

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA  
FAKULTA SOCIÁLNÍCH VĚD  
INSTITUT POLITOLOGICKÝCH STUDIÍ

## Diploma Thesis

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Russia's critique of Western liberalism under Vladimir Putin

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Study programme: Master in International Relations

Year of thesis submission: 2018

### **Statutory Declaration**

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference, the work presented is entirely my own.

Prague, 31.07.2018

Stefanie Frenzel

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Mgr. Jakub Franěk, Ph.D. for his valuable advice and guidance during the preparation of my thesis.

## **Bibliographic record**

FRENZEL, Stefanie. Russia's critique of Western liberalism under Vladimir Putin. Prague, 2018. Diploma Thesis (Master). Charles University Prague.

## **Abstract**

While most of the states have embraced capitalist market economy, liberal and democratic norms face resistance in large parts of the world. The “liberal West” under the leadership of the United States has to face critique of its democratization practices and alleged hypocrisy when dealing with the enforcement of its own norms. One of the loudest critics is Russia under President Vladimir Putin. The first objective of my thesis is to understand the rationale behind Russia's Foreign Policy. I consider this a necessary condition in order to develop efficient and deescalating policies towards Russia. I do this by means of an ideological discourse analysis of some of the most famous of Putin's speeches. The concepts of the German philosopher Carl Schmitt serve as a frame for tracing the ideas expressed in the speeches of the Russian President. The analysis concludes that, at least rhetorically, democracy, trust, disarmament, freedom of speech, balance of power and the UN as a universal institution have a central place for both the Western World and Russia. NATO expansion, U.S. intervention in the Middle East and, related to that, the alleged disrespect of sovereignty are the most dividing issues between Russia and the Western liberal democracies. It becomes clear that Russia has the impression that Western liberal democracies are less interested in peace and stability than in extending their hegemony and economic influence. The second objective of the thesis is to demonstrate that Russia's arguments are related to a broader critique of liberalism and the current world order. What can be said is that international politics must find a means to allow for different value and truth claims. Under no circumstances, this does mean that human rights should be relativized or modified because they clash with religious values. However, when enforcing liberal and democratic values by means of military or economic pressure, the Western states betray their own values and norms. This gives rise to accusations of hypocrisy and hegemony against the U.S. and

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the EU, as the analysis has shown. Furthermore, Russia's rhetoric shows a new focus on nationalism and conservatism. This suggests that post-state approaches to representation and government have at present little chance of success. It seems that, if only temporary, the strategies to mitigate anarchy in international politics have failed and balance of power is anew the top priority.

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## Thesis Project

2017/18

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### **“International cooperation beyond egoistic universalism”**

#### **Definition and justification of the subject of thesis**

The UN charter determines that the UN has been founded to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” and for these ends is bound “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples“. (<http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/>)

The charter was signed by 193 states. One could assume that the goals as formulated in the charter constitute commonly agreed objectives for the future coexistence of all nations and for its cooperation. Nowhere the charter says that democratic liberalism is the only normative framework that will be able to guarantee those goals. On the contrary, Chantal Mouffe goes so far as to suggest that liberalism in its universal form raise instability in the world because it provokes counter-reactions such as terrorism. Already in the 1930s, Carl Schmitt argues that liberalism could lead to a form of total war against enemies that stand against liberal democratic values.

Since the end of the bipolar cold war system, the US has acted as a hegemonic power defending liberal democracy and eliminating almost every political alternative. The United States have consequently engaged in interventions for promoting democracy based on the theory that democratic states do not fight each other. I will ask the question if Mouffe is right that liberal universalism ultimately leads to a less stable world? Therefore, I will analyze qualitative and quantitative studies about the development of the number and intensity of conflicts since the end of the cold war. I will try to find out which conflicts can be classified as counter-reactions to liberal universalism as promoted by the US to answer the research question. In the final part, I will look at the pluralistic model which Mouffe suggests as alternative to hegemonic liberal universalism and briefly assess its plausibility, in particular under the aspect of human rights.

