim normative-territorial identity through its discourse of Eurasianism, ‘Russian world’ (*Ruskii mir*). Laruelle lists the set of norms that Russia has been promoting in the post-Soviet space as the following:

- Sovereignty is the supreme value shaping international relations;
- The state is the recipient of the nation’s continuity over time, and of its “essence” in terms of values, and therefore cannot be challenged domestically without putting at risk the very stability of the society;
- The Eurasian space is a specific civilizational world whose autonomy should be protected and in which Russia plays a pivotal role;
- Russia values the “classical,” “historical” West and considers itself to be a legitimate part of it, but it repudiates the “post-modern” West, perceived as decadent and denying its own essence” (Laruelle, 2017:1).

Of these norms, sovereignty and ‘statism’ resonates strongly with other authoritarian post-Soviet states. From ‘sovereignty’ and ‘centrality of state’ emerge other norms such as state and regime security that legitimate a wide range of authoritarian practices. These norms legitimize or ‘validate’ authoritarian governance and socio-political arrangements that support the system. The idea of Eurasianism particularly in its ‘intercivilizational’ sense (Rangsimaporn, 2006) is about defining independent identity as much as it is about seeking great power status in Eurasia. It is about seeking a form of cultural sovereignty *vis-à-vis* Western universalism with respect to norms and values. As such, Eurasianism is an identity discourse that feeds the idea of sovereignty, pluralism, civilizational diversity and multipolarity all of which are crucial normative instruments to challenge the global liberal international order. Describing the intellectual component of Eurasianism Nugraha (2018:100) argues that one of the ideas of Eurasianism is about “negating the superiority of the European style social and political system”. This fits the post-Soviet authoritarianism as legitimating discourse through which Russia has been assuming normative leadership in the region.

By resisting Western values, institutions and norms, Russia has been “shielding post-Soviet governments from external criticism and promoting backlash against Western-

style liberalism” (Cooley, 2017:1). This serves Russia’s status in the post-Soviet space in two important ways. First, by creating a common interest with other post-Soviet authoritarian states and empowering and ‘validating’ their regimes, and second, by positioning itself as a normative leader in the region. It is interesting how Russia has been using international legal principles such as sovereignty and equality to assert its normative positioning. For example, Russia has instrumentalized the concept of ‘equality’ to deny the EU moral legitimacy to impose its own value standards as universal. Romanova notes that “[t]he EU’s normative argument is seen by Russia as profoundly unequal because it reserves for the EU the right to unilaterally decide what is right or wrong and to judge others” (Romanova, 2016:372).

Despite that Russia’s Eurasianism and its claim of sphere of influence threatens sovereignty of the post-Soviet states, which is some of them are using multivectorism to balancing against Russia (Hanks, 2009; Makarychev, 2011; Minasyan, 2012; Nitoiu, 2018), it also offers a common interest as far as authoritarian resistance to Western democratic pressures are concerned. Western norms contestation and the using of discourse or Eurasianism to ‘validate’ the post-Soviet authoritarianism helps Russia to assert itself as a normative power in the region.

The above role identities of Russia in the post-Soviet space contribute to its recognition and relative ‘social status’ as the power that defines the post-Soviet regional order. These role identities act as part of a whole to support Russia’s position as regional leader. For example, Russia’s normative power helps to sustain its other roles, i.e. integrative and mediating role in the region, while its punitive power provides the material basis for its regional leadership. It is along these parameters that Russia’s ‘social status’ as power becomes more visible. While other regional and external players may possess certain aspects of the above mentioned role and identity, Russia maintains leadership through combining the above mentioned roles backed by greater degree of social recognition thanks to its historical role as a ‘civilizer’ of the post-Soviet states in international society.

It is important, however, to note that the relationship between Russia and individual states in the post-Soviet space varies a great deal. Some states such as Ukraine and Georgia maintain hostile relations with Russia while some like Belarus and Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan have closer ties. In fact, the bilateral relationship between Russia and other post-Soviet states can be described in terms of a continuum of friendly and hostile countries. However, even in relatively hostile states, such as Georgia and Ukraine, political elites as

well as the public seem to be divided on the question of Russia. For example, in June 2019 a Russian lawmaker appeared to be speaking at the Georgian Parliament; an incident that could have been interpreted as improving Georgian-Russian relationships, but it triggered large protests by Georgians who oppose Russia (Antidze, 2019). The protest lasted days leading to clashes between the riot police and the protesters. However, when a Rustavi 2 TV presenter made insulting remarks directed at Russian President Vladimir Putin during a live broadcast, a crowd of angry Georgians gathered in front of the TV station demanding removal of the presenter and resignation of the TV's director (Dakhundaridze, 2019). This demonstrates that despite a strongly negative attitude towards Russia among the younger generation of the Georgians, there are those who prefer friendlier relations with Russia.

While Russia's leadership role in the post-Soviet space can be disputed if seen from the perspective of its bilateral relations with the post-Soviet states, regionally it has continued to be the 'power' –in terms of its relative 'social status' *vis-à-vis* other actors – that shapes the post-Soviet regional order. What suggests this more strongly is the lack of a fundamental change in the post-Soviet regional order in terms of a "power transition" (Organski, 1958; Tammen, 2008) that could lead to Russia's replacement by a rival/new power. In Regional Security Complex theory terms, such power transition would mean the emergence of a new security complex (Waeber and Buzan, 2003). But, that has not taken place, and the reason for it from the English School theory perspective is that 'power' as a social status is linked to the other two elements of regional order, e.g. social institutions and identity, which sustains and re-produces power.

The violent breakaways of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine from Russia's 'zone of influence' could be perceived as a shift towards "power transition" (Chan, 2014). However, while both wars are indicative of significant geopolitical change, they have not resulted into re-setting the regional order, particularly in terms of allowing a rival power, i.e. the EU, to take the lead in the region as a whole. In contrast, both wars have helped Russia to re-assert itself and protect its primacy. Russia's decisive military role in Georgia and Ukraine has enhanced social recognition of its punitive power. Given that both Ukraine and Georgia were left on their own against Russia, without any defensive support from their European allies, i.e. NATO, relations with Russia have become a question of realist evaluation of *status quo* for both the elite and the public in these countries, who seem to be divided on the question of Russia. Ukraine for example is facing an active pro-Russia insurgency and politics in Moldova as seen in the context of the last presidential elections between former President

Dodon (supported by Russia) and new President Sandu (pro-West) (Secieru, 2020; RFE/RL, 2020) remain divided.

Apart from its punitive power, Russia enjoys considerable influence in Ukraine and Georgia as well as in Moldova through various means, including through the Orthodox Church. Religion is often one of least talked about topics when it comes to discussing Russia's normative power in the post-Soviet space, but it is a significant non-material source of Russia's normative power and social recognition in the Christian majority post-Soviet states of Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The Church in Russia as well as the Russian state has been promoting 'traditional values' to oppose certain Western norms such as the LGBT rights "as part of their 'ethos of the Russian world'...to influence churches and societies of their 'near abroad'" (Hug, 2015:3). Hug argues that "the Russian social agenda tallies with that of the orthodox communities in these four countries" (Hug, 2015:3).

Conclusions

Despite facing a competitive regional environment, the post-Soviet regional order continues to be defined by Russia's relative primacy along a number of social parameters that facilitate Russia's social status recognition. Conceptualized in this chapter as the 'social status' in international society, power rests upon various identity roles that a leading state performs in an international society. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been able to maintain its 'social status' through various role identities it has acquired in its relations with the post-Soviet space including through its role as integrative, punitive and normative power as well as a security provider, the combined effect of which translates into Russia's primacy to external powers such as the EU. These role identities re-enforce one another at different levels to help Russia position itself as the power that continues to shape the post-Soviet regional order. This is despite challenges to Russia's status recognition in the global stage, or the challenges it faces regionally in terms of the competitive regionalization projects aimed at undermining Russia's role and position in the region. Rival power projects within the framework of regionalism and connectivity schemes, have failed to fundamentally change the regional order in favour of a new power in the post-Soviet space. Despite the multiplicity of actors in the wider Caspian region, Russia remains as the power that shapes the post-Soviet regional order.

Russia's power is rooted not necessarily in its hegemonic policy or material capability, but in the collective recognition of its 'social status' as a leader in the post-Soviet regional international society in which Russia has historically played the role of a 'civilizer'

or socializer. This recognition which is rooted in shared social institutions (discussed in the next chapter) provides a new understanding of the role of Russia beyond the simplistic framework of power analysis such as hegemony and polarity. Power is a socially produced and socially recognized identity. Conceptualizing power as ‘social status’ helps to address a major problem with defining power as a political science concept in general, and defining it in connection to the question of the post-Soviet regional order in particular as it gives agency to members of the regional international society as those who define, contest, and re-define the power. As discussed in the context of the hegemony literature in Chapter II, many have tended to view the post-Soviet region in terms of Russia’s hegemonic foreign policy only. This perspective denies the smaller states in the post-Soviet region agency to act on their own interest. Conceptualizing power as ‘social status’ helps addressing that problem by bringing smaller states in the region on the front stage of discussions on Russia’s ‘recognition’ as the power that shapes the post-Soviet regional order. Russia’s ‘social status’ is maintained through the collective reproduction and maintenance of the social structure of the post-Soviet regional international society in terms of other post-Soviet states’ conformity to the social institutions that sustains the post-Soviet authoritarian identity of the region. In theoretical terms, Russia’s social status as the power in the post-Soviet regional space rests in the working of the other two elements of the regional order’s triad: social institutions and identity, discussed in the following chapters.

VI. THE MAKING OF POST-SOVIET REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER: SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Social institutions are the most important of the triad of regional order. They are fundamental in defining the concept of order as well as the concept of society. It also closely relates to the other two elements of regional order i.e. power and identity; social institutions e.g. rules, norms and values, facilitate social recognition of power, and define the normative identity of a region *vis-à-vis* the global international society i.e. whether a region can be said to follow a liberal democracy or authoritarian political system. This is the aspect of identity that has been discussed earlier within the framework of the concept of ‘standard of civilizations’. This chapter discusses the empirical aspects of social institutions in the post-Soviet space as they come together to define the regional international order.

As discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis, social institutions are also central to the conceptualization of international society. As stated in the theoretical chapter of this thesis, a society of states can be said to exist if the states making it are bound by common rules, norms and principles in conducting international relations. This has been a central approach also in defining and conceptualizing the idea of regional international society as a group of states bound by their distinct set of rules and norms or different interpretation of rules and norms that make up the global core international society (Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Buranelli, 2014, Karmazin at el., 2014, Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009).

In studying the primary institutions as a framework for regional international society, the question concerns whether a region has its distinct norms i.e. that are different from the global international society, or it has a different understanding/interpretation of the same norms i.e. institutions (Buzan and Zhang, 2014; Buranelli, 2014; Karmazin at el., 2014; Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009). Illustrating this in the context of international human rights law, Lasmar at el. (2015) argue that “some norms, principles and values of international society that are taken for granted as being universal are in fact subject to specific regional interpretations” (Lasmar, Zhreddine and Lage, 2015: 471). They further argue that different interpretation of such norms, principles, and values create “regional systems of norms” that are different, but nested within the global international society.

Having the focus on the primary institutions in mind, Buzan and Zhang suggests studying and characterizing regional international societies:

in terms of four general attributes: their degree of differentiation from the Western–global core, their degree of differentiation from neighbouring regional international societies, their degree of internal homogeneity and integration, and their placement on a pluralist solidarist spectrum (is the principal governing logic of the region power political, coexistence, co-operation or convergence?) (Buzan and Zhang, 2014:3).

Applying this framework, this chapter discusses the post-Soviet social institutions in light of the empirical evidence drawn from foreign policy documents of 12 post-Soviet countries. Over 100 foreign ministerial statements delivered between 1992 and 2016 at the Ministerial Council of the OSCE by representatives of post-Soviet states were analyzed through qualitative content analysis to identify major norms and values that these countries have been advocating in their relations with or in response to their European counter parts within the OSCE. These norms and values were analyzed to identify the social institutions of the post-Soviet space, and then discuss how they differ from the global core international society either in terms of their regional peculiarity and difference in the interpretation of same norms. It also discusses the way the region differs or is similar to the neighboring ones e.g. the Middle East as well as its degree of homogeneity and placement on the pluralist-solidarist divides.

Post-Soviet Primary Social Institutions

The results of the analysis of the foreign ministerial documents point at the existence of both distinct social institutions and different interpretations of the social institutions of the global international society in the post-Soviet space. While there are important differences between countries individually, the region as whole demonstrates significant difference from the global international society regardless of how widely they share certain norms or the different interpretation of certain norms intra-regionally. With a few exceptions such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the most significant distinct social institution of the post-Soviet society can be conceptualized as authoritarianism. Authoritarianism serves an institution of post-Soviet regional order as it entails a set of core beliefs and values that see strong state and strong leadership as source of security and public order. In terms of difference in interpretation of global international society, the post-Soviet space, again with exception of the three outlying states of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, demonstrate strong difference in interpreting certain norms such as democracy, human

rights, principle of equality of states, Sovereignty and non-intervention, and the rule of law among others.

Authoritarianism as Social Institution

Authoritarianism is a key feature of the post-Soviet regional order not only in terms of the question of regime type, but in terms of the set of beliefs and values that constitute a distinct social institution of the region. In that sense, authoritarianism can be considered as a social institution of international society. Buranelli (2020:1) has also argued that “authoritarianism can potentially be an institution of specific regional international societies”. The post-Soviet authoritarianism first and foremost is rooted in the widely held belief in strongman leadership or ‘Avtaritet’ (authority) (Buranelli, 2020), and strong state to preserve ‘order’ and ‘stability’ in domestic politics, and discourse or pluralism and multiculturalism and authoritarian interpretation of global norms such as rule of law, sovereignty or equality etc in international politics. A key feature of the post-Soviet authoritarian norms or authoritarian interpretation of global norms is moral relativism and opposition to universalism to resist the expansion of liberal democratic international society. As such, the post-Soviet authoritarianism emerges as an alternative political philosophy in the form of ‘radical conservatism’ that is based on ‘profound rejection of liberal internationalism’ (Lewis, 2020: vii).

Although not all post-Soviet states are equally authoritarian, and some like Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have made significant progress towards democracy in recent years, most post-Soviet are considered to be consolidated authoritarian regimes. Even the three mentioned outlying states are not full democracies as shown by figure 1 bellow. However, despite being hybrid regimes, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine represent a breakaway from the post-Soviet regional order in both normative and identity dimensions, but the institutionalization of their new identity and membership in the European international society has been externally circumscribed both by the power dynamics that shape the East-West relations in the post-Soviet states, and the politics of recognition and differentiation by the Western core international society, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Figure 1: Democracy score for post-Soviet states 1 being least democratic and 4 full democracies.

Country	Regime type	Democracy score
Armenia	Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian	3
Azerbaijan	Consolidated Authoritarian regime	1.14
Belarus	Consolidated Authoritarian regime	1.39
Georgia	Transitional or Hybrid regime	3.25
Kazakhstan	Consolidated Authoritarian regime	1.32
Kyrgyzstan	Consolidated Authoritarian regime	1.96
Moldova	Transitional or Hybrid regime	3.11
Russia	Consolidated Authoritarian regime	1.39
Tajikistan	Consolidated Authoritarian regime	1.18
Turkmenistan	Consolidated Authoritarian regime	1
Ukraine	Transitional or Hybrid regime	3.39
Uzbekistan	Consolidated Authoritarian regime	1.4

Source: Freedom House (2020) Freedom in the world.

In addition to the fact that not all post-Soviet states are authoritarian, there is significant difference in their degree of democratization experiences. Some post-Soviet countries such as Russia and Kyrgyzstan started to open up more than others in the first years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, but they then gradually slid back to authoritarianism. Some countries such as Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan or Uzbekistan never attempted to reform. Armenia demonstrated significant democratic progress in the last few years. In 2019, the situation of NGOs slightly improved in Armenia as they took an active part in pushing for policy reforms (European Partnership for Democracy, 2019), but the country remains semi-authoritarian in general. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as mentioned above have been seeking to democratize over the last decade or so as they have sought

alignment with Europe as result of conflicts with Russia. Conflict with Russia has been an important factor for democratic aspirations in these countries as demonstrated in their pursued of NATO and EU membership. The normative questions in these countries, therefore, closely interact with geopolitics, which has also left their societies and political elites deeply divided on their pro-Europe choices.

At the regional level, the relatively democratic public space in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova have not resulted into the emergence of a strong democratic regional cluster to challenge the existing regional order in the post-Soviet space. Although with Western supports, these countries have created the GUAM along with Azerbaijan, but the organization does not represent a coherent regional democratic block in the post-Soviet space. Historically, GUAM was created and supported by the US in part to challenge the Russia's regional leadership in the region. However, the institution, which includes the autocratic Azerbaijan and previously included authoritarian Uzbekistan, cannot be considered as a democratic alternative or challenge to the existing largely authoritarian regional order. Normatively speaking, Azerbaijan has more in common with authoritarian regimes in Central Asia than it has with the neighboring Georgia or Moldova and Ukraine. Therefore, GUAM hardly presents a democratic challenge to the existing regional order in the post-Soviet space.

In the absence of a significant democratic challenge, the regional order in the post-Soviet space remains to be predominantly authoritarian. This authoritarian order is marked by a set of authoritarian norms and authoritarian interpretation of the global norms, which differentiates the post-Soviet regional order from the global core international society. With exception of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, these authoritarian norms have facilitated regional cohesion among the post-Soviet states along the questions of power, normative interests and identity discourses. The analysis of the foreign policy documents of the post-Soviet states indicates significant authoritarian normative convergence among most of the post-Soviet states. This normative convergence, which makes the basis of regional international order in the post-Soviet space, presents a case for authoritarianism as social institution of the post-Soviet regional international order. This chapter introduces these norms and discusses how widely they are shared across the post-Soviet states.

