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Narratives of Global Order

Editors
Matthew Levinger and Laura Roselle

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Editorial

Narrating Global Order and Disorder

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Abstract
This thematic issue addresses how strategic narratives affect international order. Strategic narratives are conceived of as stories with a political purpose or narratives used by political actors to affect the behavior of others. The articles in this issue address two significant areas important to the study of international relations: how strategic narratives support or undermine alliances, and how they affect norm formation and contestation. Within a post-Cold War world and in the midst of a changing media environment, strategic narratives affect how the world and its complex issues are understood. This special issue speaks to the difficulties associated with creating creative and committed international cooperation by noting how strategic narratives are working to shape the Post-Cold War international context.

Keywords
BRICS; genocide; intervention; narratives; politics; R2P; Russia; Ukraine; world order

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "Narratives of Global Order", edited by Matthew Levinger (George Washington University, USA) and Laura Roselle (Elon University, USA).

1. Introduction

For this issue of *Politics and Governance*, we issued an invitation to examine new strategic narratives for 21st-century global challenges. As we noted in our call for papers, the contemporary world confronts civilizational challenges of unprecedented complexity, which can only be addressed through creative and committed international cooperation. Yet, twenty-five years after the end of the Cold War, governments and political movements around the globe are retreating into threadbare, exclusionary ethnic and nationalist narratives forged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

We defined strategic narrative as a story with a political purpose—often a story that can be crystallized into a single word or phrase, such as "containment", "democratization", or "the global war on terror". Such stories provide an organizing framework for collective action, defining a community's identity, its values and goals, and the stakes of its struggles. Interest in strategic narratives builds on the narrative turn in international relations that emphasizes the importance of narratives in shaping how international order is imagined and constructed, and the recognition that political actors attempt, under particular circumstances and in different ways, to shape the narratives through which sense is made of the international system, international relations, and policy. Most of the articles found here build on Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle's (2013, 2017) definition of strategic narrative.

We welcomed paper submissions on a range of methodological and thematic topics. We hoped to explore questions including:

- What are the linguistic, political, and institutional processes by which strategic narratives take shape? To what extent do narratives play a generative role in shaping strategic decisions, as opposed

to reflecting other driving forces such as economic self-interest?
- What factors enable certain narratives to "stick" as organizing principles for strategic cooperation while others fail to translate into sustained cooperative action?
- Why, at the present historical moment, are divisive nationalist narratives more powerful than inclusive ones seeking to advance regional and global integration?
- What new narratives—and new strategies for collective action—might help improve international cooperation to address pressing challenges such as global climate change, nuclear proliferation, and the protection of vulnerable civilians from violence and humanitarian disasters?

The articles in this issue address the first three set of questions more robustly than the fourth. The papers chosen for inclusion address the dynamics of strategic narrative construction and their role in policymaking in alliances (Roselle, 2017), how Russian strategic narratives clash with Western European narratives of global order (Miskimmon & O'Loughlin, 2017), what factors undermine BRICS strategic narrative (van Noort, 2017), how characteristics of genocide discourses shape strategic responses (Irvin-Erickson, 2017), and the implications of strategic narratives associated with "normalization" for decisions concerning international intervention or non-intervention in civil wars and transnational conflicts (Lemay-Hébert & Visoka, 2017).

Strikingly, we did not receive any submissions that examined narrative strategies to enhance international cooperation or to address pressing global challenges. Indeed, the issue might be more aptly entitled "Narratives of Global Disorder" rather than "Narratives of Global Order", because the papers included here seek to understand narrative contestation and the sometimes unexamined effects of strategic narratives. This makes sense to us as the post-Cold War international system is in transition as is the communication technology ecology. Contestation is front and center.

2. How Narratives Support or Undermine Alliances

Laura Roselle's (2017) article analyzes how strategic narratives may foster or undermine cooperation in alliances. She examines Snyder's (1984) notion of an alliance security dilemma which suggests that fears of abandonment or entrapment shape alliance behavior in certain patterned ways and argues that strategic narratives play a central role in constructing these fears. Her essay focuses on two case studies of how US allies and adversaries have attempted "to use narratives to raise fears of abandonment and fears of entrapment designed to change the behavior of other actors": first, the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 of March 2011 calling for military intervention in Libya; and second, the Western alliance's imposition of punitive sanctions against Russia during the Ukraine crisis of 2014.

In the Libyan case, France and the UK attempted to persuade the US to cooperate in part by focusing on system and identity narratives that emphasized common values and the need to shape the international system. By situating the Libyan crisis within a "broader narrative of a liberal order in which states have responsibilities to individuals faced with authoritarian machinations", British and French leaders implied that "if the US did not go along, it would be outside the liberal order". Despite serious reservations about the wisdom of military intervention on the part of President Obama and most of his top advisers, the fear of being "left behind" by America's allies ultimately convinced Obama to authorize military action.

While the example of Libya shows how the use of strategic narratives can reinforce alliance cohesion by accentuating fears of abandonment, the Ukraine crisis illustrates the converse phenomenon: an adversary's deployment of narratives in order to undermine alliance cohesion by emphasizing the risks of entrapment. In the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin sought to challenge US authority in the international system and undermine Western sanctions efforts by refuting NATO's system and identity narratives. Putin argued that "in a post-bipolar world, the West, led by the US, acted selfishly, hypocritically, and without regard for international law". Putin's narratives found resonance in some Eastern European NATO member states, where political leaders opposed sanctions on Russia, arguing that "the US and NATO take advantage of those who are weaker" and calling for "the support of Christian values" as championed by Putin.

Alister Miskimmon and Ben O'Loughlin's (2017) essay probes in greater depth the "misalignment of narratives about world order projected by Russia and its Western interlocutors". Since the beginning of Putin's first presidency in 2000, Russian leaders have consistently sought to counteract the Western unipolar system narrative that depicts the US as the "sole remaining superpower" with a narrative of a "polycentric world", in which Russia maintains great power status. According to this narrative, the Russian Federation must be recognized as a "centre of influence in today's world". In the words of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, a "higher level of partnership" between Russia and the West "may be reached only on the basis of equality, mutual respect and consideration of each other's interests". This partnership requires "pragmatism", marked by an "understanding of our special responsibility for global stability", rather than "tormenting discussions about the search for general values".

Miskimmon and O'Loughlin (2017) make the thought-provoking claim that at this time of "rapid systemic change, the major point of debate" between Russia and its Western interlocutors "is the issue of recognition, rather than domination and redistribution". Instead of being recognized as a "co-constitutor" of the emerging

Post-Cold War order in Europe, "since the early 1990s Russia has complained of being excluded from the major decisions affecting it", including the eastward enlargement of NATO and the European Union. The Kremlin's growing "frustration at this exclusion has triggered increasingly assertive action…to unilaterally defend what it perceives to be in its vital national interest". In the authors' view, "events in Ukraine are at least as much symptom as the cause of tension between Russia and the West", and an "underlying issue is a failure of Russia and the West to reach a common understanding of the international system".

Unfortunately, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin see little immediate prospect of alleviating the narrative misalignment between Russia and the West. American and European commentators, having previously dismissed Russia as a declining second-rank power, now breathlessly warn of a new Cold War against an "intransigent autocratic state"; and recent EU and NATO policy communiqués explicitly declare that "Russia is no longer a strategic partner". Russia, meanwhile, "feels mis-recognised, but articulates a vision of world order that appears unsuited to the dynamics of 21st-century power, shifting hierarchies and material conditions". This growing chasm between the rival strategic narratives "has driven a cycle of miscommunication, generating frustration on all sides and restricting the scope for cooperation".

The deterioration of relations between Russia and the West offers an illuminating example of how the failure to achieve narrative common ground can exacerbate international conflict by highlighting the disjuncture between the stories told by the rival sides. Carolijn van Noort's (2017) article on "Study of Strategic Narratives: The Case of BRICS" examines the converse phenomenon: the processes by which states with widely divergent power capabilities and strategic interests seek to build a collective identity and promote a new global order.

As van Noort (2017) points out, the nations of Brazil, Russia, India, and China—with the subsequent addition of South Africa—were "artificially grouped together in a famous Goldman Sachs working paper" identifying them as "large emerging market economies that had the potential to outperform the G7 countries". Yet, these nations embraced the idea of a BRICS bloc, with ministerial meetings in 2006 and the first BRIC Summit with heads of states in 2009.

This article traces the strategic narrative processes of the BRICS nations through analysis of joint communiqués and identifies a system narrative of global recovery, an identity narrative of inclusive participation, and an issue narrative of infrastructural development. An important addition to the literature on strategic narratives is van Noort's focus on the narrative environment of symbolic, institutional and material practices. Interestingly, the conclusion reached here is about the very mixed success of a unifying BRICS strategic narrative. What arguably undermines the coherence of this narrative is "that the coalition, and the NDB [New Development Bank] more specifically, are being shaped in ways that favor the interests and values of the two autocratic members" (Abdenur & Folly, 2015, p. 88; Kiely, 2016, p. 33). The themes of good governance and development divide the issue narrative therefore into two camps: the "IBSA" countries (Brazil, India, South Africa) in the one camp, and Russia and China in the other.

3. Narratives, Norm Formation, and Conflict

While the first three articles in the issue examine how system and identity narratives can drive conflict or cooperation among states or groups of states, the final two essays explore how narratives about global norms are deployed to justify or resist demands for military intervention. Douglas Irvin-Erickson (2017) presents the concept of "genocide discourses"—a type of strategic narrative built on the principles that "the victims of genocide are necessarily moral innocents, not parties in conflict" and that "genocidal systems are dislodged only when they are swept away through external violence". These dual principles make genocide discourses "highly effective in conferring moral capital upon certain actors in a conflict". By casting "the perpetrators as evil" and "the victims as innocent", such narratives "prescribe external violence as the only means of defending the good".

Genocide discourses, writes Irvin-Erickson, can play a powerful role in "motivating humanitarian responses in defense of certain groups, or sustaining popular support for foreign wars". In their most extreme form, "a kind of reciprocal genocide becomes the imagined solution to genocide, insofar as the total annihilation of a supposedly evil social group is presented as the only way to prevent the total annihilation of a supposedly pure and innocent victim group". As case studies, Irvin-Erickson analyzes the dueling narratives of victimization told by Ukrainian and Russian leaders about the conflict between their countries, as well as the debates in the United States over Islamic State genocides in Iraq.

The final article in the special issue, by Nicolas Lemay-Hébert and Gezim Visoka (2017), speaks to the consequences of particular strategic narratives as they argue that "the language of normalization, hidden behind…narratives of interventions, has…contributed to structure the intervention landscape". Normalcy and normalization within peace and conflict studies is used as "a normative goal of peacebuilding, as an intermediary measurement of success towards sustainable peace, or as a processual mechanism facilitating other post-conflict processes". The authors suggest that normalization can be understood as a strategic narrative and that there are three modes of normalization: imposing normalcy, restoring normalcy, and accepting normalcy. These three are taken together as the concept of *normal peace*, "a new conceptual reference to understand interventions undertaken by the international community to *impose*, *restore* or *accept* normalcy in turbulent societies".

Lemay-Hébert and Visoka (2017) argue that imposing normalcy can be seen as creating liberal subjects, and the measurement becomes state "performance"; restoring normalcy is set on building resilient subjects and a return to the status quo; and accepted normalcy "where international actors seek to manage risks through recognition of the plurality of ways of life". This seemingly abstract debate over definitions can have weighty political and military consequences: countries such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, which are judged by international policy elites to be "normal" despite engaging in "widespread torture and human rights abuses", are able to avoid punitive action. But other states such as Somalia or Afghanistan, which are deemed "abnormal", may be subjected to the deployment of international peacekeeping forces or even full-scale invasion. At heart the authors note the importance of understanding how knowledge production and strategic narratives shape the exercise of power on the global stage.

4. Conclusion

At a historical moment when the international system is in flux, the analysis of strategic narratives provides a productive lens for understanding this ongoing transformation. The articles in this issue illuminate the central role of storytelling in a wide range of decision-making processes in international affairs—from alliance formation to norm formation and conflict. Thus, these articles speak to the idea that narratives shape how international issues, and the international system itself, are understood.

The analysis of strategic narratives is critical for understanding certain processes (e.g. alliance formation) that are often taken for granted. Careful attention to narratives allows one to examine the underlying assumptions upon which behavior in the international system takes place. In a post-Cold War international system, narrative contestation is the focus of scholars as political actors seek to create an ordering principle within which alliances 'make sense', conflicts among nations are waged, and a 21st-century international order takes shape.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Strategic Narratives and Alliances: The Cases of Intervention in Libya (2011) and Economic Sanctions against Russia (2014)

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Abstract
Scholars of international communication recognize that strategic narratives are important for policymaking (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013) and scholars studying alliances suggest that communication is central to the formation and maintenance of alliances (Weitsman, 2010). This essay addresses how strategic narratives affect US alliance behavior—and hence international order—in two specific ways. First, alliance behavior can be affected by other allies' narratives as demonstrated in the case of military intervention in Libya in 2011. Here the evidence suggests that the UK and France were able to use strategic narratives to influence the decision of the US to agree to military intervention in Libya by using narratives that could evoke a fear of abandonment. Second, alliance cohesion can be affected by narrative contestation by non-allies as demonstrated in the case of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. Russia has used strategic narratives in a new media environment in an attempt to elicit a fear of entrapment to counter the US attempts to coordinate alliance support for economic sanctions. In both cases, distinguishing between system, identity, and policy narratives give us a deeper understanding of narrative contestation today. This analysis adds to our understanding of the factors that affect alliances set within a new media environment characterized by a proliferation of sources and outlets and thus a more horizontal structure of information exchange.

Keywords
alliances; European Union; Libya; Russia; strategic narratives; Ukraine

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Narratives of Global Order", edited by Matthew Levinger (George Washington University, USA) and Laura Roselle (Elon University, USA).

1. Introduction

The study of alliances is central to international order as alliances speak to the ability of states to cooperate, particularly during conflict (Snyder, 1997; Weitsman, 2004, 2010). Much of the literature on alliances in international relations concentrates on alliance formation and utilizes a realist lens that emphasizes the distribution of power within the system and resulting behavior such as balance, tethering, and bandwagoning (Walt, 2011). Research has also been done on variability in the reliability of alliance agreements (Kegley & Raymond, 1990). The literature does suggest that communication is central to the formation and maintenance of alliances, and this essay seeks to address how strategic narratives function in alliance relationships today. This analysis, then, focuses on the (re)construction of alliances, and speaks to Weitsman's point that in regard to research on alliances "constructivist and identity-based arguments are becoming more prevalent and will likely continue to be an important research focus in the coming years" (Weitsman, 2010).

This paper uses two case studies to illustrate the importance of different types of strategic narratives and their projection via the media in shaping alliance behavior and international order. Specifically, a strategic narrative analysis that distinguishes international system, identity, and policy narratives is used to assess whether and how these types of narratives accord with fears of abandonment and entrapment within the alliance itself (Snyder, 1997). The first case is the March 2011 US de-

cision to support the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 that established a no-fly zone in Libya. In this case France and the UK were successful in projecting a strategic narrative that suggested that the US would be isolated, if not abandoned, if the Obama administration opposed the resolution. The second case considers Russian attempts to challenge European support for economic sanctions against Russia in light of events in Ukraine in 2014. This case highlights how Russia's strategic narrative sought to foster a fear of entrapment by Western allies, especially among specific countries, primarily in Eastern Europe.

2. Alliances and Communication

Alliances during conflict by definition are relationships that facilitate coordinated efforts to respond, so perhaps most important to the alliance relationship during conflict is alliance cohesion. Alliances and/or coalitions complicate crisis policymaking because "there must be interoperability—in terms of language, communications, doctrine, and the exchange of information" (Weitsman, 2010). Snyder (1997, p. 180) discusses the management of alliances at length in his seminal work and elaborates on the alliance security dilemma. Arguing that over the longer term alliance partners' "attention centers less on particular interests and conflicts with an adversary and more on the manipulation of apparent commitment to the alliance to offset shifts in dependence relationships between the allies themselves" (Snyder, 1997, p. 180), Snyder (1997, pp. 180–181) highlights the importance of understanding what he calls the security–autonomy trade-off and the tension between the fear of abandonment and the fear of entrapment. Especially over the long-term, so certainly in prolonged or protracted conflict situations, Snyder claims that on the one hand states may fear that their allies will abandon the alliance for any number of reasons. On the other hand, as time goes on, states may fear that they are becoming entrapped by the alliance itself. Domestic political considerations may change in states and/or external events may shift conditions related to the conflict and contribute to changes in the dynamics of alliance relationships over time.

Snyder (1997, p. 181) suggests that fear of abandonment can be addressed by increasing one's commitment to the partner, but this may also increase the possibility of entrapment—hence the dilemma. The literature on fears of entrapment and abandonment suggest that states react in patterned ways to alleviate these fears. Snyder (1997, p. 313), for example, asserts that fear of abandonment leads to "movement toward the ally". Specifically, this includes making or reiterating explicit alliance pledges, alliance revisions, and appeasing or moving closer to an ally's position. States that fear entrapment[1] "will either loosen their general alliance commitment or withhold support from their allies" (Snyder, 1997, p. 315). Snyder does make the caveat that states that fear entrapment will give firm commitments when the ally is unrestrainable. The case studies presented below test these assumptions in regard to leadership strategic narratives.

The severity of the alliance security dilemma is determined by three factors, according to Snyder—interests, dependence, and commitment. Kegley and Raymond (1990, p. 254), for their part, also focus on interests, arguing that changes in alliances are related directly to changes in conditions related to interest diversion and that "uncertainty will increase the longer the alliance remains in force" (Kegley & Raymond, 1990, p. 61). The focus on bargaining and interests sidesteps the important question of how interests (and dependence and commitment) are understood and this squarely highlights the importance of the (re)construction of alliance relationships and the importance of communication. Constructivists would point out that if interests are constructed, then interest diversion is constructed as well, for example. In other words similar changes in conditions may or may not lead to the identification of interest diversion. Likewise, Snyder (1997, p. 182) suggests that risk of entrapment, for example, is "sensitive to the degree of commonality or disjunction between allies' interests", and so fears of entrapment and abandonment are constructed as well. In other words, the same situation or event will not necessarily lead to fears of entrapment or abandonment. It is important to understand how these fears are constructed and this essay seeks to address this gap in the literature.

That said, while not explaining fully how interests are constructed, Snyder and others who study alliance relationships certainly recognize the importance of communication to alliance maintenance. So even within his conceptual framework focusing on bargaining he suggests that:

> Between allies, bargaining power will turn on perceptions of their comparative dependence, commitments, and intensity of interests in whatever they are bargaining about….The principal function of actual bargaining communications is to modify others' perceptions of these relationships and of one's own behavior, so as to enhance one's own bargaining power. (Snyder, 1997, p. 37)

Snyder is not alone. Other international relations scholars note the importance of communication to alliance relationships:

> "Bargaining power accrues not necessarily to the party possessing superior resources generally, but the party which possesses issue-specific resources, is able to communicate its resolve clearly and convincingly, and is able to exploit asymmetries in its relation. (Jonsson, 1981, as cited in Kegley & Raymond, 1990, p. 55)

[1] Fear of entrapment and abandonment can exist simultaneously. Snyder's (1997) discussion pertains to the relative strength of each.

Kegley and Raymond (1990, p. 56) suggest that the most common technique to maintain coalition solidarity is persuasion. Thus, without understanding communication processes we cannot understand alliance management and policymaking. The literature on strategic narratives focuses squarely on the communication processes of foreign policy behavior.

3. Narratives and International Relations

The narrative turn in international relations and foreign policy is marked by a range of different approaches to understanding how narratives or stories affect international relations. Similar ideas have been studied across the IR and Foreign Policy Analysis that show a need for increased cross-fertilization across sub-fields. For example, some of Subotić's (2016) ideas about the manipulation of narratives for political purposes are similar to the ideas of Miskimmon et al. (2013) on strategic narratives. Analyses of "autobiographical identity narratives" found in Innes and Steele (2013) and Berenskoetter (2012) address issues of identity and ontological security. Much of the foreign policy literature in this area has focused on narratives about particular policies or military actions, as one might expect. This includes work on military operations and strategic communication, including in Afghanistan (Betz, 2011; De Graaf, Dimitriu, & Ringsmose, 2015; Jakobsen, 2017; Ringsmose & Børgesen, 2011). For an important critique of strategic communication literature see Holmqvist (2013).

This essay uses the strategic narrative framework set out by Miskimmon et al. (2013), Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle (2017), and Roselle, O'Loughlin and Miskimmon (2014) which links international relations questions related to international order for example, with foreign policy analyses that focus on specific policy decisions. Decisions taken within an alliance fall squarely at the nexus of IR and Foreign Policy Analysis and the strategic narrative analysis introduced by Miskimmon et al. (2013) gets at exactly this. Strategic narratives are here defined as narratives "forged by a state with the express purpose of influencing the foreign policy behavior of other actors" (Miskimmon et al., 2013) and are frameworks constructed to allow people to make sense of the world, policies, events, and interactions (Antoniades, Miskimmon, & O'Loughlin, 2010; Freedman, 2006; Kaldor, Martin, & Selchow, 2007). Miskimmon et al. (2013) set out three types of narratives: International System Narratives, National Narratives, and Issue (or Policy) Narratives. This work builds on Bially Mattern's (2005, p. 5) observation that, "neither power politics nor common interests can create stable, shared expectations and behaviors among states". We must understand narratives to understand international order because these help shape perceptions of power and interests. In terms of alliances, Kegley and Raymond (1990) suggest that the most common technique to maintain coalition solidarity is persuasion. Thus, without understanding communication processes we cannot understand alliance maintenance and (re)construction. Two significant areas are important to understand. First, how do those inside of an alliance attempt to shape an alliance's preferred policies? Second, how do those outside of the alliance attempt to disrupt alliance narratives and undermine the alliance itself? The strategic narrative analysis here asserts that this goes well beyond rallying support or undermining a specific policy to include how narratives about identity and international order scaffold these more specific policy narratives.

4. A Strategic Narrative Analysis

Specifically, the analysis undertaken here is a strategic narrative analysis designed to assess to what degree and how political actors attempt to use narratives to raise fears of abandonment and fears of entrapment designed to change the behavior of other actors. Strategic narratives fall into three categories. *International System Narratives* describe how the world is structured, who the players are, and how it works. Examples would include narratives such as the Cold War, the War on Terror, and the Liberal International Order. Especially in a post-bipolar international system, International System Narratives are contested. International System Narratives include narratives about alliances, which structure international cooperation. *Identity Narratives* set out the story of a political actor, what values it has, and what goals it has. Examples of identity narratives include the US as peace-loving and committed to freedom and democracy (in the US), and the US as world bully (in other parts of the world) (Berenskoetter, 2012).[2] Alliances are made coherent and/or cohesive, in part by narratives about alliance values that fit with individual member states' identity narratives (Flockhart, 2012). Issue Narratives set out why a policy is needed and (normatively) desirable, and how it will be successfully implemented or accomplished. *Issue Narratives* set policies or actions in a context, with an explanation of who the important actors are, what the conflict or issue is, and how a particular course of action will resolve the underlying issue.[3] Strategic narratives at one level will be strengthened by resonance with narratives at other levels. Importantly, Flockhart (2012, pp. 83–84) argues that identity construction and narrative construction can reinforce or undermine alliances through rhetorical *and* functional action. That is, both rhetorical action (what political actors say) and functional action (what political actors do) contribute to, or undermine, alliance narratives. Policy choices are an example of an action that can bolster or undermine al-

[2] Berenskoetter (2012) identifies a biographical narrative of the state that delineates "an experience space (giving meaning to the past) intertwined with an envisioned space (giving meaning to the future) and delineated through horizons of experience and of possibility, respectively".

[3] This is related to Alexander George's (1989) work on policy legitimacy in which he argues that policies must be explained to political elites and the public, at home and abroad, and that this explanation should communicate that the policy is right or good, and can be achieved.

liance cohesion, but these are also embedded in broader strategic narratives.

Snyder's (1997) observation about the security dilemma in alliances raises important theoretical questions about how strategic narratives might be employed to affect state behavior within an alliance. One might expect, for example, that *within* alliances, if one or more states want to gain the support of another for a policy decision, a strategic narrative that raises a fear of abandonment—or being left behind—may be effective. The implication is that if an ally does not go along with a desired policy, that ally will be left out, if not abandoned. Theoretically, a system narrative that emphasizes the need to bolster international order and an identity narrative that claims that central common values are on the line would be expected in this case. On the other hand, if an *outside* state wants to disrupt an alliance, one strategy would be to use narratives that suggest a fear of entrapment, highlighting the "interests" that may be ignored or restrained within the alliance. In this case one would expect a system narrative that suggests how the alliance is outdated or insufficient for the current international system. See Figure 1 below.

The case studies below assess whether and how this process works, and how specific types of strategic narratives bolster overarching fear narratives.