#### **Brief state of the art statement**

Mouffe argues that liberal universalism provokes counter-reactions such as terrorism, because it does not take into account the nature of the “political”. With that opinion, she stands against the prevalent democratic peace theory.

### Specification of the research question(-s)

- Is it true that, as Chantal Mouffe suggests, universalism ultimately leads to a less stable world?

### Outline of the theoretical framework

- Chantal Mouffe's and Carl Schmitt's framework of the political, agonism and political identities

### Outline of methods/research design

Literature review & analysis of (qualitative and quantitative) studies about the development of violent conflicts since the 1990s

### Preliminary outline of the structure

#### **1 Theoretical framework**

- 1.1 What is Liberal Universalism?
- 1.2 Chantal Mouffe & Carl Schmitt
  - 1.2.1 on the nature of the political
  - 1.2.2 on liberalism
  - 1.2.3 on war & counter-reactions on liberalism
- 1.3 What means stability in IR?
- 1.4 How measure it?
- 1.5 How identify counter-reactions?

#### **2 Conflicts**

- 2.1 Development of number and intensity → studies
- 2.2 Is the Hegemon involved?
- 2.3 Which conflicts could be classified as counter-reactions?

#### **3 Conclusion**

- 3.1 Did violent counter-reactions increase since the 1990s?
- 3.2 Can they be explained by a liberal hegemony?
- 3.3 Alternative future models (multipolarity, inter-polarity)
  - 3.3.1 Mouffe's pluralism
    - 3.3.1.1 Democratic channels for agonism on a global scale
    - 3.3.1.2 Which place for human rights?
    - 3.3.1.3 Minimal standards of justice (John Rawls)

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Preliminary remark

The content of the thesis differs in some ways from the thesis project submitted in September 2017. While Chantal Mouffe is still a scholar who is relevant for my thesis, I discovered that Carl Schmitt's theory is more comprehensive and sophisticated. Also, he has received more attention by contemporary scholars who conducted research based on his philosophy. In turn, the work of these scholars connected to Russian identity and foreign policy inspired my own project. However, the issues of liberal universalism and world order stayed as *leitmotiv* of the thesis. The deviation from the original project should not be considered a flaw. It rather shows that I gained a deeper understanding of my subject while writing the thesis and improved my capacity for joined-up thinking.

## 1.2 Problem

Shortly after the end of the Cold War, some people believed the time of liberal peace was finally about to come (see e.g. (Lebow, 1994)). The war in Yugoslavia, the genocide in Rwanda, the Second Gulf War and ongoing humanitarian crises in Somalia, to name just a few, were events that resulted in a change of this perception. Non-state violence and terrorism, ethnic wars and failed states became the new topics resulting for some in a radical change of mind. Not the Golden Age of perpetual peace, but chaos, unreliability of alliances, power politics and diplomatic deadlocks seem to be the future of the international order after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Also, while most of the states have embraced capitalist market economy, liberal and democratic norms face resistance in large parts of the world. What is more, the "liberal West" under the leadership of the United States must face critique of its democratization practices and alleged hypocrisy when dealing with the enforcement of its own norms. One of the loudest critics is Russia under President Vladimir Putin. Nearly 30 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he continues to challenge the hegemony of the U.S. This has resulted in a cooling of relations between the NATO countries under American leadership and Russia. But also, relations with the European Union, especially after the association agreement with the Ukraine, have deteriorated.

Now, countries in the former USSR have to pick sides and align themselves with Russia or the U.S. In addition to this tense situation on the international stage, the UN Security Council is often paralyzed by the veto of some of its permanent members. Frequently, they cannot agree if a violation of state sovereignty is justified by a humanitarian crisis and who is allowed to carry out a mission in this case.

Also, experiences with UN–authorized interventions in Libya by NATO have not helped in building trust within the Council. This is the context of my thesis.