Regional Authoritarian Norms

As stated, authoritarianism is not a single norm, but a complex set of values and a belief system that work together as a social institution of regional order in the post-Soviet space. It's also the most significant feature of the post-Soviet regional order and differentiates it from the global international society. Authoritarianism is a worldview expressed through a set of specific norms and values that collectively produce and legitimate the existing regional order. Based on the analysis of the foreign policy documents of the post-Soviet states, a number of authoritarian norms and values were identified that constitutes the region's distinct social institutions. They include:

1. Securitism: emphasizing stability, security and strong state/leadership as the ultimate source of peace and order;
2. Parochialism: emphasizing local traditions and values as opposed to universal/Western values;
3. Secularism: not only denying a role for religion in politics, but showing little tolerance towards religious movements;
4. Revisionism: seeking reforms in international organizations with a view to enhance recognition for authoritarian/illiberal governments;
5. National harmony: suppressing collective discontent to enforce political order;
6. Statism and inter-governmentalism: rejecting supranational institutions or role for NGOs in international affairs;
7. Economy first: emphasizing economic priorities over political and civil society development.

Drawn from the foreign policy statements of the post-Soviet states within the Ministerial Council of the OSCE, each of these norms could constitute a primary social institution on their own right, but they act also as collectivity and share a single purpose, which is to socially produce, legitimate and promote authoritarianism as the ultimate social institution of the post-Soviet regional order. In other words, they are authoritarian norms, just like freedom of speech and political rights are democratic norms. However, unlike democracy which is often referred to as an institution of the liberal international society, authoritarianism is not a value term; it is rather expressed through norms such as stability, harmony, national values, sovereignty etc that give content to authoritarianism. In practice, none of the post-Soviet states refers to authoritarianism as a value. On the contrary, democracy and human rights are the two most frequently used terms in the foreign

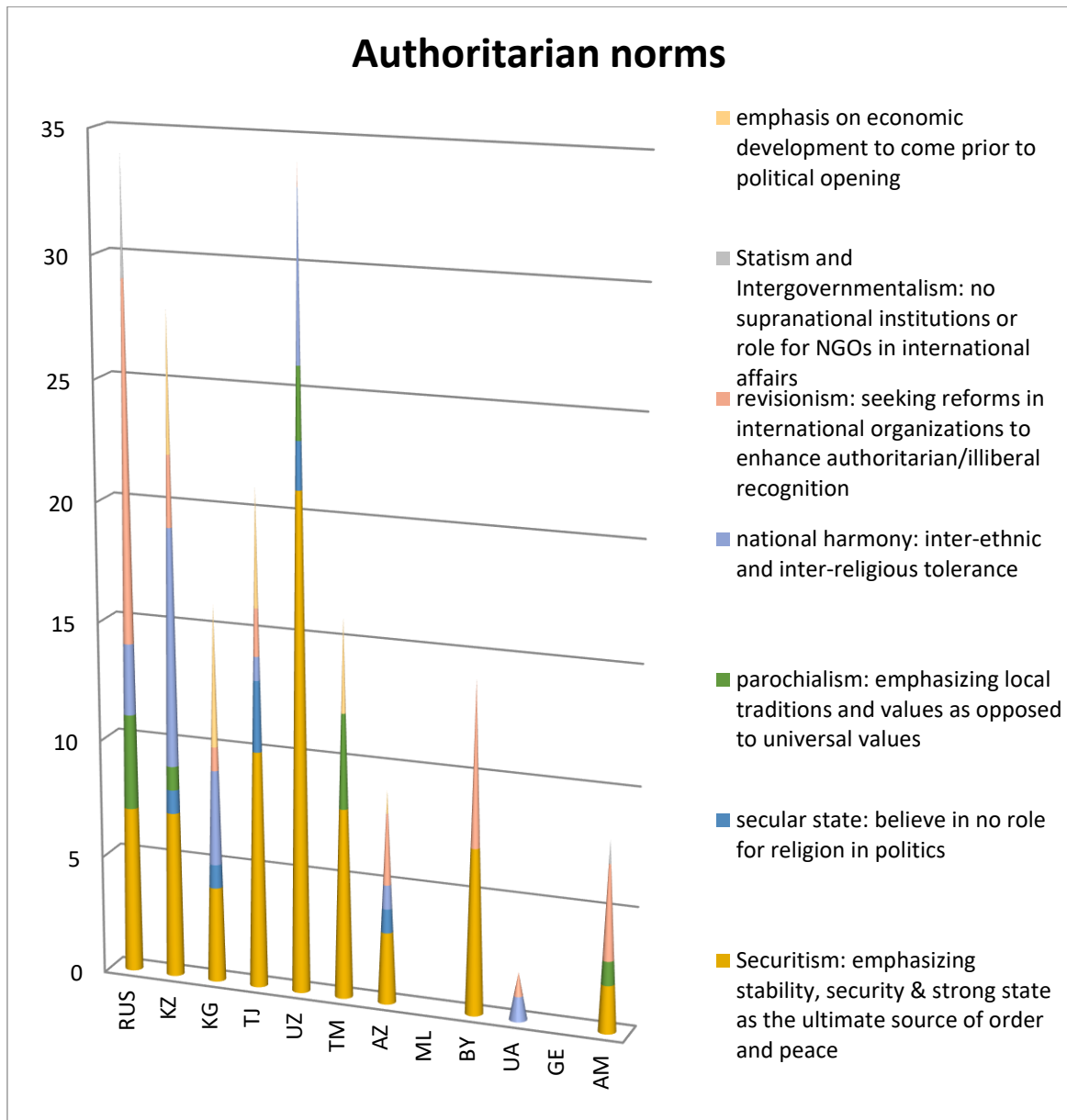
ministerial statements analyzed here. But they are subject to authoritarian interpretations that will be elaborated further on in this chapter.

Before going on to discuss them in details, it is important to note that authoritarian norms are not equally shared across all the post-Soviet states studied here. Certain norms are more widely shared than some others. Some such as inter-governmentalism are specific to a few countries only. The analysis of the normative content of the foreign policy statements indicate that there is a clear difference between the three outlying states of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine with the rest of the post-Soviet states along the authoritarian norms introduced above. There is limited reference to national harmony and national values and traditions – parochialism- in the case of Ukraine. In general, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine share none of the regional authoritarian norms, which make them clear outliers.

However, as illustrated by figure 2 below, there is a significant normative convergence among Russia, Central Asian states, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Armenia, specifically on norms such as security and stability – securitism-, and parochialism. Revisionism aimed at reforms in international institutions i.e. the OSCE to enhance illiberal recognition is also more common while secularism – is more commonly referenced by countries of Central Asia and Azerbaijan. The most widely shared authoritarian norms are security and stability. These norms sit at the heart of authoritarianism which entails the belief that strong state and strong leadership as not only the primary source of security, but also state legitimacy. Terms such as stability, including stable development, national/regime security, order and rule of law – the authoritarian interpretation of it- are the most widespread in the statements made by the representatives of the post-Soviet states at the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings.

Figure 2 also illustrates that the three outlying states of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine share none of authoritarian norms with the rest of the post-Soviet states. This closely corresponds to figure 1 which classifies them as hybrid regimes in comparison to the other consolidated authoritarian states in Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Central Asia.

Figure 2: Post-Soviet authoritarian norms and how widely they are shared.



The normative convergence on securitism is most significant among the later states. Stability and security are the most widespread authoritarian norms expressed in the foreign ministerial statements of these states within the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings. While as single words, stability and security are used widely by all countries of the world and are central concepts in the political and security debates in the global politics, they drive their meaning from a system of authoritarian norms that constitute the structure of politics in the region. Therefore, stability and security are key words for post-Soviet authoritarianism. They are used for varieties of purposes by the post-Soviet states. For example, “[i]t is our firm belief that factor of stability is the major guarantee for promotion of political, social and economic reform particularly in new independent states” (Kamilov, 1995). This statement

from Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister emphasizes stability as a norm while prioritizing it over 'political, social and economic reforms' implying that what 'new independent states' need first and foremost is stability, not, for instance, human rights and political and civic freedoms. Therefore, the emphasis on stability is aimed at opposing political pressures for democratic reforms, and justifying the authoritarian measures in the country to maintain 'stability'. This has been a core authoritarian discourse in the region as a whole. For example:

We continue to advocate an active role for the OSCE in protecting and promoting fundamental freedoms and human rights. At the same time, we note that the problems regarding fundamental freedoms and human rights should be examined in a balanced manner, taking into account the need to safeguard security and stability within society (Zohidov, 2013).

The above statement by Tajikistan's deputy Foreign Minister reflects its government's securitization of the discourse on human rights by arguing that they endanger security and stability of the country, and hence, leaders must ensure that democratic reforms do not jeopardize the stability of their countries. Stability is at the core of how international affairs are understood by authoritarian states in post-Soviet states. Authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space perceive stability as a question of international peace and security, thus justifying crackdowns on democratic forces as those endangering international security as demonstrated in the following statement by the former Kazakh foreign minister, who is currently the president of the country:

Democracy as we perceive it is not an anarchy and permissiveness, which in some countries have already led to the unstoppable merge of authority and crime, have destabilized internal situation with corresponding negative outcomes for international security. In principle we consider the present stability in Kazakhstan-one of the largest Eurasian states of the modern world to be a significant contribution of our country into global and regional stability (Tokaev, 1998).

Equating open political space with anarchy and criminality, authoritarian states focus on stability as the ultimate norm that is promoted both nationally and internationally. The post-Soviet authoritarian states often frame global insecurity with liberal interventionism. Reflecting on the instability in the Middle East and North Africa, the Russian Foreign Minister argued that "[t]he ramifications of meddling in internal affairs, imposing democratization and toppling governments can clearly be seen in the Middle East and North Africa" (Lavrov, 2016). The centrality of stability in the domestic and international discourses of the post-Soviet states aims at promoting strongman politics and strong leadership as a source of political order legitimacy in the region. For instance, Tajik deputy foreign minister argued that "In fact, the past events in a number of regions of the world proved that we – the politicians are responsible for peace and stability, for decisions

and obligations that we undertook in order to make security firm and lasting” (Yoldashev, 2008).

Emphasizing security and stability are frequent in statements by representatives of other post-Soviet states such Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia. While at the national level these norms such as stability and security are promoted as the most important function of the state to ensure public order by suppressing political dissent, at the international level, they are promoted to resist liberal internationalism. As such, they are core authoritarian norms that are often used in combination of a number of other norms that define authoritarianism as a system of ideas that re-enforce each other at various levels. For example, parochialism which is the second most widely shared regional norm is aimed at delegitimizing pushes for democratic reforms or human rights by rejecting their universality and emphasizing national values and cultures. In Lavrov’s words, “[...] it is important that human rights discussions take into account the fact that these rights are based on traditional human values and cultural and civilizational diversity; diversity which must of course be respected” (Lavrov, 2009).

By resisting universality of the human rights values and emphasizing diversity authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space tend to reject the liberal internationalism on national-cultural grounds, and demand respect and recognition for national cultures in the post-Soviet space. Although Russia has been a leader in the post-Soviet space in opposing liberal internationalism on cultural-civilizational grounds to guard its authoritarian system against Western pressures to democratize, other post-Soviet states have not been mere Russian followers. Countries in Central Asia have been vocal in essentialising national differences as a strategy to fend off Western liberal projects and question the legitimacy of international democracy promotions:

The Republic of Uzbekistan is making its contribution in support of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, a dialogue which must be conducted within the framework of international law, without pressure and force or attempts to impose unacceptable values and moral norms while preserving a respectful attitude towards the mentality of the people, which has taken shape over the course of many centuries or millennia (Head of Delegation of Uzbekistan, 2007).

Or

Really, all of us profess the general values based on ideals of the world, welfare and justice. Their practical implementation in many respects depends on the attentive and mutually respectful relation of the OSCE participating countries to the history, traditions and mentality of the people of our states (Head of Delegation of Turkmenistan, 2013).

The emphasis on national cultures and traditions makes parochialism another authoritarian norm of the post-Soviet states in Central Asia. Parochialism is an essential component of advancing and legitimating authoritarianism. The post-Soviet authoritarian states often frame interaction with Western democracies within the OSCE from the perspective of dialogue of ‘cultures’ and ‘civilizations’, and define differences in regimes and values in terms of diversity and difference in ‘national mentalities’. For example, Lavrov argued that “real unity in the Pan-European process can be ensured only through recognition of and respect for diversity and due regard for the cultural, historical, national and other differences between our countries” (Lavrov, 2004). Such statements are common in the foreign policy statements of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE.

By framing authoritarian values in terms of a nation’s culture, parochialism as a norm allows the post-Soviet states to demand recognition and legitimacy for their authoritarian norms as something that reflects ‘national cultures’, the protection of which is guaranteed under international law. This not only represents a different interpretation of international law, which will be discussed in next section, but safeguards authoritarian norms against liberal internationalism and the ‘expansion’ of the global regional society into the post-Soviet space. The key purpose of parochialism is to justify difference in regimes, norms and practices in terms of diversity and national cultures, which are protected by international norms such as multiculturalism.

Instrumentalizing the discourse on pluralism the post-Soviet states have been seeking recognition of non-democratic norms as a matter of cultural differences. Representatives of some of the post-Soviet states have made lengthy comments to reject imposition of certain norms on philosophical grounds. The following passage from Armenian Foreign Minister in 1998 demonstrates it well:

In any democratic society the challenge consists in reconciling values from within a range of multiple and competing values, all seemingly important and equally valid. It was the contribution of the late great political philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin to draw attention to pluralism as an essential, irreducible ingredient of democracy. This process of ongoing negotiations between multiple values and their advocates can maintain and strengthen the democratic credentials of the OSCE itself. Transparency and consensus in decision making and the attempt to reconcile competing principles are all essential for the OSCE in pursuing security through dialogue and negotiation, rather than through the imposition of a singular principle overriding all others. The transformation of any principle into inflexible and orthodox dogma risks freezing conflicts or imposing brittle solutions that do not take into account the complexities of competing, legitimate norms and claims (Oskanian, 1998).

While the general context for the passage above relates to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which Armenia has been occupying against the international norms of

sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, it also provides contexts for how international norms are re-interpreted by post-Soviet states. In fact, this is where regional authoritarian norms and authoritarian interpretation of liberal norms come together to produce one coherent normative argument, which is to say that recognizing the moral weight of authoritarian norms is a democratic requirement for the OSCE as a liberal European institution.

Authoritarian recognition has been a key element of norm contestation by the post-Soviet states within the OSCE. Norm contestation has been pursued not solely through rejecting global liberal norms, but through attempts to mainstream authoritarian interpretation of common norms as equally valid. As it will be explored in the following section, democracy, human rights, sovereignty etc are some of the most widely used norms in the statements delivered by the representatives of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE. In general, the post-Soviet states share a common normative language when it comes to global norms. The difference however, arises from the alternative interpretation of those norms and efforts to get this alternative interpretation accepted by the European members of the OSCE as a matter of pluralism and multiculturalism.

Authoritarian Interpretation of Global International Norms

Besides, regional authoritarian norms, a significant part of the normative convergence in the post-Soviet states comes from common –authoritarian – interpretations of other international norms. Shared interpretation of the international norms also constitutes a major component of discussion on social institution of regional international societies. Authoritarianism as the ultimate social institution of the post-Soviet regional order cannot be understood independently from the authoritarian interpretation of liberal international norms. Most of the post-Soviet states define the global international norms not only differently but closely in relation to regional authoritarian norms. In other words, authoritarianism is expressed not only through authoritarian norms, but also through authoritarian interpretation of the global norms.

The analysis of the foreign ministerial documents suggests that authoritarianism is the main prism through which global norms such as sovereignty and non-interference, equality of states, democracy and fundamental freedoms are interpreted by most of the post-Soviet states. A significant difference was observed in the case of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, who have adapted a more liberal view of the international norms as part of their ‘Europeanization’ efforts. It is important to note that difference in interpretation of global

norms correlate also with foreign policy dynamics of these countries. While some states such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus have been largely consistent in their interpretation of the global norms since 2000s, some such as Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova have shown discrepancies over time, which reflects political changes in these countries over the last two decades.