5. Methodology—Cases and Texts

The two cases presented here—UN Resolution 1973 (Libya) in March 2011 and the crisis in Ukraine 2014—were chosen for a number of reasons. First, in both cases alliance cohesion is threatened. In the case of UNSCR1973, alliance members in Europe and the US did not agree on how to handle the situation in Libya. In the case of Ukraine, the allies do not agree on the specifics of economic sanctions. Second, in both cases US behavior is constrained and the US is not able to get its preferred policy implemented. In the case of Libya, the US is reluctant to intervene but agrees to do so. In the case of Ukraine, the US preferred more stringent economic sanctions and a united European counter to Russian actions in Ukraine. The cases were also chosen because Snyder's (1997) theory about the alliance security dilemma suggests that in the case of Libya, one would expect to find UK and French strategic narratives that foster a fear of abandonment among US policymakers, and that in the case of Ukraine, one would expect Russian strategic narratives that support a fear of entrapment among EU member states.

These cases were chosen as heuristic cases to highlight how strategic narratives affect alliance behavior (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 75).[4] Each case is used to explore important conceptual issues associated with the role of strategic narratives in alliance maintenance, and specifically to understand more about the use of system and identity narratives in attempts to affect policy behavior. In the case of UNSCR1973, the focus is on how France and the UK used strategic narratives to secure US support for the resolution. The time period is relatively short here, and while media does play a role, the focus is on elite diplomatic strategic narratives. The Ukrainian case examines whether and how adversaries, in this case Rus-

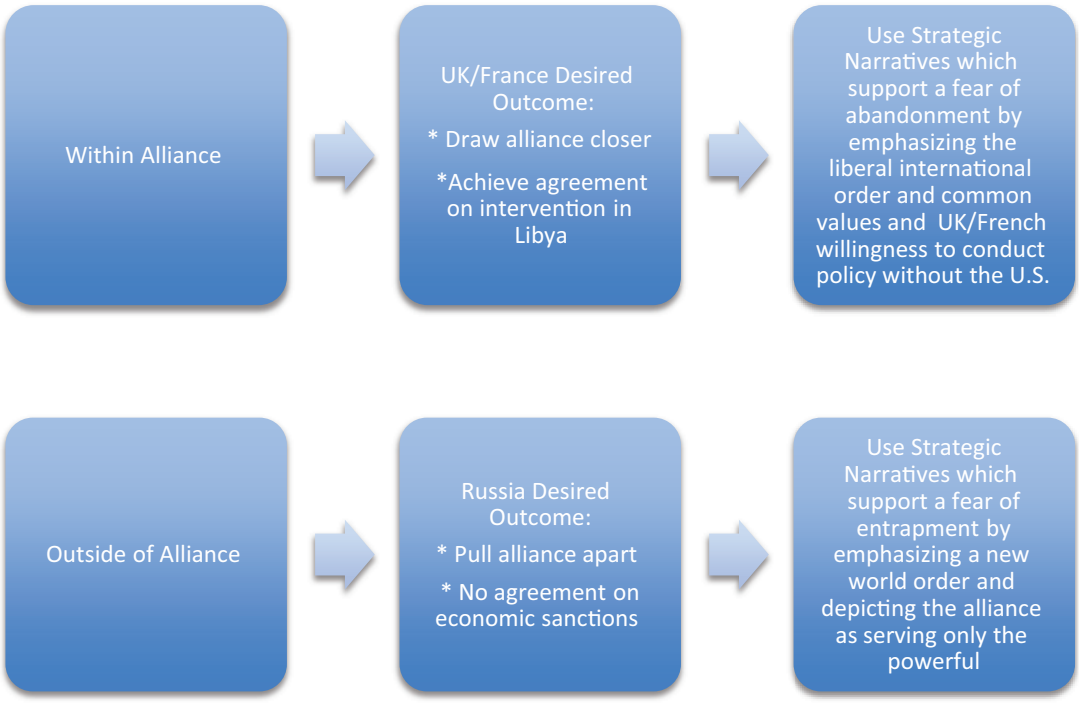

Figure 1. Alliances, the security dilemma, and strategic narratives.

[4] George and Bennett (2005, p. 75) say that heuristic cases "identify new variables, hypotheses, causal mechanisms, and causal paths".

sia, use strategic narratives in an attempt to undermine the Western alliance.

To understand strategic narratives, they must be traced. This involves identifying and analyzing the formation, projection, and reception of strategic narratives, "guarding against viewing this as a linear process" (Miskimmon et al., 2013, p. 184.) The case studies on Libya and Ukraine focus on identifying strategic narratives (in particular system and identity narratives) and understanding how their content affects support for particular policies. In the Libya case, careful analysis of the content and timing of French and British strategic narratives in leadership statements is undertaken. All French and UK leadership statements found on their respective foreign ministry website were included in the analysis. In addition, details associated with the dissemination of French and British strategic narratives are found in memoirs (including those of Clinton and Gates, for example) and media interviews, which also suggest how US leaders understood the narratives and how they affected US policy behavior on Libya. This is a particularly interesting case because there is significant detail about President Obama's decision-making process on this issue because of *Vanity Fair* journalist Michael Lewis's access to the White House during this period. In the Ukraine case, the focus is on how Russian strategic narratives found in the speeches of President Putin and other Russian leaders. These were found by searching the Russian government website and through a Google news search looking for full text documents. In addition, media coverage of European states' reactions to proposed sanctions was gathered (via Google news archive searches) to determine whether specific political actors responded to these Russian narratives.

The speeches and interviews were analyzed to identify international system, identity, and policy strategic narratives as detailed above by looking for narratives about the structure and functioning of the international system, narratives that speak to why and how alliances and states should react based on perceived values, and narratives that focus more directly on the specific policies. Then, these narratives were assessed to see whether or not they supported a fear of abandonment or entrapment.

6. Libya: UNSCR1973, March 2011[5]

The debate over United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 in March 2011 was a challenge for the US. The Obama administration was not eager to commit forces in Iraq as it was focused on ending US intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, many, if not most, of President Obama's advisors opposed involvement in Libya (Clinton, 2014, p. 370; Gates, 2014, pp. 517–522; Lewis, 2012). France and the UK were successful in their efforts to have UNSCR1973 accepted, despite publically stated reservations of President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton. In fact, France and the UK coordinated early on in the crisis and thus the timing and content of their narratives were broadly similar. The UK and French strategic narratives underscored a broader narrative of a liberal order in which states have responsibilities to individuals faced with authoritarian machinations. The implication here was that if the US did not go along, it would be outside of the liberal order. The brief case study below was developed by analyzing diplomatic activity and major speeches by French, British, and US leaders on the situation in Libya in March 2011. It begins with consideration of the French and British use of strategic narratives and concludes with an assessment of the US response. French and British strategic narratives pushed the US to approve of the no fly zone and there is evidence that this tipped the balance for President Obama on a decision that was "one of those 51–49 decisions" (Lewis, 2012). UNSCR1973 was adopted on 17 March 2011. France, the UK and the US voted in the affirmative, while Russia, China, and Germany abstained.

France was a co-sponsor of UNSCR1973 and took the initiative in diplomacy around its passage (The Economist, 2011). France did attempt to use its presidency of the G8 to mobilize support within the UN, but was not able to get support for a no fly zone at the G8 meeting in Paris on 13–14 March 2011. As Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Alain Juppé noted on 15 March 2011, "some of our partners, chief among them my German counterpart, opposed any use of force. As for Russia, she was hardly enthusiastic, and the US took a long time to define her position" (Embassy of France in Washington, 2011b).

French efforts continued through the effort of President Sarkozy and French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy in calling for action as Gaddafi's forces threatened to attack Benghazi (Clinton, 2014, p. 368; Lévy, 2011). Sarkozy had spoken forcefully about Libya in February, saying "the continuing brutal and bloody repression against the Libyan civilian population is revolting", and "the international community cannot remain a spectator to these massive violations of human rights" (Watt, 2011). The French narrative stressed the violations of human rights and the suffering of the Libyan people, the lack of legitimacy of Gaddafi as leader, and the responsibility of the international community to respond. This is also set within the broader context of the Middle East "Arab Spring". Sarkozy met with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and pushed his case on 14 March 2011. Clinton also met with rebel leader Mahmoud Jibril, who was accompanied by Levy (Clinton, 2012, p. 369).

When Alain Juppé, Ministre d'Etat, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs spoke to UNSCR1973, he set out the French narrative:

> The world is experiencing one of the great revolutions that change the course of history. From North Africa to the Persian Gulf, the Arab people clamor to

[5] This section is adapted in part from Miskimmon et al. (2013).

> breather the air of liberty and democracy. From the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia and the events of 25 January in Egypt, great hope arose and democratic transition was launched in a spirit of maturity and responsibility….The new Arab spring is good news, I am certain, for all of us. Our duty and interest require us to support these developments with confidence and availability. We must not give free rein to warmongers; we must not abandon civilian populations, the victims of brutal repression, to their fate; we must not allow the rule of law and international morality to be trampled underfoot. (UN Security Council Resolution 1973)

This sets out an International System Narrative that stresses significant changes in the system as authoritarian rulers are overthrown. It also directly addresses France's own revolutionary Identity Narrative and calls for support for those fighting their own revolutions in 2011. France's narrative, defining a perception of order that approximates liberal interventionism, is clearly outlined in Sarkozy's speech on 19 March after UNSCR1973 has been adopted (Embassy of France in Washington, 2011a). As military force is used, Sarkozy says: "Today, we are intervening in Libya, under a mandate of the United Nations Security Council, with our partners and in particular our Arab partners. We are doing so to protect civilians from the murderous madness of a regime which, in killing its own people, has lost all legitimacy" (Embassy of France in Washington, 2011a). As Engelbrekt (2014) notes, this ties into R2P, the Responsibility to Protect which calls for the international community "to prevent and halt mass atrocity crimes perpetrated against civilians".

The context for the UK narrative about Libya included public skepticism towards military intervention after the protracted military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, *and* the UK commitment to working closely with the French since the British–French agreement of November 2010. When the French called for a no fly zone, the UK was first cautious. Some reports speculated that this was due to the fact that there were efforts underway to repatriate UK citizens (Watt, 2011). Soon, however, Prime Minister Cameron and the UK government would stand with the French in supporting a no fly zone in Libya. After an EU emergency summit on 11 March, where German opposition forestalled a united call for a no fly zone, Prime Minister Cameron said:

> The truth is this: Gaddafi is still on the rampage, waging war on his own people, hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced and right now there is no sign of this ending. Round the region people continue to campaign for change and their aspirations have not yet been met. Britain should be a relentless advocate for greater political openness, support for human rights and non-violence. (Watt, 2011)

Cameron's International System narrative focused on change in the region and the UK's responsibility to support this changes with fit with an Identity Narrative that stressed UK support for human rights. Gaddafi was depicted as an illegitimate leader.

The UK's Permanent Representative to the UN Mark Lyall Grant outlined the UK's rationale for supporting UNSCR1973, reaffirming the UK narrative (Grant, 2011). After the vote, he said:

> The situation in Libya is clear. A violent, discredited regime which has lost all legitimacy is using weapons of war against civilians….The international community has come together in deploring the actions of the Qadhafi regime and demanding that the regime end this violence against the Libyan people. International opinion has looked to the Security Council to act. The Arab League has been particularly clear in its demands, including for the imposition of a No-Fly Zone. That is why the UK, in close cooperation with Lebanon and France has pressed for the early adoption of this resolution. My government welcomes the fact that the Council has acted swiftly and comprehensively in response to the appalling situation in Libya and to the appeal of the Arab League. (Smith, 2011)

The UK narrative, like the French, emphasized the responsibility of the international community to stand firm against tyrants, especially when countries within the region (The Arab League) support the actions. It suggested that the world was calling for action.

Turning to the US, the Libya crisis presented the Obama administration with a number of challenges. President Obama's foreign policy narrative stressed the end of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the need for the US to avoid unilateral actions, bolstering instead partnerships in the world. Obama's strategic narrative emphasized a more "respectful" US state seeking to work with others in the international system. Throughout his presidency Obama "demonstrated a foreign policy position caught between a narrative of American military withdrawal and a narrative of American leadership and responsibility that reflected US great power identity. Pressure to withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan clashed with the potential implications of involvement in Libya, with no clear sense of the scope of the military operation. The scaling back of US military operations coupled with the desire to have other states share in maintaining international order soon became the key pillars of Obama's foreign policy doctrine" (Miskimmon et al., 2013, p. 79).

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with President Sarkozy on 14 March 2011 and her memoir argues that the President and Bernard-Henri Levy were "genuinely moved by the plight of the Libyan people suffering at the hands of a brutal dictator, and they made a persuasive case that something had to be done" (Clinton, 2014, p. 368). Clinton also met with British Foreign Secretary William Hague, who agreed with Sarkozy that action was necessary, and she noted that "that counted for a lot" (Clinton, 2014, p. 368). Finally, she met with Mahmoud

Jibril, a Libyan political scientist representing the rebels, who was accompanied by Levy (Clinton, 2014, p. 369). All made the same argument—that there was a responsibility to defend the people of Libya against the violence of Qaddafi.

On 15 March 2011, Obama and advisors in Washington, DC discussed the issue of a no fly zone in Libya (Lewis, 2012). First it was established that a no fly zone alone would not stop Qaddafi. Military intervention of some sort would be needed. According to Lewis's (2012) account of the meeting, most advisors opposed any intervention in Libya, and Obama characterized this position as follows:

> We were engaged in Afghanistan. We still had equity in Iraq. Our assets are strained. The participants are asking a question: Is there a core national-security issue at stake? As opposed to calibrating our national-security interests in some new way.

Specifically, Secretary of Defense Gates, Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, Vice President Biden, and White House chief of staff William Daley were opposed to action. "'How are we going to explain to the American people why we're in Libya', asked William Daley, according to one of those present. 'And Daley had a point: who gives a shit about Libya?'" (Lewis, 2012). However, UN ambassador Susan Rice and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton along with a few others among the junior staff supported US intervention. They made the case that the US should take responsibility. Lewis (2012) says that Ben "Rhodes [who] would have to write the speech explaining the decision…said in the meeting that he preferred to explain why the US had prevented a massacre over why it hadn't". For those who supported intervention, the French and British narrative was resonant.

The argument for support for intervention went beyond a call to US values and the liberal international order. Clinton also suggested that for US allies vital interests were at stake:

> You know, we asked our allies, our NATO allies, to go into Afghanistan with us 10 years ago. They have been there, and a lot of them have been there despite the fact they were not attacked. The attack came on us, as we all tragically remember. They stuck with us. When it comes to Libya, we started hearing from the UK, France, Italy, other of our NATO allies. This was in *their* vital national interest. (Clinton, as cited in Saletan, 2011)

Dennis Ross, then Middle East expert at the National Security Council, said that Clinton also argued in "a fairly clever way" (Becker & Shane, 2016). As quoted by Becker and Shane, Ross recalls Clinton saying: "You don't see what the mood is here, and how this has a kind of momentum of its own. And we will be left behind, and we'll be less capable of shaping this". The argument was that the policy was extremely important to France and the UK, it fit within the international liberal order and identity narratives espoused by the US and its allies, *and* the US would be left out if it did not agree to the intervention in this case.

Obama, according to Lewis, wanted to make sure that allies were ready to engage: "He wanted to say to the Europeans and to other Arab countries: We'll do most of the actual bombing because only we can do it quickly, but you have to clean up the mess afterward". And while there are number of other issues that Obama suggested affected his decision, including weighing the potential risk to military personnel, and the ability to get the UN resolution passed, he also considered the fact that "Sarkozy and Cameron were far enough out there to follow through". Finally, he made the decision to push for the UN resolution. Lewis (2012) notes: "Of the choice not to intervene he [Obama] says, 'That's not who we are'".

Once a decision was made, Obama used a strategic narrative to justify that decisions and the military action that followed that emphasized the alliance involved. Speaking at the National Defense University on 28 March, he emphasized US leadership within a coalition, and stressed the responsibility to maintain international order (Obama, 2011): "To summarize, then: In just one month, the US has worked with our international partners to mobilize a broad coalition, secure an international mandate to protect civilians, stop an advancing army, prevent a massacre, and establish a no-fly zone with our allies and partners". Ultimately, despite Obama's hesitancy to become embroiled in an overseas military operation, the US would not be left behind and would not argue against the French and British narrative that was consistent with US Identity Narratives.

This case study highlights how system and identity narratives can be used within alliances to affect the behavior of an individual member of the alliance. By emphasizing common identity narratives, alliance members may push the uncertain member of the alliance to fall on one side of the issue. Specifically, the system and identity narratives set the stage for the implication that the US would be left out of decision-making on Libya if it did not go along with the French and UK desire for intervention. Obama was able to shape the mission because of the agreement on intervention and participation.

7. Ukraine: Crisis in 2014

The second case study focuses on how strategic narrative contestation can affect alliances. In this case the Russian government, under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, used strategic narratives to counter US explanations about events on the ground in the Ukraine, to challenge US authority in the international system, and to undermine US sanctions efforts. In so doing, Western alliance cohesion was threatened. For example, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic opposed EU sanctions

(Luhn, 2014).[6] This case study focuses on events from February 2014 when then President Yanukovych left office and sought refuge in Russia after massive demonstrations in Ukraine until 31 October 2014. Russian strategic narratives are derived from speeches of President Putin and other Russian leaders. Specific attention is paid to Russian narratives via mass media, and to a lesser degree, US and European responses to those narratives. This case examines how the Russian narrative about the annexation of Crimea was developed to promote domestic support and to challenge NATO alliance identity narratives by attempting, in part, to arouse fears of entrapment.

Putin's 18 March speech on the referendum in Crimea set out the Russian strategic narrative about the crisis in Ukraine (Prague Post Magazine, 2014).[7] Putin first said that 84% of the population had voted and 96% wanted Crimean unification with Russia. And then he explained the outcome this way: "To understand the reason behind such a choice it is enough to know the history of Crimea and what Russia and Crimea have always meant for each other". This history, Putin explained, tied Ukraine, Belarus and Russia together and glorified Russian valor and was inherently connected to Identity Narratives:

> Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea. This is also Sevastopol—a legendary city with an outstanding history, a fortress that serves as the birthplace of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Crimea is Balaklava and Kerch, Malakhov Kurgan and Sapun Ridge. Each one of these places is dear to our hearts, symbolizing Russian military glory and outstanding valor. (Prague Post Magazine, 2014)

Note the importance of Orthodoxy as part of an Identity Narrative. This is tied together with Russian identity.

Putin blamed former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev for disrupting the history by annexing Crimea to Ukraine, and when the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, "millions of people went to bed in one country and awoke in different ones, overnight becoming ethnic minorities in former Union republics, while the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders" (Prague Post Magazine, 2014). All would have been fine, according to Putin's narrative, but "time and time again attempts were made to deprive Russians of their historical memory, even of their language and to subject them to forced assimilation" (Prague Post Magazine, 2014). After the change in government, Putin said that the people of Crimea turned to Russia for support and help. This historical narrative explained and justified Russian behavior in 2014 to a domestic Russian population.

Putin also addressed a televised "Meeting in support of Crimea's accession to the Russian Federation, 'We Are Together'" on 18 March (Presidential Executive Office, 2014a). The graphic on the stage depicted a heart in white, blue, and red—the colors of the Russian flag—and said "Crimea in my heart!" Putin's strategic narrative fit squarely into an attempt to bolster domestic support, particularly in light of protests in Moscow in 2011–2013. Dougherty (2014, pp. 2–3) writes that "for Moscow, the conflict in Ukraine is accelerating profound changes already under way in the Russian media: the centralization and mobilization of information resources in the hands of the state, providing the Kremlin—and President Vladimir Putin—the means to galvanize public opinion domestically and in the region, as well as forcefully assert Russia's policies, views and—increasingly—values internationally". Putin had solidified control over domestic media in a number of ways (Birnbaum, 2014; Mickiewicz, 2014, p. 56).

Many Western countries directly challenged the Russian narrative, and identified it by name as a narrative. British Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant called Russia's stance "A new fantasy narrative" while French Ambassador Gerard Araud said it was "virtual reality" (Anna, 2014). The US, for its part, consistently challenged the Russian narrative. The US State Department, for example, set up online blogs, one of which covered a United Nations speech by US Ambassador Samantha Powers, who said in June 2014:

> Russia has attempted, erroneously, to characterize the events unfolding in eastern Ukraine as a humanitarian crisis. They falsely have cast themselves as the defender of rights and vindicator of the vulnerable; and the Russian army and its operatives as a humanitarian aid agency. But this Russian "aid" operation sends soldiers, not doctors; it mans armored personnel carriers, not relief tents; it provides surface-to-air missiles, not meals-ready-to-eat. (US Department of State, 2014)

There were also other groups using social media and website online to counter Russian narratives. See for example, StopFake.org, which sets out the "struggle against fake information about events in Ukraine" (www.stopfake.org/en) or the work done by NATO's Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

Beyond a focus on Ukraine itself and on Russia's history with Crimea, Putin used the Ukrainian case to present an International System Narrative, describing

[6] Geographic proximity to Russia and reliance on Russian gas do not determine support or opposition to economic sanctions. Poland and the Baltic states strongly support sanctions.

[7] The referendum was not recognized by Ukraine or the West.

how changes in the international system led to other situations comparable to Ukraine, and implying that the US and Western Europe are hypocritical in their condemnation of Russia. Included among these comparable cases was Kosovo, which Putin directly compared to Crimea: "For some reason, things that Kosovo Albanians (and we have full respect for them) were permitted to do, Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in Crimea are not allowed" (Prague Post Magazine, 2014). Putin continued by setting out an International System narrative that emphasized US hegemony and hypocrisy:

> After the dissolution of bipolarity on the planet, we no longer have stability. Key international institutions are not getting any stronger; on the contrary, in many cases, they are sadly degrading. Our western partners, led by the US, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they please: here and there, they use force against sovereign states, building coalitions based on the principle "If you are not with us, you are against us". To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organisations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall. (Prague Post Magazine, 2014)

Putin complained that the US and NATO did what they wanted, expanding NATO toward the east,[8] bombing Belgrade, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and deploying a missile defense system in Europe asserting power over Russia. Putin developed this International System Narrative throughout 2014, decrying US hegemony in the system:

> This period of unipolar domination has convincingly demonstrated that having only one power centre does not make global processes more manageable. On the contrary, this kind of unstable construction has shown its inability to fight the real threats such as regional conflicts, terrorism, drug trafficking, religious fanaticism, chauvinism and neo-Nazism. At the same time, it has opened the road wide for inflated national pride, manipulating public opinion and letting the strong bully and suppress the weak. Essentially, the unipolar world is simply a means of justifying dictatorship over people and countries. The unipolar world turned out too uncomfortable, heavy and unmanageable a burden even for the self-proclaimed leader. (Presidential Executive Office, 2014b)

For those in world who have been critical of US unilateral action in Iraq, for example, Putin's narrative could find resonance. It also spoke to many in Eastern Europe that might feel as if membership in the European Union and/or NATO required national interests to be subsumed until the broader organization's interests or demands. In other words, perhaps states could become entrapped by an alliance which asked them to sacrifice for membership in a broader alliance. This then could bolster support for Issue Narratives in a number of areas, including Ukraine.

Russia's International System Narrative during this time was projected within a broader Russian initiative to develop international communication outlets to counter Western, and particularly US, strategic narratives. Dimitri Kiselov, whom Putin appointed to head a newly organized media structure in Russia in 2013 said that his job was "Restoring a fair attitude towards Russia as an important country in the world with good intentions—it is the mission of the new structure, which will lead me" (Lenta, 2013). Putin himself said that soft power—which is inherently linked to strategic narratives (Roselle et al., 2014)—is a central concern for Russian foreign policy:

> Soft power, a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations. At the same time, increasing global competition and the growing crisis potential sometimes creates a risk of destructive and unlawful use of "soft power" and human rights concepts to exert political pressure on sovereign states, interfere in their internal affairs, destabilize their political situation, manipulate public opinion, including under the pretext of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad. (Putin, 2013)

Russia spent money on international broadcasting, including development of RT (formerly Russia Today) (Dougherty, 2014). The contestation of strategic narratives was (and is) front and center for the Russian leader.

Turning more directly to how Russian narratives were used to try to undermine or weaken alliances, particularly in Europe, there are component parts of the Russian narrative that found resonance in Eastern Europe, and with certain audiences in Western Europe and the US. The idea that the US and NATO take advantage of those who are weaker and calls for the support of Christian values can be found in some (but not all) of the speeches of political elites in Eastern Europe, for example. In the countries that have not supported sanctions—Slovakia, Hungary, and increasingly during this period some in the Czech Republic—one can see overlapping narratives. For example, Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico asserted, in explaining opposition to economic sanctions, that, "Europe hasn't learned from the past 'and we still continue seeking enemies'" (The Slovak Spectator, 2014). This ties into comments by him that compared increased NATO

[8] NATO admitted the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1999. In 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined. Albania and Croatia joined in 2009.

troop deployments in Central and Eastern Europe to the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact (The Economist, 2014). Russia's depiction of NATO's expansion of power fits into this narrative.[9] Hungary's president, meanwhile, found resonant Putin's narrative about "Christian" values and domestic politics supported this (Luhn, 2014). In Hungary the Russian narrative fit with a "nationalist rhetoric aimed at foreign energy corporations and the EU" (Verseck, 2014). Finally in the Czech Republic, President Milos Zeman characterized the conflict in Ukraine as a civil war rather than as Russian aggression (EUbusiness.com, 2014). Thus Russian system narratives that emphasized US overreach or entrapment found resonance in some circles, as did identity narratives about "Christian" values. These narratives could be used to support domestic political ambitions of political actors, even as they threatened European cohesion.