I am convinced that a profound understanding of the rationale behind Russian Foreign Policy is necessary to develop efficient and deescalating policies towards Russia. While I am reluctant to believe in democratic peace, I do consider wars a failure of diplomacy, communication and commitment to de–escalation. So, the first objective of my thesis is to understand the rationale for Russia’s Foreign Policy. When interpreting President Putin’s foreign policy rhetoric, I highlight how EU and U.S. actions have been received in Russia and how this, in combination with the current Russian course, can only lead to more tensions. This way, some of Vladimir Putin’s actions, which are portrayed as irrational in the Western media, can be seen as a response to what Russia’s competitors are doing. Here, it is important to emphasize that my focus is on the Russian perception of international relations, it is not about finding out what is “true” and who is “right”. Also, it should not seem that I suggest that Russian Foreign Policy was a mere reaction on Western actions and discourse. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that a relation between the two exists.

The second objective is to demonstrate that Russia’s arguments are related to a broader critique of liberalism and the current world order. The aim is to outline a different approach for cooperation with Russia and other non–liberal states.

### **1.3 Solution**

In the thesis, I try to answer the question: “What is the rationale behind Russian Foreign policy under President Putin?”. Therefore, I analyze Russian foreign policy rhetoric in the light of Schmitt’s political theory. Carl Schmitt was a realist scholar who developed his political theory from the 1920s onwards. Carl Schmitt’s theory has experienced a revival since the late 1990s (McCormick, 1998; Kochi, 2006; Fritsch, 2008; Bahnisch, 2002; Benoist, 2007; Chandler, 2008; Teschke, 2011; Bradley et al., 2016). In this tradition, in chapter 2, I outline the relevant aspects of Schmitt’s theory. His approach to politics, international law and the nature of liberalism serve as frame for tracing the ideas expressed in the speeches of the Russian President. All above, Schmitt’s critique of liberalism, his *Concept of the Political* and the *Theory of the Partisan* have been used by numerous scholars to analyze the increase in violence and instability after the end of the bipolar system (Ulmen, 2007; Behnke et al., 2007; Odysseos, 2007; Petito, 2007; Slomp, 2009; Auer, 2015; Kurylo, 2016).

In the third chapter, I analyze the speeches I have chosen. I start by explaining my choice of research material and proceeding. As research hypothesis, I expect to find indicators for strong anti-liberal and anti-U.S.–American attitudes, as well as an insistence on state sovereignty and non-intervention in the community of equal states. When reading Schmitt’s works, one clearly sees striking similarities with the way President Putin structures and defends his Foreign Policy to the world and to his country. In this respect, Auer (2015, p. 956) states that, while it is not reasonable to draw a direct line from Schmitt to Putin, “what matters are the common tendencies between Schmitt’s arguments and the salient characteristics of the contemporary Russian state. These are plentiful.” If there are indeed striking similarities between Schmitt’s understanding of politics and the political rhetoric of President Putin, it would underline that, apart from different interests, the West and Russia also have fundamentally different perceptions of and visions for the international order. In his analysis of foreign policy discourse in France and Britain, Larsen (2005, p. 28) came to a similar conclusion: “that one is faced with incompatibility of discourses between societal actors as an obstacle to dialogue”.

This will lead to the fourth part where I place Vladimir Putin’s rhetoric in a wider context. In this part, I elaborate on alternative approaches to world order. For that, I take into account the findings from my analysis as well as issues of collective identities and universal human rights.

#### **1.4 Theory and method**

On the conceptual level, I assume states to be the main level of analysis in international theory (Wendt, 1994). I treat the Russian President as the main, rational, unitary actor in Russian Foreign Relations and the one who has the main influence on how Russian Foreign policy is formulated. He is the highest representative of his state and the main decision-maker; hence he is the agent (Hudson, 2005). This is in accordance with Carl Schmitt’s thinking on the sovereign and the agency of the state. Foreign policy here is understood as “the process and resultants of human decision-making with reference to or having known consequences for foreign entities” (Hudson, 2005, p. 2). While structure certainly has some influence on the agent, this is not a focus here because it would make the limited aim of this contribution unachievable due to its complexity. Larsen (2005) points out that a focus on individuals in the context of foreign policy analysis is justified. Especially, in a situation of crisis (in my case: Crimea), individual actors tend to have more power than in normal times– even more in a system where there is little political control over the leader. Also, focusing on President Putin makes sense insofar as he will

be in power most likely for at least the next six years if not longer (Roberts, 2017). Thus, anyone who aims at formulating a strategy towards Russia should start with him.