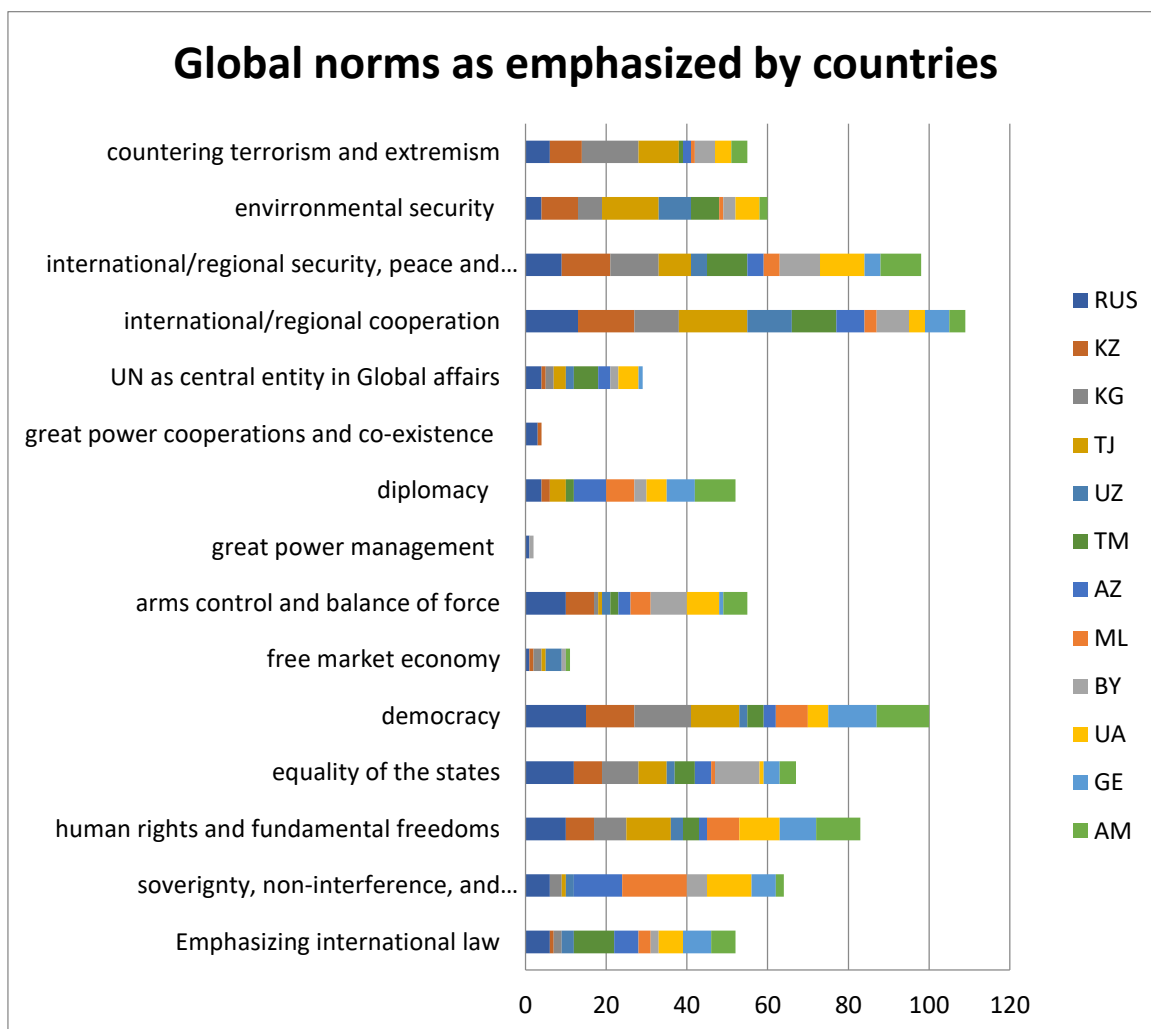
It is within this context that authoritarian interpretations of global norms become a feature of regional international society in the post-Soviet space. Combined with authoritarian norms some of which are largely shared with the post-Soviet states, the authoritarian interpretation of the global norms constitutes the social institution of the post-Soviet regional order. At a glance, and based on quantitative content analysis of the normative language used by the post-Soviet states within the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings one may see strong and consistent support for liberal norms such as democracy, human rights, rule of law and fundamental freedoms. However, what is meant by these words is different in the post-Soviet authoritarian context than in the global international society context. For example, rule of law is often used to justify authoritarian order rather than emphasizing practices that are consistent with international human rights laws or democratic nature of the laws.

The following passage from Kazakhstan's current president Tokayev, then Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, is a perfect testimony on what rule of law for the post-Soviet authoritarian states means: "The issue of law improvement can be and should be raised. Discussion on how good or bad a law is, can be and should be held. But as long as a law exists it should be followed strictly" (Tokayev, 1998). As the statement demonstrates, the main emphasis here is not on the need to reform, but to enforce the laws no matter how 'good or bad' the laws are. 'Improvement' in the existing laws, as the statement says, is often subjected to interpretation of how a good law looks like within the framework of civilizational discourses that aim at questioning the superiority or universality of the liberal interpretation of rule of law.

Similarly, as evident in figure 3 in the following, emphasis on democracy and fundamental freedoms is widespread in the statements of the post-Soviet representatives in the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings, but these norms are interpreted very differently from how they are understood in the global international society context. A glance at figure 3 below may suggest strong support for liberal global norms in the post-Soviet space.

Support for Democracy and human rights and fundamental freedoms are two of the top five most widely and frequently advocated norms in the statements studied here.

Figure 3: Most widely referenced international norms by post-Soviet states.



A quantitative content analysis of the text may conclude that there is strong support for liberal norms in the post-Soviet space. However, such reading of the above chart is incomplete without qualitative analysis of the liberal norms as promoted by the representatives of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE Ministerial Council. However, a close examining of the text and their context and intended meanings reveals that what they mean by democracy is fundamentally different from what the norm might mean in the context of the global international society. The bar chart above maps some of the most widely used norms in the statements of the representatives of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE. It illustrates that the most widely and most frequently used norm is international/regional cooperation. Cooperation is a key norm of how international relations is perceived by the post-Soviet states. While the emphasis on cooperation underlines the

centrality of diplomacy as an institution of international society too, given the larger context of discussion, the prevalence of the language of cooperation is tied more with the idea of cooperation as authoritarian recognition. In other words, by cooperation the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space mean authoritarian-democratic cooperation within the OSCE though it certainly refers to working together to solve issues such as conflicts in the regional settings too.

The idea of authoritarian-democratic cooperation aims at both recognition of authoritarian states by the Western democratic ones as their equal counterparts in the OSCE context, and resistance to Western pressures for democratic reforms. By emphasizing cooperation, the post-Soviet states demand Western democratic states to work with their authoritarian regimes, instead of criticizing them or pressuring them for democratic reforms. For example, in 2016, the Kazakh Foreign Minister stated “**The Organization should work with the governments of Participating States, not on them,**¹⁴ in terms of promoting the principles of good governance, including strengthening the rule of law, institution building and nurturing a new political culture” (Idrissov, 2016). Although Kazakhstan tends to speak of democracy in terms of a political evolution that takes generations, it actively resists Western pressures, and demands that international cooperation with the country should respect and recognize the state of affairs in the country. Such cooperation necessitates recognition of authoritarian states as equal members of the international society. This is central to the question of authoritarian recognition and resistance to democratic pressures within the OSCE, which the post-Soviet authoritarian states have consistently followed as a key objective.

Very often, representatives of the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space advise the OSCE to recognize the differences in certain practices with regards to global norms such as democratic standards and human rights, and suggest that international cooperation should be based on mutual respects between the states within the OSCE:

In order for cooperation within the OSCE human dimension to acquire a constructive character, meeting common interests, and actually contribute to progress in fulfilling commitments in these areas, a fundamental change in approaches and methods is necessary. Together we need to learn to conduct a mutually respectful dialogue across the entire spectrum of human rights issues; take into account the context, specifics, sensitivities and opinion of partners; look for topics with a “common denominator (Makeya¹⁵, 2013).

¹⁴ Emphasis as per the original text.

¹⁵ Spelling is based on how it has appeared in the original documents. It has been spelled as Makei in some of the other official statements.

While the Western members of the OSCE remain critical of the authoritarian regimes in the post-Soviet space, over the last almost three decades, they have, nonetheless, been cooperating with these states which have shown considerable authoritarian resilience defying liberal expectation of socialization or democratic learning of participating in the OSCE. As a result, participation in the OSCE has resulted into a condition of peaceful co-existence of democracy and authoritarianism and *de facto* mutual recognition of the two systems of governance and ideas. That has been the key objective of the discourse on ‘cooperation’ for the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet states space.

Whether or not cooperation, which appears to be a neutral term, has been interpreted by the post-Soviet states in a way to imply democratic-authoritarian co-existence can only be comprehended in the broader normative context within which the post-Soviet states interact with their European counterparts. An authoritarian interpretation of cooperation becomes evident when analyzed as part of a normative system that entails different interpretation of other key norms of international relations. For example, figure 3 above demonstrates that after cooperation, democracy is the most widely and most frequently used norm in the statements of the representatives of the post-Soviet states at the Ministerial Council meetings of the OSCE. A closer examination of the term as used in the statements present a fundamentally different interpretation of the norm. Democracy, for example, is a celebrated word in the post-Soviet states, often for entirely different purpose. By democracy is meant recognition of diversity of regimes, cultures and governance models in the international system. Such interpretation of the democracy is an authoritarian novelty that seeks to introduce democracy not in terms of liberal freedoms, but in terms of appreciation of difference in international society. This includes difference in the way democracy is interpreted, thus rejecting one single or universal interpretation of the norm:

As regards the human dimension of the OSCE’s activities, I should like to reiterate the absolute unacceptability of attempts by some countries or groups of countries to claim “absolute knowledge” with regard to the nature and principles of democracy and to use the OSCE for “lessons in democratization”. No one has a monopoly on the truth. Dialogue on the humanitarian agenda can only be equal and mutually respectful (Lavrov, 2007).

The above statement captures the essence of how democracy is interpreted by authoritarian regimes in the post-Soviet states. Consistent with authoritarian norms discussed earlier, the authoritarian interpretation of democracy first and foremost, rejects the liberal international definition of the term, suggesting variation in the meaning of democracy, and highlighting the freedom to interpret it differently. This different

interpretation of democracy is presented within the discourse of multi-culturalism and ‘equality of truths’ thus, rejecting the imposition of a single interpretation of democracy as something that undermines other international norms such as principles of ‘equality and mutual respect’, which are considered to be democratic values in themselves: “The ability to reach consensus on all issues within a framework of mutual respect and mutual benefit should become a generally accepted criterion for measuring the democratic nature of a state” (Karabaev, 2007). As suggested by this statement by Kyrgyzstan’s Foreign Minister, mutual respect for differences is a democratic imperative, showing states’ commitment to democracy.

Such authoritarian interpretation of liberal norms often takes place within the framework of respect for diversity. National culture is a key reference for authoritarian interpretation of global norms. From this perspective, differences in regime types are explained in terms of difference in national cultures and traditions. Subjecting national cultures to other national cultures, therefore, violates the principle of equality and mutual respect as a key institution of international society. The following passage from the Russian Foreign Minister demonstrates it well:

The countries making up the OSCE have much in common in terms of history, traditions and culture. However, each of them also has its unique features, which reflect the richness and diversity of the world. It would be unforgivable to lose this priceless heritage. Attempts to adapt the OSCE area to the interests of a single group of countries through the aggressive imposition of neoliberal interpretations of human rights will ruin European civilization. An arrogant disregard for traditional values and moral norms – common to all of us and characteristic of every nation – is unacceptable (Lavrov, 2013).

Although Russia is a leader in authoritarian interpretation of global norms, other post-Soviet states (with exception of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine and to some extent, Armenia) widely share the Russian interpretation of democracy as international multiculturalism that justifies authoritarian regimes in terms of difference in national cultures. The discussion on parochialism earlier in this chapter demonstrated how widely this perception is shared among the post-Soviet authoritarian states. There is a tendency among the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space to call themselves democracies with distinct national features, implying that democracy has not or should not be a uniform system. The widespread emphasis on democracy in the foreign ministerial statements from the post-Soviet states, therefore, is not indicative of support for democracy as a liberal norm. It rather, presents an authoritarian interpretation of democracy as respect for difference. Such interpretation of international norms such as democracy or human rights allows for celebration of democracy as diversity of cultures, norms and regimes in the global arena. It

is within this framework of interpretation that authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space claim to be democracies despite having despotic regimes. For example:

Today we can say that the Turkmen people and Government passed this test with honour and, relying on traditional foundations and democracy, were able to organize and hold elections to appoint the new Head of State, elections which offered a genuine choice and took place in an environment of complete openness and transparency (Head of Delegation of Turkmenistan, 2007).

Or, in this example from Tajik foreign minister: “During the years of independence, a solid foundation of new social system that meets the spirit of democracy, civil society, fundamental principles of human rights, and freedoms was laid” (Zarifi, 2011). For the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space, for election, hence, democracy to be legitimate, it needs to be based on ‘traditional foundations’. As such, for them democracy is not about liberal, but communitarian values. The fact that such formulation of democracy is a mere authoritarian distortion of the liberal notion of democracy needs no explanation. However, the argument is rooted in a pre-existing conception of democracy as a system that serves the interest of the mass – or the proletariat as in the case of the Soviet Union. In the post-Soviet context, the concept of the proletariat has been replaced with the idea of national cultures and mentalities an issue of public interest. Therefore, it is expected that democratic instruments such as elections reflect ‘public interest’ rather than individual freedom. That is how the practice of elections as a democratic culture has adapted to authoritarian norms, leading to the emergence of what the existing literature calls electoral authoritarian regimes. Electoral authoritarian regimes use election, not to enable change, but to validate authoritarianism. This has been the mere function of elections in most post-Soviet states over the last almost three decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

It is obvious that not all post-Soviet states share the authoritarian interpretation of global norms. The three outlying states of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have adapted the liberal interpretation. These countries have been actively pushing for democracy and have used democratic aspirations as an expression of dissent to the existing regional order. While most post-Soviet states have consolidated authoritarianism in response to liberal internationalism, these three states have taken the path towards joining, though with limited success, the European international society. For example, Moldovan Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that “[w]e want Moldova to be a democratic, prosperous, reunited and European state, at peace with itself and its neighbors” (Stratan, 2007). Moldova, as well as Georgia and Ukraine, have adopted the liberal interpretation of democracy, have pursued not only different normative choices compared to other post-Soviet states, but also as means

to re-define their identities in relation to the post-Soviet regional order. The discourse on liberal democracy goes hand in hand with identity discourse on ‘Europeanization’ in these countries. Adopting liberal interpretation of democracy is often pursued by these countries as ‘Europeanization’ project, which is more than democratic transition and includes civilizational identity discourses. Evident in the statements presented by representatives of these states within the OSCE, it highlights the theoretical links between social institutions and identity as elements of regional order:

In the light of our commitment to European values, we see the European integration process as a natural path for our country’s development. European and Euro-Atlantic integration is the cornerstone of our foreign policy, which is determined by the choice of the Georgian people and embedded in our identity. The EU Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, where we initialed the Association Agreement, turned a new page in the EU-Georgia relations that makes the Europeanization of Georgia and other committed Eastern European partners irreversible (Panjikidze, 2013).

While such statements from representatives of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings indicate that the region is diverse, authoritarian interpretations of global norms nevertheless, remains a significant feature of the region. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are clearly outliers in the post-Soviet space in many normative respects. However, other states in the post-Soviet space share authoritarian interpretation of international norms, more widely. This is visible in the case of a number of other international norms such as human rights, equality of states, and principles of sovereignty and non-interference as illustrated in figure 3. Human rights are often viewed by the post-Soviet states from the perspective of cultural relativism as evidenced by the following statement: “Lastly, it is important that human rights discussions take into account the fact that these rights are based on traditional human values and cultural and civilizational diversity, diversity which must of course be respected” (Lavrov, 2009). Moreover, human rights, while celebrated widely in official discourses, are weighted against a number of core authoritarian norms such as security and stability, or parochialism:

We continue to advocate an active role for the OSCE in protecting and promoting fundamental freedoms and human rights. At the same time, we note that the problems regarding fundamental freedoms and human rights should be examined in a balanced manner, taking into account the need to safeguard security and stability within society (Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, 2013).

In addition to framing human rights around authoritarian norms, the analysis of statements demonstrated patterns of critical stances on human rights among authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space. While emphasizing commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms in official discourses, the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space

often tend to see the Western focus on human rights and fundamental freedoms as a tool of external interference, and therefore, the post-Soviet states criticize the Western pressures on the grounds of principles such as sovereignty and non-interference. For example, reflecting on the OSCE's efforts in promoting human rights under the human dimension of its comprehensive security concept, the Azerbaijani head of delegation stated that “[w]e observe that the balance of the three dimensions of security is undermined, and there are attempts to use the human dimension for exerting pressure on participating States” (Head of Delegation of Azerbaijan, 2015). Such framing of human rights is common in the statements by representatives of the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space:

Belarus has repeatedly expressed its concern over the tendency to isolate the OSCE activity to humanitarian and human rights issues. This tendency has become increasingly prominent over the last few years. Such diversion from the principles of comprehensive and cooperative security, with disregard of its specific vital components compromises the essential purpose of our Organization (Khvostov, 2001).

Some states, while emphasizing their commitments to human rights, have become critical of European human rights bodies and have demanded that human rights organizations such as the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, or the OSCE field missions that are critical in examining and reporting on human rights and democratic reforms be accountable to member states, thus, subjecting human rights issues to the principle of intergovernmentalism. For example, “it is imperative that the missions should work in strict conformity with their mandates and in close contact with the host country authorities. Under no circumstances should they turn into a mechanism of intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states” (Khvostov, 2001).

Echoing the Belarusian minister, the Armenian foreign minister stated “In human dimension we are ready to continue constructive cooperation with the OSCE/ODIHR, yet at the same time we support the re-evaluation of the role of the ODIHR and a higher level of its accountability before the member states” (Nalbandian, 2008). Similarly, Kazakhstan's foreign minister stated that “It is important to continue improving the existing OSCE instruments, including field missions. We believe that expectations and approaches of host countries must be determinant for field missions in implementing their tasks” (Tazhin, 2008). Similar statements from representatives of the post-Soviet states are frequent in the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings. While they do not necessarily provide a different interpretation of human rights values, they indicate a common approach in engaging with or countering criticism on human rights issues though, as evident in Lavrov's statement quoted

above, human rights is also seen from the perspective of cultural relativism. The core authoritarian norms through which human rights are framed include statism and intergovernmentalism, both of which are strong features of authoritarianism and the post-Soviet regional order. They convey the belief in the centrality of the state as the ultimate institution of international society. Such belief in statism requires authoritarian states to subjugate universal values such as human rights to uphold the principle of sovereignty of states, which itself is interpreted differently in the region.