8. Analysis and Conclusions

The cases presented above examine the role of strategic narratives within alliances. If we are to understand the (re)construction of alliances over time, it is important to understand how strategic narratives work within alliances and as outside challenges to alliances. First, strategic narratives can shape how alliance interests, values and identity are understood by members—as illustrated in the case of Libya. In this case, French and British narratives shaped the way the material conditions on the ground were presented, and suggested that the identity of the member states within the alliance demanded military action. This can, in part, explain why states agree to go along with allies' preferred policies under certain circumstances, speaking to the literature on representational force (Bially Mattern, 2005). Bially Mattern argues that shared identity can create order and structure expectations about behavior. Identity narratives may be used by allies to influence policy decisions arguing that the alliance "must" pursue a certain policy because "that is who we are". This adds insight into why states with similar regime types are more likely to align—they share Identity Narratives (Lai & Reiter, 2000). In addition, there is some evidence that these narratives were used to raise a broader fear of abandonment. If the US did not go along with France and the UK, especially after they had gone along with the US in Afghanistan, the US would be outside of policymaking on Libya.

Second, the Ukrainian case illustrates how those outside of an alliance may attempt to use strategic narratives to undermine alliance cohesion by raising fears of entrapment. Here, both system and identity narratives of NATO were challenged or contested by Russian narratives. Russia's narrative that, in a post-bipolar world, the West, led by the US, acted selfishly, hypocritically, and without regard for international law challenged the Western alliance narrative. It suggested that countries within the alliance should fear a "dictator" US telling them what to do. Parts of Russia's strategic narrative questioning Western behavior and promoting "Christian values" were (and are) resonant among some, but not all, political actors in the NATO alliance. It is important to understand how these strategic narratives that threaten alliance cohesion may serve domestic political purposes within alliance member states. These Russian narratives developed in part to serve Russian domestic political needs as well—in this case to bolster support for the annexation of Crimea and for Putin himself.[10]

These two cases show how important understanding narrative (re)construction is to understanding international order and policy behavior. They also illustrate how important domestic political considerations can be. Clearly more work needs to be done on the conditions under which strategic narratives affect alliance cohesion and decision making. Under what conditions do strategic narratives shape alliance policy decisions and the international order more broadly? Under what conditions are outside narrative challenges to alliances successful? How does this work in a new communication environment? What role does fear of entrapment and fear of abandonment play in alliance relations, and how are narratives linked to these fears. The cases do suggest that understanding strategic narrative communication should be an important component of the study of alliances and international order.

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[9] Although it is important to note President Kiska contests this narrative, saying that Ukraine should be supported because the Czech Republic remembers what it was like when no one helped Czechoslovakia in 1968. Here the same historical event is used to support different narratives.

[10] It is also important to recognize that Russia and Putin struggle with credibility issues in many of the countries that opposed economic sanctions. The history of the Soviet Union in the region has not been forgotten.

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Article

Russia's Narratives of Global Order: Great Power Legacies in a Polycentric World

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Abstract
This article takes a strategic narrative approach to explaining the current and likely future contestation between Russia and the West. We argue that Russia projects a strategic narrative that seeks to reinforce Russia's global prestige and authority, whilst promoting multilateral legal and institutional constraints on the other more powerful actors, as a means to ensure Russia stays among the top ranking great powers. To illustrate this we analyze Russia's identity narratives, international system narratives and issue narratives present in policy documents and speeches by key players since 2000. This enables the identification of remarkably consistency in Russia's narratives and potential points of convergence with Western powers around commitment to international law and systemic shifts to an increasingly multipolar order. However, we explain why the different meanings attributed to these phenomena generate contestation rather than alignment about past, present and future global power relations. We argue that Russia's historical-facing narratives and weakened material circumstances have the potential to hamper its adaptation to rapid systemic change, and to make attempts to forge closer cooperation with third parties challenging.

Keywords
Cold War; international order; Russia; strategic narrative; United States

Issue
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1. Introduction: Strategic Narratives of Order

Russian narratives of the international system serve as a public deliberation on Russia's role in the world, as a projection of state power, and as a means to exert persuasive force in international relations. Within Russia's narrative of the international system lie debates over Russia's post-Cold War role in the Euro-Atlantic area, and more fundamental discussions concerning how power transition in the world will affect Russia's position in it. Strategic narratives are a means to seek to shape conditions to be conducive to Russian political, economic and security interests—and these narratives are in turn defined by material conditions. However, strategic narratives go beyond expressions of material interests. They are a core component of the Russian state itself—shaping its own self-conception and setting expectations on Russia's role in the world and how it should be recognised. This essay argues that Russia projects a strategic narrative that seeks to reinforce Russia's global prestige and authority, whilst promoting multilateral legal and institutional constraints on the other more powerful actors, as a means to ensure Russia stays among the top ranking great powers. This narrative of international order has been largely con-

sistent since the turn of the 21st century, corresponding to Vladimir Putin's tenure as President and Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

However, great power influence is not necessarily an accurate image of how world order operates. The EU's rhetorical shift towards value pluralism in its dealings with third parties, the uncertainties of US foreign policy under the Trump administration, and the increasing voice of emerging powers in global governance all indicate a shift to polycentrism, but not the kind envisaged by Russia. A world in which some issues are handled regionally, some intergovernmentally, and some with civil society or corporations participating in decision-making is a world of 'variable geometry' requiring a mutual refinement and flexibility of narratives across these domains (Burke-White, 2015, p. 6). Instead of the UN Security Council P5 governing world affairs hierarchically, akin to the 'fixed geometry' of the 19th Century European congress, it is likely that, structurally, 21st Century governance will be more fluid, based around issue-focused, regional and cross-regional coalitions. We argue it will be easier for the EU and NATO to adapt their narratives of the international system to this material situation as they invest considerable effort in projecting strategic narratives of the evolving international system as a means to influence its emergence and shape it to their material interests. Russia's historically-facing narrative could well prove out of step with the systemic change underway. It will be especially difficult for Russia to become a 'good citizen' and play a constructive role (cf. Lo, 2015), despite Russian leaders' statements concerning shared responsibility for transnational problems. Nevertheless, our concern remains that all sides must seek some narrative convergence for cooperation to be possible at all.

This article deploys the concept of strategic narrative. We define strategic narratives as 'a means by which political actors attempt to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors' (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 6). Within the literature, political narratives focus on time sequence (Shenav, 2006), the projection of a past–present–future structure, some attempt at resolution, and a notion that events are connected in non-random and possibly causal, or at least explicable, manner. Further, drawing on Kenneth Burke's work we examine the interaction between agency and narrative—how people use language to act (1966)—in this case, how Russian elites draw on narratives to exert influence. Narratives contain a pentad of components: character or actors (agent); setting/environment/space (scene); conflict or action (act); tools/behavior (agency); resolution/or suggested resolution/goal (purpose). We focus on these components in our analysis of Russia's strategic narrative of the international system as a means to illustrate attempts by Russian actors to influence current events, narrate Russia's role in the world and seek to shape emerging conceptions of the international system.

Strategic narratives in international affairs come in three interconnected forms. First, narratives of the international system outline how the world is structured, who the main players are, and how the system should function (Bially Mattern, 2005; Hurrell, 2005; Miskimmon & O'Loughlin, 2017). Second, identity narratives shape perceptions of what is appropriate for a state to do in any given context. Finally, policy narratives outline how an actor views the appropriate response to address a political challenge or crisis and articulates a position based on material interest, and/or, what is might be a normatively desirable outcome. In today's interconnected world, policy narratives often compete within complex multilateral contexts, but if successful, can forge consensus between disparate positions. This article primarily addresses system narratives but they cannot be understood in isolation from the identity and policy narratives they interact and intersect with.

The final aspect of strategic narrative analysis is a focus on the nexus between international relations and communication through understanding the processes of formation, projection and reception of narratives. As we shall see in the analysis to follow, news media can amplify and reinforce narrative mis-alignment. Most recently, this takes the form of US and European media projecting an identity narrative of Russia as an intransigent autocratic state and therefore, implicitly or explicitly, propagating a 'New Cold War' system narrative.

Our analysis will demonstrate that analysing Russian narratives can only suggest superficial points of convergence between Russia and the West,[1] as a starting point for debates about more fundamental conceptual differences which must be addressed before major disagreements can be recognised and accounted for. Russian leaders communicate about points of connection with the West, yet have also been keen to stress Russian civilizational and cultural singularities. The West, however, largely understands international law and democracy to have universal normative and technical characteristics. The Russian model of plural civilisations undermines the possibility of a shared normative basis for institutions. A failure to recognise that democracy, law and economic freedom are essentially contested concepts marks a failure in the West to understand that alternative explanations are structurally inevitable because of how concepts work nationally and internationally (see for example, Acharya, 2014; Callahan, 2008; Mishra, 2017). Kupchan argues that rather than follow the existing order, rising powers will seek to revise that order (2012, p. 7). This rapidly changing picture has the potential to impose significant adaptation costs on powerful states. But as Lo (2015) argues, Russia's understanding of these concepts and the translation of them in to institutions and actions is not fit for today's global diffusion of power (cf. Slaughter, 2005, 2017).

[1] The West is a contested term. For a more thoughtful discussion of the term's genealogy and uses, see Gow (2005) and Hellmann and Herborth (2016).

Since Wendt's (1999) assertion that international order was constructed and not given, there has been significant interest in how order is manufactured and developed in international affairs. In her book *Power in Concert*, Mitzen (2013) argues that the emergence of concert diplomacy in the 19th Century established public commitments to self-restraint and collective problem-solving. Whilst the Concert of Europe ultimately collapsed, it suggested a blueprint for future generations of diplomats concerning the possibility for diplomacy to mitigate instability in global order. Creating order requires narrative work. Order is an idea that has evolved over time, taking new forms and involving different shapers through the course of history. Historian David Armitage suggests that 'what humans have invented, they may well yet dismantle; that what intellectual will has enshrined, an equal effort of imaginative determination can dethrone' (Armitage, 2017, p. 11). This is central to our understanding of how global order and narrative intersect.

After the initial post-war period during which there was the potential for cooperation, Russia and the West can now more easily be drawn into the old binary imaginary. Risse (2011, p.603) argues:

> the world of 2010 still resembles the cold war and its end. The main structuring forces are still ideas and discourses. The only difference is that the world is no longer structured along only two competing discourses, Western liberalism and Eastern communism. Many more ideas now fight for attention and compete for persuasive power. And this must not be bad for international order. The transatlantic community—and the scholarly community, too—just need to get used to it. Whether the ideational plurality results in a materially multipolar order with many power-balancing centers or in a more pluralistic but still multilateral order, remains to be seen. In the end, it is still a world 'of our (discursive) making'. (Onuf, 1989)

The strategic narrative framework can explain that *how the international system is understood* directly effects *how the international order functions*. Examining how different actors project and contest narratives of the international system highlights how existing and emerging powers seek to impose a shared meaning of how international order does, or should, function. At this point of rapid systemic change, the major point of debate is the issue of recognition, rather than domination and redistribution. This is particularly so for Russia; recognition is a powerful theme running through its foreign policy narrative.

What follows is a breakdown of Russia's strategic narrative of the international system, Russia's identity and role within this desired system, and the policy prescriptions it privileges. The narratives are drawn from foreign policy documents and speeches by key players since 2000 focusing on Russia's global strategy and security policy (on the utility of analyzing Russian foreign policy texts, see Dyson & Parent, 2017). After an initial parsing for Burke's pentad to identity narrative components, in this article we highlight narratives pertaining to Russia's international system narrative. This encompasses projections of prestige, equality and mutual respect between Russia and the West, a narrative purporting to reject stereotypes of the West and Russia, narratives of polycentrism and multipolarity, narratives of normative diversity, narratives of order based on international law, and finally, narratives of the Common European Home which draws a clear line to negotiations at the end of the Cold War which included Russia at the top table of European order. Following Roselle's (2006, 2017) analysis of Russia's strategic narrative, we argue that narrative divergence is complicating the emergence of narrative alignment on system narratives. This significance of this finding is to explain why the opportunity for cooperation between the West and Russia on policies that would forge closer cooperation have become increasingly difficult.

2. Russia's Consistent System Narrative

There has been considerable interest in the targeted use of strategic communication in Russia foreign policy, most notably in Ukraine since 2014. This is largely tactics-focused and ignores discussions on Russian strategic narratives and the Kremlin's wider efforts to shape a conducive international context for Russian foreign and domestic interests. The themes in Russia's strategic narrative of global and regional order since 2000 have been consistent. These themes include demands for recognition of Russia's standing in the world by the West, the stressing of pan-European cooperation under the Common European Home narrative, and a stress on the emergence of a new world order based on polycentrism, which will be discussed in more detail below. Jutta Weldes' idea of a 'security imaginary' is useful in this regard, understood as a, 'structure of well-established meanings and social relations out of which representations about the world of international relations are created' (Weldes, 1999, p. 10). Drawing on Weldes, Stefano Guzzini (2016) argues that the resurgence of geopolitics, with its spatial logic, serves as a means to cope with the anxiety caused by the end of the Cold War in the identities of actors in Europe. Russian elites have drawn on a defined security imaginary as a response to Russia's identity crisis following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. How actors use narratives is central to this. The consistency of the narration of Russia's environment, and its role within it, serves as a means to reinforce Russia's post-Cold War identity. This largely historically-facing narrative of the international system provides the basis on which Russia, in debates with the West, seeks to reinforce itself domestically and how it justifies its actions internationally (Cadier & Light, 2015; McDonald, 2007).

We argue that events in Ukraine are at least as much symptom as the cause of tensions between Russia and

the West. A major underlying issue is a failure of Russia and the West to reach a common understanding of the international system. Russia has been coherent in how it has narrated its position in the world, and consistent in its view of international order and its desired relationship with the West—even as, Bobo Lo (2015) contends, the Kremlin narrative rests on a misunderstanding of its role in the world and of how shifts in the international system affect Russia (Stent, 2015). Russian strategic narrative consistency rests on the eternal dilemma of political elites in international affairs—whether to be driven by a realistic response to emerging events, or to strive for what they seek as what should be. The post-Cold War order in Europe has emerged from debates in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall and have been reinforced by the enlargement of NATO and the EU to the borders of the former Soviet Union area. Legro (2005) suggests that at major critical junctures in international affairs states are faced with decisions on whether to adapt to new circumstances or consider alternative policy options. Rather than being a co-constitutor of this emerging system, since the early 1990s Russia has complained of being excluded from the major decisions affecting it. As time has passed, Kremlin frustration at this exclusion has triggered increasingly assertive action on their part, most notably in Ukraine, to unilaterally defend what it perceives to be in its vital national interest.

However, the intensity of the narratives has increased along with the stakes as the international system evolves. Narratives on Russia from outside the Russian Federation have often been used to reinforce Russia's perceived weakness vis-à-vis the West or powerful rising powers such as China. Former United States President Barack Obama sought to paint Russia as a weakened power, despite efforts by Putin to assert Russia's strength. In a wide-ranging interview in *The Atlantic*, Obama argued that Putin is

> constantly interested in being seen as our peer and as working with us, because he's not completely stupid. He understands that Russia's overall position in the world is significantly diminished. And the fact that he invades Crimea or is trying to prop up Assad doesn't suddenly make him a player. You don't see him in any of these meetings out here helping to shape the agenda. For that matter, there's not a G20 meeting where the Russians set the agenda around any of the issues that are important. (Obama in Goldberg, 2016)

Conversely, there is a significant literature and policy discussion driven by concerns that the Russian Federation poses a real risk to regional and global security, and to the interests of the West. Legvold (2017, p. 1026; see also Legvold, 2016) argues that Russia is intent on challenging the existing order and that the West has underestimated its threat. Dimitri Trenin, Director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, argues that in order to avoid conflict with Russia a more nuanced view of the nature of the challenges is needed (Trenin, 2016). Trenin argues that within Russia grievances against the West fall in to two narratives: that the West fails to recognise Russia's contribution towards ending the Cold War, and that the West does not acknowledge Russia's Great Power status. From the West's perspective, Russia's actions in Crimea and more broadly in Ukraine, and the perception that Russia has been operating significant information campaigns against the West, have precipitated a Western need to rethink its relations with the Russian Federation, which, in Sperling and Webber's (2016) analysis, has involved a re-securitisation of relations, escalating the attendant risks of re-creating a security dilemma between the two sides. Narrative contestation of identities, views of regional and global order and emerging policy developments have central to understanding the emergence of the tensions now evident between the West and Russia (Pantti, 2016).

On the surface, Russian and Western narratives converge in highlighting the importance of international law, democracy and the centrality of markets. Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, suggests that

> There's no ideological differences as far as democratic principles and market economy are concerned. Second, these days, unlike the days of the Cold War, we have much clearer common threats, like terrorism, like chaos in the Middle East, like the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. (as cited in Saunders, 2017).

They face common threats which incentivise cooperation due to their transnational nature. From this perspective there appear to be major incentives for Russia to play an active role in tackling these threats *and* maintaining the pillars of international order. There is a flip side, however: Russia's expectation that, in playing a cooperative role in maintaining the architecture of the international system and addressing systemic threats, Russia will be considered a partner by the West and emerging powers. However, divergence on the *meaning* of the core pillars of the system—law, democracy and markets—pinpoints where the challenges for communication exist. Those outside Russia may simply not believe Lavrov when he says Russia's ideological affinity to 'democratic principles' reflects the same affinity in the West, for instance. This drives a cycle of mis-communication, embedding frustration on all sides (Hill, 2016). The result is moves towards meaningful shared governance and convergence only deepen that frustration. There is superficial convergence in the public narratives Russia projects, but this masks significant differences resting on contested understanding of core concepts of sovereignty and hierarchy in the international system.

The reception of Russia's narrative has been viewed differently in the US, triggering debates regarding competing policy responses. This reinforces our argument

that conceptual differences matter. Let us point to four within the US. Rudolf (2016) highlights three schools in the US discussion on Russia. First, a neo-containment school which argues that a more authoritarian Moscow will pursue an expansionist policy. Second, the mechanistic school—Russia is acting like a great power vis-à-vis its periphery, which should mean that the US and its partners respond more robustly to Russian actions. Third, an interactionist school that argues both sides are to blame for recent tensions and should work to forge closer cooperation. Each of these entails a narrative, projecting a past, present and possible futures. Additionally, fourth, on the global level, demands for Russian and Chinese spheres of influence counter the US-led conception of a liberal order based on integration into the existing global economy (Ikenberry, 2009). Acceptance of such a narrative would mean that the US will either have to live with this, or challenge this—which could lead to escalation.

Media ecology matters here too: The reception of Russia's foreign policy narrative in the US is complicated, Tsygankov (2017) argues, by news media which reinforce binary relationship between the US–Russia as a means to reassert US identity and global presence. Analysis of European news media shows the same has happened since 2014 (Ojala, Pantti, & Kangas, 2017). The representation of Moscow as a neo-Soviet autocracy ignores alternative understandings of Russia in US media. This purposively juxtaposes a more inferior Russian identity with a superior American one. Tsygankov adds that the centralisation of Russian governance could be interpreted a means to address significant domestic and international challenges, rather than the portrayal of an autocratic state. Tsygankov argues:

> The presentation of Russia as an abusive autocracy is a way to promote a particular image of democracy within a global competition over the power to shape information and generate ideas. In this brave new digital age, media, more than ever, are a critical tool of global governance and soft power. (Tsygankov, 2017, p. 31)

In summary, there are consistent aspects of how Russia and its elites narrate Russia's identity, its position (and grievances) within the post-Cold War order, and its vision for a future Great Power-led multipolar system. However, these narrative elements are not straightforwardly recognised outside Russia, particularly in the US; as Tsygankov suggests, what for Putin is the necessary consolidation of domestic governance appears, externally, as the actions of an autocratic and therefore problematic state (for example assassinating or jailing political opponents and invading neighbouring states). We now turn to an analysis of Russia's main strategic narratives which are central to Russian foreign policy and Vladimir Putin's conception of regional and global order.

3. Narratives of Recognition: The Prestige, Equality and Mutual Respect Narrative

Central to understanding Russia's narrative of the international system is the role of great powers working in concert, an elite group of states reinforcing a hierarchy to which Russia claims membership. In the National Security Concept (NSC) of the 10 January 2000 (NSC, 2000) Russia's status in the world is placed central to its foreign policy narrative and narrative of global order. The NSC 2000 states that, 'Russia is one of the world's major countries, with a centuries-old history and rich cultural traditions' (NSC, 2000) This claim to great power status is reinforced in the Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) of 28 June 2000, highlighting its position as one of the largest Eurasian powers. The FPC 2000 is laden with identity narrative claims signalling Russian responsibility to play an active role in solving international challenges, on a regional and global level. The FPC 2000 proposes that, 'the Russian Federation has a real potential for ensuring itself a worthy place in the world'. The document also outlines that Russia is a 'reliable partner', that it plays a 'constructive role' in resolving problems and that its foreign policy is 'balanced' due to its geopolitical situation. The FPC 2000 also asserts Russia's independence, pragmatism and transparency, taking into account 'legitimate interests of other states and [Russia] is aimed at seeking joint decisions'. The NSC 2000 and FPC 2000 both highlight the centrality of Russia's demand for recognition.

In a speech to the Russian International Affairs Council in June 2014, Lavrov presented the Ukraine crisis as a chance to clear the air and to focus on the modalities of what recognition of Russian concerns and status should involve. Lavrov hoped

> the current crisis will become a kind of 'refreshing storm', which will help to transfer our relations with western partners to healthier and fairer foundations (probably not at once). It will probably have less tormenting discussions about the search for general values and more recognition of the right to be different, more aspirations to build relations on firm foundations of equality, mutual respect and consideration of each other's interests. (Lavrov, 2014b)

The FPC of 30 November 2016 is more explicit in outlining a narrative of recognition and reinforces the more assertive trajectory of Russia's foreign policy narrative evident particularly after the 1999 Kosovo War and 2003 Iraq War. These were viewed as being evidence of the West's disregard for international law, the sovereignty of states and a deliberate attempt to sideline Russia. The FPC 2016 puts the consolidation of the 'Russian Federation's position as a centre of influence in today's world' at the centre of Russian foreign policy (FPC, 2016, para. 3c). The mutual recognition and respect narrative of Russian foreign policy has developed over time. It was something Russia aspired to on the basis of the sleight felt

by the West's expansion in Europe and move to an interventionist foreign policy, and as something to aspire to as Russian foreign policy recovered from the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. In recent years, the narrative has taken on a more conditional element: Russia demands recognition as a precondition for cooperation. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has repeatedly used this conditional narrative of recognition in his public pronouncements. In a 2014 interview Lavrov stated that, 'It is evident that the transfer to a brand new, higher level of partnership may be reached only on the basis of equality, mutual respect and consideration of each other's interests' (Lavrov, 2014a, *Kommersant*). Lavrov's speech to the 2017 Munich Security Policy conference reinforced this recognition narrative when outlining his view of US–Russian relations: 'We want relations based on pragmatism, mutual respect, and understanding of our special responsibility for global stability' (Lavrov, 2017).

4. Narratives of Inclusion and Exclusion: The Common European Home

A second core Russian strategic narrative is that of the Common European Home which expresses decades-long resentments over the failure to fully include Russia in the post-Cold War European order. Symptomatic of the West's rejection of the Common European Home narrative is Russia's exclusion not only from western institutions, but also in debates concerning the growing membership of NATO and the EU and its impact on Russia's regional interests. Exclusion has been a common narrative in Russian foreign policy documents and public speeches since the 1990s. This has also been reflected in analysis by a minority of western actors who seek to understand Russia's opposition to EU and NATO expansion (Kissinger, 2014; McGwire, 1998). Russian foreign policy documents call for indivisible security (FPC, 2016, para. 27d) rather than institutionalised demarcation in Europe. Putin's 2007 Munich Security Conference speech is often referred to as the beginning of a substantive change in policy narrative, calling for a restructuring of security cooperation on the global level (Putin, 2007). Former President Medvedev's call for a New Security Architecture in 2008 is further evidence of a more pessimistic view in Russia of the possibility of establishing closer collaboration with the West in security and defence policy. Yet despite the change in policy narrative to a more critical stance towards the West signalled by Medvedev and Putin, the core claim for inclusion in decisions on European regional order remained central to Russia's system narrative.