Moreover, central to my thesis is the assumption that “[l]iberal democracy[...] is not a necessary condition for stable peace” (Kupchan, 2010, p. 7). I also agree with scholars who criticize the “coercive character of liberal order making. Examples are the Global War on Terror and interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq” (Nadarajah et al., 2015, p. 50) which caused impeded development in the concerned regions and violent resistance to the liberal project.

On a more philosophical level, I approve Tsai’s demand that “liberal universalists should [...] give up the assumption that liberal values ‘are simply in the light of reason’ superior to other sets of values” (Tsai, 2013, p. 320). The universalist claim can only be upheld if its morals are justifiable to every member of every society concerned. Is that not the case, liberal ideals are not universally applicable (Tsai, 2013).

Some might say that “mere rhetoric” cannot say anything important about the “game” that is played on the international scene. Besides the large group of scholars who focus their research on discourse analysis, one could argue with Krebs et al. (2007, p. 35). They show at the example of the Iraqi invasion in 2003 that the Bush administration “was nearly as preoccupied with how the combat was portrayed as with the combat itself”. This indicates which weight and significance political rhetoric has for governments, so it also should be equally important for political scientists.

My analysis proceeds from the assumption that language reflects political actions and reveals the speaker’s identity. Language is not just about words, but about what the recipient makes of it, about meaning. With this assumption I am in the field of discourse analysis (Gee, 2004) which is the theoretical approach for my study. Discourse analysis argues that language itself is political (Gee, 2004). The discourse approach proceeds from the assumption that language has no meaning without related content or substance (Larsen, 2005). In other words, meaning of words cannot become accessible without the context in which the speech act takes place. Not grammatical rules, but social rules give meaning to the words (Larsen, 2005).

Larsen (2005, p. 21) underlines the importance of the political discourse as being “one possible source of foreign policy. It has a special status in being structural” by “constituting a framework for the general foreign policy line”. Because of this constitutive role of discourse, I am confident that, although my analysis is very limited in scope and ambition, it can still contribute towards a better understanding

of Russian foreign policy under President Putin. Roberts (2017) chose a similar methodology when she based her analysis of Russian Foreign Policy on Putin's own justifications of his strategy towards Crimea. She explained that her approach would focus on the relational character of foreign policy rather than "the generic expectations for power-driven state action" (Roberts, 2017, p. 30). In her eyes, Russian Foreign policy and Russian identity are to a considerable amount a reaction to Western expansionist moves in Eastern Europe (Roberts, 2017).

There are different approaches towards discourse analysis. As a non-native speaker and because I consider it more relevant for the thesis, I focus on the vocabulary employed and not the grammar in the speeches of President Putin. I use the ideological approach which, according to Dijk (1985, p. 9), "intends to reveal underlying [...] ideologies through discourse analysis". Gee (2004, p. 19) suggests that language has different building tasks, the two most relevant for my analysis are 1) connecting or disconnecting things as well as 2) uttering perspectives on the "distribution of social goods". From these two tasks, two questions leading the analysis can be derived. First, how is the reference object of the speech characterized or evaluated? This could be for instance, related to the text: What is a good, equal and just international order according to President Putin? Or, how does the President classify U.S. intervention on Syria? The second question asks about how things are being connected or disconnected in the speeches. In my case, for instance a possible question would be: (How) Does the Russian president connect liberalism and increasing international instability?