The term sovereignty, in addition to being used by the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space to guard themselves against pressures on their human rights records, is often given a cultural dimension meaning that Western criticism framed by authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space as undermining their stability, national cultures, values and traditions. This is evident in the authoritarian interpretation of democracy as well as discussion on parochialism presented above. Thus, sovereignty for the post-Soviet authoritarian states is not limited to the legal definition of the term, and includes the cultural realm and identity. Based on such an understanding of sovereignty, states are cultural entities that need to be protected against culture based interventions such as promoting Western norms in non-Western societies. Such interpretation of sovereignty is expressed through various formulations of national differences and their essentialization. For example, as early as 1995, some post-Soviet states in Central Asia declared their intention to take a different path from democratic system of governance and justified their choice based on the argument to choose their ‘own way of development’ that reflected their ‘national consensus’ and demanded that the international community recognize and respect their different choice: “Uzbekistan became a member of international community. It happened when it was recognized that Uzbekistan will pursue its own way of development which provides for preservation of social and political stability civil and national consensus” (Ganiev, 1995).

Later on, as the initial excitement over democracy started to weaken, more states in the post-Soviet space joined Uzbekistan’s reasoning through much smarter argumentation such as the idea of “sovereign democracy” (Surkov, 2006) that paved the way for not only rebranding of electoral authoritarianism as illiberal democracy, but also provided philosophical defence against Western normative criticisms. Mixing Carl Schmitt’s idea of democracy as ‘identity of governors and the governed’ with Francois Guizot’s concept of sovereignty as the rationale of the national elite (Krastev, 2006) the idea of ‘sovereign democracy’ was instrumentalized to question the moral legitimacy of liberal

internationalism while justifying the authoritarian regimes as embodying the national will of the independent states. Russia again has been the leader in this, but many other post-Soviet states adopted the Russian normative response to liberal pressures within the OSCE. At the 2016 Ministerial Council meeting of the OSCE, Lavrov, on behalf a number of post-Soviet states who submitted a joint proposal to reform the OSCE, stated the following:

Together with a number of other countries, Russia has long been putting forward proposals to redress the thematic and geographical imbalances in the work of the institutions and missions and to abandon the mentoring tone and attempts to impose values without considering the specific features of the various countries and regions of Europe (Lavrov, 2016).

Russia and other authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space have been consistently questioning the universality of the European values, and have used international norms such as sovereignty to resist European efforts to advance liberal norms in the post-Soviet space including through political and economic pressures. Some authoritarian post-Soviet states have explicitly referred to such pressures as undermining their sovereignty. As indicated by the following statement, the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space frame such pressures as undermining international law and the fundamental principles of international relations:

What is required of the OSCE today is not only to recognize the need for a return to the spirit of Helsinki but also to take real steps aimed at the good-faith implementation of the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including the renunciation of economic and political pressure on sovereign States (Mikhnevich, 2012).

Similarly, reflecting on the OSCE's focus on promoting and protecting human rights and democratic values under the human dimension of its comprehensive security, the Azeri representative at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting held in Belgrade in 2015 stated that "[w]e observe that the balance of the three dimensions of security is undermined and there are attempts to use the human dimension for exerting pressure on participating States" (Head of Delegation of Azerbaijan, 2015). Many post-Soviet states frame such 'pressures' as a violating their sovereignty, which as elaborated above goes beyond the legal definition of the term and includes cultural or civilizational identity. From this perspective, no state has the legitimacy to pressure other states to adapt to their political norms. According to them norms are different, but are of equal morality. This is at the heart of the cultural relativism and international multiculturalism that the post-Soviet authoritarian states have been advocating to resist liberal internationalism. Lavrov's emphasis on the preservation of 'civilizational diversity' and Central Asians' parochialism reflect an

understanding of states as cultural boundaries and sovereignty as a culturally inclusive concept. This is well demonstrated by consistent demand for ‘mutual respect’ and equality of states.

Equality of states is another key international norm that is interpreted differently in the post-Soviet space. As figure 3 shows, equality of the states is among the top 5 most widely shared and most frequently referred norm by the post-Soviet states. While it is used with regard to different topics and various contexts, the analysis of the statements showed that it is largely used by the post-Soviet states in relation to their European counterparts within the OSCE in particular their moral supremacy claims as democracies *vis-à-vis* the post-Soviet states. Equality in this context means not only the equality of states as units of international relations, but equality of norms and political regimes. As expressed in the following statements, post-Soviet states’ interpretation of equality includes mutual respect for and recognition of all political regimes within the OSCE. For example, aiming at Western criticism of authoritarian regimes, Turkmen foreign minister demanded mutual respect and observation of the principle of equality of states while working cooperating to improve international security:

In view of the urgent need to find effective ways of developing the international security system under the new circumstances, we should observe the highest principles of equality of and mutual respect for the parties involved and endeavour to minimize the influence of the various stereotypes on the objective assessment and positive resolution of problems as they arise (Meredov, 2008).

The emphasis on equality and mutual respect in this context refers to equality of political regimes and fighting any ‘stereotypes’ about the post-Soviet states. This is particularly evident in the following statement by Kazakhstan’s minister of foreign affairs, where he addresses the reluctance of the European members of the OSCE to Kazakhstan’s proposal as country chair of the OSCE presidency in 2009:

We have repeatedly underlined that we consider the issue of the support of Kazakhstan’s bid to chair the OSCE in 2009 as an integral element of the Organization’s reform and its political future. The declared equality and mutual respect of the OSCE Participating states should proliferate into all spheres of its activity (Tazhin, 2007).

Kazakhstan’s presidency of the OSCE in 2010 was a highly controversial topic within the OSCE, particularly among its European members and international human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch, 2009). Many feared that allowing Kazakhstan to assume the presidency and closing eyes on its human rights and good governance records amounts to recognition of authoritarianism, and thus, a defeat for liberal internationalism.

This, which will be further discussed in the next chapter on identity too, constituted a major element in the discussion on authoritarian-democratic co-existence within the OSCE and authoritarian interpretation of the principle of the equality of states. Equality for authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space means also the equality of regimes and political systems. For many of the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space, all states deserve to be treated equality, whether they are democracies or non-democracies, and the principle of equality of states requires mutual respect for regimes in participating states of the OSCE. The authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space demand such recognition by arguing that “[d]ialogue on the humanitarian agenda can only be equal and mutually respectful” (Lavrov, 2007). Or, by arguing that “[w]e believe that it is important for the Organization to enhance its role as a platform for dialogue between countries on an equal basis and in accordance with the principles of mutual respect during discussions and decision-making on important issues of security and co-operation throughout the OSCE area” (Aslov, 2015).

The principle of equality as used in the statements of the Foreign Ministers of the post-Soviet states aims also at making power relation and cultural hierarchy effective within the OSCE. The cultural hierarchy, which constitutes the core discussion on standards of civilization and identity in the next chapter, often come together with power relations within the organization. As reflected in the following statement by Armenia’s Foreign Minister, equality is understood both as legal equality before the international law, and equality of ‘regions’ of the world and the recognition of their normative particularities and political practices, particularly in the context of the activities of the multilateral institutions:

It is not a matter of being and feeling equal, rather of having an equal right to defend our interests. Because this unevenness [referring to problem of inequality in OSCE] becomes more apparent and more problematic at the level of institutions and missions, believing in enhancing ODIHR’s autonomy and effectiveness, we have attempted to seek in ODIHR greater evenhandedness, transparency, non-selectivity, and region-blindness particularly in its election-related activities (Oskanian, 2007).

Oskanian’s reference to equality, particularly to ‘non-selectivity, and region-blindness’ echoes a common sentiment often expressed by most of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE. There is a common feeling of being treated unequally, and the OSCE applies ‘double-standards’ when it comes to reporting on their political practices such as elections and democratic processes. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, such sentiments have led to collective alienation and external construction of the region’s identity as the un-equal other *vis-à-vis* the European regional international society, thus leading to the region’s differentiation from the core international society and its normative standards.

Conclusions

In light of the original data derived from foreign ministerial statements of post-Soviet states within the OSCE, this chapter provided empirical insight into the primary social institution of the post-Soviet regional order. As one of the key elements of the triad of regional order, social institutions define the normative structure of a regional international society. In other words, the post-Soviet primary social institutions underpin the authoritarian structure of the region's international order that help differentiate the post-Soviet space from the European international society and other regions in the Eurasian continent. They are also central to social recognition of power and the discussion of identity, all of which work to enforce one another, thus, creating a coherent theoretical relation in the conceptualization of regional order.

The discussion on social institutions of the post-Soviet regional order above demonstrate that despite intra-regional variations, the post-Soviet regional order represents a case for a regional international society that is differentiated from the global core international society both in terms of having its own norms as well as different interpretation of international norms. The authoritarian normative convergence among countries of Central Asia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Belarus present a strong case for the existence of common social institutions of a regional international order in the post-Soviet space. Authoritarianism constitutes the core of the social institution of the post-Soviet regional order. Authoritarian norms such as stability, security, parochialism, authoritarian rule of law and others discussed in this chapter are some of the common regional norms shared by the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet states.

However, the findings above also indicate a strong case for normative divergence in the sub-regional level concerning Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The pro-West democratic norms and aspirations in these countries present case for a breakaway from the post-Soviet regional order. The analysis of the data above demonstrated that they share none of the post-Soviet authoritarian norms or the authoritarian interpretations of the global norms with other post-Soviet states. At least at the official level, these countries are intra-regionally differentiated from the post-Soviet regional order. However, their normative differences reflect geopolitics as much as they represent progress in the path towards democratization. Geopolitics has not only polarized the political elites and the societies in these countries along the pro-West and pro-Russia divide, but also circumscribed the impacts of their

democratic breakaway from the post-Soviet regional order, meaning that despite their normative divergence they do not represent a fundamental disruption in the regional order. In other words, their pro-European aspirations and democratic norms have not resulted into constitution or expansion of different regional order in the post-Soviet space. This has created a scenario where Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine can be said to have departed from the post-Soviet regional order in sub-regional level, but are stuck in the inter-regional dynamics that define the post-Soviet space vis-à-vis the Europe/the West. Understanding their place in the post-Soviet regional order demands further studies and conceptualization, which this thesis has not fully accomplished.

Apart from the above mentioned outlying states, the post-Soviet space however, can be said to have converged around authoritarianism as a shared interest. The prevalence of authoritarianism as an opposition to liberal internationalism as well as authoritarian interpretation of international norms differentiates the region from the global core international society, and the regions surrounding it such as the Middle East. While most of the states in the Middle East are also run by authoritarian regimes, the post-Soviet authoritarianism is marked by its distinct features such as strong secularism and electoral authoritarianism, whereas most states in the Middle East, perhaps with the exception of Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, are either despotic Emirates or Monarchies, or are religious theocracies such as Iran. Besides different power and identity dynamics, regime types and the place of Islam in the governance of their societies distinguish the post-Soviet authoritarianism from the Middle Eastern authoritarian regional international order.

In terms of the 'pluralist-Solidarist spectrum' (Buzan, 2014), the post-Soviet regional international society is clearly on the pluralist side. The post-Soviet states' emphasis civilizational diversity and their efforts for authoritarian recognition not only paces it on the pluralist end of the spectrum, but also introduces co-existence and cooperation as the organizing principles of the regional order. Despite its heterogeneity and lack of integration, the region, as a whole, creates a distinct regional order that can be differentiated from the global core international society and the region surrounding it along all the theoretical parameters that define a regional international society according to Buzan (2014). Furthermore, seen from the perspective of the triad of regional order, the region also presents a distinct regional identity vis-à-vis the global international society. The factor of identity, which is discussed in the next chapter, completes the triad of power, social institutions and

identity of the post-Soviet regional order, providing a coherent theoretical understanding of the regional order.

VII: THE MAKING OF POST-SOVIET REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER: IDENTITY

Identity is the third element of regional order. Identity refers to the mechanism of social recognition and differentiation. In the context of international relations, it concerns states' social recognition and differentiation in international society. Identity has both internal and external dynamics. Internally, it concerns states' politics of self-identification. Internal identity is expressed most notably through the processes of nation building and nationalism that seek to represent a polity in terms of certain ethno-cultural symbols and features and political history. Internal identity as a social mechanism of recognition and differentiation requires that members of a polity share the belief in such national traits to represent them, and that such traits make them a distinct group *vis-à-vis* other polities.

External Identity concerns the social process of recognition and differentiation of states as member of the international society, meaning whether a state representing a distinct and independent polity is recognized as legitimate member of international society. This often happens on legal grounds such as recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of a state within the framework of international law. However, external recognition and differentiation involves practices that go beyond institutional recognition such as membership in the UN, and involves a politics of inclusion and exclusion based on the 'standard of civilization' (Gong, 1984; Wight, 1991; Fidler, 2001;2002; Salter, 2002; Hobson, 2007; Stivachtis, 2008; 2015; Bowden, 2009; 2015a; Dunne, 2010; Buzan, 2014a).

Inclusion and exclusion in international society plays a crucial role in defining a state's identity. Identity as dynamics of recognition and differentiation in international society/societies is defined in terms of certain politics of inclusion and exclusion on the basis of certain criteria involving sharing of social institutions and common interest. In other words, the identity of a state is defined in relation to its membership in an international society in terms of sharing the same institutions i.e. values, norms and interest. Buzan states that "society of states" refers to a shared or "intersubjective understanding" of rules and norms of inter-state interaction that "not only condition [states'] behaviour but also define the boundaries of a social system" (Buzan, 2014:13). Identity is thus closely defined in terms of whether a state falls in or outside 'social boundaries' of international societies. These boundaries are constantly created, negotiated, re-created and maintained through politics of inclusion and exclusion by the states constituting the international society. Who falls within

these social boundaries and who is kept out of it determines states' external identity in international societies.

This chapter discusses identity of the post-Soviet states in the context of their interactions with Western states¹⁶ within the OSCE. By analyzing the sentiments of the post-Soviet states' diplomats, it unpacks the dynamics of the post-Soviet states' recognition and differentiation within the OSCE as an institution of the global core international society. In light of the original insight derived from the foreign policy statements of the representatives of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE, the chapter presents a discussion on the regional identity as the third constituting element of the post-Soviet regional international order. Although self-identification remains a key dynamic of identity in the post-Soviet space, the post-Soviet identity as an element of the post-Soviet regional order is discussed mainly through external recognition and differentiation of the region *vis-à-vis* the global European international society. In fact, the external dynamics of identity is found to play a key role in the construction of internal identity of the region through a 'reflexive social construction' (Guzzini, 2000) process. The external identity of a regional international society concerns the dynamics of 'othering' in global international society. The key measure of recognition and differentiation here is: how are certain regions of the world are viewed by the global international society? Therefore, identity in the context of regional international societies concerns recognition and differentiation *vis-à-vis* the global international society.

Sometimes, certain countries or regions of the world might aspire to be part of the global international society, leading them to create an aspirational identity meaning who one wants to be. In practice however, aspiring to be one, does not guarantee membership in international society, implying that the 'social boundaries' of global international society are often not stretchable. This means that the internal and external dynamics of identity of states in a given region might not always be coherent. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine's European aspirations demonstrate this well, where their Europeanization efforts have failed to offer membership in the EU –as somewhat exclusive regional international society. As such, the dynamics of recognition and differentiation in international society concerns deeper aspects of inclusion and exclusion, and it takes place even despite formal membership in international society such as the UN or regional international societies such as the EU.

¹⁶ As elsewhere throughout this thesis, Western states and European states are used interchangeably here to underline the Western-Europeanness of the global core international society.

As highlighted in the theoretical framework of this thesis, a key framework to study identity in international societies is the English School concept of ‘standards of civilizations’. The concept provides a unique framework to study the identity of the post-Soviet regional international society in terms of recognition and differentiation within the OSCE as an institution the European international society. The concept of ‘standards of civilizations’ historically “comes from international law and diplomatic and international legal practice, where it became deeply embedded during the nineteenth century” (Buzan, 2014b: loc.457). The usage of it was associated with classifications such as “civilized” and “barbarian” that were used in the nineteenth century to “gatekeep on entry to European, and later Western, international society” (Buzan, 2014a:17). Although the vocabulary of ‘standard of civilizations’ is no more in use in the international discourse, the politics of it remains in place and often manifested in terms of various forms of conditionality put ahead for membership in certain groups of states or international organizations (Buzan, 2014; Stivachtis, 2008). Stivachtis (2008: 80) has argued that “despite the major changes that have occurred, the ‘standard of civilization’ has remained an international practice as well as a benchmark against which the attitudes and policies of states are assessed”. According to Stivachtis, nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the EU’s policy of ‘membership conditionality’.