The exclusion of Russia from meaningful European security policy discussions has been reinforced by EU and NATO narratives on European security. From the EU and NATO's perspective, Russia's destabilising foreign policy actions in the region have contradicted the Russian government's Common European Home narrative, reinforcing the West's scepticism stance on the potential for greater cooperation. The oppositional stances taken by Russia and the West based on different material interests limit the scope for a strategic narrative to emerge which might forge common ground. Since the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the EU has undergone protracted periods of self-reflection on its relations with Russia. The EU's Global Strategy of 2016 and NATO's Newport (2014) and Warsaw (2016) summit declarations have signalled the limits of EU/NATO–Russia cooperation in the context of continued tensions over Crimea and the Donbass region. This has been reinforced by tensions over Russia's support of Assad in Syria. The identity, system and policy narratives of the EU and NATO are now firmly excluding Russia from significant cooperation, stating explicitly that Russia is no longer a strategic partner. The identity and system narratives of the EU and NATO are framed as counter to Russia's narrative. This context leaves little room to forge an inclusive Common European Home narrative and reinforces the divisible security architecture it purports to oppose. We set out these competing narratives in Table 1.

We re-emphasise that while there is superficial convergence on key concepts—the primacy of international law and the emergence of a polycentric or multipolar order, for instance—the normative foundations for any cooperation are weak because of differing meanings attributed to these concepts. The EU and, to an extent NATO, emphasise universal values policed by the international community, while Russia emphasises the universal value of sovereignty, the primacy of great powers in enforcing international law, and a plurality of normative orders or civilisations, as illustrated in the final section.

5. Multipolarity and Polycentrism: Re-Ordering the World Narrative

The third core narrative which is consistent in Russian foreign policy has been the promotion of the emergence of a polycentric world order. Russia's 2000 FPC stressed a narrative of multipolarity and the dangers of unilateralism. It committed Russia to working towards, 'a multipolar system of international relations that really reflects the diversity of the modem world with its great variety of interests'. More recently, reinforcing a narrative of global change is a means to challenge the systemic dominance of the US and position Russia as a shaper of this new world order (FPC, 2013, para. 3). Russia's narrative stresses the relative decline of the West and the rise of the rest. The 2013 FPC stated, 'The ability of the West to dominate world economy and politics continues to diminish. The global power and development potential is now more dispersed and is shifting to the East, primarily to the Asia-Pacific region' (FPC, 2013, para. 6). Putin's 2014 speech to the Valdai International Forum highlight the dangers of 'unipolar domination'.

The EU shares much of the same order narrative. The EU Global Strategy outlines a narrative of the world as a 'complex world of global power shifts and power diffusion' (European Union, 2016, p. 16). This order narrative

Table 1. EU, NATO and Russian narratives of identity, order and issues.

	Identity	System	Policy
EU	New identity narrative of an emerging global player; Ever closer union; Demonstrates by example the benefits of democracy and human rights.	World characterized by demands of interdependence; Relations with others central to stability, based on partnership; Founded on governance, rule of law, democracy, human rights; World increasingly contested and complex—alternative narratives emerging which should be challenged.	Comprehensive Approach; Promoting interests and universal values; Russia undermining freedom, sovereignty security and minority rights; Strategic competition with BRICS; Russian aggression in Ukraine; Russia acting illegally; Russian hybrid war; Russia no longer a 'strategic partner'.
NATO	Defender of freedom and security; Proves its worth in the Cold War, needs to continue proving it.	Open, rules-based system founded on sovereignty and territorial integrity; System increasingly defined by chaos and new threats.	Russian rejection of post-Cold War order; Russia waging undeclared war in Ukraine; Russian hybrid war; Russia no longer a 'strategic partner'.
Russia	Global Player; Civilization with heritage of culture and science; Excluded and badly treated by the West.	New for a Common European Home—A common economic and humanitarian space (Putin); Europe less central to world order—emergence of BRICS; Return of East/West confrontation in Europe; Polycentric world order; International order should have a legal framework.	Western media propagating new Cold War narrative; EU/NATO not respecting freedom of Ukrainian people; Absence of strategic trust in EU/Russia relations; EU exaggerates friend/foe narrative; Sanctions unjust, not merited. Coup d'état in Ukraine supported by outsiders; West provocation and flouting of international law; Russia helping Ukraine overcome crisis.

portrays the EU as an upholder of values in a world where not all states share its views—as the Russian narrative of international law has stressed for many years. The EU's response has been to seek a more common foreign policy despite Brexit and the complexities of speaking with one voice. For McFarlane, Russia is determined to play a 'holding game' until the conditions emerge for it to play a more prominent role in a pluralist international system (McFarlane, 2006, p. 57). The timeline for such a holding game could be extensive. A recent report by the Russian International Affairs Council argues that the process of moving to a new multipolar international order has stalled due to the unexpectedly strong US recovery after the 2008 financial crisis (Luzyanin et al., 2016, p. 6). Lo's critique of Russia's stance of multipolarity suggests that Russia's holding game may never end. He argues

> There are few signs…that the Putin regime has come to terms with the 'inconvenient truths' of the new world disorder. It continues to frame the landscape of contemporary politics within an artificial multipolar (polycentric) paradigm. It overestimates Russia's capacity to establish itself as a regional and global player on its own narrow terms. And it believes that the future lies not in adapting to fast-changing international realities, but in hunkering down—reaffirming time-honored principles of Russian foreign policy, such as the primacy of great power diplomacy and military strength. (Lo, 2015, p. 67)

States must be willing to adjust their conceptualisations. The EU has shifted, at least rhetorically, towards value pluralism in their dealings with third parties. This is routine in contemporary international affairs. China too has adapted its concept of sovereignty as 'non-intervention' for African audiences in response to African fears of exploitation, for instance (Keuleers, 2016). This is a world of 'variable geometry' governance, in which states must co-partner, mutually adjust and be open to new forms and relations of power (Burke-White, 2015, p. 6). Certainly,

rhetorical accommodation is easier from a position of material strength and security; without those, Russia can only challenge by projecting its consistent narrative in the hope it might finally not be mis-recognised, it can get mired in contesting every crime or norm violation it is accused of (MH17), or it can take military risks. However, because of more fundamental conceptual differences, its communications will intensify mutual frustration. The UN Security Council will not and cannot simply govern world affairs like 19th Century great powers, with Russia at the table with its own sphere of influence.

6. Conclusion

We have charted Russia's 21st Century foreign policy narratives, compared them to debates in the US and to EU and NATO policy documents, and pointed to a failure of Russia and the West to reach a common understanding of the emerging international system. Consistency of the Russian narrative indicates that in spite of the current fixation with disinformation and Russian-led information warfare, Russia has been coherent in how it has narrated its position in the world, drawing on a 'security imaginary' which sets limits on how much scope for adaptation in Russia's narrative of international order there is. We have highlighted that Russia's strategic narrative of the international system is underpinned by its identity narrative and this plays out in how it narrates its policy preferences or its view of the Ukraine crisis. However, shared language concerning commitment to international law and multipolarity cannot disguise competing meanings attributed to these words within Russia and the West, making narrative convergence difficult. Without such alignment, it is impossible for all parties to reach an alignment in narrating the recent past, present problems, and the future world order that they must, somehow, govern and manage together. In particular, Russia feels mis-recognised, but articulates a vision of world order that appears unsuited to the dynamics of 21st century power, shifting hierarchies and material conditions. Since 2000 this mis-alignment has driven a cycle of mis-communication, generating frustration on all sides and restricting the scope for cooperation. It has also sparked policy responses which espouse relative gains over forging collective agreements. The crisis in Ukraine can be interpreted as an opportunistic Russian action in the absence of a shared narrative of the European space in which Russia believes it is recognised and is seen to mutually gain from cooperation with the EU and NATO. But this is not simply a direct disagreement on crises such as Ukraine. It is reflective of competing and currently unresolved narratives of world order, which further divergence can only harden.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Study of Strategic Narratives: The Case of BRICS

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Abstract
In the battle of narratives to give meaning to the international system in the twenty-first century, emerging powers are actively engaged. In particular, the BRICS group, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, have advanced their claim to reconstitute international affairs to make it more just and fair. What if their narratives about the international system effectively contest narratives constituting the Liberal World Order? For understanding the battle more profoundly, this study examines the strategic narratives of the BRICS. A documentary methodology was employed to elicit themes and narratives in BRICS joint communiqués of 2009 to 2016 for the identification of its strategic narratives. I have identified a system narrative of global recovery, an identity narrative of inclusive participation and an issue narrative of infrastructural development. A narrative grammar was used to relate BRICS strategic narratives with their narrative environment of symbolic, institutional and material practices. Due to a partial compliance with the narrative grammatical rules, the BRICS group may not effectively influence and gain public support.

Keywords
BRICS; narrative analysis; strategic narratives; thematic analysis

Issue
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1. Introduction

In the battle of narratives to give meaning to the international system in the twenty-first century, emerging powers are actively engaged (see the work of Cox, 2012; Hurrell, 2013; Ikenberry, 2011). What happens when 42% of the world population effectively contest existing narratives about the international order? As Schweller commented: "Profound dislocations throughout the global system are causing the narrative of world politics to become an increasingly fragmented and disjointed story" (Schweller, 2014, p. 9). The first decade demonstrated stunning economic growth figures in the BRICS countries, a group comprising of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. These emerging powers were artificially grouped together in a famous Goldman Sachs working paper (O'Neill, 2001; see also Wilson & Purushothaman, 2003). The original BRIC acronym, without the "S" of South Africa, signified four large emerging market economies that had the potential to outperform the G7 countries (O'Neill, 2001). These emerging powers took major roles in the global economy, and were indispensable in the negotiation of development issues (exemplified in the Heiligendam Summit in 2007; see Cooper & Thakur, 2013, p. 269). The global financial crisis of 2008 and its ramifications internationally perpetuated discontent with asymmetric globalization. During the first BRICS Ministerial Meeting in 2006 encouraged by the Russian Presidency, the four Foreign Ministers expressed their interests in a new consultation platform (Kirton, 2015). The dialogue propelled various ministerial meetings and the first BRIC Summit with heads of states in 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia (BRIC, 2009). The group advocated for reform of multilateral institutions to correspond to the economic changes of the twenty-first century (BRIC, 2009). In 2011, they enlarged its membership to South Africa (BRICS, 2011). Originally a platform on finance and good governance, the group broadened its commitments throughout the years (see for example, Larionova, Kirton, Bracht, Wang, & Rakhmangulov, 2016).

A much-debated question is whether this political formation makes sense, given the fast social, political and economic differences between the BRICS countries (de Coning, Mandrup, & Odgaard, 2014; Mielniczuk, 2013; Thakur, 2014). In the global reordering of international affairs (see the work of Xing & Shaw, 2014), the BRICS mission is to promote a "multipolar, equitable and democratic world order" (BRIC, 2010, nº. 2). The formation of strong strategic narratives may shape expectations and beliefs positively, when the unstable and uncertain situation perpetuated by the economic downturn and the political crises in several of the BRICS countries are taken into account (see the fall of emerging powers, in Kiely, 2016). Recognizing BRICS continuous efforts to pursue cooperation, it is important to analyze how the formation of their public narrative make ontological sense (Somers, 1994).

The BRICS joint communiqués that are released after each annual summit capture the group's main aspirations and objectives. The communiqués stipulate a strategic script as they are "designed or nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others to developing events" (Freedman, 2006, p. 22). A strategic script, or in other words strategic narratives, are "representations of a sequence of events and identities, a communicative tool through which political actors—usually elites—attempt to give determined meaning to past, present, and future in order to achieve political objectives" (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013, p. 5). Using a constructivist approach, it examines how rational actors construct a social, political reality (Wendt, 1994, 1999). There are three types of strategic narratives: system narratives which "are about the nature of the structure of international affairs"; identity narratives which "are about the identities of actors in international affairs that are in a process of constant negotiation and contestation"; and issue narratives which are "strategic in the sense of seeking to shape the terrain on which policy discussions take place" (Miskimmon et al., 2013, p. 7). This study is situated in the "narrative turn" in international relations (Roberts, 2006), in observation of literary studies (see the work of Barthes, 1966; Bruner, 1991; Burke, 1962; Propp, 1968; White, 1980). Using the theoretical framework of strategic narratives, the study sets out how the BRICS group gives meaning to the international system, their collective identity and the issue area of infrastructural development. The issue narrative of infrastructural development is significant for that it describes the design and implementation of ports, roads, airports, bridges, dams through "soft" technology transfer and knowledge exchange and "hard" project development, while emphasizing the sustainability element. As Schweller writes: "emerging multipolarity is attributed to the diffusion of economic, scientific, and technological power" (Schweller, 2014, p. 85).

For the critical analysis, I analyzed how BRICS strategic narratives complied to the "narrative grammar" for that full compliance would "influence the success and impact of a strategic narrative" (Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2016, p. 7). The narrative grammar rules draw attention to "*connecting* (however unstable) *parts* to a constructed *configuration* or a *social network* of relationships (however incoherent or unrealizable) composed of symbolic, institutional, and material practices" (Somers, 1994, p. 616, italics in original). Effective compliance of these narrative grammatical rules enhances public support for BRICS mission. Strong strategic narratives have the potential to empower political actors. I examine four elements that relate to the narrative environment: mission purpose, legitimacy, the prospect of success, and the presence of counter narratives. A compelling mission purpose keeps "the focus on long-term, overarching purposes and ambitions"; legitimacy concerns both the "objective sense (judicial, procedural) and a subjective sense (political, public, ethical); the prospect of success "triggers public support for a mission" due to "an overarching storyline"; and the presence of counter narratives is a result of disagreement among political elites that is reflected in mainstream media reporting on the issues at stake (Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2016, p. 7). The authors define a fifth indicator, which concerns the compliance of a narrative into an "overall strategic communication plan" (Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2016, p. 7). I have chosen not to use this indicator for the analysis, because the BRICS group has not collectively formulated a strategic communication plan. Using a soft power perspective (which evidently is not so "soft", see Mattern, 2005; building on the work of Nye, 1990), BRICS joint communiqués aim to shape the behavior of international and domestic audiences and is therefore essentially strategic. These four elements provide the tools to discuss whether BRICS strategic narratives can influence and generate public support.

This paper analyzes first how the strategic narratives of the BRICS give meaning to the international system, their collective identity and the issue of infrastructural development. And second, it examines how the BRICS strategic narratives relate to a narrative environment of symbolic, institutional and material practices. Public support for the BRICS group is expected to decrease, due to partial compliance with the narrative grammatical rules.

2. Qualitative Research Design

This study pursued a qualitative research methodology guiding the narrative inquiry, confirming the observation that: "Researchers will mix methods together in different ways, and we expect to see in the next decade a series of patchwork, adaptive, broader methodologies" (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 24). This case study about the BRICS group uses the theoretical framework of strategic narratives to examine how their political communication is persuasive. I have pursued a qualitative research process, i.e. a documentary methodology, to understand how a credible storyworld is evoked in BRICS joint communiqués. Documents can be used to reconstitute the meaning of international affairs, "so as to de-

velop and underpin particular visions of the world and the things and events within that world" (Prior, 2011, p. 67). The data set for this paper comprise of the BRICS joint communiqués from 2009 to 2016. Pursuing a theory driven analysis, the results created "more a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 84). It discusses the ontological features of BRICS strategic narratives; it does not analyze the causal impact of BRICS strategic narratives and the actual increase or decrease of public support. Thus, I have taken interpretivist ontology to learn how meaning is generated within the documents (Grix, 2002, p. 178). Table 1 sets out the qualitative research design for this study.

Reading addressed both the explicit, communicative meaning and the implicit, conjunctive meaning in the documents (Bohnsack, 2013, p. 225; Feldmand & Almquist, 2012). Documents convey political interests as they are "created for a particular purpose, crafted according to social convention to serve a function of sorts" (Coffey, 2013, p. 369). The textual reading of BRICS joint communiqués was structured in six phases (see Table 2).

After the first two phases in which I organized the documents and designed a coding framework, I situated the narrative components of the BRICS story in phase 3 using Kenneth Burke's framework of dramatism (Burke, 1962). Accordingly, "language is best seen as an enactment, as a symbolic selection of circumference, which gives entities an identifiable character (or substance)" (Crable, 2000, p. 329). The who, when and where, what, how and why questions contextualized the actions and motives for BRICS cooperation. Phase 4 and 5 went deeper into BRICS political communication by employing a narrative and thematic analysis for the analysis of mutual constituting aspects of content and form (narrative). Accordingly, the "paradigmatic type uses an analytic process that identifies aspects of the data as instances of categories; the narrative type uses an analytic process that produces storied accounts" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 21). Thematic and narrative structural analyses complement each other, because they both "lend themselves to constructionist paradigms that view experiences, meanings and social structures as mutually constitutive" (Shukla, Wilson, & Boddy, 2014, p. 3). The identified themes are "not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures—but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). The search for causal emplotment in phase 5 identified how the sequence of events were assembled in a coherent narrative. It analyzed how for example narratives about the reform of international institutions and the intensification of intra-BRICS mutually beneficial cooperation may positively affect the aspira-

Table 1. Qualitative research design for study of strategic narratives.

Research Design	Methodology	Pivotal cognitive modes	Research types	Gathering structure	Data collection techniques	Data management techniques	Data analysis techniques techniques
Case Study	Documentary	Reading	Textual	Structured	Documents	Coding	Thematic analysis Narrative analysis

Table 2. Six phases of the documentary methodology.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3 Codes *Descriptive coding of narrative components*	Phase 4 Thematic analysis *Step 1: Thematic coding* *Step 2: Searching for themes*	Phase 5 Narrative analysis *Step 1: Narrative coding* *Step 2: Searching for causal emplotment*	Phase 6 Strategic codes *Constitute themes and narrative structures in three types of strategic narratives*
Organizing the documents in excel files. Reading and writing down initial ideas	Tagging and designing a coding framework	Act (what) Scene (where and when) Agent (who) Agency (how, by what means) Purpose (why)	1. Thematic coding 2. Themes Sub themes	1. Narrative coding 2. Narratives and emplotment	1. Constitute themes and narrative structures in system narrative, identity narrative and issue narrative 2. Create a coherent report

tion for a more fair and democratic multipolar world order. The last phase integrated the results through the conceptual framework of strategic narratives, which is disclosed below.

3. BRICS Strategic Narratives

In the BRICS joint communiqués, a system narrative of global recovery; an identity narrative of inclusive participation; and an issue narrative of infrastructural development were identified. The themes in each of these narratives emphasize responsive multilateralism, a culture of equity and strategic synergies respectively. Under the premises "that the 21st century should be marked by peace, security, development, and cooperation" (BRICS, 2013, nº 22), the BRICS group aspires "a more democratic and just multi-polar world order" (BRICS, 2009, nº 12). In this part, I will discuss the strategic narratives that I identified in BRICS joint communiqués.

3.1. Strategic System Narrative of Global Recovery

BRICS strategic system narrative of global recovery addresses good governance, in particular in the area of finance, economics and international security and a central role for the G20 Summits "in dealing with the financial crisis" (BRIC, 2009, nº 1). The imagined recuperation presupposes a revival of economic growth, as well as the restructuring of multilateral institutions to counter "the risk of seeing them fade into obsolescence" (BRIC, 2010, nº 11). A reformed multilateral system should support a "strong client orientation that recognizes each country's development needs" (BRICS, 2014a, nº 19). The principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" is an important element in this narrative (BRICS, 2012, nº 22). The recovery is not proposing a counter challenge against existing market capitalism practices. It accommodates both short-term goals, i.e. the annual meetings and workshops; as well long-term pursuits, aligned with the sustainable development goals and economic growth exemplified in their "roadmap for trade, economic and investment cooperation until 2020" (BRICS, 2016, nº 36).

The central theme in this system narrative suggests how multilateralism symbolizes a cornerstone function for sovereign states. Institutions such as the United Nations are essential to address transnational issues involving trade and security. Multilateralism is seen compatible with sovereignty, as they "insist that international law provides tools for achieving international justice, based on principles of good faith and sovereign equality" (BRICS, 2015a, nº 6). In their search to make multilateral institutions more accountable and legitimate, the communiqués encourage honorable behavior. In particular, they promote responsible macroeconomic policy and compliance with official development aid (see BRICS, 2013, nº 7, 2016, nº 22). The BRICS group originates from a tradition of multilateral dialogues, exemplified by the repeated citing of the United Nations' 70th anniversary (see BRICS, 2014a, 2015a, 2016). Furthermore, the aspired global recovery is causally emplotted as to foster sustainable development and global peace. The BRICS group is actively engaged with a post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 (BRICS, 2015a, nº 65). Therefore, a strategic system narrative of global recovery imagines responsive and legitimate multilateral institutions that foster the political interests of sovereign states.

3.2. Strategic Identity Narrative of Inclusive Participation

The joint communiqués strategically communicate an identity narrative of inclusive participation. The advocacy for more voice and representation communicated in their system narrative is supported by a narrative account of their collective identity as responsible, mature, pro-active emerging powers. These emerging countries advocate for inclusive participation as a conditional to re-order international affairs in a sustainable way. The leitmotifs of the 2014 and 2016 BRICS summits reinforce this vision of negotiation, i.e. "inclusive growth, sustainable solutions" and "building responsiveness, inclusive and collective solutions" (BRICS, 2014a, 2016). There is a strong commitment to the G20 on the premises of inclusive participation: "Compared to previous arrangements, the G-20 is broader, more inclusive, diverse, representative and effective" (BRIC, 2010, nº 3). The BRICS group causally emplot an identity narrative of inclusive participation as mutually constitutive to their system narrative of global economic recovery.

The central theme identified in this narrative is equity, which encourages fair play instead of positive affirmation. For example, they advocate for the treatment of "all human rights, including the right to development, in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis" (BRICS, 2014a, nº 30). Competitiveness is imagined as an outcome of an equitable international system. Inclusive participation is advocated through representative experiences of political leadership. For example, the performance of the respective members to host high profile events is praised: "We commend China for the successful hosting of the 11th G20 Leaders' Summit in Hangzhou" (BRICS, 2016, nº 41) and "We congratulate Brazil on hosting the UN Conference on Sustainable Development" (BRICS, 2013, nº 35). The emphasis in this narrative is on how inclusive decision-making in international affairs exemplifies fairness.

3.3. Strategic Issue Narrative of Infrastructural Development

The issue narrative of infrastructural development is significant in the BRICS joint communiqués. It concerns the mobilization of infrastructure investments and the promotion of physical infrastructure respectively. The narrative of inclusive participation propelled a range of intra-

BRICS cooperation schemes, with the New Development Bank as its flagship. The documents encourage proactive behavior, "for the development of action-oriented economic cooperation and systematic strengthening of economic partnership for the recovery of the global economy" (BRICS, 2015a, nº 12). Cooperation is envisioned in many issue areas, in which I interpreted infrastructure financing and development to be the main foci. This issue narrative of infrastructural development empowers BRICS identity narrative of inclusive participation for that it provides structural tools that are responsive and equitable. It also recounts a bottom up approach in which infrastructural development may translate into an economic global recovery. The main theme in this narrative is feasible and strategic synergies for prosperity. Therefore, infrastructural development communicates a social reality defined by synergy in un(der) explored areas of cooperation. The strategic framework that is envisioned aims to "strengthen cooperation in science, technology and innovation with the purposes of promoting inclusive and sustainable social and economic development [and] providing a new quality of growth based on economic complementarity" (BRICS, 2015a, nº 62). The complementary cooperation that is aspired envisions an honest South–South dialogue. It celebrates the expertise in the country, the possible export of "best practice", and the promotion of fruitful enterprises. The issue narrative of infrastructural development communicates connectivity between the promotion and financing of institutional, physical and people-to-people interactions.

4. Compliance Narrative Grammar

To understand whether the BRICS group is expected to gain support for their mission to foster a fair and democratic multipolar world order, I have used the "narrative grammar" for the evaluation of BRICS strategic narratives (Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2016, p. 7). This part examines how BRICS strategic narratives articulate a credible storyworld, juxtaposing the strategic narratives in relation to a narrative environment of symbolic, institutional and material practices.

4.1. Mission Purpose

At its essence, it is not well-defined how BRICS the "economic story" of five emerging market economies and BRICS the institutionalized "political story" are mutually constitutive. The challenge is to interconnect the two stories: "working from economic reality to a tighter sense of normative and ideational identity amongst the grouping's membership" (Cooper & Thakur, 2013, p. 274). The communication of global recovery is fairly unsubstantiated, given that these "emerging powers have produced neither a unified ideology, nor a new institutional framework for global governance that is politically and ideologically universal" (Xing, 2016, p. 50). Multipolarity can be classified as the least stable international order (Murray, 2016, p. 95). It is unclear in the texts how the global recovery is peaceful and fair in light of the loose contract between sovereign states and their commitment to multilateralism.