A methodological challenge is what Gee (2004, p. 67) calls "the frame problem". "[...] [D]iscourse analysis is always a movement from context to language and from language to context" (Gee, 2004, p. 29). When interpreting language in a critical way, a researcher has to consider the context of the communicated information. However, the wider context of a communicated piece of language can be very large. Gee (2004) suggests increasing the contextual scope until no new information change the researcher's interpretation of the data anymore. Nonetheless, I use a narrower frame. First, I have very clear expectations about my research result- to find similarities between a Schmittian and Putin's use of the concepts of the state and the international order. My approach is very deductive and straightforward- either Putin's discourse resembles the one of Schmitt or not. While I aim at finding some information about the identity of the speaker, for instance, I cannot include the complete domestic politics context in Russia or its economic and political alliance with China- this would be far beyond the scope of my thesis. However, relevant international debates and actions (see Gee (2004) on conversations and

intertextuality) which took place at the time of the speeches, are considered

Although some treat Putin's rhetoric as a new "official ideology" or even "Putinism" (Ernst, 2014), I rather speak about his political rhetoric. Firstly, a speech is only one mean to express intentions and perceptions. It is impossible to do a comprehensive Foreign Policy analysis only based on speeches. Secondly, one cannot be sure that such an ideology even exists. For example, Makarychev et al. (2014) very much question the coherence and consistency of Russian Foreign policy which does not point towards a mature, solid ideology but a borrowing from different concepts and arguments. Moreover, Krebs et al. (2007, p. 42) point to the fact that, while "[p]ublic semiotic codes constrain social actors", they do so regardless of whether they truly 'believe' in these codes' content. Bluntly speaking, the Russian President may very well utter something with a certain objective before a certain audience but that does not mean that he himself believes what he says. Hence, if there even is such thing as Putinism, will stay unsure. By political rhetoric I mean organized speech acts, whether oral or written (Krebs et al., 2007) which are uttered in a political context. A political context here is understood in a very narrow sense of "high politics" meaning relations between states and their representatives. I also use the term "discourse". Generally speaking, discourse means "language-in-use" (Gee, 2004, p. 8). I also take it as a synonym for rhetoric if the choice of words, the connection of certain phenomena with social goods and the use of concepts seems to follow an inner logic and appears throughout the different speeches. While rhetoric can be used in a single speech act adapted to a specific situation, discourse indicates a recurring, regular use of language which has become dominant in a larger context and which reflects on underlying practice, ideas and values. Rhetoric is more used in the context of a classical, Aristotelian theory of persuasive speech acts, whereas discourse is a term from critical political approaches. I employ both terms where they fit. However, I need to clarify that I do not analyze "Discourse with a capital D" like Gee (2004, p. 29) because I cannot take into account interactions, symbols, tools and intonations in such a small study. So, my focus is indeed on the rhetoric. Also, it should be emphasized that analyzing some speeches of the Russian president is hardly enough to claim the existence of a complex, new, **societal** discourse which is why I limit myself to speaking of Putin's discourse or his rhetoric. To express the existence of a recurring use of images, labels and cause-effect-relations one can also choose to speak of ideational narratives instead. Still, I need to underline as well that it is not Putin's personal, individual, private belief system I am researching and claiming access to. I am analyzing his way of communicating with allies and opponents telling them what he wants them to believe about Russia's position. And the

President's speeches are an official, targeted, authentic source for this research project.

A comment on the use of terms such as “the West” or “Western countries” is necessary. It is used as synonym for NATO countries as well as Members of the European Union. I am aware that the those use of these terms is highly disputed in critical approaches to international relations, especially in post-development scholarship. Also, NATO countries are not all members of the European Union and vice versa. However, it is the Russian President who uses them as synonyms in his speeches and hardly ever differentiates. So, I hope that for this thesis, my choice of vocabulary can be considered appropriate and suits the methodology best while avoiding complicated and long replacement constructions.