Although not an entirely European practice, the ‘standard of civilization’ was institutionalized in the European international society in the 19th century international relations where states were ‘culturally ranked’ (Buzan,2014b) often in racist terms of ‘civilized’ vs. ‘barbarian’ based on certain norms, cultural and political practices. Prior to the emergence of the concept as a legal term in the 19 century, many other regions or empires in the world from the ancient Greeks to China and to the Muslim empires widely used the ‘civilized-barbarian’ framework in relation to certain other region, peoples or communities (Buzan, 2014b). In most of these cases, faith-based distinctions served such differentiations. In Europe too, the ‘Christiandom’ defined the social boundaries of the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savages’. However, it was the 19 century institutionalization of the ‘standard of civilization’ in Europe that strongly impacted the development of modern international relations. It facilitated colonialization and subjugation of non-European societies and had a profound effect on hierarchy in international relations (Salter, 2002; Hobson, 2007; Stivachtis, 2015a; Bowden, 2015). While its colonial usage aimed almost entirely on exclusion, it’s usage in the post-colonial or Westphalian context where the right to self-determination of states was

recognized as a global norm, the concept slightly changed form to imply conditions or criteria of inclusion in the core global international society. That means that to “to engage fully in international relations, your behaviour has to conform fully to expectations, policies, and rules established by the prevailing powers” (Fidler, 2002:389).

Whereas Buzan (2014b:779) argues that the development involving the evolution of medieval European Christendom into a Western international society, particularly the concept of the ‘standard of civilization’ opened the way for inclusion as opposed to exclusion that was inherent in the idea of ‘Christendom’, one may argue that the Christian roots of the Western civilization still remains relevant to identity questions in Europe. One example includes Turkey’s membership in the European Union. While Turkey’s human rights records and democratic performance have been the formal excuse behind its failure of accession, some have wondered whether the EU remains a “closed club for Christian states located between the Ural and the Atlantic” (Kylstad, 2010:1) and that Turkey’s Muslim identity is incompatible with the Idea of cultural Europe, the identity of which is rooted in history including the Christianity and enlightenment. Kylstad (2010: 24) hence argues that “The debate over Turkey’s EU bid remains embedded in the language of culture and history”. Although the example of Turkey’s accession to the EU is not necessarily equates inclusion into the global international society, because the EU does not equal international society, the example nevertheless illustrates the exclusivity of the idea of Europe as a regional international society at the heart of the global core international society. This is relevant for the discussion on differentiation of the post-Soviet space within the OSCE. Cultural Europe is still defined in terms of ‘standards of civilization’ where liberal democracy, human rights, and European values, including those rooted in religion/civilizations affect the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, or differentiation and recognition in the global international society.

Despite greater diversity and the rise of non-Western power centers in today’s global politics, and non-Western adaptation to global international society’s norms and practices, the ‘standard of civilization’ remains a key feature of identity creation and maintenance in the global international society. Though not formally any more, it is still used to differentiate between states the global core/European international society and ‘other’ states or regional international societies. The ‘standard of civilization’ and the European identity of the global core international society interplay with each other. As such, the discussion on identity in regional international society concerns differentiation by the global core international society. Building on the insights from Neumann (1999), Neumann

& Welsh (1991), and Sakwa (2011), Stivachtis (2015:130-131) argues that “Europe has traditionally been defined in terms of inclusion and exclusion and the European identity has been forged in contrast to a number of ‘others’. This ‘othering’ often expressed in terms of ‘standard of civilization’ has been at the core of European international society, where ‘others’ such as Russia and Turkey have served as the ‘constitutive others’ of the European identity (Stivachtis, 2015: 131). With the evolution and expansion of the European international society, the standard of civilization became an identity marker in the process of the external recognition and differentiation.

In the context of regional international societies *vis-à-vis* the global international society, the standard of civilization not only differentiates between states and regions along normative hierarchy, but also along identity debates because the relation between norms (social institutions) and identity is reflexive or constitutive meaning that one always reinforces the other. As Flockhart (2014) has argued, identity drives from the core norms and values. As such, in studying and theorizing regional international society one cannot exclude identity from the analysis of regional international societies. In other words, regional international societies are differentiated from the global core international society not only on the basis of different social institutions or different interpretation of the primary social institutions of the global core international society, but also based on identity and power. This, which makes a conceptual contribution to the existing literature, is explored below in the context of the post-Soviet regional identity *vis-à-vis* Western/European states within the OSCE.

Identity of the Post-Soviet Space: Global Dynamics of Recognition and Differentiation

The central argument of this chapter is that, besides distinct primarily social institutions, the post-Soviet space has its distinct regional identity, which further differentiates the region *vis-à-vis* the global core i.e Western European international society. While intra-regionally, the region remains diverse including in its civilizational identity debates, it is differentiated intra-regionally particularly in respect to the idea of Europe, which constitutes the civilizational identity of the Western or global core international society. In terms of the “their placement on a pluralist solidarist spectrum” (Buzan and Zhang, 2014:3), the post-Soviet space represents a pluralist regional international society organized on the principle of co-existence and cooperation as opposed to the integrationist and solidarist European international society. Externally, the region is strongly differentiated

by and from the Western/European international society based on ‘standard of civilization’ pertinent to Western values such as liberal democracy and human rights. In fact, with a few exceptions, the post-Soviet states’ authoritarian structure and its fundamental opposition to liberal internationalism present the region as the “constitutive other” (Stivachtis, 2015) of the European identity. The ‘othering’ of the post-Soviet space by the Western members of the OSCE externally constructs the identity of the post-Soviet states as the ‘unequal-other’ within the OSCE; a sentiment that is widely shared and expressed by the political elites in the post-Soviet space.

The following offers empirical insights on identity debates in terms of dynamics of recognition and differentiation of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE as an institution of the European international society. The identity element of the regional order in the post-Soviet space is studied through examining sentiments expressed by the representatives of the post-Soviet states at OSCE Ministerial Council meetings over the period of 1992-2016. The sentiments include both self-identification and reflections on external representation of the post-Soviet states’ in light of ‘standards of civilization’ manifested in varieties of normative languages towards the post-Soviet states within the OSCE.

Most importantly, instead of studying the identity of the post-Soviet states through examining the statements of the European members of the OSCE, it analyzes the feelings and sentiments of differentiation and ‘otherization’ as expressed by the representatives of the post-Soviet states. In other words, it takes the feelings and sentiments expressed by the post-Soviet states representatives to assess dynamics of differentiation within the OSCE in terms of how the post-Soviet states feel about themselves within the OSCE rather than feelings and sentiments expressed towards the region by the European members of the organization. One main reason for this, besides the lack of data on European perception of the post-Soviet states is that differentiation and exclusion is better understood through sentiments of those who are subjected to ‘otherization’. That experience of being ‘othered’ often leads to greater self-awareness about difference as matter of identity, and hence, it helps to better understand not only the dynamics of external recognition and differentiation, but also the reflexive or co-constructive effect of the external differentiation on internal identity in terms of the politics of self-identification.

Standard of Civilization and Identity: The Post-Soviet States as the ‘Unequal Other’

The analysis of the ministerial statements of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting provides important insights into the dynamics of recognition and differentiation within the OSCE as consistently expressed by feelings of ‘otherness’. The feeling of ‘otherness’ is expressed through what the post-Soviet states’ representatives frame as ‘inequality’ and ‘double-standards’ within the OSCE. Moreover, the perception of inequality is often framed by the post-Soviet states in terms of East and West divisions, giving the perception of otherness greater cultural-political content and relevance. Sometimes, the dynamics of otherness go beyond the post-Soviet space and include politics of differentiation within the broader European international space. For example, a Central European diplomat at the OSCE in Vienna complained that there is an ‘invisible’ line of distinctions within the OSCE dividing member states into ‘East and West of Vienna’. Certain European states that have joined the EU at later stages face recognition issues by the core EU member states West of Vienna.¹⁷

Comprising the core of the European international society, the ‘West of Vienna’ concept refers primarily to Western European states, which have played a historical role in shaping the global international society and its ‘standard of civilization’ as imperial powers. As the core of the cultural West, countries such as Austria, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and others have shaped the ‘Western’ identity of the European international society, and their cultural (normative and legal) practices have determined the ‘standard of civilization’, and hence, the social boundaries of Europe *vis-à-vis* rest of the world. Their politics of differentiation in terms of the perceived ‘invisible line’ of division between ‘West of Vienna’ and ‘East of Vienna’ has had a constructive effect on the identity of other states in geographical Europe and beyond. This identity politics seems to be playing out in multi-lateral European institutions such as the OSCE, where some member states, particularly the post-Soviet states feel they are being treated as the ‘un-equal other’ within the organization.

Within the OSCE, the East-West dynamics are playing out in terms of new sets of ‘standard of civilization’ involving good governance practices and commitment to liberal values such as democracy and human rights. The ‘Western’ critic of the ‘eastern’ states on their poor human rights records have often been perceived by the ‘East of Vienna’ states as condition of structural inequality. This is frequently highlighted by the representatives of

¹⁷ Interview with a diplomat from a Central European country in Vienna, November 20, 2017.

the post-Soviet states within the OSCE. Most post-Soviet states see the Western discourse on human rights and democratic freedoms as political tools to differentiate the ‘other’ from the ‘European’ within the OSCE. For example, the following statement by the Belarusian foreign minister highlights ‘the geographical bias’ towards the post-Soviet space:

Unfortunately, the crisis of confidence is most pronounced, and differences and contradictions in the approaches of the OSCE participating States continue to manifest themselves within the framework of the “humanitarian basket”. This is due to the excessive politicization of human rights issues, hypertrophied attention to certain issues to the detriment of others, the continuing geographic bias towards the countries “east of Vienna” as well as attempts to fill the OSCE agenda with non-consensual, artificial topics (Makei, 2013).

Most authoritarian states in the post-Soviet space frame European criticism on human rights and democratic freedoms as practices of ‘othering’ in the OSCE, where certain states or regions are focused on projecting the European ‘standard of civilization’. Similar to the Belarusian foreign minister, Azerbaijan foreign minister highlighted that the geographical focus of the European discourse on human rights follows the logic of differentiation and exclusion. The Azerbaijani Foreign Minister stated that “the emerging trend to confine the OSCE to dealing mainly with the human rights issues and exclusively in the eastern part of the Euro-Atlantic area is a matter of our concern” (Mamadyarov, 2008). The concern over the OSCE’s focus on human rights in the post-Soviet states has led to the development of a shared sentiment among the post-Soviet states of being treated as the ‘unequal-other’ within the OSCE. This is particularly the focus of statements on ‘equality of states’ as a key international norm promoted by the post-Soviet states. Statements such as the following by Tajik Foreign Minister are frequent in the ministerial statements of the representatives of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE Ministerial Council:

We believe that it is important for the Organization to enhance its role as a platform for dialogue between countries on an equal basis and in accordance with the principles of mutual respect during discussions and decision-making on important issues of security and co-operation throughout the OSCE area (Aslov, 2015).

The perception of inequality or un-equal treatment of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE is quite widespread. Statements such as “[t]he declared equality and mutual respect of the OSCE Participating states should proliferate into all spheres of its activity” (Tazhin, 2007) not only indicate perceptions of inequality within the OSCE, but also challenge the European ‘standard of civilization’. The discourse on inequality reveals deeper identity dynamics within the OSCE in terms of recognition as member of European international society. The politics of recognition goes beyond institutional membership. It

involves ideational and cultural notions. Institutionally speaking, all post-Soviet states are participating states of the OSCE. However, practices of inclusion and exclusion in European international society happen in the deeper ideational and cultural levels, where membership requires not only compliance, but also compatibility with European 'standards of civilization'. The sentiment of the Central European diplomat cited above about the invisible line of division between 'West of Vienna' and 'East of Vienna' confirms that complete institutional membership in the EU may also not overcome identity recognition barriers in international society. This makes identity in international society looks somewhat primordial, meaning that sometimes full compliance with liberal democratic values, as was the case in post-World War II Japan for example, may not assure recognition as an equal member in the global Western international society (Sozuki, 2008). As discussed earlier in this thesis, Japan was a leading non-Western democracy and global economy before the rise of China and enjoyed excellent good governance and human rights records, yet the country was struggling in terms of Western global recognition and international status. Similarly, many of the Eastern and Central European states have adapted liberal democracy and free market economy, but some still feel 'not European enough' within the EU. That perception of inequality is central to the question of identity as dynamics of recognition and differentiation in the global international society. It reveals identity because the un-equal is meant to be the non-Western European.

Coming back to the post-Soviet states, the perception of 'inequality' is at the core of identity debates. The post-Soviet space as 'unequal other' within the OSCE is externally constructed through politics of differentiation by the core European international society within the OSCE. The primary practice of differentiation involves compliance with European values and standard of civilization. Nowhere has this been more visibly at work than in European responses to Kazakhstan's bid to chair the OSCE in 2010. Being a consolidated authoritarian state, Kazakhstan's bid for OSCE chairmanship was highly controversial in the Western world. Many, including Human Rights organizations in the Western world, strongly opposed the proposal. In response to Kazakhstan's proposal, the OSCE defined a set of conditions requiring Kazakhstan to implement comprehensive reforms to improve the situation in the country with regards to human rights and freedom of speech. This was to state that in order to qualify for leading a European institution, Kazakhstan needs to live up to the expectation of the European states by complying with

certain 'standards of civilization', particularly in governance culture and values. In order to gain Europe's 'trust' Kazakhstan declared:

To develop an agenda and strategy for our future OSCE Chairmanship, Kazakhstan this year elaborated and adopted a state programme titled 'Path to Europe'. Our goal is to bring relations with European countries to the level of strategic partnership, actively employ European models to improve our laws, attract advanced technologies and expertise in management and institutional evolution (Tazhin, 2008).

The Western conditionality for Kazakhstan's 'suitability' to chair the OSCE worked purely on the logic of 'standard of civilization'. It required that in order to 'qualify' for leading a European institution, Kazakhstan must undertake the 'path to Europe', and 'employ European models' in its governance. For the post-Soviet states, the Western reactions to Kazakhstan's bid were interpreted as statement of 'inequality' of the non-European states in the eyes of the European ones. Kazakhstan's bid therefore became a battleground to determine the status of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE in the most explicit manner. Voices of support to Kazakhstan poured in from the members of the CIS, which considered Kazakhstan's bid as a test of recognition of not only Kazakhstan but the entire post-Soviet regimes. The collective effort was aimed at challenging the 'inequality' and the European 'standard of civilization' on 'who' is 'suitable' to chair the OSCE. The Russian Foreign Minister for example, stated:

There are the attempts to violate the principle of equality among the participating States of the OSCE. This is manifested most clearly in the approaches of a group of countries with which we are all familiar to Kazakhstan's bid to assume the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009, a bid which is supported by all the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and that means by one fifth of the OSCE's membership. Unlike all the others who have so far been approved without any problems for the role of "taking the helm" of the OSCE, there have been attempts to force our friends from Kazakhstan to somehow additionally prove their "suitability". This kind of double standard is absolutely unacceptable (Lavrov, 2007).

Lavrov's statement highlights the core of the 'standard of civilization' debate in terms of perceived 'inequality' expressed through discussion of 'suitability' of a post-Soviet state in the eyes of the European states to lead an international organization. For many of the post-Soviet states, the discussion of 'suitability' entails a cultural and geographical bias towards non-Western-Europeans. Or at least, it is framed that way by the political elites in the post-Soviet authoritarian states, perhaps as part of their authoritarian resistance against liberal internationalism and liberal conditionality. Many have spoken about the OSCE's 'double-standard' in the post-Soviet space as a declaration of 'othering'. The post-Soviet states' perception of 'inequality' and 'double standards' is a deeply rooted sentiment, which has informed their self-perception *vis-à-vis* the European members of the OSCE as the

‘unequal other’. For the post-Soviet states, such politics of differentiation and ‘othering’ has undermined cooperation within the OSCE. For example, Belarusian Foreign Minister for example argued that for OSCE to foster effective cooperation “it is imperative to have political will, consider the interests of each OSCE member state, and refuse to operate double standards” (Khvostov, 2001).

Kazakhstan’s bid for chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 in many ways became a demonstration of dynamics of east-west recognition and differentiation. Identity expressed through ‘standard of civilization’ sat at the core of the debate. For many in the post-Soviet space, the event signified recognition of the post-Soviet region by the European international society as equally suitable to lead a global entity. This was interpreted as such at deeper, civilizational-discursive level. By civilization here is meant “‘imagined communities’” narrated by political and intellectual elites: as essentialized and non-essentialized entities; and as clashing/conflicting or dialoguing/engaging with each other’ (Bettiza, 2014: 1). The civilizational aspect of the discussion in Kazakhstan’s bid to chair the OSCE involved recognition of the ‘East’ by those to the ‘West’ of Vienna. This was how it was understood by the political elites in the post-Soviet. For example, Tajikistan’s Foreign Minister stated that “[w]e restate our firm support to adoption of a positive decision on Kazakhstan’s Chairmanship in the OSCE in 2009. We convinced that this step may serve for the benefits of strengthening the responsibility and ownership within the OSCE by all participating states, situated east of Vienna” (Zarifi, 2007).

For Kazakhstan, the bidder for the OSCE chairmanship, the bid was about no less than what it was for the rest of the post-Soviet states:

I should like to make it known that in chairing the Organization Kazakhstan will be strictly committed to the fundamental principles and values of the OSCE and guided by the interests of all its participating States in strengthening confidence and mutual understanding among the countries to the west and the east of Vienna, and it will endeavour to ensure that all three “baskets” of the Organization’s work are given equal attention (Saudabayev, 2009).

Saudabayev’s statement demonstrates not only his country’s ability to respond to the European conditionality on ‘fundamental principles and values of the OSCE’ in order for his country to qualify for chairing the OSCE, but also highlights the identity dynamics involving his country’s bid for leading the OSCE. Kazakhstan’s chairmanship of the OSCE was believed to enhance ‘confidence and mutual understanding’ between two distinct identities or cultural realms characterized as ‘west’ and ‘east’ of Vienna countries. Allowing Kazakhstan to lead the organization was perceived to be a statement of equality of statuses

of participating states, as expressed by the Belarusian Foreign Minister: “[w]e believe that the decision on the OSCE Chairmanship of Kazakhstan will be an important step really indicating the equal status of all the participating States and contributing to strengthening of the confidence within our Organization and the OSCE itself (Martynov, 2007).