In comparison to BRICS strategic system narrative, BRICS identity and issue narratives promote more clearly how a democratic and equitable multipolar world should look like. Advocacy for inclusive participation is projected as a natural development, considering that their participation is essential in addressing global challenges (see for example the Heiligendam process). It particularly aims to shape a preferred narrative of decision-making processes. With respect to BRICS issue narrative of infrastructural development, this causally connects energy, telecommunication and transport sectors for the benefit of sustainable development (BRICS, 2016, nº 62). The establishment of the New Development Bank responds to the real and persistent gap in infrastructure financing (BRICS, 2013, nº 9). There is the demand for infrastructure and commodities, as well as existence of in-house knowledge, resources and technology (see analyses on complementary cooperation, for example Mudunuru, 2013, p. 65). The New Development Bank exemplifies the do-it-yourself attitude of the BRICS.

4.2. Legitimacy

The reordering of the world is pursued through legitimate procedures, i.e. reform to address the underrepresentation of emerging and developing countries. However, in the subjective sense it fails to comprehensively account for the political and cultural divergences between the five member states. For example, the credibility of these countries to pursue a democratic world order is weak, given the (semi) authoritarian regimes of two of the five BRICS members (Abdenur & Folly, 2015, p. 88). BRICS system narrative of global recovery does not fully legitimize their mission of a fair and democratic multipolar world order.

According to the same argument, inclusive participation has been performed in the procedural sense but is not entirely attuned to diverging cultural norms and values. Since 2013, regional leaders have been invited to attend the BRICS Summits (see BRICS, 2013). However, the BRICS group advocate for the emerging and developing countries, without necessarily attaining this regional leadership position (see the work on Brazil and South Africa, by Vieira & Alden, 2011). Also, the encouragement of intra-BRICS meetings of non-state actors (i.e. civil society, academic community) articulates a democratic and fair decision-making processes. Again, in the subjective sense it does not provide compelling arguments for why these processes are credible open spaces for narrative contestation of state narratives.

The same is acknowledged in BRICS issue narrative of infrastructural development narrative. It is procedurally legitimate, given the integration of these countries in the global economy. Complementary cooperation is

credible, given that the group includes "the factory of the world (China), the garden of the world (Brazil), the gas station of the world (Russia)…, the back office of the world (India)" and South Africa as the "African Gateway" (Kahn, 2011a, p 493, 2011b, p. 496). But is does not attend to economic power imbalances, and therefore new expected emerging economic hierarchies.

4.3. Prospect of Success

BRICS system narrative of global recovery is not clearly stipulating an overarching storyline that promises success. Originally a consultation group on finance and good governance, the BRICS group expanded its issue areas. Evidently, this complicates the measuring of success given that there are "no tangible policy measures and specific projects are announced following the talks" (Liu, 2016, p. 450). It affects the apprehension of the cooperation, because "without clearly formulated policy goals at the start, it is quite cumbersome to design them once the mission is underway" (2016, p. 11). Furthermore, the stunning growth and performance of the initial decade are difficult to repeat. In particular, "now that the BRICs story is better known, expectations are higher and the valuation gap is much smaller" (Wilson, Kelston, & Ahmed, 2010, p. 1). Also, adverse events (i.e. economic downturn and political challenges, see Talley, 2016; Tisdal, 2016) are not comprehensively emplotted in BRICS joint communiqués. Therefore, the causal emplotment of events are not effectively narrated in a success narrative. Correspondingly, "the tectonic plates of global politics are certainly shifting, but their movements are yet not predictable" (Pant, 2013, p. 103). A clear roadmap that addresses BRICS means, ways and ends would improve the political communication.

BRICS identity narrative of inclusive participation aims to shape both the behavior of international and domestic audiences. It advocates for reform on the global level, as well as it promotes multi-stakeholdership in domestic debates. A "horizon of success and progress" (Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2016, p. 7) is indicative when non-state actors, i.e. civil society and academics, have measurable participatory influence on narrative contestation on the national and subsequently the multilateral level. Commitments for non-state actors' participation tend to have a secondary position in the BRICS joint communiques (see numerical order of commitments incorporating the participation of non-state actors), emphasizing the prioritized role of sovereign states to contest and constitute narratives of international order.

To judge the promise of success expressed by BRICS issue narrative of infrastructural development is arguably premature. The establishment of the New Development Bank is very recent (see BRICS, 2014b, 2015b), and the ability to mobilize resources is a matter of time. However, emphasis on connectivity in the communiqués is indicative of an aspired political reality that accommodates their infrastructure bottlenecks through the provision of accommodating solutions (i.e. in contrast to conditioned International Monetary Fund loans). This narrative resonates with BRICS identity narrative of inclusive participation through its democratic governance and self-defined policies.

4.4. Presence of Counter Narratives

In terms of the compliance of BRICS strategic narratives with the narrative grammatical rule of presence or absence of counter narratives, this is largely based on implicit reading. Paratextual, both academic papers and news articles signal more explicitly the presence of counter narratives. Accordingly, the "greater the dissent, the better the possibility that the media will start inscribing these political dissenting voices, that is, counternarratives, into their dichotomous media frames" (Dimitriu & de Graaf, 2016, p. 12). BRICS reordering of the world does not accommodate the asymmetric power balances between the BRICS countries, i.e. China's disproportionate political and economic weight. The economic downturn undermined the narrative coherence of BRICS the "economic story". The reporting on the closure of Goldman Sachs' BRICs investment fund perpetuated this reading (Iosebashvili, 2015). These concerns about BRICS means to pursue global recovery and China's disproportionate economic weight perpetuate counter narratives.

The issue narrative of inclusive participation is a pragmatic approach to cope with global governance and development challenges. In practice, instances of political discontent were effectively concealed in the communiqués, albeit emphasized in media reports. Russia's annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine in 2014 forced the powers to conceal their unease about the violation of the sovereignty principle. Unmistakably referring to the international isolation of Russia, the joint communiqués denounces "unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions in violation of international law and universally recognized norms of international relations" (BRICS, 2014a, nº 27). Furthermore, news reports of the Goa Summit highlighted the tension between India and China on the issue of state-sponsored Pakistani terrorist groups (Parashari, 2016). At the same meeting, Russian President Vladimir Putin presumably declined a private meeting with Brazilian President Michel Temer, as he disapproved the impeachment of "comrade" Dilma Rousseff (Escobar, 2016). Inclusive participation should not come at the expense of sovereign power; therefore "none of these newly-empowered, rising developing nations will agree to limit their own sovereignty or to allow supranational bodies" (Fituni, 2014, p. 107). The informal contract between sovereign states and their commitment to multilateralism therefore evokes a cherry-pick approach of policy areas that are least prone to be politically sensitive. It signifies that the aspired decision-making processes surpasses the necessity to agree on all issue areas.

Lastly, BRICS issue narrative of infrastructural development encounters various counter narratives articulated by non-state actors in the BRICS countries. While BRICS identity narrative of inclusive participation promoted the participatory role of civil society, this promise did not promote a new (infrastructural) development paradigm with a large support. Originally, civil society supported the BRICS coordination, as it thought to be a counter hegemonic challenge. What arguably divides the coherency of this issue narrative, is "that the coalition, and the NDB [New Development Bank] more specifically, are being shaped in ways that favor the interests and values of the two autocratic members" (Abdenur & Folly, 2015, p. 88; Kiely, 2016, p. 33). Good governance and development discriminates the issue narrative therefore in two camps: the "IBSA" countries (Brazil, India, South Africa) in the one camp, and Russia and China in the other. Other types of counter narratives originate in the critique on BRICS endorsement of the neoliberal development model (Taylor, 2014), exemplified by the BRICS-from-Below movement (see the work of Bond & Garcia, 2015). It assumes an existential incompatibility between infrastructural development as imagined by the BRICS group and a desirable fair and just multipolar world order.

5. In Conclusion

This paper examined how the BRICS group gives meaning to the international system, their collective identity and the issue of infrastructural development and how these BRICS strategic narratives relate to a narrative environment of symbolic, institutional and material practices. Using a documentary analysis, I identified a system narrative of global recovery, an identity narrative of inclusive participation, and an issue narrative of infrastructural development respectively. Due to partial compliance of BRICS strategic narratives with the narrative grammatical rules, the BRICS group may not effectively generate public support for their proposed reordering of the world. The narratives convey procedural legitimacy, but fail to address a narrative environment of symbolic, institutional and material practices. Without causal implications of tangible indicators and achieved successes, BRICS joint communiques fail to communicate a temporal sequence of events and therefore a (promised) indication of success. The presence of counter narratives is arguably negligible. However, the BRICS group as a whole may lose relevance due to an implicit reading of China's asymmetric weight and the choice to not emplot adverse events such as the economic downturn and political challenges into a coherent narrative.

The analysis discussed the ontological dimensions of BRICS strategic narratives. It did not seek to answer whether the narratives effectively changed domestic and international behavior. Furthermore, qualitative research on how member states contest BRICS strategic narratives would demonstrate how the battle of narratives within the BRICS group is effecting the narratives' coherency and strength. Evidently, this paper is a shortened version (full analysis on formation and narrative contestation on this formation to be included in the author's doctoral). For future reference, the mutual constitutive interaction between the visual imagery (Crilley, 2015) of BRICS annual summits (i.e. logo and websites) and the joint communiqués would improve the ontological analysis of BRICS strategic narratives.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Genocide Discourses: American and Russian Strategic Narratives of Conflict in Iraq and Ukraine

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Abstract
This paper presents the concept of "genocide discourses", defined as a type of strategic narrative that shapes the way individuals and groups position themselves and others and act, playing a critical role in the production of violence and efforts to reduce it. Genocide discourses tend to present genocide as fundamentally a-political, and hold that genocidal systems are dislodged only when they are swept away through external violence. Secondly, genocide discourses are built on an assumption that the victims of genocide are necessarily moral innocents, not parties in conflict. These two factors make genocide discourses highly effective in conferring moral capital upon certain actors in a conflict. The two principles converge to produce strategic narratives that direct political and military actions in certain ways in the context of contentious conflicts and political violence, motivating humanitarian responses in defense of certain groups, or sustaining popular support for foreign wars. The paper illustrates the argument by examining two case studies between 2014 and 2017: the debates in the United States over Islamic State genocides, and the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

Keywords
genocide; Iraq; Islamic State; Russia; strategic narratives; Ukraine

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1. Introduction

When the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine in 2014 and annexed Crimea, accusations of genocide were unleashed on all sides of the conflict. Ukrainian nationalists accused the Soviet Union of committing genocide against Ukraine in the 1930s and 1940s. The Russian government, in turn, denied the Soviets committed genocide and accused the Ukrainian government of attempting to manufacture past Soviet genocides to cover up the fact that Ukrainian nationalists currently were plotting genocide against ethnic Russians. Depending on one's position in the conflict, therefore, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is either seen as an effort to save ethnic Russians from genocide in eastern Ukrainian, or an illegal military invasion undertaken by a Russian government in Moscow that claims historical dominance over Ukraine because of a political arrangement that was achieved by Stalin through genocide in the 1930s and 1940s.

In another conflict, seemingly a world away, we find a similar genocide discourse at work. In 2014, the United States government began to indicate that it was inclined to determine the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was committing genocide (Kerry, 2014). When it became apparent that United States officials would seek to declare ISIL's treatment of the Yezidi religious minority to be genocide, Christian groups in the United States mobilized to pressure congressional representatives to pressure the State Department to include Christians as victims of ISIL genocide (Toosi, 2015, 2016). The goals of this movement, which was in many ways led by the Catholic organization the Knights of Columbus, were humanitarian and grounded in an authentic impulse to provide relief to those who were suffering, even if this humanitar-

ian response was rooted in their own politics. The response employed a genocide discourse to build sympathy amongst Christian lobby groups in the United States to pressure the government to expand the number of Syrian and Iraqi refugees (of all religious groups) accepted by the United States. But this genocide discourse, which used the suffering of Christians as a bridge for mobilizing American sympathy to all the victims of ISIL, was quickly eclipsed by a second, parallel genocide discourse that presented Islam, and especially Sunni Islam, as a genocidal evil that had to be eradicated. This second genocide discourse undercut the goals of the first, as humanitarian sympathy for the victims of ISIL gave way to movements calling upon Americans to care for the victims of ISIL by eradicating ISIL, which delegitimized the incipient attempts by Catholic social justice lobby groups to increase the number of refugees accepted by the United States.

I define "genocide discourse" as a type of strategic narrative, where a strategic narrative is understood in part as a "compelling story [line] which can explain events convincingly and from which inferences can be drawn" (Freedman, 2006, p. 22). Strategic narratives—whether they are articulated at an interpersonal, intergroup, national, or inter-national level—shape the way individuals and groups position themselves and others, and act (Cobb, 2013, pp. 4–5; Smith, 2003). The inferences that strategic narratives engender play a crucial role in legitimizing or motivating certain kinds of actions, creating a set of assumptions about a given conflict that can prescribe, or even motivate, certain responses or actions. For instance, to state that a group in a conflict is a victim of genocide confers upon that group a kind of innocence, helplessness, or defenselessness. This, in turn, can elicit sympathy to their position, and prescribe certain actions be undertaken, presumably, in their defense. Because such actions are inferred, not stated explicitly, strategic narratives in times of armed conflict can be efficient movers of public opinion, legitimizing the conflict and stifling public debate and critical inquiry, while fostering a commonly held perception that the conflict is not a policy choice of elites and leaders but rather something unavoidable, even natural. They can also set in motion reductionist explanations of conflict that elide meaningful distinctions between actors in conflict. This is precisely what genocide discourses are intended to do—to collapse the social, political, economic, cultural, religious, and historical contexts of any conflict into a simple binary of good guys and bad guys. By explaining conflicts in binary terms, genocide narratives can bolster exclusionist rhetoric, crystalizing positions in a conflict, or responses to a conflict, in unequivocal terms (Feierstein, 2013).

Strategic narratives can be transnational, adopted and adapted by groups, in reference to local responses to local politics or global politics. As such, they can be "global narratives" that "criss-cross the world" and "play a critical role in the production of violence, as well as in the international policies and practices that seek to contain or reduce it" (Cobb, 2013, p. 4). This was the case, for example, in a global interplay that occurred as local Catholic groups around the world began to advocate for humanitarian policy responses in defense of the victims of ISIL genocides in North Africa and the Middle East. These Catholic lobbying efforts motivated a movement in Lithuania, which prompted a resolution in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania recognizing "The Genocide of Christians and Other Religious Minorities in the Middle East And North", (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015), which was cited by the Knights of Columbus in their 200-page documentation of genocides committed by ISIL against religious minorities that they submitted to the United States House of Representatives, calling on the United States Congress to recognize genocides committed by ISIL against all religious minorities—including Muslim groups.

The genocide discourses examined in this article are types of strategic narratives in which the deployment of the concept of genocide, either purposefully or reflexively by parties to the conflict, or by third parties or outside actors, provides an organizing framework for collective action, defining a community's identity, its values and goals, and the stakes of its struggles, vis-à-vis an other in a conflict. The application of the concept of genocide within a strategic narrative carries a set of assumptions about what genocide is, what kinds of people commit genocide, and what kinds of people experience genocide. And, importantly, it carries assumptions about how these people who commit or experience genocide should be treated, and how individuals and groups should respond to genocide. In some instances, therefore, a genocide discourse can play a generative role in a conflict, shaping decisions undertaken by groups and states beyond other forces such as immediate economic interests. More frequently, a genocide discourse is coopted or directly employed as a framing device by elites and leaders, such as national policy makers, within the context of a larger strategic narrative, to try and shape group support and promote group cohesion around a particular goal. Scholars have demonstrated that actors in conflicts around the world have attempted—sometimes successfully—to portray themselves as victims of genocide in order to convince powerful foreign states to interfere in a conflict on their behalf (Kuperman, 2008). This paper advances a similar argument, attempting to shed light on the way certain actors determine that some groups are victims or perpetrators of genocide and other are not, in order to alter the way those actors are perceived and treated, and thereby advance their own strategic goals within the context of larger conflicts.

2. Genocide Discourses

2.1. Victims, Politics, and Legacies of Totalitarianism

There are two historic, organizing principles of the genocide prevention movement. The first is that external vi-

olence is the only means of stopping genocide. The cutting edges of the atrocity prevention field of practice focus on improving the ability of people in influential positions to identify genocidal processes and make ethical decisions to resist genocide (Waller, 2016), while bolstering peace processes that provide a context in which these decisions can be made and supported (Moix, 2016; Rosenberg, Galis, & Zucker, 2016). Such approaches, prominent amongst peacemaking practitioners, reject the assumption that genocide can only be prevented through external force or armed force. What is notable in these cases, however, is that scholars and practitioners who advocate for such an approach simply avoid using the word genocide all together (see Weiss, 2012), or they go to great lengths to argue that genocide is not an act, but a complex social process in which individuals are constantly making decisions that allow genocide to occur (see Waller, 2016). In fact, when activists and policy makers deploy the language of "mass atrocity prevention" or "the responsibility to protect" instead of using genocide, and when they differentiate between crimes against humanity and genocide, they acknowledge a wide range of non-violent and non-coercive ways of preventing or stopping atrocities (Irvin-Erickson, 2017a; Weiss, 2012). When the word genocide emerges in academic and social discourses about a given conflict, however, a different set of assumptions is put in place, assumptions that tend to privilege external violence as the only path towards peace. What is it about the word genocide that makes people see a conflict differently when the word genocide is used instead of another term? What is it about the word genocide, and the word's connotations, that lead people to see violence as the only way to prevent the act?

This pillar of the genocide prevention tradition has its roots in a closely related field of study, the study of totalitarianism. Raphaël Lemkin, in *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, the book in which the word genocide first appears in print, framed his study of Axis governments as a study of totalitarianism (Lemkin, 1944, p. ix). The theory of totalitarianism in the 1920s and early 1930s centered around a belief that the total state altered the social fabric of society to eliminate the basis of political opposition, or to create a "new man" in order to facilitate the ideological goals of a regime. Lemkin, on the other hand, would disaggregate the concept of totalitarianism—the "total" control of a political regime over political and social life—from the practice of altering the social fabric of society through violence and coercion, a practice he called genocide. In Lemkin's foray into this theory, he used the term genocide to refer to the destruction of social groups. This allowed him to argue that genocide was as old as human history, but became a useful strategy of governing that was employed by totalitarian governments. Genocide, for Lemkin, was therefore not intrinsic to totalitarianism. However, Lemkin's views on genocide and totalitarianism were never widely accepted (Irvin-Erickson, 2017b). A host of other theorists brought genocide studies to a position that resembled the study of totalitarianism, and set the pace for genocide prevention movements of the second half of the twentieth century.

Hannah Arendt (1951) believed totalitarian regimes used violence and terror to obliterate political life. Borrowing from the zeitgeist of the day (Iakovou, 2009; Söllner, 2004), her central notion was that totalitarian regimes ruled through violence and terror. Totalitarian regimes, for Arendt, could not be swept away by political movements within their societies. Instead, brutal yet irrational, they could only come to an end when their irrational priorities led to internal collapse, or when they were toppled externally through violence. A similar belief can be found in the writings of Karl Wittfogel (1931, 1938, 1957) who is known in English language scholarship for *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, which synthesized much of his previous scholarship on the total systems of power in oriental and Chinese states. In his study of "hydraulic dynasties" that ruled by monopolizing access to water in their empires, Wittfogel argued that the administrative infrastructure needed to control access to water and irrigation generated governmental institutions that were well-suited for serving as mechanisms of social control—such as specialized bureaucracies and military units designed not for fighting wars but enforcing laws. These institutions generated and maintained social hierarchies, and buttressed the power of ruling elites. While there were pretenders to the throne who were constantly warring and assassinating each other, the dynasties as a whole survived despite the internal divisions, Wittfogel argued, because each dynasty's political power was derived from its total control over the social and political institutions of the society. Totalitarianism, for Wittfogel, was functional, not irrational, leading him to argue (against Arendt) that such regimes would not self-destruct. Since these institutions gave the rulers of these states the ability to obliterate the social and political groups that opposed them, the only way the dynasties fell, Wittfogel argued, was when they were swept away by military forces from outside of their own social and political base.

The basic thesis was nearly ubiquitous throughout the anti-totalitarianism and genocide prevention movements and traditions. The jurist Antoni Wereszczyński (1928), a major figure in Lemkin's intellectual circles whom Lemkin drew upon, argued that the totalitarian regimes of Europe did not arise from military coups, but from revolutionary upheavals with a social basis. Once in power, the revolutionary organization "relies on the apotheosis of the state, on a belief in its almost miraculous might, on a strict connection between the state and the victorious organization or its leader, and on the elimination of the rest of the population from having any influence at all" (as cited in Kornat, 2006, p. 84). Any political machinations of the population to try and put an end to the regime and its systems of violence were therefore futile—violence was the only way out, because

the state itself was willing to kill entire groups who had alternate ideas about how the society should be governed. In another classic study of totalitarianism, Franz Neumann (1942) argued that the National Socialist Party in Germany constructed a "state-less" state that lacked modern political institutions necessary for reining in the power struggles of competing groups whose only common ground was hatred, propelling the state towards uncontrolled violence and expansionary war. Sigmund Neumann (1942), on the other hand, proposed that the totalitarian state was brought into being through a one-party system that mobilized masses of people in support of its program by stoking anger at imagined enemies, and then violently crushing internal political opponents through a military apparatus created to fight these imagined external foes. Thus the totalitarian government, for Sigmund Neumann, created a state of permanent revolution through which it stayed in power, exclusively, by generating imaginary enemies of the revolution. Both Franz and Sigmund Neumann, coming from different starting points, arrive at the belief that the totalitarian state's murderous willingness to annihilate entire groups was the pillar of its strength, and would only come to an end through the internal collapse of the state and the regime (when they ran out of imagined enemies and began to kill their own supporters), or through external force. And, finally, Ernst Fraenkel (1941/2017), argued that the National Socialist government divided German law into two competing areas, forming a "prerogative state" governed by the party which ruled through arbitrary violence, and a "normative state" which maintained the legal order and protected the legitimacy of German courts. Here, again, we find a situation close to Wereszczyński's terms, where the legal system of totalitarian regimes eliminates individual rights and asserts state control over the life and property of the ruled, allowing political enemies to be repressed violently but legally, while legalizing and empowering an "unthinking grey mass, a mob whipped along in the direction indicated by the almighty rulers" (as cited in Kornat, 2006, p. 84). From Wereszczyński, Wittfogle, Neumann, Neumann, Fraenkel, and Arendt, among others, thus was born an intellectual tradition that has animated the genocide prevention and humanitarian intervention movements for the last century: the idea that once a regime becomes genocidal or totalitarian, internal collapse or violent intervention from the outside are the only ways the regime, and the mass violence it commits, can be brought to an end. As Arendt put it in *On Violence*, in the totalitarian state that rules through violence, the only pillars of political power for the regime are the state security forces and a network of informers—beyond this, political or moral challenges to the regime and its violence are utterly useless (Arendt, 1970, pp. 81–84).

After this generation of thinkers, totalitarianism quickly became an "essentialist" concept, employed in social scientific and political discourse to justify American democracy over Soviet communism and fascism (Spiro & Barber, 1970). Dirk Moses (2006) has observed that the field of genocide studies resembles "a version of totalitarianism theory" because "the definition of genocide—at least a true one [according to the field's theorists]—can only be committed by a totalitarian or at least authoritarian state driven by a utopian ideology". This is why, Moses writes, when the word genocide is invoked, public, policy, and scholarly debates in the United States tend to focus on the ideological or religious-political dynamics of a regime. For example, the debates in the United States over the Darfur genocide in the late 2000s became "preoccupied with the Islamism of the Khartoum regime rather than the logic of counter-insurgency and civil war, a potential in all societies" (Moses, 2006). Such framings of genocide that locate the causal variable of genocide within a regime or a society's ideologies—therefore—serve to locate the phenomenon of genocide within unfamiliar non-Western, non-liberal, or non-democratic ideologies, which in turn justifies the familiar over the unfamiliar, the liberal over the non-liberal, the democratic over the non-democratic, and the Western over the non-Western (see Hinton, 2012). The genocide prevention and humanitarian intervention movements that inherited this intellectual tradition, moreover, also employ a system of knowledge built around conceptions of good and evil, rather than a falsifiable relationship between the objective social conditions and subjective relations of people in conflict.

These connotations embedded within the concept of genocide make it exceedingly difficult for peacemaking practitioners, legal practitioners, and policy makers to use the word. Practitioners who attempt to prevent the kinds of mass violence that the word "genocide" is intended to signify often prefer, instead, to use the phrase "responsibility to protect" to denote the normative principle of preventing genocide, and the phrase "mass atrocity prevention" to denote the practical application of the genocide prevention norm (Evans, 2008; Rosenberg, 2009; Scheffer, 2006). By avoiding the word genocide and instead using the phrases "responsibility to protect" and "mass atrocity prevention," as Evans (2008), Rosenberg (2009), Scheffer (2006), and Weiss (2007) have pointed out in different ways, practitioners and policy makers have been able to avoid the rhetorical traps and reductionist connotations that "genocide," as a word, evokes. When scholars and policy makers frame a conflict as genocide, and then present genocide in the terms of a systematic theory of good and evil; express conceptions of genocide that locate genocide within the unfamiliar; and carry over the belief that genocide can only be stopped through external violence, external violence to stop genocide and topple totalitarian regimes is presented as just and necessary (see Moses, 2006, 2011b). From these starting points, to determine that a group is suffering genocide, and then to oppose using violence to protect the group, is often seen as taking the side of the perpetrators morally, and thus to side with evil.