Many in the post-Soviet space looked at Kazakhstan’s chairmanship of the OSCE as an opportunity to overcome the perceived inequality of statuses concerning the social recognition of the post-Soviet states by the Western-European international society. Therefore, it was a statement of recognition as demonstrated earlier by Russian foreign minister’s statement. Kazakhstan’s bid for chairing the OSCE turned into a struggle for recognition for ‘east of Vienna countries’ by the ‘west of Vienna’ states, underlining east-west identity politics and dynamics of recognition and differentiation in the European global international society. Once Kazakhstan’s bid was approved, its chairmanship of the OSCE along with Ukraine’s chairmanship in 2013 was perceived as international recognition and hence an important achievement for the entire post-Soviet space. For example, Lavrov stated the following in 2013 in Kiev:

I am glad to see in this hall, ministerial colleagues who understand the particular importance of our joint work at this level in the OSCE format. It is already the second time that a participating State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has chaired our Organization, and, in our view, the work of our Ukrainian colleagues, just like the work of our colleagues from Kazakhstan before them, deserves the highest appreciation (Lavrov, 2013).

Despite Kazakhstan and Ukraine’s success in securing OSCE chairmanship, the post-Soviet states perception of the ‘unequal other’ however, continues to persist. The sentiment of inequality is widespread in the statements of the foreign ministers of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE. The emphasis on equality of states as a core international norm is one of the most frequently referred to norms in the post-Soviet space as demonstrated in the figure 3 presented in the previous chapter of this thesis. That sense of inequality has had a profound effect on post-Soviet states’ identity and self-perception, pushing them away from the European regional international society towards forming a regional international society of their own, where they not only resist the European pressure, but also form and converge on a set of ‘other’ shared values and interests. The ‘other’ shared values and interests are demonstrated through authoritarian norms that underpin the social institutions of the post-Soviet regional order discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis.

It must be highlighted that in the early years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent states in the post-Soviet space demonstrated strong interest in

‘joining’ the global community of states. In fact, in the first decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union, all of the newly independent states declared unconditional support for democratization and expressed eagerness to join the community of democratic states and free market economy. For example, in 1992, the Russian foreign minister Andrey Kozyrev stated that “[w]e have said loud and clear that our goal is incorporation into the community of democratic, market economy states” (Kozyrev, 1992). Similarly, Kyrgyzstan’s foreign minister stated that “[w]e intend in every way to promote familiarization of citizens of the republic with CSCE documents, starting from school programs to the files of our ministers” (Otunbaeva, 1992). Echoing Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan’s representative stated “[t]he Uzbek people have the firm intention of building a state in which democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms and national harmony will be fully realized and which will implement reforms leading to market economy” (Head of Delegation of Uzbekistan, 1992).

Similar statements from other Central Asian states, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Armenia and Belarus were delivered in support of democracy as the path for the newly independent post-Soviet states in the 1992 Prague ministerial conference and a few subsequent meetings. The excitements in the region to join the free world and democratic aspirations were so high that, for example, Russian foreign minister suggested reconsidering the consensus-based rule of decision making within the CSCE, regarding actions concerned ‘protecting human rights and democracy’: “[w]e continue to believe that CSCE activities must be based on consensus. But when it comes to protecting human rights and democracy, the ‘consensus minus one’ formula suggested by Mr. Genscher must be allowed to operate (Kozyrev, 1992).

Towards the end of the 1990s, however, the excitements for joining free and democratic world started to gradually fade away. The ruling elites in the post-Soviet states reacted to the various forms of democratic conditionality including for financial assistance to those states with increased sense of resistance to reforms and political opening. Some argued that Western pressure for democratization undermined their sovereignty and stability. For example, Kamilov argued that “Uzbekistan became a member of international community. It happened when it was recognized that Uzbekistan will pursue its own way of development which provides for preservation of social and political stability civil and national consensus” (Kamilov, 1995). Some other post-Soviet states argued that democratization takes time that the world should not pressure for fast changes:

Strive of new democracies for gradual improvement should be given a worthy appraisal. It should be remembered that the path to mature democracy is long and thorny. It is our opinion that OSCE while

evaluating achievements of its member states in the area of democracy should consider deep historic background (Tokaev, 1998).

As Western pressures and conditionality increased to push for reforms in the post-Soviet space, the post-Soviet regimes reacted with enhancing authoritarian political discourse including adopting counter-norms to challenge Western pressures. As early as 1998, the political rhetoric with respect to democracy and political freedoms started to shift in most of the post-Soviet states and new normative language such as cultural diversity, national traditions, and sovereignty became central to foreign policy statements. Countries such as Russia and Belarus adopted a new normative language including ‘sovereign democracy’ and ‘sovereign equality’ to resist Western democracy promotions. As the years passed, repressive regimes in Russia, Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Belarus strengthened their grips on power and democratic aspirations were replaced with a new form of authoritarian regimes called ‘competitive authoritarianism’ (Levitsky & Way, 2002). Competitive authoritarian regimes adapted to democratic principles such as the elections, but engineered the electoral process in their favor to prolong the ruling elite’s, or in many cases, autocrats’ control on power in the post-Soviet states.

Though in no way one can argue with certainty that the authoritarian backlash in parts of the post-Soviet space was in part the result of the West’s unwillingness to recognize the post-Soviet states as equal and legitimate counterparts, the dynamics of ‘othering’ of the post-Soviet space did follow greater authoritarian resistance, and eventually de-legitimization of liberal internationalism in political discourses in the post-Soviet space. Stivachtis (2015:131) has argued that the ‘othering’ by the European international society of Russia has been a key reason why it has developed ‘ambivalent’ relations with the west. According to Stivachtis (2015:131) Russia has been perceived as Europe’s ‘constitutive other’ alongside Turkey. This politics of differentiation as the ‘unequal-other’ has had a profound impact on self-perception and identity of Russia in particular, and the identity of post-Soviet states in general *vis-à-vis* Europe. Given that the dynamics of recognition and differentiation in global European international society often came in the form of criticism that entailed politics of ‘shaming’ the ‘uncivilized’, the standard defensive behaviour required defence of the ‘uncivilized’ as ‘differently civilized’ or ‘equally civilized’. This counter-narrative became the corner stone of the post-Soviet regional identity.

While the European international society considered the post-Soviet as the ‘unequal-other’ or the ‘uncivilized-enough-other’, the post-Soviet states tended to defend

their standards and legitimize their political values as matters of cultural-civilizational diversity. The politics of differentiation by the global European international society has pushed the post-Soviet states to the margins of the European international society and shaped the external identity of the post-Soviet states. Facing un-recognition by the global international society, the post-Soviet states have gradually sought to de-legitimize the European standard of civilization by rejecting liberal internationalism and universality of the European values. Instead, the post-Soviet states have increasingly sought to define themselves in terms of sovereign regimes with distinct political traditions and values that are no less civilized than their European counterparts.

Furthermore, by emphasising the equality of cultures and regimes in response to Western ‘standard of civilization’, the post-Soviet states have tended to define themselves as representing a pluralist regional international society *vis-à-vis* the integrationist European international society. This has been at the core of discourse on ‘equality’ of states promoted by the post-Soviet states within the OSCE. The emphasis on equality is not only aimed at equality of states, but also the equality of the norms and values that make up the states. According to the post-Soviet states those values shall be respected as sovereign and hence, recognized by the core European states within the OSCE. Facing un-recognition as equally ‘civilized’, the post-Soviet states adopted new normative languages to refuse Western ‘standard of civilization’ and emphasize “equal participation and equal treatment of all participating states” (Nalbandian, 2009), and demand the political dialogue to be based “on the principle of sovereign equality of all the participating states” (Martynov, 2007). The post-Soviet states also challenged Europe’s “absolute knowledge” of the “nature and principles of democracy” and “monopoly on the truth” demanding that the “dialogue on the humanitarian agenda can only be equal and mutually respectful” (Lavrov, 2007). For many post-Soviet states, the OSCE is not supposed to be a place for “lessons in democratization” (Lavrov, 2007), but as platform for dialogue among equal cultures: “[w]e have a unique opportunity to strengthen and enhance the main purpose of the organization – to serve for a broad, open, and equal political dialogue between participating states on key issues of security and cooperation in Europe” (Zarifi, 2011).

The pluralist discourse on international society is one of the main features of identity in the post-Soviet regional international society. This identity is constructed in close connection with politics of ‘othering’ in the global international society. The global international society’s differentiation of the post-Soviet space as the ‘unequal other’ has had

a profound effect on the post-Soviet identity as a result of which, the region has increasingly sought self-identification as ‘equally-different’ *vis-à-vis* the European international society, which tends to see it as the ‘unequal-other’. By presenting itself as the ‘equally-different’, the post-Soviet regional international society has sought to resist the European ‘standard of civilization’ arguing for a pluralist international society where all governance cultures and values are equally important and must be recognized as such. However, the external perception of the post-Soviet space as the ‘unequal-other’ remains fundamental to the region’s identity in the global international society irrespective of the internal diversity of the region and individual states’ aspirations or politics of self-identification. The global Western international society has been externally differentiating the post-Soviet space as the ‘other’, and primarily based on the ‘standard of civilization’. The European ‘standard of civilization’ has been largely indifferent to internal or sub-regional identity debates within the post-Soviet space which despite sharing considerable normative commonality are not entirely homogenous including in its identity debates.

Internal Dynamics of Identity: The Intra-Regional Politics of Self-Identification

While much of the debate on identity in this chapter involved external aspects of it, the internal identity of the region is also important to highlight. The internal debate on identity is heterogeneous, and the region’s self-understanding is different across sub-regional and national divides. There is at least one strong sub-regional identity that is widely accepted both externally and internally, which is Central Asia. The five states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have a distinct regional identity both as mostly Turkic –except Tajikistan- and most importantly Muslim states in the post-Soviet space where Islam defines their civilizational identity both internally and externally. Though Azerbaijan, both Turkic and Muslim nation, is not geographically associated with Central Asia, it is perceived to be part of the same civilizational group within the OSCE.

As far as the Islamic-civilizational identity of Central Asia is concerned, the internal (self-identification) and external identity of the region is quite consistent. For example, a response to the survey question from a Central Asian representative to the OSCE highlighted ‘Central Asian’ and ‘Muslim’ as the most important regional identities.¹⁸ Similarly interviews with diplomats representing two European member states at the OSCE also

¹⁸ Researcher’s anonymous survey Interview with representative of a Central Asian state in the OSCE, Vienna, November 2017.

highlighted that Islam was perceived to be an identity feature that set Central Asia and Azerbaijan aside from the rest of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE.¹⁹ The Islamic civilization, however, appears less frequently in the ministerial statements of the representatives of the post-Soviet space. Perhaps, the strong secular nature of the states in Central Asia and Azerbaijan makes the religious-civilizational identity a less favourable internal identity debate. Reference to Islam and Islamic civilization appears mostly in the statements delivered by the foreign ministers of Uzbekistan. For example,

For centuries Uzbekistan has been one of the centres of enlightened Islam, instilling in the consciousness of people such eternal values as a desire for good and peace, tolerance in inter-ethnic and interreligious relations, mutual respect and harmony among peoples regardless of the colour of their skin or their convictions (Head of Delegation of Uzbekistan, 2007).

However, despite being a feature of the region's identity, the relationship between the state and Islam in Central Asia and Azerbaijan has been complicated. Islam remains a corner stone of the post-Soviet national identities in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, but the Islamic-civilizational discourse on identity in these countries is also overshadowed by strong secularism their ruling elites have inherited from Soviet communist era. Secularism is key regional value that sets states in Central Asia and Azerbaijan apart from most other Muslim states in the region. In most cases, the post-Soviet secularism is not fundamentally different from the Soviet's hostile view towards religion, which did not only separate the Mosque from the State, but widely and systematically suppressed religion and religious institutions. The Soviet interpretation of secularism continues to shape the ruling elites' understanding of the term in Central Asia and Azerbaijan where religious freedom is strictly limited and its public manifestation is widely suppressed (United States Commission on International Religious Freedoms, 2019).

Therefore, despite being a fundamental feature of cultural identity in Central Asia and Azerbaijan Islam remains relatively marginal in the official foreign policy identity discourses in the region, where the security language of 'radicalism' and 'terrorism' has led to suppression of religious identity symbols and their public manifestation. While celebrating Islam as a feature of national identity, states in Central Asia and Azerbaijan have less favourable view of public manifestations of region arguing that they endanger the secular state, stability, peace and harmony. "The religious radicalism should not be

¹⁹ Researcher's interviews with representatives of two European member states of the OSCE, November 20, 2017, Vienna, Austria. The Interviewees asked to remain anonymous because they did not have the official permission from their respective capitals to talk to me on the issue.

considered as a democratic opposition. It is a type of totalitarian ideology, targeted to discredit the democracy, secular state, multinational and multiconfessional society” (Mustafaev, 1998).

The regional politics of self-identification in Central Asia therefore, is not heavily influenced by religious-civilizational identity discourse, at least within the OSCE. Most states in the region advocate for a broader and more inclusive regional identity, particularly the idea of Eurasia. This allows for the states in the region to become part of a bigger collective discourse particularly *vis-à-vis* Europe within the OSCE. As a regional identity, ‘Eurasia’ is an established political and geopolitical discourse in the foreign policy of Russia and Kazakhstan, but other states such as Kyrgyzstan and Belarus also self-identify with it in some ways as means to both convey support to Russia’s regional integration projects as well as advocating for inclusivity in Europe. For example, in 2009, Kyrgyzstan’s foreign minister stated that “[we] are interested in enhancing the role of the OSCE in the creation of Eurasian security architecture” (Sarbaev, 2009). The reference to ‘Eurasian’ in such statements highlights Asianness of the OSCE regional space besides the Europeanness of the organization. That ‘Asian’ dimension of Europe is often seen by some post-Soviet states in terms of a duality that must define the OSCE’s identity. This duality is more explicitly expressed in statements by Russia and Kazakhstan. For example, Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister stated that “We hope that the OSCE would be able to adapt to the changed reality, retain its authority and weight on the world arena and become a renovated dialogue platform uniting Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian space” (Tazhin, 2007). Similarly, in 2016, Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister stated that “Rebuilding **confidence and trust** in Europe and Eurasia remains an urgent task.... The **Eurasian dimension** (emphasis in the original) of the OSCE security space is the core message of the Astana Declaration and should remain in our focus” (Idrissoev, 2016).²⁰

Most post-Soviet states define their identity in terms of this duality that characterizes the OSCE as an organization that is internally differentiated in terms of including both ‘European’ and ‘Asian’ states. Sometimes, this is perceived as dividing lines between the two different cores of the OSCE. A number of the post-Soviet states have been explicit in arguing such dividing line is in place to reinforce the historical, i.e. cold war era political and ideological divisions, in their views. For example, in 2015 Belarusian Foreign

²⁰ Emphasis as in the original text.

Minister argued that “[w]e have never recovered from the “cold war” syndromes. And regrettably the OSCE has not abandoned the “bloc thinking”. **The rule of force, confrontation, sanctions mentality** [emphasis in the original] still prevails in interstate relations” (Makei, 2015). Similarly, the Russian Foreign Minister argued that east –west rivalry in integration projects has not abandoned the politics in Europe. At the Kiev Ministerial Council meeting, Lavrov stated that “[d]ividing lines in the OSCE area have not diminished. In the trade and economic sphere, attempts are being made to create an artificial watershed between integration processes in the European Union (EU) and Eurasia following the logic “with us or against us”” (Lavrov, 2013).

Russia has been a strong proponent of Eurasia, not only as a regional identity, but also as cultural-ideational identity. As discussed in the chapter on social institutions, Russia considers Eurasia a cultural space, which despite sharing its civilizational roots with Europe, has its own norms, values and traditions that must be respected and treated equally by European international society. This has been at the core of the Russian norm contestation within Western institutions. The idea of Eurasia is to emphasize the ‘Asianness’ of the ‘Europeanness’ of the post-Soviet space in particular, but also the OSCE as an organization consisting of both ‘European’ and ‘Eurasian’ states. The ‘Asia’ in ‘Eurasia’ is the ‘East meets the West’ of the concept. For a number of post-Soviet states such as those in Central Asia the ‘Asianness’ of their regional-cultural identity has been important, and it constitutes part of their self-identification. For examples, joining the then Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) for the first time as an independent country, Uzbekistan minister stated: “[h]ow great a pleasure it is that a voice from Asia- I mean the voice of the republic of Uzbekistan- can now be heard on the platform of such an important international forum as CSCE (Teshabaev, 1992).

Teshabeve’s statement demonstrated that in addition to self-identifying as an Asian state, Uzbekistan, considered membership at the CSCE as recognition of its identity by the European community of states. This was the defining moment in the country’s regional-cultural identity configuration at the global stage as it emerged as an independent state. The Asian element of identity of states in Central Asia has remained an important pillar of self-identification *vis-à-vis* Europe and even Russia since independence: “[t]he task at the present stage is to extend broader and more organic coverage to the Asian part of the OSCE area, and to do this on the basis of the principle of indivisible security” (Nazarov, 1998).

The ‘Asian part of the OSCE area’ is framed not only for self-identification as ‘Asian’, but also to identify the OSCE as consisting of both Asian countries and European countries. That is how it is usually perceived by most countries in Central Asia. In the following statement by Kyrgyzstan’s foreign minister the OSCE is considered to form ‘a single geographical and political space’ that can be both identified as ‘Asian’ or ‘European:

At present, the system of security and co-operation may be regarded as European or Asian. However, in view of the dynamic development in the post-Helsinki era, we regard Europe and Asia, which are connected by a great number of historical, economic and cultural links, as a single geographical and political space (Sarbaev, 2009).

Whether the above characterization of the OSCE is accurate or not, is not at the focus of discussion here. Such statements demonstrate the regional dynamics of self-identification in the post-Soviet space. The most significant conclusion from the above quoted statements on internal regional identity is that the region’s self-identification is shaped or informed in a continuum between Asia and Europe. This continuum creates a cultural-political geography in which the post-Soviet space locates itself. While Tajikistan sits at the Asian end of this continuum, Georgia and Moldova –though still detached from Europe- define themselves as the European end of it.

Georgia, Moldova and lately Ukraine could form another sub-regional identity in the post-Soviet space in terms of self-identification as ‘European states’. Georgia and Moldova in particular have been advancing a ‘European state’ identity for themselves to both distinguish from the rest of the post-Soviet states as well as aspire to join the European regional order. “We want Moldova to be a democratic, prosperous, reunited and European state, at peace with itself and its neighbors” (Stratan, 2007), Moldova’s foreign minister stated at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid. Similarly, Georgia has actively pursued an ‘Europeanization’ project both as an identity and geopolitical objective to integrate with Europe as it has been breaking away from the post-Soviet regional order. ‘Europeanness’ leads the politics of self-identification in Georgia; a process considered by the political elites as ‘natural path’ for development of the country and ‘irreversible’:

In the light of our commitment to European values, we see the European integration process as a natural path for our country’s development. European and Euro-Atlantic integration is the cornerstone of our foreign policy, which is determined by the choice of the Georgian people and embedded in our identity. The EU Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, where we initialed the Association Agreement, turned a new page in the EU-Georgia relations that makes the Europeanization of Georgia and other committed Eastern European partners irreversible (Panjikidze, 2013).

The discourse on European identity in Georgia, however, remains largely aspirational. The European identity of Georgia seems to be externally challenged by the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion of the European international society discussed above in terms of ‘standards of civilization’. Europe as materialized in the form of the EU has not been completely open to Georgia, and for that matter, Moldova and Ukraine’s inclusion into the union. It is important however, to note that the EU has been aiming at expanding its security community into the post-Soviet space mainly through its Eastern Neighbourhood policy in particular the EaP (Simão, 2018). Despite denying membership in the EU, Association Agreement (AA) and the EaP have facilitated greater European engagement with these countries. This has further enhanced the discourse on European identity in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which set them apart from other post-Soviet states. As highlighted in the previous chapter, these countries are also differentiated from other post-Soviet states along normative issues. However, their aspirational identity as European countries is externally circumscribed by the EU denying them membership, which places them largely outside the idea of Europe and thus, the European regional international society.

The national and sub-regional identity discourses in the post-Soviet space suggest various self-identification practices. While these are important intra-regionally, the internal dynamics seem to have been less constitutive of the external identity of the region *vis-à-vis* the global Western international society. Despite some degree of awareness in the global international society about the regional dynamics, which is reflected in specific sub-regional programming such as the EU’s strategy for Central Asia, the EaP, etc., the core European international society continues to see the post-Soviet states as the ‘unequal-other’. For the core European international society, the post-Soviet space represents an international space ‘east of Vienna’. In Stivatchis’s (2015) word, ‘east of Vienna’ is the ‘constitutive other’ of West. In other words, the West is defined through the politics of differentiation from the East. ‘Standard of civilization’ has been at the core of politics of differentiation. The West-East identity is mutually constructed, socially reproduced and sustained through practices of recognition and differentiations. In more general terms, for ‘west’, the post-Soviet space is part of the ‘global east’. By ‘global east’ is meant all the ‘others’ in international society that are differentiated from the European international society based on ‘standard of civilization’; the ‘unequal others’ or the ‘uncivilized-enough others’ that are yet to ‘qualify’ for membership in core global international society. In specific terms, however, the post-Soviet

space represents the non-European, the ‘post-Soviet-other’, or the ‘post-Soviet-authoritarian-other’ as opposed to the European liberal democratic international society.

As discussed throughout this thesis, the post-Soviet states are fully aware of their differentiation from and by the core European international society. Despite aspiring to join the European club of states, they have faced considerable recognition challenges. Their perception of inequality within the OSCE has shaped their external collective identity as the ‘unequal other’. This process of ‘othering’ has constituted the post-Soviet’s regional identity *vis-à-vis* the Western/European international society. As such, the region is globally differentiated and externally identified as ‘different’. Their ‘difference’ has been at the core of their identity most significantly represented through its different social institutions. As Flockhart (2014) has argued, identity can be reflected in the social institutions i.e. norms and values, and governance features. The authoritarianism that defines the political system and governance norms and values in the post-Soviet space define the identity of the region too. Despite regional variations in across the spectrum of democracy-authoritarianism, the region’s identity comes as the one differentiated ‘other’ *vis-à-vis* the global European international society. In other words, regardless of their internal homogeneity or difference, the region is united in its external identification as the ‘eastern other’

Conclusions

As one of its fundamental elements, identity is central to the definition and theorization of regional international order. It reflects dynamics of recognition and differentiation in international society and shapes politics of self-identification and regional awareness. Identity closely interact with social institutions and power to shape a regional international order that is both internally and externally differentiated, creating an international order nested out of the global one. As the third pillar of regional order, identity is deeply rooted in the social institutions, and as Flockhart (2016) has argued in the order’s self-understanding. Like social institutions, identity plays a key role in facilitating power recognition. Russia’s social status recognition in the post-soviet space is therefore closely linked also to the East-West identity dynamics, which has denied Russia full inclusion into the European international society not only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but throughout its modern history.

The results of the analysis of the foreign policy statements of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE Council of Ministers indicate that the post-Soviet regional space is strongly differentiated externally from and by the European international society. Such differentiation

has externally constructed the post-Soviet states' identity *vis-à-vis* Europe as the 'unequal other' within the OSCE, leading to regional awareness and common sentiments that has in turn shaped the politics of self-identification in the post-Soviet space. Their shared sentiments of 'inequality' unite them as the 'un-equal other' as expressed in their statements discussed above. Externally differentiated by the global core international society, the post-Soviet states have tended to move towards consolidating its distinct identity in terms of a pluralist regional international society that is built upon the idea of diversity as opposed to the hegemonic liberal internationalist international society. The pluralist identity of the post-Soviet regional international society has been crafted in response to the politics of 'othering' by the European international society. That is also to overcome the problem of recognition through emphasising difference and diversity. Defining themselves in terms of difference, the post-Soviet states have adopted a politics of self-identification that seeks to identify the post-Soviet space as 'equally different' as opposed to its external identity as the 'unequal other'. This, among other, indicates the reflexive relation between the external and internal identity dynamics in international society.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Defined primarily in terms of regional international society, this thesis discussed regional international order in the post-Soviet space to address the central puzzle of the research which concerns the region's relative stability regarding Russia's primacy after the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1992-2016). As discussed in the body of the thesis, much of the existing literature defines the post-Soviet regional order in terms of Russia's hegemonic foreign and security policy or the logic of polarity that subjugates the regional international politics in the region to Russia's coercive capabilities. Two major problems were identified with these perspectives, and they include denying other post-Soviet states agency in international relations and reducing the question of regional order to geopolitics. By offering a critic of the existing literature, the thesis adopted the English School perspective to provide a new theoretical explanation for the research puzzle by conceptualizing the post-Soviet regional international order in terms of a regional international society that reflects shared interests, values, norms and identity.

This perspective enabled the researcher to go beyond the Russian hegemony argument or Regional Security Complex logic, both of which see to reduce regional order to questions of geopolitics or polarity. Instead, the English School conceptualizes regional international order as a unique configuration of order in international relations, where order emerges from social recognition of power, shared interests, and intersubjective understanding of the constituting norms and common identity. In other words, regional order is not reducible to factors of hegemonic control, polarity or material resource for leadership. By conceptualizing regional order in terms of regional international society, the thesis offered a framework to analyze and appreciate the agency and fundamental roles that other post-Soviet states demonstrate in shaping, contesting, socially producing and/or maintaining the post-Soviet regional order based on shared ideational and material interests, as well as certain identity dynamics.

In addition to providing an alternative theoretical explanation for the research puzzle, the core objective of the thesis was to develop a theoretical framework that captures the social dynamics that shape regional international order as a social process and its institutionalization as collective material and ideational interests rather than a hegemonic imposition of great powers interests. In pursuing this objective, the thesis offered an in-depth discussion on the concept of regional order and introduced it as a distinct level of analysis and theorization in IR that is differentiated from constructs such as global order or world

order. It also classified IR theories according to taxonomy of order in international relations to present a regional level theory of IR. By analysing theories and approaches to regional level analysis, the thesis introduced a research framework based on the English School theory to study the international order in the post-Soviet space. The thesis slightly modified and adopted Flockhart's (2016) analytical framework consisting of a triad of power, social institutions and identity to present a coherent theoretical and empirical response to the question of post-Soviet regional order and Russia's primacy in it. The original data derived from the foreign ministerial statements of the representatives of the post-Soviet states within the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings provided first-hand empirical insight about the constituting norms and values and well as identity dynamics that define the post-Soviet regional international order *vis-à-vis* the Western/European core international society/order.

The main objective of this thesis was to offer an alternative theoretical explanation for Russia's primacy to other actors in the post-Soviet space and the region's relative authoritarian stability, against the backdrop of the limited success of the expansion of the liberal European international society into the region following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Based on the triad of power, social institutions and identity framework, Russia's primacy was conceptualized in terms of the concept of power reflecting not merely material capabilities, but most importantly social recognition of its status as the leading state in the post-Soviet space. Russia's social status as power was argued to have been sustained and facilitated through several shared or common social institutions and identity dynamics that define the post-Soviet regional international order *vis-à-vis* the global core international society.

Discussing Russia as power in the post-Soviet space, the thesis analyzed dynamics of Russia's social status recognition in the context of variety of identity roles it is undertaking including its role as integrative, coercive, and normative power as well as its role as security provider and peacekeeper in the region. These role identities reinforce one another at different levels to help Russia position itself as the power that shapes the post-Soviet regional order. A key source of Russia's social recognition was argued to have been its role as a normative power in the post-Soviet space. Russia's normative power was discussed in the context of its democratic norm contestation and leadership as a core member of what has been characterized in this thesis as the post-Soviet regional international society. The findings of the thesis demonstrate strong normative convergence among most of the post-

Soviet states, who qualify to represent a distinct regional international society in which Russia has been playing the historical role of a socializer state.

The findings firstly demonstrate strong evidence for the existence of a distinct regional international society in the post-Soviet space. This regional international society can be distinguished in terms of its authoritarian social institutions and authoritarian interpretation of the international norms. In light of the original data derived from the foreign policy statements of the post-Soviet states, the thesis offered extensive discussions of the post-Soviet authoritarian norms and values such as authoritarian stability and security, parochialism, statism and intergovernmentalism, and civilizational diversity, etc., and illustrated how these norms are used to both resist democratic pressures and consolidate authoritarian order in the post-Soviet space. These norms are often emphasized in response to external pressures, particularly by the Western democratic international society for democratic reforms. As such, they become critical to post-Soviet regional order's self-understanding and identity *vis-à-vis* the Western international society. Authoritarian norms such as parochialism for example are devised to delegitimize international democratic norm promotion by emphasising respect for cultural diversity, national traditions and sovereignty, and a pluralist international society. Similarly, the thesis offered an in-depth discussion of how global norms such as equality, democracy, cooperation, sovereignty, etc. are interpreted differently to resist liberal internationalism and universalism, and demand authoritarian recognition within liberal institutions such as the OSCE. For example, democracy is a celebrated word in the post-Soviet states, often for entirely different purposes. By democracy is meant respect for and recognition of the diversity of regimes, cultures and governance models in the international system.

Such interpretation of democracy is an authoritarian novelty that seeks to introduce democracy not in terms of civil and political freedoms, but in terms of appreciation of difference in international society. This includes differences in the way democracy is interpreted, thus rejecting one single or universal interpretation of the norm. Such interpretation of democracy is further reinforced by authoritarian interpretations of other international norms such as equality and sovereignty. An authoritarian interpretation of democracy is often presented within the discourse of multiculturalism and 'equality of truths' to reject the imposition of a single interpretation of democracy as something that undermines other international norms, including principles of 'equality and mutual respect', which are considered, by post-Soviet authoritarian states, to be democratic values in

themselves. Equality, as an international norm, is interpreted also fundamentally differently by the authoritarian states in the post-Soviet states. Whereas its international interpretation concerns legal equality of the states, the post-Soviet authoritarian interpretation of the term concerns moral equality of political norms, national cultures and the normative regimes that states represent or embody. Such interpretation of equality and other international norms is aimed at rejecting moral universalism amid international pressures on the post-Soviet states' freedom and human rights records as well as at promoting a pluralist vision for international society; one that is defined in terms of diversity of values and mutual recognition of normative regimes. As such, the post-Soviet states present and legitimize authoritarian order as an anti-hegemonic vision for a global international order amidst the emerging multipolarity and declining liberal international order.

While the identification and definition of the post-Soviet regional international society was an essential component of theorizing the post-Soviet regional order, a key focus of the thesis was on defining Russia's position within the post-Soviet authoritarian regional order. Russia's position was defined in terms of its various identity roles, but most importantly in terms of its normative leadership that facilitated and enhanced its social recognition as power. Although the authoritarian norms and the authoritarian interpretation of international norms are widely shared and promoted by all post-Soviet space (except Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), Russia appears to have assumed normative leadership particularly through contesting democratic norms in the global stage. In the post-Soviet space, Russia provides normative support for authoritarianism in the region particularly by 'shielding' the post-Soviet authoritarian regimes and elites against Western criticisms including within the OSCE or 'validating' (Cooley, 2014) those regimes through its discourse on multiculturalism and 'radical conservatism', aimed at rejecting liberal internationalism (Lewis, 2020). In the case of Kazakhstan's bid for the OSCE presidency, for example, Russia firmly supported Kazakhstan and strongly objected to, in Lavrov's words, "attempts to force [...] Kazakhstan to somehow additionally prove 'suitability'" (Lavrov, 2007). There are numerous other cases where Russia has been extending support for authoritarian post-Soviet states, including on their democratic performance such as elections and human rights records. Russia has been instrumental in developing alternative regional mechanisms to Western democratic institutions such as, for example, the CIS Election Monitoring Organization (CIS-EMO) or other similar structures to counter liberal institutions in the post-Soviet space such as the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions

and Human Rights (ODIHR). Coupled with Russia's more global revisionist agenda to challenge the liberal international order, Russia's role in supporting authoritarianism has enabled it to emerge as a normative power in the post-Soviet space, where the prevalence of authoritarian social institutions supports its leadership aspirations and social recognition. Russia's normative leadership is a fundamental aspect of its status as power.

Moreover, Russia as the 'constitutive other' (Stivachtis, 2015) of the idea of Europe has been at the centre of East-West dynamics in international society for much of its history. As Europe's other, Russia has been playing a historical role in defining the peripheries of Europe as a distinct cultural and ideational space now most notably pursued within the framework of Eurasia as opposed to the idea of Europe. In this space which encompasses the post-Soviet region, Russia has pursued both a geopolitical and civilizational identity mission for itself, and the role of a 'civilizer' state in international society with respect to the post-Soviet states. It has played a key role in the expansion of the institutions of international society in the region particularly through socializing the former Soviet republics and their elites within the Soviet Union. This historical role has facilitated Russia's power recognition in the region, where most states and the political elites have been previously socialized within the same normative, legal and ideational systems.

Russia's primacy in the post-Soviet space, therefore, is closely linked to the authoritarian structure of the region in terms of authoritarian social institutions that facilitate and sustain its leadership aspirations and social recognition. Its status is however supported also by an identity dynamic that defines the third pillar of the post-Soviet regional international order. The findings of the thesis on identity provide a coherent empirical support to the idea of post-Soviet regional order as one that is strongly differentiated from and by the global core international society, not only on the basis of their difference in social institutions and different interpretation of social institutions, but also on the basis identity dynamics. Identity of the post-Soviet states was analysed in terms of the dynamics of recognition and differentiated within the OSCE as an institution of the Western international society. These dynamics were studied through the analysis of the shared sentiments among post-Soviet states' representatives about practices of 'othering' of the post-Soviet states by the Western states as well as in the context of politics of conditionality involving a certain standard of civilization.

Findings illustrate that the post-Soviet states are strongly differentiated from the cultural-normative Europe as the 'unequal other' within the OSCE. Such differentiation,

which has been occurring, based on normative qualities such as democracy and respect for human rights has enforced a ‘standard of civilization’ criterion for recognition of the largely consolidated authoritarian post-Soviet states within the OSCE. Besides the use of cultural-geographical categories such as ‘East of Vienna’ and ‘West of Vienna’, these dynamics of differentiation have externally constructed the post-Soviet states’ identity *vis-à-vis* Europe as the ‘unequal other’ within the OSCE, leading to regional awareness and common sentiments among post-Soviet states’ leaders, used as the basis of official policy. The sentiment of inequality which was discussed in-depth in this thesis constitutes the basis of regional cohesion despite divergent intra-regional identity debates.