2.2. Strategic Narratives and Genocide Discourses

Strategic narratives, in shaping perceptions of conflicts to influence political behaviors, limit the opportunity for political contestation when they are accepted as social fact (Jackson, 2003; Mattern, 2005). This is especially so in genocide discourses that present complex conflict processes in good/bad binary terms, making the belief that a particular group is a "victim group" or a "perpetrator group" seem like a social fact (Subotić, 2016, p. 615). When the good/bad binary is laid over the victim/perpetrator binary, and combined with the sense that external violence is the only way to stop the perpetration of genocide, genocide discourses shut down critical analysis of a conflict. Strategic narratives reduce political space for debate by making alternative narratives sound incoherent and not compelling (Krebs & Lobasz, 2007; Subotić, 2016, p. 615). The ability of genocide discourses to make it seem like a social fact that certain groups are good or bad intensifies this "lock-in effect" (Goddard, 2006). Dissenting points of view about how to act vis-à-vis the perpetrators or victims are presented as hopelessly naïve, at best, or morally evil at worst. This muddles the criteria necessary for making ethical judgments. The ability to know how to act and why, therefore, becomes obscured in this closed system of logic. As a result, the potential for actors to articulate moral arguments collapses into moralizing, while acting to stop genocide and to topple totalitarian regimes is taken as unquestionably good, and failing to do so as unquestionably bad. In such constructions, once the word genocide has been uttered, the moral judgement has already been made. This is what makes genocide discourses effective types of strategic narratives, directing political behaviors towards intervening against the perpetrator group, and presenting inaction in defense of the victims as a moral evil.

If genocide is an act that must be stopped, how should it be stopped? Many doubt that genocide can be ended peacefully because they assume that genocide is either a decentralized, pathological act with perpetrators at every level of society or an act impelled by the momentum of a huge bureaucratic enterprise beyond the control of anybody (Heidenrich, 2001, p. 95). When genocide is viewed in such terms, it appears that genocide is caused by either everyone in a society or no one. From this premise, an intellectual and conceptual holdover from the theory of totalitarianism, the only sanction against genocide is the application of external violence: war.

In seeing genocide as an evil act, one that is simultaneously committed by everyone and no one, the motives for the act collapse into the act itself. The killing of a group is seen as the reason why perpetrators kill the group. This tautology ascribes the beginning to the end, leaving the analyst to understand genocide not as political or sociological, but a type of *sui generous* violence. Preventing genocide is therefore about stopping those who will be killers from killing, not about understanding the ethical decisions people face in genocidal programs, the reasons why people lend their support to a genocidal program when they would otherwise stand opposed, why people remain bystanders, and how and why people make decisions to act upon their knowledge, either resisting or collaborating. The paradox is that genocide cries out for retribution, even generations later, because it is resistible, and not an indomitable phenomenon that can only be stopped by violence (Bronner, 1999, p. 318). The tragedy of reducing genocide to an inevitable evil is that the "all-encompassing evil of the holocaust" as with any other genocide, ironically "is precisely what demands a sense of nuance in making ethical judgments" (Bronner, 1999, p. 318).

2.3. The Victims as Moral Innocents

If the belief that external violence is the only means for preventing genocide is a pillar of the humanitarian intervention and genocide prevention traditions, then this belief generates a second pillar that affirms the assumptions of the first. This second pillar is that the victims of genocide are not parties in a conflict, but moral innocents guilty of neither wrong-doing, nor of inflicting any perceived injury upon their victimizers. The position is derived from an assumption in theories of totalitarian explained above. The victims, in such visions, are killed for no other reason than to advance the political, social, or utopian agendas of their killers (see Moses, 2011a). When the formulation is deployed in strategic narratives, it creates the belief that genocide ceases to be genocide when the victims are acting unethically, or when they are guilty of a crime or moral wrongdoing, or if they are in conflict with their victimizers. In other words, genocide cannot be committed against people who have done bad things to their aggressors—in such cases, those who are killed *en masse* are no longer thought of as victims of genocide, but casualties of war or civilian casualties.

Arendt's insistence in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* that no one or no group was ever completely innocent, when she pointed to the complicity of many individual Jews and the role of Jewish councils in aiding the German genocide, provoked intense backlash and led many to accuse her of blaming the Jews for their own fate (Arendt, 1963). Yet, she also argued that because no group deserved to have genocide committed against them, the attempt to destroy an entire group did render the group innocent in the sense that they were not guilty of a crime or offense that would have warranted their total annihilation as a group. To seek the extermination of German National Socialists, as a social group, after the war was to commit genocide. Thus, for Arendt, no group could ever deserve to have genocide committed against them no matter how bad their individuals were. The same was true in all cases of mass violence, Arendt argued, not just genocide. In totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union, which Arendt believed was not genocidal in ideology, "terror as

we know it today strikes without any provocation [and] its victims are innocent even form the point of view of the persecutor" (Arendt, 1951/1973, p. 6). The arbitrariness of terror, where Bolshevik officials and police officers could become the victims of police terror, meant that "nobody, not even the executioners, can ever be free of fear". Even when those who were guilty of committing atrocities became the victims of the same atrocities, Arendt wrote, "the arbitrariness by which victims are chosen" meant that these individuals were "objectively innocent" regardless of what they may have done or not done (Arendt, 1951/1973, p. 6). Though the victims were objectively innocent, the victim group could not be morally innocent for Arendt. Yet, as the field of genocide studies developed its own theoretical literature, the distinction between moral innocence and objective innocence, the sense of being guilty of wrong doing, began it elide.

One of the seminal figures in the field, the sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz defines genocide as "a structural and systematic destruction of innocent people by a state bureaucratic apparatus" (Horowitz, 2002, p. 23). The word "innocent" is necessary in Horowitz's definition because it "sets [genocide] apart from other social evils", and recognizes that "the victim is 'punished' for being part of some particular group, tribe, race, or religion" (Horowitz, 2002, pp. 29–30). In Horowitz's perspective, genocide is a meaningful concept because it signifies an atrocity where the victims are targeted for no other reason besides their culturally-conditioned identity and are therefore "innocent" of any other wrong doing (Horowitz, 2002, pp. 23–28).

Similarly, Anderson and Anderson define genocide as "systematic, cold-blooded, bureaucratically administered extermination of entire ethnic, religious, or political groups by their own national governments in the absence of anything that a rational external observer could consider an adequate reason" (Anderson & Anderson, 2013, p. 6). This suggests genocide could be considered a legitimate course of action if a rational outside observer determined the victims were guilty of some wrong doing. By definition, the authors continue, genocide is only committed against an imaginary enemy, not a real enemy. Thus, to eliminate a group that poses a real threat is not genocide. To "qualify" as genocide, the authors write, "a campaign must involve a systematic attempt to eliminate whole groups, including harmless 'critics', innocent families, and children, and suspect bystanders". The authors add that "merely eliminating actual political rivals is not genocide. It is unpleasant, but it is politics-as-usual, carried out everywhere" (Anderson & Anderson, 2013, p. 7).

The problem here, as Martin Shaw has observed, is definitional and methodological. From a social scientific perspective, it is impossible to maintain that any given population can be purely perpetrator or purely victim, given that all social groups contain individuals who themselves have complex and changing roles within a conflict (Shaw, 2013, p. 36). Yet, in genocide scholarship (i.e., Anderson & Anderson, 2013; Charny, 1994; Fein, 1993; Horowitz, 2002), and especially in genocide discourses employed by political activists or by nationalist or ethnic group actors, the perpetrator social group is presented as a coherent group defined by purely evil intentions while the victims are presented as passive recipients of violence, not actors or parties in conflict (Shaw, 2013, p. 35). What is more, even in the most asymmetrical of conflicts, Shaw contends, individual victim-actors might be mostly people who are not perpetrators of violence against civilians, but the larger group to which they belong will inevitably include individuals who are. Yet, the "purity of the victims' victimhood is important not only for maintaining a simple 'perpetrator/victim' analytical model, but also for group 'ownership' of genocide". The idea of the "singular victim-groups", Shaw continues, "becomes a device policing communal identities" and "often of political institutions and causes which mobilize them" (Shaw, 2013, p. 36).

As this paper will argue in the next sections, the genocide discourses in America over ISIL genocides created a sense that the perpetrator group was purely and coherently evil which, in turn, ascribed that evil to every individual member of the social group. The conceptual holdovers from the theory of totalitarianism carried over into the genocide discourse, leading to a collective sense that only external violence could end the genocide. Because the social group was seen as a coherent collection of individuals, the strategic narrative that emerged was one that framed the prevention of genocide as requiring the extermination of the entire social group and all the individuals who were part of it—a policy response that itself is genocidal.

In regards to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, a similar process is evident. For Ukrainian nationalists, Donald Beachler (2011, p. 150) writes, the notion of being the victims of genocide at the hands of Russian chauvinists decades ago provides Ukrainian actors with the ability to claim historical moral innocence, which is seen as legitimizing the Ukrainian position in the conflict for international and domestic audiences. Given the substantial Russian-speaking population in Ukraine, Ukrainian nationalist political leaders believe it is necessary to mobilize Ukrainian nationalist sentiments against Russia, as a country and ethnic community. The genocide discourse employed by Russian officials and state-backed media, in return, frames the Ukrainian government as supporting genocidal violence against ethnic Russians in Ukraine. The Russian government's claims against Ukraine, while spurious, are made in reference to this anti-Russian axiom of Ukrainian nationalism. From the perspective of the government in Moscow, this genocide discourse is also highly purposeful, presenting an image for domestic consumption that Ukraine and all ethnic Ukrainians are a coherent and malevolent group. This prescribes contentious and violent struggle as the only way for defending the good, while conferring a sense of historical and moral innocence on self-identified ethnic Russians.

3. Ukraine and Russia

At least since the 2004 Orange Revolution, the Ukrainian nationalist movement, which is seeking to end Russian suzerainty in Ukraine, has dedicated a significant portion of its energies to proving that the Soviet treatment of Ukraine in the 1930s and 1940s constituted genocide (Beachler, 2011). In 2008, when Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko traveled to Canada, where a large Ukrainian diaspora carries significant influence, he carried two diplomatic goals: laying the ground work for Ukraine's entry into NATO and official recognition of the Holodomor, the great famine of 1932 and 1933, as genocide (Clark, 2008; Potter, 2008; Wood, 2008). Yushchenko—who was poisoned by dioxin in 2004 in an attack attributed to the Russian government—was one of the stalwarts of the Orange Revolution, leading a movement to strengthen Ukraine's ties to the West and break away from the influence of Russia. Within the context of this political movement, asserting that Stalin orchestrated a genocide in Ukraine in the 1930s become a powerful statement, mobilizing and legitimizing the nationalist movement by drawing a straight line between the direct control of Moscow over Ukraine in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and the Russian Federation's influence over Ukraine in the 2000s. The implicit claim was that Russian political, social, and economic dominance over Ukraine today is a direct consequence of the genocide of the 1930s, which brought Ukraine under the orbit of Moscow through a campaign of Russification. This genocide discourse sought to cast Ukrainians, as a group, as historical victims of Moscow to legitimize the nationalist movement's current efforts to economically and politically break away from Moscow and align Ukraine with the European Union (see Motyl, 2017).

When Yushchenko's successor Viktor Yanukovich was elected through the support of his of Russian-speaking political base, the Ukrainian government backed away from all claims that the Soviet Union had committed genocide in an attempt to "Russify" Ukraine. When Yanukovich was driven from power in popular protests in 2014, Russian troops invaded the country to secure Russian interests in the Donbas region and Crimea. The genocide discourse amongst Ukrainian political parties seeking to align the country with the European Union and NATO reemerged after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, especially when evidence began to emerge that the new Russian-backed authorities in Crimea were marginalizing and dispossessing ethnic Tatar communities (Blank, 2015; Korostelina, 2015; Uehling, 2015). A growing number of Ukrainian leaders began to cite both the Holodomor and the 1944 genocide of the Crimean Tatars as evidence that the Russian Federation's invasion and support of rebels in the Donbas region and the annexation of Crimea were illegitimate because Moscow's dominance over these regions today is a consequence of the genocides in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Russian government responded by claiming Ukraine was plotting genocide today. The response was a text-book example of political elites crafting a strategic narrative to create public support for armed conflict, while promoting group cohesion. In a broad sense, political life depends on narratives, which individuals use to make sense of the world and their own identity-position within social groups (Somers, 1994), establishing the criteria by which individuals interpret political reality and create knowledge about how to act (Franzosi, 1998; Patterson & Monroe, 1998). Narratives as such, however, are not spontaneous. Political actors—from individual elites to political parties, social movements, and governments—craft stories that influence people to act in certain ways or support certain policies. Political actors can invent narratives of historic victimization at the hands of a particular group in the past in order to justify political suppression, repression, or even mass violence against that group in the present. This dynamic is evident in cases of genocide, from the genocides of Native Americans to genocides in the former Yugoslavia, where political actors couch their attempts to annihilate a group not as a form of self-serving political gain, but as necessary for protecting society from that group (Bergholz, 2016; Madley, 2016; Naimark, 2002).

I argue that the introduction of genocide discourses in these types of strategic narratives can be a powerful motivator of such political and collective action. Genocide discourses within strategic narratives do not present conflicts as conflicts, but primordial struggles between good and evil, which directs political communities towards supporting polices of armed military interventions to suppress genocide. The claim that emerged from Russian government officials that Ukrainian nationalist actors were manufacturing a false history of Soviet genocides was used to present Ukrainian political actors as geo-political imposters and academic amateurs. The corresponding claim that it was Ukrainians who were using this imagined history to justify Ukrainian genocides against ethnic Russians in Ukraine was, in turn, a handy tool for creating a strategic narrative that positioned Ukrainians as deserving political repression. Indeed, the Russian invasion of Crimea and the Donbas region of Ukraine were framed by Moscow as attempts to defend ethnic Russian speakers—a large minority group in Ukraine—from ethnic cleansing and genocide at the hands of chauvinist Ukrainians who falsely demonized Russians as genocidaires and used them as a scapegoat to explain away the country's political and economic struggles (Weiss-Wendt, in press).[1]

As officials in the Russian government began accusing Ukrainians of inciting genocide against Russians, the Russian Foreign Ministry began efforts to thwart support amongst American activists and academics to rec-

[1] Weiss-Wendt (in press) cites "Russia Investigates Ukrainian Top Brass Over 'Genocide'", from the *The Moscow Times* (2 October 2014); and "Bastryrkin: Chislo postradvshikh ot voennykh prestuplenii kievskogo rezhima prevysilo 22000 chelovek", available at http://rusnext.ru/news/1454064729

ognize the Holodomor as genocide. One tactic, designed to present Americans as hypocrites in front of Russian and Russian-speaking Ukrainian audiences, was to claim that the United States had no moral standing to accuse the Soviet Union of genocide in the past because white police officers in the United States kill so many black citizens (Weiss-Wendt, in press). In this sense, the Russian response to accusations of genocide in Ukraine were remarkably similar to the position taken by pro-Russian scholars and Russian diplomats during the brief war with Georgia in 2008 over the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, when they argued that Russia's military intervention in Georgia did not violate international law, but instead upheld the norms of the law because the war was an effort to protect the vulnerable ethnic Russian population from the Georgian governments' human rights violations and genocidal intentions. When challenged, they simply referred to Western intervention in Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya that were legitimized under slogans of genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect norm (Irvin-Erickson, 2017a; Rubenstein, 2017). The position coming from the Moscow government was surprisingly frank. If the United States and Western Europe could arbitrarily pick which group was an innocent victim of genocide (or a potential victim of genocide), to legitimize a foreign war in the name of the victims, then why couldn't Russia arbitrarily pick who to defend or not defend?

In 2015, the Russian justice department labeled Lemkin's (1953/2014) essay on the Soviet genocide in Ukraine, written in 1953, as "extremist literature", further escalating the war of words in the genocide discourse and officially censoring the writings of someone who is largely considered a human rights hero, but who is considered an anti-Russian chauvinist in Russia (Irvin-Erickson, 2017a, pp. 48–50; Russian Ministry of Justice, 2015; Weiss-Wendt, in press). This determination came at a time when academics in Ukraine, the United States, and Canada were beginning to discover Lemkin's writing on Soviet genocides in Ukraine, and the Holodomor. From the perspective of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, and its supporters from Ukrainian diasporas in Canada and the United States, positioning Ukraine collectively as a victim of genocide in the past would confer a sense of historical innocence on Ukraine as a country today, which could be translated into political capital in a geo-political struggle (Beachler, 2011, pp. 147–152). The Russian government tried to establish a counter narrative that negated the claims of victimhood by either drawing Ukraine and the West as morally equivalent to Russia or, better yet, positioning ethnic Russians in Ukraine as the innocent victims of the hypocritical aggressors in Ukraine and the West. The genocide discourse, from both sides of the conflict, sought to manipulate public sentiments about innocence and guilt through the language of genocide to legitimize certain positions in the armed conflict—with great effort amongst Ukrainian political movements to translate this into a stronger response from Western countries in support of the Ukrainian position, and attempts by Moscow to counter this moralizing discourse with a discourse of moral equivalency.

The Russian government's genocide narrative—though it did not persuade international audiences of Ukraine's illegitimacy—created a framework to promote group cohesion amongst the public in Russia and amongst Russian speakers in Ukraine to rally support for Russian military action and Moscow's political goals in Ukraine (Balzer, 2015). But these dynamics are not unique to the Russian government's attempts to rationalize an invasion of Ukraine. They are likewise on full display in attempts in the United States to understand and frame American conflicts in Iraq and Syria, and understand how to act.

4. The United States and the Islamic State

In the humanitarian intervention and genocide prevention traditions, witnesses and bystanders to genocide and mass atrocities are conceptualized as parties to the conflict—taking an implicit side against the victims by virtue of their self-perceived neutrality and their unwillingness or inability to act in defense of the victims (Charny, 2016, p. 8). The victims, meanwhile, are presented as not being parties to the conflict. Thus the conflict, in genocide, is presented as being between the perpetrators and the rest of humanity. Therefore—as an extension of this logical frame—the goal of the advocacy movement against genocide is to move state actors and international organizations from their neutral positions (which is seen as pitting them against the victims) into taking actions in defense of the victims, or to prevent and prosecute genocide.

A significant boost to the movement to intervene humanitarianly in defense of the victims of ISIL genocide came with a June 2016 determination by the UN Human Rights Council that genocide was being committed against Yezidis, a claim substantiated in a report to the UN Human Rights Council by the independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (Dieng & Welsh, 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/32/CRP.2). The finding gave spirit to movements to pressure states to officially recognize the genocide of Yezidis, with the goal of activating states' treaty-obligations under the UN Genocide Convention to protect civilians and prevent and prosecute the genocide (Kikoler, 2015; Stanton, 2015). There were also groups that wanted a legal determination of genocide in order to aid international efforts to resettle Yezidis as refugees.[2] Christian groups in the United States were especially effective in mobilizing pressure on congressional representatives to pressure the State Department to include Christians as victims of ISIL genocide, in an effort to legitimize wide humanitarian protections and expansive refugee acceptance policies in the

[2] For recent continuations of the argument, see *Open Letter of Cross-Party British PMs to Home Secretary Amber Rudd*, 17 November 2016, available at https://gallery.mailchimp.com/cbe8d3ab1c3cb6ca29607bbe2/files/1611_Iraqi_Religious_Minorities_Letter.pdf

United States (Toosi, 2015, 2016). This movement culminated in a resolution before the House of Representatives, which passed unanimously, determining that ISIL was committing genocide against Christians and Yezidis (Congress, 2015). The determination that ISIL was committing genocide against Christians, in addition to Yezidis, became an important factor in the discourses employed by lobby groups in the United States who wanted to resettle ISIL victims in the United States as refugees (Knights of Columbus & In Defense of Christians, 2016).

However, the genocide discourse to recognize the Christian victims of ISIL genocides emerged from within the context of a larger strategic narrative taking shape in the United States, which was placing increasing pressure on President Obama's administration between 2015 and 2016 to frame United States foreign policy and humanitarian policy in group-selective religious terms. The inclusion of Christians as victims of genocide along with the Yezidis, in the context of this second genocide discourse, created a problem for the Obama administration. With the emergence of a growing genocide discourse that was not orientated towards changing United States foreign policy to expand humanitarian relief to victims, but rather to orientate United States policy towards eradiating ISIL militarily, any statement that genocide was being committed only against Yezidis and Christians would appear to be disregarding the deaths of Muslims at the hands of ISIL. The Obama administration faced a dilemma. To include Christians and Yezidis as the only recognized victims of genocide would make it appear that the United States was drawing a distinction between the victims of ISIL violence, to suggest that the deaths of Muslims were not as morally reprehensible as the deaths of non-Muslims. This was despite the fact that individuals from all religious groups were dying brutally at the hands of ISIL fighters, in the same conflict—and despite the fact that the genocide discourse employed by Catholic lobby groups was intended to use a common Christian identity to expand humanitarian sentiments amongst Western Christians to all victims of ISIL violence.

Yet, including Muslims as the victims of ISIL genocides—in the perspective of many—would be tantamount to denying the genocide against Yezidis and Christians, or tantamount to denying that ISIL was genocidal. Before exploring why, it is worth noting that this put the Obama administration in a political bind. With pressure mounting on the Obama administration, the United States Department of State attempted to finesse the dilemma, and determined that ISIL was committing genocide in Syria and Iraq against Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims (Kerry, 2016). Secretary of State John Kerry (2016) included Shiite Muslims in his official statement, noting that the Islamic State was seeking to "cleanse the land of [Shiite] filth". But he conveniently left out Sunni Muslims as victims of ISIL genocide—even though Sunni Muslims were being killed by ISIL in much the same manner as the other victims. If the list of victims could be expanded to include these different religious minorities, why not add Kurds and Sunnis to the list of ISIL victims of genocide, as well?

The absence of Sunnis as a victim of ISIL genocide within the genocide discourse implies that, because ISIL is based geographically in historically Sunni Arab lands, and because it is a self-proclaimed Sunni movement, its victims of genocide would not be Sunni. ISIL fighters and leaders might target Sunnis for death and terror, according to this logic, but not genocide. This is despite the fact that a majority of the cities and towns destroyed, and the millions of people displaced, by ISIL violence are Sunni. Human rights monitors have documented ISIL enslavement, rape, massacre, and kidnapping of Sunni victims—the same kinds of atrocities ISIL has committed against members of all other groups (Sly, 2016; Tayler, 2017; Wille, 2016a). This genocide discourse, which removes Sunnis from being recognized as victims of ISILS genocide, implies that Sunni Muslims are a monolithic group, where the atrocities committed by Sunni actors (ISIL) impugns the whole group of Sunni Muslims. Thus, Sunni Muslims become collectively guilty of ISIL attempts to destroy entire groups—guilty of genocide. Likewise, for those who advocate for a narrative that ISIL is committing genocide against Christians and Yezidis, and thus leave out Muslims as victims of genocide, the ISIL targeting of all Muslims is not presented as genocide. The reasoning is simple. The axiom of the genocide discourse that demands that the victims of genocide must be moral innocents and the perpetrators morally bad creates a situation where one group cannot commit genocide against themselves. Thus, from this discursive framing, to claim that Sunnis were both victims and perpetrators of genocide against Sunnis is nonsensical. The notion that the victim group is also the perpetrator group invalidates the notion that the victim group is morally innocent—which means, according to this frame, that they cannot be the victims of genocide. Likewise, to view ISIL genocides as a genocide of Muslims against Yezidis and Christians excludes Muslims from ranks of victims of genocide.

The framing of the violence as such, to suggest that Sunnis cannot be the victims of ISIL genocide (because ISIL is a Sunni group), or that Muslims cannot be the victims of ISIL genocide (because ISIL is a Muslim group), is social scientifically unsound and politically dangerous. The framing sets in motion a discourse of placing collective blame for ISIL violence on Sunni Islam, or all of Islam (Tayler, 2017; Wille, 2016b). If Muslims are the perpetrators of genocide, then their victims—Yezidis, Christians—are moral innocents, which confers upon the perpetrator a corresponding sense of evil intrinsic to their group identity. The attempt by the Obama administration to finesse the problem and list Shia Muslims as victims, therefore, did not change the fundamental axioms of the genocide discourse, but only reified the reductionist tendency of genocide discourses to collapse the complexities of the conflict into simple calculations of good and evil. Within a year, it would therefore be possible to discern a clear genocide discourse in the United States that advocated

exterminating ISIL, and presented ISIL as an intrinsically evil social group of radical Islamists, or even an evil social group of all Muslims. Calls to exterminate ISIL, or radical Islamists, or even all Muslims, were therefore presented not as genocide, but a form of social protection against the threat of genocide posed by this group (with some suggesting the genocidal threat was posed by ISIL, others arguing it was posed by radical Sunni Islamists, and others still citing Islam as the genocidal threat). What is more, when genocide becomes the operative lens through which ISIL (or Sunnis, or Islam) was conceptualized, then the prevention of genocide is not seen as involving the resolution of differences between groups because there can be no resolution between good victims and bad perpetrators. Sociological or political projects that deal with the implications of identity that underscore intergroup conflicts and genocidal processes were likewise dismissed as naïve, since it was (is) believed that there is no group conflict to resolve. The solution, rather, was seen as applying external violence to sweep away the genocidal threat posed by ISIL (or Sunnis, or Islam).

The public discourse and the policy conversations in the United States about how to respond to ISIL, therefore, were no more sophisticated than the essentialist discussions of anti-totalitarianism in generations past. In presenting ISIL as evil, an evil that is simultaneously engendered by every Sunni and no one in particular, the motives for ISIL violence collapse into the violence itself. The tautology that took hold in strategic narratives in the United States undermined any kind of coherent attempt to respond to the violence in political or sociological terms. Preventing ISIL violence, therefore, was about stopping those who will be killers from killing, not about understanding the ethical decisions people face, the reasons why people lend their support to ISIL's genocidal program when they would otherwise stand opposed, why people remain bystanders, why they find they cannot resist, and how and why people make decisions to act upon their knowledge, either resisting or collaborating to different degrees.

With the construction of an all-encompassing evil Islamic enemy, movements in the United States to increase the number of refugees accepted into the United States, and efforts to expand humanitarian relief by forcing the United States to officially recognizes that ISIL was committing genocide, collapsed. The initial movements deploying a genocide discourse to motivate broad and inclusive humanitarian responses gave way to a strategic narrative that cast the perpetrator group as intrinsically evil, and sought to legitimize greater uses of American military power in Syria and Iraq in the name of confronting evil. Thus the genocide discourse that prevailed in the United States argued against accepting victims of ISIL genocide as refugees for fear that their children, as members of an intrinsically evil group, might be sympathetic to ISIL or radical Islam. The organizing framework for collective action became one of orientating United States foreign policy around specifically Christian interests, coupled with calls to violently eradicate ISIL as a social group as the only solution to the genocides committed by ISIL. With the genocide discourse underpinning these frameworks, the ability for American policy makers, leaders, and civil society movements to think clearly or ethically about the conflict eroded.

The efforts of George W. Bush to combat a tendency to frame United States foreign policy in religious terms have been well-documented. In his now-famous address on 17 September 2001 at the Islamic Center of Washington, DC, Bush sought to prevent United States foreign policy from being perceived as being at war with a religion, and address a rise in anti-Muslim hate crimes in the country in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks.[3] Likewise, the Obama administration and Secretary of State John Kerry worked to ensure United States foreign policy could not be construed as being anti-Islam (Kerry, 2014). But the intervening years between 2001 and 2016 saw an awakening of a popular movement across American society to position United States foreign policy in explicitly Christian terms—despite 16 years of efforts from the country's political elites from both major parties to stem this trend. By the second Republican Party primary presidential debate on 16 September 2015, the mood of the nation had shifted dramatically.[4]

During the debate, a consensus emerged amongst the candidates that Islam was an existential threat to Western civilization. This consensus took on a feeling of urgency with the prospect of nuclear-armed Iran and the rise of ISIL. While the candidates were careful to only say they would fight against "radicals", their rhetorical construction of Western civilization as Jewish and Christian placed all of world-Islam outside the boundaries of the Western, the American, and the "us". One prevalent narrative in the United States is that American foreign policy should stand in defense of "Western civilization". The strategic narrative creates a sense of coherence in what would otherwise be an arbitrary determination about who is a friend and who is an enemy, and which societies are desirable to include within the American security community and which are necessary to exclude (Jackson, 2003). Thus all Islam became implicitly radical, a world-force excluded from the West that must be combated. The message affirmed the candidates' anti-Muslim credentials to those who would vote solely on anti-Muslim grounds, while allowing the candidates to plausibly deny any such prejudice to the general American public. The fact that ISIL and Iran were in conflict with each other, positioned on antagonistic geopolitical poles, was irrelevant within the strategic narrative that

[3] The video and transcript is archived by the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, available at https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/george-w-bush-on-islam-and-terrorism–3

[4] All citations to the debate come from *Time*, "Transcript: Read the Full Text of the Second Republican Debate, September 16, 2015", available at http://time.com/4037239/second-republican-debate-transcript-cnn

positioned both actors as united in their opposition to America and the "West". Also irrelevant was any meaningful distinction between the strategic goals of these different actors and acts of violence, so that any terrorist threat to the United States posed by ISIL was presented as being an expression of their genocidal conduct, and part of a larger Muslim plot to destroy America. Thus, an outside observer might draw objective distinctions between an act of terrorism and an act of genocide, but the presidential candidates had forged a narrative where an act of terrorism committed against the United States by an Islamic actor would necessarily be a reflection of a "radical Islamic" genocidal objective.

American voters had every reason to worry about nuclear weapons falling into the hands of a government in Iran whose leaders have denied the Holocaust and called for the destruction of the Jews of Israel. But this was not the argument being made. Instead, the candidates likened the struggle to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran to a struggle between two civilizations with destinies structured like a zero-sum game, the Jewish and Christian West versus the Islamic other. Towards the end of the three-hour debate, John Kasich—who along with Jeb Bush urged tolerance and defended the principles of an individual human rights based approach to world affairs—evoked the memory of the Holocaust directly, saying: "One more time in America, we need to revive the concept of citizenship, where everybody's actions make a huge difference in changing the world. We have a Holocaust memorial on our state house grounds. And there is one line on there that stands out all the time: 'If you've saved one life, you've changed the world'". In the 16 September debate, Kasich likened the Nazi German attempt to destroy the Jews to the threat posed to Western civilization by a nuclear-armed Iran and radical Islamic terrorists. The timing of the reference to the Holocaust was opportune in the debate, imbuing a sense of moral purpose into his call that America revive a unified concept of citizenship. But the sentence also harkened back to something he had said two sentences earlier—that America had to rebuild relationships with "our allies" so that, united, "we'll fight for freedom and for human rights". To the casual listener, Kasich was speaking in the usual platitudes of the Holocaust as a lesson about defending citizenship and human rights. But he had already asserted that the Iran nuclear agreement would be a positive force in world affairs because it would allow for the "military option" if "we find out that they may be developing a nuclear weapon". And, at the same time, he added, the agreement provides a framework for working with allies in "Western civilization, our friends in Europe", to restrain Iranian geopolitical ambitions. The fight for revitalizing citizenship and human rights that Kasich infused with moral purpose through his reference to the Holocaust was therefore bound up within the struggle against Iran (and vice-versa), which ultimately demanded the unity of Western civilization to face this Islamic threat to its existence. What was this thing Kasich was calling Western civilization? Whatever it was, he saw it as Jewish and Christian.

This sentiment was soon echoed by Mike Huckabee, who claimed that the Iran deal "is really about the survival of Western civilization". A nuclear Iran, the former governor of Arkansas concluded, threatens "the very essence of Western civilization". Later, Kasich went on to explain his theory of world affairs, linking together the Iranian regime and ISIL into one coherent threat to the United States, stating that "Western civilization, all of us, need to wake up to the fact that those murderers and rapists need to be called out, and in Western civilization we need to make it clear that our faith in the Jewish and Christian principals force us to live a life bigger than ourselves". Through this context, what Kasich meant by his reference to the Holocaust became clear, and tangible. The Holocaust was a benchmark that the American public should use to measure the threat that Iran and ISIL pose to the existence of the West. It was a strategic narrative that collapsed distinctions between different Sunni movements, between Sunni and Shia groups, between state adversaries and non-state actors, into a single category of Islam set in a genocidal struggle against the West. The genocide discourse Kasich deployed—although it advocated for an inclusive, and human-rights based reference point to orientate a compassionate United States foreign policy—contained the seeds of its own demise. Kasich's construction of a Judeo–Christian West that was fundamentally good, in the context of the genocide discourse he set forth, allowed for the silent implication that the Muslim Middle East was intrinsically evil. This—in the debate an in the wider public discourse—allowed for the rise of a new genocide discourse that undermined Kasich's own human-rights based policy prescriptions.

What were Kasich's unstated assumptions about Islam embedded in the statement? Firstly, Western civilization was Jewish and Christian. And, by extension, "radical" Islam would have no place in a world that was safe for Jewish and Christian civilization. Secondly, in so far as Jewish and Christian principles allowed for individuals to "live a life bigger than ourselves", Islam would drive people down into something less, thus fulfilling the prior expectation that Islam had no place in a world safe for "us". Kasich's human rights based position, therefore, could not separate itself from the non-human rights based approach advocated by Huckabee, which opened the door for Ted Cruz to promise to kill all of the radical Islamists in the world. Ben Carson had already said in the first debate that he would ignore the Geneva Conventions and torture Islamic enemies of the United States, and a few days later he suggested that a Muslim would be unqualified to be president of the United States because a Muslim, by virtue of his group membership, could not share American values (Bradner, 2015).[5] The rhetoric of these

[5] See *Time*, "Transcript: Read the Full Text of the Primetime Republican Debate, August 6, 2015", available at http://time.com/3988276/republican-debate-primetime-transcript-full-text

four politicians—Kasich, Huckabee, Carson, and Cruz—was highly purposefully, categorically collapsing world Islam into ISIL, and thereby into genocidal terror. They were not against Islam, but against radical Islam. Yet they had constructed a vision of Islam that presented all Islam as essentially radical, as a monolithic group that exists outside of the boundaries of the West, whose existence in the world posed an existential threat to the existence of Western civilization, which was Jewish and Christian. In this genocide discourse, which effectively prevented clear and ethical thinking, it became impossible to distinguish Kasich's nuanced and moral position from the blunt moralizing of the larger strategic narrative taking shape.

This second genocide discourse, as a "bottom-up" narrative emanating from political activists in United States civil society that was picked up and articulated by political elites such as Huckabee and Cruz, succeeded in defining the terms of engagement with United States foreign policy against Islam. The movement eventually found a political articulation in the eventual Republican nominee, and later United States president, Donald Trump, who embraced the discourse of Muslim genocides being committed against Christians, and linked ISIL, al Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah into a single genocidal movement (Fredericks, 2016; Trump, 2017); called for a ban on all Muslims entering the United States and immediately attempted to partially enact that ban in his first month in office (Fields, 2015); selected a National Security Advisor who believed Islam was a political ideology and that the United States was at war with Islam (Kaczynski, 2016); appointed a top advisor who believed the United States had a duty to reject secularism and eradicate Islam from United States society while combatting Islam overseas (Harkinson, 2016; Mallin, 2017); and unapologetically stated that the United States should privilege accepting Christian refugees because the second-generation of Muslim immigrants in the United States could become terrorists, and then rejected accepting all refugees from Muslim countries on the grounds that some of the Christians might be Muslims who, though they are victims of ISIL today, would produce future decedents of Muslims who would be terror threats because they were Muslims (Brody, 2017; Memoli, 2016). In so doing, the genocide discourse of ISIL genocides established, discursively, an image of an American political community as a distinctly Christian community—Christian in its values and goals, and in the stakes of its international and domestic struggles—without having to define the content of that identity, define what it meant to be Christian or American, or think clearly about what a "Christian" or "American" ethics would look like in the face of the challenge of responding to genocide. The honest and inclusive attempts to employ a genocide discourse that used a Christian identity to bridge sympathy between Americans and ISIL victims of genocide and increase the number of refugees accepted into the United States thereby gave way, over the course of two or three years, to a strategic discourse that brought about its very antithesis.

5. Conclusions

Politically, the strategic narratives I have termed genocide discourses are highly effective in legitimizing certain kinds of political actions—from legitimizing certain wars to guiding decisions about which parties in local or regional conflicts should be supported by powerful countries. Such narratives simultaneously cast the perpetrators as evil, the victims as innocent, and prescribe external violence as the only means of defending the good. In the context of United States foreign policy, the effect is to place Sunnis (or all Muslims) beyond what Helen Fein (1993, p. 59) termed "the universe of moral obligation" of a Christian American community and foreign policy. In the context of Iraqi politics, the genocide discourse also reifies the sentiments of Shiite officials in the Iraqi government who have a material interest in socially and politically marginalizing Sunni groups and casting the stakes of political struggle in Iraq in religious terms. In both cases, the strategic narratives that deploy the concept of genocide to describe the actions or identity of the other reify themselves in a self-fulfilling prophesy, helping create the social conditions that serve as evidence of their existence (Cobb, 2013, p. 4)—evidence that the social, political, and moral constellation of the human universe really is divided along a Christian/Muslim axis (or a Shia/Sunni axis). But it also sets in motion the kinds of reductionist thinking that locates the criteria for ethically judging responses to actions within the act that must be judged. Because ethics presupposes the ability to make a choice—and genocide discourses are designed to remove the sense that one has a choice—the genocide discourses explored in this article push elected officials, policy makers, and the public more generally in America and Russia towards inserting themselves into a violent conflict on behalf of particular parties, while casting the American and Russian positions in conflicts as the side of the good.

A kind of reciprocal annihilation becomes the imagined solution to genocide, in so far as the total annihilation of a supposedly evil social group is presented as the only way to prevent the total annihilation of a supposedly pure and innocent victim group. In the context of the conflict in Ukraine sparked by the clandestine Russian invasion of Crimea and the Donbas region, the argument amongst Ukrainian nationalists that Soviet genocides were an attempt to "Russify" Ukraine in order to subject Ukraine to the political authority of Moscow legitimizes and grounds calls to remove Russian influences from Ukraine as a solution to Ukraine's political and economic problems (Motyl, 2017). Likewise, the prevarications from Moscow about Ukrainian genocides against ethnic Russians are effective tools for conjuring up domestic support for an aggressive foreign war and annexing large portions of Ukraine (Motyl, 2017, p. 360).

In the context of United States politics, the genocide discourses are operating in much the same way, calling to mind solutions to genocides in Iraq and Syria that rely

on reductionist and essentialist thinking about parties in conflict. Such genocide discourses frame external violence deployed against ISIL (or Sunni Muslims, or even all of Islam) as a regenerative force—a source of grace in defense of the innocent—that can bring peace out of genocide. What drops out of political discourse, and what drops out of the movements and policies they inspire, is any serious conversation about the ethics and efficacy of such interventions, or any thought about how peace is supposed to be forged after wiping away the totalitarian/genocidal ISIL movement. The same can be said for Ukrainian and Russian accusations of each other as genocidal. This is because, in eliminating the social group that seeks to eliminate entire social groups, the promise of peace is not believed to be located in the political and social realms of conflict. Rather, the promise of peace itself is taken as implicit in the morally sanctioned violence that purifies society of sources of evil.

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Article

Normal Peace: A New Strategic Narrative of Intervention

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Abstract
International actors have used multiple discursive frameworks for justifying interventions, from human security to the responsibility to protect, and, most recently, resilience-building. We argue that the language of normalization, hidden behind these narratives of interventions, has also contributed to structure the intervention landscape, albeit in less obvious and overt ways than other competing narratives of intervention. This article disentangles the different practices of normalization in order to highlight their ramifications. It introduces the concept of *normal peace*—a new conceptual reference to understand interventions undertaken by the international community to *impose*, *restore* or *accept* normalcy in turbulent societies. The article argues that the optimization of interventions entails selective responses to govern risk and adapt to the transitional international order. The art of what is politically possible underlines the choice of optimal intervention, be that to impose an external order of normalcy, restore the previous order of normalcy, or accept the existing order of normalcy.

Keywords
international intervention; normal peace; normalization; peacebuilding; resilience

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1. Introduction

The narratives of normalcy and normalization have been present for some time in the social practices of peacebuilding and in broader International Relations (IR) debates, but there has been a lack of explicit effort to theorize their meaning(s) in practice. The notion of 'normalization' in the IR discipline has more often than not been used interchangeably with the notion of 'peace', and the re-establishment of diplomatic relations (Bull, 1977). In peace and conflict studies, normalcy is invoked interchangeably as a normative goal of peacebuilding, as an intermediary measurement of success towards sustainable peace, or as a processual mechanism facilitating other post-conflict processes (e.g. 'reconciliation' or 'good governance'). For instance, the United Nations (UN) has used normalcy in parallel to the notions of peace, stability, and reconstruction (UN General Assembly and Security Council, 2005, p. 19). Certain UN policy documents explicitly treat normalcy as a passage to peace consolidation and recovery (UN Peacebuilding Support Office, 2012). In other instances, normalcy is invoked as a politics of care towards local subjects and an aspirational mechanism for generating local acceptance and validity for the external rulers (UN, 2008). Similarly, the European Union (EU) has started to invoke 'normalization-building' as a rationale for describing its conflict-resolution and crisis-management operations abroad. Javier Solana, the EU's first High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, argued that 'crisis

management missions have been at the heart of the EU's stabilisation and normalisation efforts in the Balkans' (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2013, p. 3). How should we make sense of these very diverse narratives of normalcy? This paper argues that these different praxeological invocations of normalcy and normalization have not been given the level of interest that they deserve in the field of IR, and peace and conflict studies more precisely, for two main reasons. First, because these social practices have been subsumed within other general interpretative categories (see, for instance, the vibrant literature on 'liberal peacebuilding', but also the Responsibility to Protect, the human security or resilience literatures), which have obscured more than revealed normalization practices. Second, when normalcy and normalization narratives and practices have been specifically analysed, specific form of interventions have generally been treated separately and in disconnection with the knowledge base in IR and in peace and conflict studies that gives meaning to these normalcy interventions. In this article, we will mobilize—in more an illustrative than a systematic fashion—three specific literatures in the field of peace and conflict studies, with the aim of linking these literatures with specific sets of normalization practices: fragile states and liberal peacebuilding (*imposing normalcy*), resilience (*restoring normalcy*) and indigeneity and authenticity (*accepted normalcy*).

We argue in this article that normalization can be understood as a reformulation of existing governmentality practices, while at the same time representing a new strategic narrative that seeks to legitimate existing interventionary practices, and when necessary to adjust to the fluid international order. We assemble the broad variety of discourses and practices on normalization in peacebuilding, and make sense of these interventionary practices by presenting them in a continuum of practices of domination and of the management of individuals and societies: from the imposition to the restoration and acceptance of normalcy. The fluidity and optimization of discourses and practices of normalcy articulated through an assemblage of interventionary measures (Visoka, 2017b) represent a will to govern which is not necessary attached to liberal normative frameworks, but constantly changes the referent objects of intervention.

The first mode of normalization, *imposing normalcy*, implies external intervention in a particular society considered as being 'abnormal' due to the experience of violent conflict or being generally considered 'fragile' and in need of intervention. These societies are conceptualized as in dire need of normalization through the imposition of external blueprints of normalcy, in the form of norms, rules, standards, practices in distinct areas of governance, institutions, economy, social relations, and culture. The second mode of normalization, *restoring normalcy*, encompasses practices that seek to restore a society to its previous condition, a condition deemed normal and acceptable for international and local actors after experiencing a particular difficulty that required external assistance. The third and final form of normalization, *accepting normalcy*, implies the acceptance of a particular local version of normalcy by external actors, as either a strategic withdrawal of governance responsibilities or ontological permutation of difference. We refer to these three sets of social practices taken together as *normal peace*, which lies at the intersection between the governmentality of other and 'the self', enabling specific forms of intervention to regulate or deal altogether with the societies deemed 'abnormal' or 'dysfunctional'. This discussion echoes Roberto Esposito's discussion of the immunological pursuit of self-preservation against the other as a progressive 'interiorization of exteriority'. What remains constant for Esposito is 'the place where the threat is located, always on the border between the inside and the outside, between the self and the other, the individual and the common' (Esposito, 2008, p. 2). It is the recognition that the other is not simply external to me, which is to say, other to me (Donà, 2006, p. 57). It 'takes the outside inside' (Donà, 2006, pp. 57–58) and forms a dialectic of the excluding inclusion or inclusive exclusion.

Three modes of normalization elaborated in great length in this article constitute the dominant narrative of normal peace, which encompasses a broad range of fluid narratives and strategic frameworks for making sense of intervention and non-interventions in the turbulent societies. In this context, *normal peace* can be defined as a set of governmentality practices aimed at disciplining and regulating societies deemed 'abnormal' or 'dysfunctional' through wide-ranging forms of interventions. In turn, normalization practices—imposing, restoring, and accepting normalcy—are 'made possible' by specific discourses (Foucault, 1988, p. 19). In our case, three specific discourses, or more appropriately knowledge, enable normal peace practices: the failed or fragile states discourse and its counterpart, the liberal peacebuilding discourse, are associated with imposing peace; the discourse on resilience is associated with restoring normalcy; and the discourse on indigeneity is associated with accepted normalcy. These discourses, associated with the underlying sets of practices, in turn, inherently shape the governmentality practices behind normal peace. The governmentality of normal peace lies, then, at the intersection between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self, and the interplay between the two enables different actors to create the subjects of interventions as well as to legitimize specific forms of international peacebuilding interventions.

Accordingly, unveiling various mutations of new strategic narratives governing international interventions and their unprincipled and political interests has far-reaching consequences for the normative credibility of Western democracies and global institutions. This paper is organized as follows. First, we explore the concepts of normalcy and normalization by linking them with the work of Foucault. We then explore in more detail the technologies of normalization in the specific context of peacebuilding interventions by looking alternatively at

imposed, *restored*, and *accepted normalcy*. The paper concludes with a problematization of the contemporary politics of normalization by looking at the ramifications of the *normal peace* agenda.

2. On Being and Becoming Normal

Narratives are important epistemological categories for making sense of social world. In essence, narratives represent condensed interpretation of meanings, norms, values, events, social facts, and experiences (see: Elliott, 2005; Herman & Vervaeck, 2001). They can take the shape of policy discourses, stories, and textual and performative articulations. Conceptual narratives of normalcy and normalization have been variously defined in different disciplines, making the notions essentially contested and contingent on semantic interpretations. For a start, Sigmund Freud is often associated with the conceptualization of normalcy—through his psychoanalytical perspective—while Michel Foucault has been at the forefront of developing a critical account of the historicity of normalization practices; Freud engaged in exploring the inner constraints of normalization (Ipperciel, 1998), whereas Foucault focused on the external forces, powers, and technologies of normalization. While Freud's perspective is to a certain extent relevant for our study, we are more interested in exploring the external dimensions of normalization through the prism of different technologies of knowledge and practice. Foucault approached normalcy and normalization from the perspective of the biopolitics of power, governmentality, and disciplinary technologies. He has been highly influential in developing critical accounts in peace and security studies, which led to the development of the field of international political sociology (see indicatively: Bonditti, Bigo, & Gros, 2017). While Foucault's work on bio-politics, resistance, and governmentality has been extensively applied to the subfield of peace and conflict studies, his work on normalization has been examined more often than not indirectly as a by-product of other related notions. Foucault held that the idea of normalization is to impose precise norms without having to resort to punishment, thus representing the most 'advanced' form of interventionism in society. Essentially, the production of norms is the production of power, which requires people to change their practices to ensure conformity with collective social norms (Taylor, 2009, p. 52). For Foucault (2003, p. 50), the norm is an 'element on the basis of which a certain exercise of power is founded and legitimized'. Thus, normalization is the hidden governance of social relations in the wake of modernity and the perceived necessity for governing all aspects of society. The purpose of disciplinary technology is to ensure the compliance of society with certain norms, where the punishment is hidden in the institutional mechanisms of governance. Hence, normalization is:

> a system of finely gradated and measurable intervals in which individuals can be distributed around a norm—a norm which both organizes and is the result of this controlled distribution. A system of normalization is opposed to a system of law or a system of personal power. (Robinow, 1984, p. 20)

As Foucault (2003, p. 50) holds, 'the norm's function is not to exclude and reject. Rather, it is always linked to a positive technique of intervention and transformation, to a sort of normative project'.

For Foucault, the normal is determined through its opposite—the abnormal—whereby the differentiation of these two constitutes their distinctions. The practice of this distinction between normal and abnormal enables the delineation of identity and the production of power. Abnormality has historically evolved through the practice of 'expert medico-legal opinion', which holds the power to determine the field of normal from the abnormal. Through the discussion of abnormality, Foucault (2003, p. 61) tried to explain the 'technology of human abnormality', which for him 'appears precisely when a regular network of knowledge and power has been established that brings the three figures together or, at any rate, invests them with the same system of regularities'. This conception of abnormality then, in turn, allows or justifies psychiatric and administrative interventions. This signifies that the technology of normalization requires the creation and classification of anomalies and deviations, as well as the isolation or reformation of these abnormal individuals through coercive, corrective, or therapeutic interventions. Foucault also argues that the imposition of a particular regime of normalcy and homogeneity goes hand in hand with the production and systematization of knowledge, which supports the normalization of social affairs. This hegemony of normalcy is the main trigger of resistance, which seeks to normalize another set of phenomena, which are perceived as being abnormal (Bigo, 2008, p. 99). Hence, for Foucault, questioning norms and unmasking their effects on power opens up many possibilities for preserving and expanding freedom (Taylor, 2009, p. 46). Normalization can hardly be considered to contribute to the politics of empowerment simply because its very logic is situated on the binary between the forces that possess the knowledge and authority to normalize others and the devalued, discredited ones who are deviant and 'in need of treatment'. Every practice of normalization results in a process of marginalization and exclusion of other practices deemed abnormal.