Externally differentiated by the global core international society, the post-Soviet states have tended to move towards consolidating its distinct identity in terms of a pluralist regional international society that is built on the idea of diversity as opposed to the hegemonic liberal internationalist international society. The pluralist identity of the post-Soviet regional international society has been crafted in response to the politics of ‘othering’ by the European international society. That is also to overcome the problem of recognition through emphasising difference and diversity. Defining themselves in terms of difference, the post-Soviet states have adopted a politics of self-identification that seeks to portray the post-Soviet space as ‘equally different’ as opposed to its external identity as the ‘unequal other’.

While reflecting normative differences, identity constitutes a feature of regional international order that goes beyond normative discourse and involves a deeper or permanent feature of order such as the civilizational boundaries. In the context of post-Soviet states’ interaction with the European states within the OSCE, the politics of differentiation by Europeans concerns the question of ‘European-self’ versus ‘non-European other’. Such differentiations go a level deeper than normative differences and present the idea of Europe as something somehow primordial, which is not fully or easily open to membership. This politics of exclusion informs dynamics of differentiation of not only the post-Soviet space, but also of countries East of Vienna more broadly as evidenced by the finding of this thesis. In the post-Soviet space, these dynamics of differentiation have externally constructed the post-Soviet space as an ‘unequal other’. The identity of the post-Soviet states as the ‘unequal other’ marks a distinction in terms of the ‘European’ and ‘the other’. This is precisely where Russia emerges also as an ideational actor to claim the post-Soviet social space by asserting the discourse on Eurasianism as a distinct identity *vis-à-vis* Europe.

Therefore, Russia's social status in the post-Soviet regional international order rests upon not only on its normative leadership, but also the East-West identity dynamics that otherizes the post-Soviet states *vis-à-vis* the Western international society. These identity dynamics further enhances the recognition of Russia's social status as a power. By claiming this non-European space as a cultural ground for post-Soviet identity, Russia asserts itself as a leader in the region. Although a necessary condition for its primacy, Russia's coercive or material capabilities, therefore, are not the only defining element of its status in the region. Whereas Russia's material sources of power are important determinants of its status in the region because they enable Russia to perform the various identity roles it plays, its social recognition as a leading state is tied also to the common normative and ideational interests that define the social dynamics of the region. Normative and ideational elements provide Russia's nonmaterial source of power and facilitates the social recognition of its status. This is an essential part of the debate on Russia's power status, because it implies that material sources of power are a necessary condition, but they are not enough for social recognition of power. For example, the EU's collective material power, both in terms of military and economic capabilities, are greater than Russia's, but the EU's influence in the post-Soviet space, except for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, is far more limited than Russia's. Russia's relative primacy in the post-Soviet space, therefore, is rooted in the shared social institutions and the region's identity dynamics that facilitate social recognition of Russia's status as power. This perspective provides a new understanding of the role of Russia in the post-Soviet space beyond the simplistic frameworks of hegemony and polarity. Power is a socially produced and socially recognized identity. Russia's 'social status' is maintained through the collective reproduction and maintenance of the social structure of the post-Soviet regional international society. In theoretical terms, Russia's social status as the power in the post-Soviet regional space rests upon the working of social institutions and identity dynamics as the two fundamental elements of order, along which regional orders are differentiated from one another and from the global core international society.

The findings of the thesis provide a comprehensive and coherent response to the central question of the research. The findings of this research suggest that for the most part, the post-Soviet space is marked by strong normative convergence with Russia, which, in addition to identity debates, has contributed to sustaining Russia's social status recognition as power. The findings demonstrate that the post-Soviet regional order did not change with respect to Russia's primacy, because the normative discourses and identity dynamics that

facilitated Russia's social status recognition as the leading state in the post-Soviet space did not change. The authoritarian social institutions, as well as the politics of identity *vis-à-vis* Europe, continued to define the post-Soviet regional international society in which Russia has been playing the historical role of the 'civilizer' or socializer of states.

It is important, however, to note that Russia's social status recognition has not gone totally unchallenged over the last decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, Russia's claim of 'sphere of influence' in the post-Soviet space has been challenged both externally by other great powers, and regionally by states such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine who have demonstrated a regional breakaway from the post-Soviet regional order. But such challenges have not fundamentally shifted the power dynamics in favour of another regional or external power to assume leadership recognition in the post-Soviet space. As such, Russia's relative social status as the lead states in the post-Soviet space continued to define the regional order, despite being contested by three pro-West Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

However, despite their limited impact on the post-Soviet regional order, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine present a clear anomaly in the post-Soviet space in terms of their democratic aspirations that place them outside the normative boundaries of the post-Soviet space, at least at the level of the official discourse. Socially however, these countries remain divided on their pro-democracy aspirations, and their political systems remain hybrid representing a mix of democratic changes and authoritarian structure inherent in their Soviet history and state evolution. At official discourse levels however, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, share none of the authoritarian norms or the authoritarian interpretation of international norms identified in the context of other post-Soviet states. Given their conflicts with Russia, they also strongly oppose Russia's leadership role in the region, thus challenging Russia's social recognition as a power in socio-normative terms. Though still hybrid regimes, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine's overall democratic performances are considerably higher than the rest of the post-Soviet states, and their aspirational European identity discourse distinguishes them from the identity discourse within the post-Soviet space. Considering these elements, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine cannot be said to make a single regional international society with other states in the post-Soviet space. But at the same time, they do not constitute a regional society of their own (yet) and are not (yet) part of the European regional international society either. Their European aspirations are externally circumscribed by the idea of Europe as a rather exclusive identity. This was

discussed not only in terms of the East and West of Vienna dynamics, but also in the context of EaP and Association Agreements that denied them EU membership. For the EU, as demonstrated in the context of the EaP, partner states like Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are treated as Europe's Eastern borders on the 'other' side of Europe. This has left them with limited external recognition as members of the European international society.

In addition to being subject to Western conditionality, and hence, differentiated from Europe, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine remain part of the post-Soviet regional dynamics that define Western powers' relations with Russia. For Western powers, these states are part of the post-Soviet space, where, as indicated in the context of the conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, and more evidently in the context of the 2020 conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Western powers *de facto* recognize Russia's great power managerial responsibilities in the region. As such, they are subjected to the power dynamics that shape Russia's relations with Western powers. Despite significant investments and normative interests, the Western powers' regional leadership ambitions in the post-Soviet space are limited in nature. In other words, while Western powers have been actively advancing their material and normative interests in the post-Soviet space, they have not been invested in overturning the regional order in respect to Russia's primacy in the region. This was evident also in Western powers' reluctance to protect Georgia or Ukraine against Russian aggression in 2008 and 2014, respectively. The 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh once again demonstrated the limits of Western powers' such as the EU or US leadership ambitions in the region and their recognition of the region as Russia's sphere of influence. In this context, Georgia's, Moldova's and Ukraine's European aspirations have failed to redefine the post-Soviet regional international order. Although they represent a regional breakaway from the post-Soviet regional order, they have been unable to constitute a different regional order or join a different regional international order. Their breakaway from the post-Soviet regional order has put Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in a case where they have sought to divorce from the post-Soviet regional international society in hope of joining the European one, only to get stuck in a 'suitability' game that define the path to Europe. This has created divisions among the political elites as well as the general public in these societies over their European aspirations and relations with Russia, not to mention their rather deeply rooted societal connections with Russia due the prevalence of orthodox religious norms and values that create a shared civilizational identity with Russia.

Presenting a clear case of sub-regional difference in the post-Soviet society concerning discussions involving power, social institutions and identity dynamics, at least at the discursive level, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine demonstrate a challenge for the conceptualization of the post-Soviet regional order as a single authoritarian regional international society. Based on the official discourse, these states are outliers and cannot be grouped together with other post-Soviet states as members of the same regional international society. However, they do not constitute an alternative regional order either. The analysis of the processes of their attempt to join the European international society indicates the existence of various barriers including the post-Soviet regional power dynamics, norms and identity which affects their positioning between the European and the post-Soviet regional order. Whether they could potentially form a sub-regional international order of their own or join the European regional international order is a question of future. Theoretically however, imagining such an order would require the existence, not the aspiration, of a regional international society marked by distinct elements of power, social institutions and identity. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine do not represent such an order of their own making. In fact, the cases of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, being stuck in between their aspired European membership and the post-Soviet regional dynamics, show how significant the interplay of power, social institutions and identity is in the making of a regional international order. This finding suggests that a transformation in regional international order requires shifts not only in one element of the regional order, but a transformation in all three elements of order.

The findings of this thesis have significant implications for the study of change and continuity in regional international orders. A fundamental change in regional order is not possible through changes in the material and geopolitical circumstances alone, but also requires the transformation in the social institutions and identity discourses that define the order. Such transformation must also lead to a shift in the relative social status of the leading state(s) that constitute the power element of the regional order. Therefore, change in one aspect or element of order does not automatically facilitate change in other elements of order, or the regional order as whole. Certain changes are often beyond the free will of states due to structural forces that reinforce regional orders. This particularly concerns the case for joining other regional orders. Regional orders are often structurally differentiated from one another. In addition to power, identity dynamics often play a significant role in regional differentiations. While transformation in social institutions and power dynamics may be

possible, such as in the context of the integration of the formerly communist states in Eastern Europe into the European Union, transformation in identity dynamics prove to be the most challenging aspect of regional order transformation. As witnessed in the context of differentiation on ‘West of Vienna’ and ‘East of Vienna’, identity dynamics often run a level deeper and are hard to completely overcome. This means that inclusion and recognition in international society remains somehow partial only because there are always a core group of states that tend to subjugate others to a system of hierarchy. In certain contexts, such as the case of Japan, the state’s normative progression towards a community of full and stable democracies does not grant it equal status as those of European core democracies. As such, the inherently exclusive nature of international society often becomes a source of frustration in the struggle for recognition fuelling feelings of inequality and ‘otherness’.

These findings also underline the significance of identity as a constituting element of regional international order. The existing literature discusses regional international society almost exclusively in terms of different social institutions or different interpretations of social institutions. This framework is incomplete without the other two elements of order discussed in this thesis, namely, identity and power. Touching upon a deeper sense of community such as civilizational self, identity more profoundly shapes the dynamics of recognition and differentiation, or the politics of inclusion and exclusion in international society. In other words, regional international societies are differentiated from the global core international society not only in terms of different social institutions or different interpretations of social institutions of the global international society, but also along sentiments of collective self and the collective ‘other’. This finding underlines the significance of identity in conceptualizing regional international societies. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the existing literature uses mainly the social institutions framework to study regional international societies. This perspective offers limited insights about social dynamics in international society. For example, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine share, at least in the level of official discourse, the same European democratic social institutions, but this does not necessarily make them part of the European regional international society.

By bringing power and identity into the framework, this thesis not only addresses a significant gap in the existing theoretical literature on regional international society, but also offers a coherent theory of regional order supported by significant empirical evidence. Regional international societies, and for that matter regional international orders, are constituted through the interplay of power, social institutions and identity that function as a

coherent whole. While social institutions are central to the conceptualization of regional international society, power and identity are the other defining features. Power is an integral part and a central institution of order as reflected in the concept of ‘great power management’ in the English School literature. The idea of ‘great power management’ as an institution of international society implies regional divisions of managerial responsibility of great powers. Therefore, regional orders cannot be conceptualized independent of power as a socially recognized status of a leading state in a given region.

So is identity. Identity is part of a more permanent feature of international society that is crucial for dynamics of recognition and differentiation in international society. The framework of the triad of power, social institutions and identity advanced in this research addresses a significant gap in the existing literature from the English School theory perspective, which fails to address regional dynamics beyond discussion of social institutions. Methodologically, the framework offers a fresh perspective on how to operationalize the concept of regional international orders, research, identify, and differentiate them from other regional international orders, and from the global international order. The findings of this thesis demonstrate a coherent empirical support for this theoretical approach.

Empirically, the thesis contributes significantly to the discussion of post-Soviet regional international society in terms of identifying its constituting norms and values. The existing literature’s engagement with post-Soviet states is limited both in scope and in empirical aspects. For example, the literature from the English School discusses regional international society in the post-Soviet space in terms of limited normative schemes, such as Westphalian pluralist norms (Buranelli, 2014) or institutional features such as the CIS (Pourchot and Stivachtis, 2014). This thesis not only brings original and relevant data and identifies a set of distinct regional norms that previous studies failed to offer, but it also expands our understanding of the post-Soviet regional dynamics beyond the geographically limited focus of the existing studies that deal with Central Asia only. The findings of this thesis demonstrate that the post-Soviet regional international society is in fact greater in size and membership, and more profound in terms of its constituting primary social institutions.

The thesis also contributes original empirical insight into the role of other post-Soviet states in the making, re-making and maintaining of the post-Soviet regional order. Most significantly, the findings of the study support the argument that beyond Russian material power, there is a distinct regional international order in the post-Soviet space

marked by a profound set of ideas and norms about world politics, and common material and ideational interests. Such an order first and foremost represents a society defined based on normative and material convergence of interests rather than hegemonic imposition of a power's foreign policy or security interest. This society and core social institutions are shaped by active participation of other post-Soviet states' who share an interest in maintaining its order. In this society, Russia enjoys primacy to external powers by sharing its core values and interests.

Questions for future research

Though this thesis makes a number of theoretical and empirical contributions on the questions of post-Soviet regional order, it also opens up areas for further research, which it was unable to explore due to limitations in the structure of the thesis, time, resource, and scope of the research. On the empirical side, the discussions on power can be further explored through collecting similar original data as those constituting the basis of analysis on social institutions and identity chapters. Through the thesis has managed to do that to some extent, for example, in the context of normative and identity debates future research could look at specific cases where Russia's social status recognition could have been measured, compared and contrasted with other regional or external powers such as the EU. The EU's engagement with the region has been analysed in the context of EaP and the EU strategy for Central Asia, but data on the EU's place in the discursive space of the region could be of fundamental relevance to the discussion on power in the post-Soviet regional space. Though it is expected that the EU enjoys greater social recognition in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as demonstrated in their discourse on Europeanization, the empirical data on its relative social status elsewhere, for example in Central Asia can help analyse the power dynamics better. This necessitates adopting a comparative research framework, where EU's status can contrast with that of Russia's.

An important area of future research is the question of the three outlying states of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in the post-Soviet space. As discussed above, they remain in the grey zone between the post-Soviet authoritarian regional international order and the European liberal-democratic regional international order. Defined in terms of their pro-West democratic aspirations, they constitute a breakaway from the consolidated authoritarian regional order in the post-Soviet space, but their inclusion into the European regional international society has faced challenges both geopolitically in terms of East-West power dynamics, and ideationally in terms of norms, ideas and socio-cultural markers that define

'Europe' as an exclusive identity. Their place in the post-Soviet regional order requires substantive theoretical and empirical engagements including on what their European aspirations mean to the idea of regional international society both in the European and in the post-Soviet context.

A key question regarding the EU-post-Soviet space interaction concerns the identity of the region from the perspective of the EU member states or more broadly the Western members of the OSCE. The thesis offers an in-depth discussion of the identity of the region based on the sentiments expressed by the political elites of the post-Soviet space within the OSCE. The research had initially planned to discuss the post-Soviet states external identity through the perception of the Western members of the OSCE too, but the request for a survey interview was turned down by all, except two European states. The diplomats contacted by the researchers required permission from their respective capitals to talk on the issue. Though a similar approach to the one adopted by this thesis, namely analysis of sentiments expressed in the official statements of the Western diplomats could also help, a survey research could offer greater and generalizable data. Similarly, as supplementary data to what have been drawn from the statements, the researcher had also planned a survey research to further map the opinions among the post-Soviet diplomats within the OSCE on the question of regional identity and dynamics of regional recognition and differentiation. All, but one diplomat declined to participate in the research reasoning that they did not have permission from their respective capitals to take part in the research. Future research on identity in regional society could look into ways such data could be collected and made available for analysis.

Another key topic concerning the question of the post-Soviet regional order is the growing influence of China in the region, particularly in Central Asia. Although China's role has been briefly discussed in the context of the SCO and the Belt and Road Initiative, China's influence on the post-Soviet regional order requires a more in-depth and independent study. As an authoritarian power with global leadership ambitions that is also actively contesting the Western liberal international order, China's impact on the post-Soviet regional order is of paramount significance. Future research on this topic could explore dynamics of China's social status recognition in the post-Soviet space as well as patterns of normative convergence and divergence between the post-Soviet states and China. The key question in this regard is whether China could potentially replace Russia as the power in the post-Soviet space? Anecdotal data point at growing anxieties about China's role in Central Asia, where

anti-Chinese sentiments as demonstrated by various protests have been frequent over the last few years.

At the official level, Russia and Central Asian states' cooperation with China within the SCO has led to adopting common normative languages in the security field as demonstrated by the 'Shanghai Spirit' and the 'three evils' discussed in the body of the thesis. However, China's engagement in other areas such as its environmental norms and practices has led to growing anxieties among communities in Central Asia. A significant number of protests against Chinese companies in Central Asia concern environmental concerns. Coupled with anxieties concerning issues of debt-trap, local perceptions of China's role in the region seem to be less conducive to its leadership ambitions. But given its massive material resources, China continues to play a significant role in the post-Soviet space, which deserves a closer look particularly from the perspective of regional order. As authoritarian powers, China and Russia share normative interests in challenging the Western liberal international order, but in the post-Soviet regional context they are bound to rivalries. China's vision of the region as an integrated Silkroad community fundamentally challenges Russia's Eurasianism. Future research on the post-Soviet regional international order could look into how the rise of China may affect the regional dynamics across the triad of power, social institutions and identity.

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