3. How Things Become (Ab)Normal: Normalization in Practice

During the Cold War era, interventions to discipline and regulate societies were mostly reframed and understood, by academics and policy-makers alike, through the lens of ideological affiliation and a bipolar world order. After the age of bipolar rivalry, post-Cold War interventions have been framed, rather, within the strategic nar-

ratives of humanitarian intervention, human security and the responsibility to protect, liberal peacebuilding, and resilience. These multiple narratives serve to cast light from a specific angle, obscuring other phenomena in the process. While specific references to normalcy and normalization have been and are still frequent in interventionary discourses, they have been subsumed within wider analytical categories and have hence lost all their specific and autonomous meanings (see Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017). It is therefore central to understanding practices of normalization in the context of intervention and peacebuilding to explore specific techniques that the international community—defined here as formal and informal assemblages of state and non-state actors around the UN, regional organizations or more *ad hoc* coalitions—invoke to deal with 'turbulent societies' that represent a threat to or disturbance of what is perceived as a normal state of affairs in the society of states. Understanding the politics of normalization requires exploring the technologies of selectivity, namely when to consider something normal and when to brand it as 'abnormal', when to intervene to impose and restore normalcy, and when to conveniently accept the heterogeneity of normalcy and co-exist with other 'abnormalities'.

3.1. Imposed Normalcy: Creating Liberal Subjects

Externally imposed normalcy has been particularly salient in post-conflict societies affected by civil war and internal violent conflict, through stabilization, peacebuilding, and statebuilding interventions (Lemay-Hébert, 2009; Visoka, 2016a). Imposed normalcy practices are made possible through a specific reading and mapping of the world as being composed of 'strong', 'efficient', and hence 'sovereign' states at one end of the spectrum, and weak, failed, and collapsed states in need of transformation and intervention at the other. Framing conflict-affected societies as 'abnormal', 'violent', 'illiberal', or 'fragile' justifies external intervention to impose normalcy. These signifiers, each in their own way, act as prescriptive terms, 'employed in connection with the contemplation and execution of international involvement' (Jackson, 2004, p. 22). Hence, imposed normalcy takes all its meanings through an approach of *abnormalization* of specific societies seen as unable to manage their own affairs or 'perform functions necessary to meet citizens' basic needs and expectations' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2008; on a critical take on OECD's interpretation of fragile states, see Lemay-Hébert & Mathieu, 2014). The process of abnormalization may involve an assemblage of different techniques, such as discursive statements, framing of events, and audio-visual evidence, which help constitute over time a particular image of abnormality. This process of abnormalization of local societies might disregard local knowledge and practices which can be considered normal in Western societies. However, without such discursive abnormalization intervention might be deemed as unnecessary, which is not what external actors often desire.

In this context, state 'performance' becomes the yardstick of normalcy, whereby liberal democracies are instituted as models of governance (Lemay-Hébert, 2013). Normalcy is defined as a fairly specific set of functions every state is supposed to perform (seen through a technocratic or institutionalist lens, i.e. what requirements the state should meet) and as a set of ideals to which actors and institutions have to conform (through a normative lens, i.e. how the state should meet its requirements). This enables the ranking of states according to their performance, which leads to the identification of the 'core of monstrosity behind little abnormalities' (Foucault, 2003, p. 56). The discourse on fragile and failed states is directly linked with practices of normalization, thereby legitimizing the imposition of a particular normalcy in countries considered pathologically ill or unable (or unwilling) to govern themselves. If we follow existing statistics and rankings of state performance, there are currently 34 fragile states, and over 60 per cent of the world's population live in undemocratic societies. This naturally opens up perspectives of intervention in these 'dysfunctional' societies. As Caroline Hughes and Vanessa Pupavac (2005, p. 873) argue, this global discourse 'fixes culpability for war on the societies in question, rendering the domestic populations dysfunctional while casting international rescue interventions as functional'. In this context, one could argue that the international order fundamentally rests on 'techniques of transformation of abnormal elements into responsible and well-functioning members of a community' (Zanotti, 2006, p. 152). Hence, this is the dual nature of the discourse—defining certain 'Western' societies as normal while considering those that do not conform to the standard as 'abnormal'—that effectively opens up the possibility of imposing normalization practices.

Knowledge production about conflict societies is at the heart of the technology of international normalization. Since the end of the Cold War, the discourse of normalization has been invoked by scholars as a problem-solving approach to violent conflicts. In her early writing, Mary Kaldor (1996, p. 510) proposed creating zones of 'normality' to protect civilians from violent conflict, thus creating conditions for normalization through robust peacekeeping and international administration. Bridging peacekeeping and peacebuilding, Kaldor (1996) held that 'after cease-fire agreements, the tasks of peace-keeping have to be extended beyond the separation of forces to civil security in order to establish peace-time conditions and assist 'normalization', including freedom of movement, the return of refugees, and the capture of war criminals'. She equates peacebuilding with normalization as a stage that precedes a settlement. Others equate normalcy with reconstruction. Lorraine Elliott (2003, p. 272) argues that 'social reconstruction or normalisation, and the rebuilding of a just and equitable civil society, are es-

sential components of long-term peacebuilding'. Elliott considers as 'social normalization' working with vulnerable groups in the society through therapeutic interventions, material support, and service provision. Moving from normalcy as a processual stage to the desired end goal, Richard Caplan (2005, p. 198) defines 'normality' as 'a stable peace and the establishment of effective mechanisms of domestic democratic governance'. Other entities consider normalization as the final stage of post-conflict recovery, when extraordinary measures are removed, self-sustainability of peace is established, and 'the internal and external relations are conducted according to generally accepted norms of behaviour' (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2002, p. 2).

Imposing normalcy on 'abnormal' states then becomes a normal—even irrefutable—practice, which 'naturally' flows from the diagnostic posed by scholars and the various indices of state failure created to support these practices (Grimm, Lemay-Hébert, & Nay, 2014). The list of countries where normalcy was imposed by outside forces—either through peacebuilding missions or other forms of intervention—is long and covers all regions of the world. Many examples of UN peacebuilding missions comprise normative agendas that consist of external blueprints for democratization, good governance, the rule of law, neoliberal economics, and liberal civil society, which are considered as prerequisites to enforcing 'normal social relations' after violent conflict (Väyrynen, 2010, p. 140). Most evidently, many peacebuilding interventions aim to build 'normal societies' that vaguely mimic Western democratic societies. Such regimes of norms, practices, and values are imposed on 'abnormal post-conflict societies' to ensure their normalization with a new political and societal order to maintain stability, peace, and development and prevent the recurrence and spillover of violence.

External normalization practices entail a degree of alienation, whereby changing existing cultural and collective referent systems is considered a new normalcy. Local social norms and order are deemed incompatible with the possibility of peace, which in turn necessitates external engineering of local norms of how to regulate social and political relations (Lemay-Hébert & Kappler, 2016). Interventions seek to impose new social conventions through 'capacity-building' programmes, knowledge transfer, and learning by undertaking mentorships. The technology of normalization is legitimized through the use of 'blueprints' and 'best practice' regimes, which seek to increase local acceptance of the intervention and remove any competing local know-how registers. Local culture and social order in conflict-affected societies are classified as failed, illiberal, and traditional, and thus cannot be included in the 'solution' (Visoka, 2017a). The very fact that those societies have failed to maintain peace and have become a source of regional instability means they are seen as having lost their civility. The ontology of imposed normalcy is rooted in the logic that institutions and norms such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and the market economy are universal by nature and thus can be adjusted to be applicable to post-conflict societies through technical intervention.

At the heart of the normalization of post-conflict societies has been a process of normative production, which entails imposing new norms to govern peace, stability, and development in these war-shattered societies. Strong emphasis on institution-building aims to generate predictable social and political behaviour and establish a social contract with strong political obligations for citizens (Visoka & Richmond, 2017). New regulatory regimes are imposed to govern political life in such a way as to ensure ethnic accommodation and reduce local resistance to and accept the authority of international interveners. For example, the international community implanted new, modern legislation in Kosovo that aimed both to bind the country to the highest democratic standards and to facilitate its eventual integration into the EU (Guéhenno, 2015). Normalization requires strong enforcement capabilities. In certain places, such as Timor-Leste, the international community has deployed armed peacekeepers and international police to enforce post-conflict stabilization and facilitate the implementation of peacebuilding and statebuilding agendas (Harris & Goldsmith, 2011). Hence, normalization can be imposed through military rule as well as soft interventions through international neo-trusteeships, ad hoc technical assistance, and shuttle diplomacy.

3.2. Restored Normalcy: Building Resilient Subjects

In another set of discourses and practices, normalcy and normalization have been alternatively justified as interventions that aim to facilitate the return to 'conditions before the intervention' (Kratochwil, 2010, p. 198), a situation deemed normal and acceptable for international and local actors. Interventions for restoring normalcy are seen as successful even if they only entail a return to dismal pre-conflict levels, which are primarily concerned with the creation of the effect of 'semblance of normalcy' (Tamer-Chammas, 2012, p. 218). In this cluster of social practices, normalcy is understood both as a willingness for conflict-affected societies to return to antebellum social, political and economic conditions, while at the same time being linked to local and international perceptions of what constitutes 'stability' in this context. Hence, most restored normalcy practices do not lead to a return to a mythical 'previous condition', or 'pre-event norms,' but instead create new features of normalcy—a mirror image of the status quo ante that does not, however, exactly match the original image of normalcy. In these contradictory invocations, the narrative of resilience represents an attempt to convert extraordinary and emergency conditions into normal conditions of co-existence with violent abnormalities.

The discourse of restoring normalcy as a return to the status quo ante can be found in numerous interventions, which include a wide variety of actors. In this context, lo-

cal businesses can be seen as having a large role in restoring 'some form of normalcy' in a post-conflict setting while being instrumental in promoting 'pockets of normalcy' during conflict (Sweetman, 2009, p. 57). The same could be said of traditional, non-state leaders who have been identified as crucial actors in 'restoring some semblance of normalcy and security' in Darfur (Tubiana, Tanner, & Abdul-Jalil, 2012, p. 102), in Somalia (Jeng, 2012, p. 272) or in Sierra Leone (Martin, 2016). The discourse of restoring normalcy has also found traction in the disaster relief literature, where it has come to be associated with recovery efforts, defined as the protracted process of recuperating pre-event norms. This is a discourse that has been used in numerous post-disaster situations, such as the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan (Tisdall, 2013).

In this context, restoring normalcy can be traced to the burgeoning discourses and practices of resilience-building in conflict- and disaster-affected societies. The resilience-building discourse is replete with 'building back better' semantics. For instance, the United Nations Development Programme (2010, p. 19) presents its recovery efforts as focusing largely on 'restoring normalcy following a crisis, transitioning effectively from crisis to development, and using recovery work as an opportunity to build back better'. Similarly, resilience is about adaptability and recovery, and as such resilience seeks to normalize instability through a succession of various forms of intervention (Anderson, 2015, p. 62). For instance, the OECD (2011, p. 15) defines social resilience as 'the capacity of a community (or organisation) to adapt under adverse conditions and restore a sense of normalcy from an external shock'. In this context, resilience entails coming to terms with a permanent state of affairs made of contingency, adaptability, vulnerability, and instability. In their critical account of resilience, Brad Evans and Julian Reid (2014, p. 3) argue that 'instability and insecurity are the new normal as we become increasingly attuned to living in complex and dynamic systems which offer no prospect of control'. The resilience-building discourse is closely linked to the failure to impose normalcy, as discussed earlier. Hence, resilience signifies the recognition of external limits to (re)build political structures and to drastically transform 'abnormal' post-conflict societies. Such realization permits changing the focus of interventions from transformation to self-management and confinement of risks.

Although emergencies are defined as 'urgent situations created by an abnormal event' (OECD, 2006), they are no longer exceptional and extraordinary events. The amplification and repetition of vulnerabilities has brought them to the point of normalization. Emergencies have increasingly become normal events, which remain for 'the subject to learn to take care of their own endangered destinies' (Evans & Reid, 2014, p. 89). The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2015, p. 3) argues that 'protracted is the new normal', referring to the longevity of humanitarian crises and highlighting the international reluctance to end protracted crises. After the realization that stability is a myth, resilience 'becomes a normalized standard for mapping out (ab)normal behaviours such that the very terms of success are loaded with moral claims to a specific maturity' (Evans & Reid, 2014, p. 103). Craig Calhoun (2008, p. 67) suggests that 'today we see not one large emergency dismissed as an exception, but innumerable smaller ones still treated as exceptions to an imaginary norm but repeated so frequently as to be normalized'. The normalization of emergencies makes resilience a coping mechanism to deal with anticipated and permanent crises. This instability is not viewed as necessarily abnormal in this framework, and conflicts and disasters are seen not 'as deviations of the normal state of affairs' but as inherently constitutive of the reality many Third World countries face on the everyday level. Interventions are not confined to exceptional situations but acknowledge the continuities and discontinuities between crisis and normalcy (Duijsens & Faling, 2014, p. 172). This approach moves towards a 'vulnerability framework' where normal daily life becomes difficult to distinguish from disaster (Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2003, p. 10). However, this shift not only ignores the root causes of turbulent events, but also disregards the multiplicity of consequences that are now deemed as normal and expected.

Paradoxically, the technology of restoring normalcy entails both the optimization and withdrawal of responsibility for previous failures to impose and maintain normalcy, as well as new tactical interventionism which seeks to impose normalcy through building resiliency and self-sufficiency (Chandler, 2014). Thus, the very act of striving to build autonomous societies locks local societies into new forms of dependence on external resources and expertise, and unequal power relations. In other words, international efforts to restore normalcy represent a renewed rationale to govern risks and vulnerabilities at their source and suspend any modernist fallacy about progress or stability. The narrative of resiliency is gradually becoming a withdrawal symptom from the liberal aspirational politics of global progress and positive transformation of human condition while preserving same old fluid interventionary practices without the burden of local acceptance and global legitimacy.

3.3. Accepted Normalcy: Coping with Difference

A third set of narratives and practices revolves around accepting normalcy, where international actors seek to manage risks through recognition of the plurality of ways of life. Like the two other categories of normalization practices, recognising alterity and coping with difference is unfolding both as a knowledge production process and as a set of practices. In the context of normal peace, accepting the world as it is takes on two major meanings. First, accepting normalcy can take the shape of an exit strategy for interveners after failed attempts to impose or restore normalcy and, at the same time, works as a discursive tactic to avoid the responsibility of any undesired

results (see Visoka & Doyle, 2014). Second, accepting normalcy is also used as a discourse to justify and legitimize non-intervention towards societies which could be labelled as 'abnormals' from a universalist perspective—for instance, societies experiencing internal troubles and not following normative regimes of human rights. The discourse on heterogeneity and indigeneity informed by cultural relativism is often advocated by critical scholars as a pathway for finding alternative paradigms to building sustainable peace after violent conflicts. For various reasons, international actors come to accept this 'abnormality' as a new form of normalcy, and implicitly or explicitly recognize the limits of external imposition or restoration of normalcy in the process of reshaping these societies. Combined, these two types of knowledge enable new forms of practices of accepted normalcy.

Accepting normalcy of conflict-affected societies, fragile states, and disaster-affected places has become synonymous with 'the art of what is politically possible' (Donais, 2012, p. 152). It represents coming to terms with the practical limits of international interventions, which does not represent the end of interventions but rather signifies the birth of new modes of governance through failure and crisis. In the context of recalcitrant local actors and resilient social structures, peacebuilding actors can soon become disillusioned with what it is actually possible to achieve in particular 'theatres of operations'. From the deeply embedded warlord structure in Afghanistan to clans in Somalia and the mafia in the Balkans, international interventions have 'feet of clay' (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 2), and international officials more often than not are forced to recognize the limit of their transformative agenda in peacebuilding contexts.

Transcending the categories of 'successful missions' (such as ONUSAL in El Salvador) or 'missions which failed to complete their mandate' (such as UNAMIR in Rwanda)—categories usually linked to mainstream conceptualization of exit strategies (Caplan, 2012; UN, 2001)—accepted normalcy can either take the shape of a hasty exit from the country, thus recognizing the impossibility of carrying out a specific mandate, or be associated with so-called successful missions, with focus shifting from social transformation to 'good enough peacebuilding' (Donais, 2012, p. 151). The UN Secretary-General's report 'No exit without strategy' exempts the UN from responsibility for its partial success or failure by considering that 'the role of the United Nations is merely to facilitate the process that seeks to dismantle the structures of violence and create the conditions conducive to durable peace and sustainable development' (UN, 2001, p. 2). However, accepted normalcy can also signify the ignorance of the international community in resolving a conflict and can serve as a neo-colonial effort to compartmentalize a particular conflict. Richard Caplan (2006, p. 254) argues that exit strategies should be pursued in proportion to the sustainability of peace, while acknowledging that exit 'can also be a political matter, the pace of which may be determined by domestic and international factors that have little to do with the preparedness of a territory'.

Accepting alterity has also taken prominence in the critical literature on peacebuilding, with voices calling for a rethink on external interventions and the acceptance of 'local' and 'indigenous' forms of peacebuilding. In this context, accepting normalcy involves recognition of the importance of local cultures, knowledge, traditions, and needs, while accepting local practices of conflict resolution and organization of political community, however unpalatable to international officials these practices may be. For instance, Oliver Richmond (2008, p. 116) considers external peace frameworks for governance enshrined in rational and technical problem-solving logics as 'normalising governance activities' that aim to transfer 'liberal epistemologies into conflict zones'. He further argues that 'local decision making processes should determine the basic political, economic, and social processes and norms to be institutionalized in context' (2011, p. 112), and maintains that peace 'emerges from local and indigenous agency, rather than being prompted externally' (2013, p. 384). For Roger Mac Ginty (2008, p. 139), 'traditional and indigenous approaches to peace-making and reconciliation can offer a corrective to the failings of the Western peace-making model', hence making peace the 'restoration of resonant normality to everyday life' (Kappler & Richmond, 2011, p. 274). This critical alternative to top-down liberal governance leans more towards accepting local normalcy in its cultural, social, and everyday manifestations, while considering external support as necessary to enable local peace formation and emancipation from inequality and discrimination, and to promote autonomy from external political, economic, and socio-cultural tutorship. It has to be noted that this discourse has been criticized as retaining certain elements of the more mainstream liberal interventionist paradigm, especially in its understanding of the disputed 'local' (Hameiri & Jones, 2017; Randazzo, 2017; Visoka, 2016b).

The discourse of accepted normalcy is also evident in the cooperative practices of the international community with regard to authoritarian regimes, such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, or societies with 'internal troubles', such as Israel. Despite the fact that these societies are engaged in widespread torture and human rights abuses, have breached international law, and have suppressed minorities, these authoritarian, turbulent places continue to enjoy extensive international acceptance. This accepted normalcy is often justified in terms of the war on terror and geopolitical stability, which provide a blanket reasoning and selectivity for non-intervention. For instance, the discourse of accepted normalcy was evident when the UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee did not consider Bahrain's failed revolution a civil war, despite extensive use of violence by police against protesters; it concluded that 'life, on the whole, continues as normal' (House of Commons, 2013, p. 106). The powerful discourse on normalcy propagated

by Israel and its allies has suppressed the scale of violence committed in Gaza, the West Bank and other occupied territories. However, these repressive practices are justified as acts of self-defence and protection of democratic society. By calling Israel a democracy, the exemption from intervention is institutionalized and thus abnormal practices are camouflaged, silently tolerated, and accepted by the international community. Although Saudi Arabia is widely criticized for harsh domestic policies and is considered a significant source of terrorist funding in the Middle East and beyond, the US and other Western democracies continue to consider it a major foreign-policy ally, and thus treat these domestic and global sources of insecurity as normal (see: Blanchard, 2015). These examples signify that the discourse of accepted normalcy inverts discourses of intervention to justify non-intervention, holding thus the exception to determine what constitutes a normal or abnormal affair in world politics. However, in the process, accepting the 'abnormal' other comes down to transforming the self, where conceptions of normality are at risk to be radically transformed. The exception risks becoming the rule when we 'take the outside inside', that is to say when there is a 'substantial assimilation of the other into my horizon' (Donà, 2006, pp. 57–58). Our own conceptions of normality end up dramatically transfigured through this complex interaction between the self and the other.

Finally, the discourse and practices on accepting multiple normalcies signifies the optimization of interventions in such a way that, when imposing or restoring normalcy is not possible, the 'abnormal' state of affairs is accepted and legitimized internationally. It is a paradigm of retreat from external, coercive regulation, in a context where policymakers are finding it increasingly difficult to formulate and impose a coherent political project for 'othered' societies (Finkenbusch, 2017). Thus, accepting normalcy not only blurs international norms, but challenges them and undermines the credibility of global governance. Nevertheless, accepting normalcy can signify the end of a particular regime or normalization, and simultaneously the birth of a new understanding of normalcy, which entails new disciplinary modes and transactions in international politics.

4. Conclusion

This article points to the existence of different discourses and practices of normalization which seek to 'make sense' of international interventions in turbulent societies. In contrast with approaches that emphasize the novelty of specific interventionary forms, this article has offered an alternative perspective, focusing on how narratives and practices of normalization include both elements of continuity and change—encompassing both the continuation of 'traditional' interventionary dynamics and the emergence of new post-interventionary dynamics. In casting the technology of normalization in 'turbulent societies', this article focused on a number of distinctive sets of discursive practices, ranging from interventions in 'abnormal' societies that seek to reform and transform through the imposition of external blueprints of normalcy to interventions that seek to restore societies to their *ante bellum* state, as well as new emerging features of accepting normalcy, where local versions of 'peace' are accepted. Despite the efforts of many societies to construct alternative normalities, the quest for governmentality of different ways of life has found ways of intervening with ever-shifting rationales and justifications. The resulting 'order' emerging from these governmentality practices can take different shapes and forms depending on the specific context of interventions: it can be a liberal in nature through *imposing peace* practices—even if this strand of intervention has lost steam recently—but it can also be quite conservative in nature through *restoring peace* practices, or even isolationist or minimalist through *accepting peace* practices.

In this context, we believe that *normal peace* has the potential to become an umbrella notion to understand past, present and future multi-faceted interventions, ranging from peace-making to peacekeeping, stabilization missions, peacebuilding, and resilience-building. We see the progressive emergence of the discourse of normalization as gradually replacing other interventionary paradigms. In specific instances, especially in the context of the *accepted normalcy* and *restored normalcy* discourses, this change of paradigm indicates a post-interventionary shift, representing a reduction of expectations vis-à-vis conflict-affected societies as well as a realization of the limits of liberal interventionism, and serve as a tactical withdrawal from international responsibilities towards targeted societies. What was first perceived as 'abnormal' suddenly becomes normal and acceptable. Victims of conflict become either resilient subjects or actors of their own destiny, left to their own devices. It is in the context of all-encompassing attempts to govern risks that discourses of resilience, acceptance of difference, and permanence of crisis are becoming enabling frameworks which legitimize optimal normalization expressed in both more radical and fluid forms of intervention.

Through this cursory review of normalization narratives and practices, we suggest and hint at a shift in focus from peacebuilding to normalising turbulent societies, where peace is not seen only as a process either brought from outside (liberal interventionism or top–down governance) or constituted from inside (emancipatory or everyday forms of peacebuilding), but also as a mix of social practices—policies and discourses—produced by and through knowledge production. The discursive knowledge on fragile states, illiberal social orders of conflict-affected societies, resilience, and permanence of crisis, as well as failure and acceptance of alterity, has a direct role in legitimizing particular forms of normalization. It is the intersection of both 'worlds'—the policy and academic spheres—that enables the constitution of the meanings of normalcy and normalization

practices identified in this article. This necessitates questioning the impact of knowledge production in normalizing and abnormalizing discourses and practices of peace. From liberal peacebuilding discourses and debates to the resilience literature and emancipatory peacebuilding literature, this article has drawn together different sets of discursive policies that shape the field of international normalization practices. It is therefore crucial to recognize that knowledge production about turbulent societies has a direct impact in shaping discursive and practical aspects of intervention. What we see emerging is a need to further theorize normalcy and normalization practices across different disciplines to make sense of its praxeological and discursive invocation in contemporary global affairs. Therefore, what this study points out is that dominant normative frameworks—such as governance, stability, peace, justice, development—guiding international interventions are inherently unstable as they constantly undergo multi-sited transitions, some of which are demonstrated in this paper through an analysis of narratives and practices that seek to impose, restore, or accept multiple versions of normalcy in world politics.

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