## **2 Carl Schmitt's political thought**

### **2.1 State of the art**

Carl Schmitt was born in 1888 and died in 1985, hence he witnessed and reflected politics in the German Empire, in the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the Federal Republic of Germany (Mehring, 2011). Raised in a bourgeois Catholic family, he studied law in Berlin, Munich and Strassburg (Mehring, 2011). Already in his habilitation thesis he focused on *The Value of the State and the Significance of the Individual* and continued to research the role of the state in the Weimar Republic (Mehring, 2011). In the 1920s and early 1930s, his theory became more political, as he criticized the treaty of Versailles and the Weimar Republic. His most famous work, *The Concept of the Political* was published in 1932. Shortly after that, he became one of the most important lawyers in the Third Reich with Hermann Göring as his first mentor, helping with the legal aspects of the enforced conformity of the German federal states (Mehring, 2011). He held several high-ranking posts in the Third Reich. As State Councilor, he helped to prepare and introduce several legal reforms (Mehring, 2011). His publications until 1936 – most of them anti-Semitic in tone – focused on legally and politically justifying the Nazi Regime (Mehring, 2011). Being removed from all his offices in 1936 due to party politics, he turned to criticism of international public law, the League of Nations and the American, liberal way of war under President Wilson (Mehring, 2011). After being arrested in internment camp and released after one year in 1946, Schmitt was interrogated prior to the Nuremberg Trials, but not convicted due to a lack of proof that he was directly involved with Nazi crimes (Mehring, 2011). In the German Federal Republic, he republished older papers and reflected on his own and his country's past (Mehring, 2011). Still, two of his most famous works, *The Nomos of the Earth* (1950) and the *Theory of a Partisan* (1963), were

published in the post-war period. Given his past, it is very surprising how much positive attention his works received, especially among critical and leftist scholars and among those whose research focuses on foreign policy and war.

One of them is the Belgian philosopher Chantal Mouffe. Her writings explain her understanding of Schmitt's key concepts<sup>1</sup>. More importantly, she employs those ideas to develop her own concept of a multipolar world order. This is relevant for the last part of the thesis. Odysseos; Petito (2007) collected works criticizing liberal universalism based on Carl Schmitt in their publication "The International Political Thought of Carl Schmitt– Terror, liberal war and the crisis of global order". They can be considered a good example of how Schmitt is interpreted by left, critical scholars. As a response to that, Chandler (2008) offers an analysis of the use of Schmitt by critical and post-structuralist scholars. He argues that these scholars idealize Schmittian thought, which is highly controversial and sometimes incoherent over the long time that lies between the beginning of his publications in the 1920s and his last monography *Political Theology II* in 1970<sup>2</sup>. According to him, these scholars "treat Schmitt in an idealist manner, through the focus on his work at the contingent level of his political conclusions rather than at the more fundamental level of his geo-political grounding of the limits of international law and its relation to sovereign power" (Chandler, 2008, p. 28). In his introduction to Schmitt's *Nomos of the Earth*, Koskeniemi (2004, p. 500) is not short of critique for Schmitt's "suggestive and incomplete" writings. However, he offers a comprehensive, well written interpretation of the work. In contrast to mainstream critical scholars, he comes to the conclusion that Schmitt is not against universalism as such, but against the "false and nihilistic" liberal, U.S.–American type (Koskeniemi, 2004, p. 501). Another helpful introduction to Schmitt's thought is given by Teschke (2011) who relates it to Schmitt's life and career. Moreover, Howse (2006) engages with Schmitt's *nomos* and sets it into its historical context while asking about its relevance today. He concludes that a new *nomos* needs a new notion of the *Political*.

When it comes to the application of Schmitt, Rech et al. (2017) offer a well-conceptualized analysis of Schmitt's thoughts related to the death of the state and the European order after World War II including the *Großraum* concept. *Großraum* can be translated as "greater area" and is a term to describe the geo-political organization of the world around regional super-powers. The confrontation with Alexandre Kojève's more liberal ideas in this work highlights the nationalistic–realist character of

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<sup>1</sup>"Democracy in a multipolar world" (2009), "Which world order: cosmopolitan or multipolar?" (2008), "Carl Schmitt's warning on the dangers of a unipolar world" (2007) and "On the political" (2005)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz112748.html> as of June 29, 2018



Schmitt's thought. Also, Rech et al. (2017) mention Putin's Eurasian union as an example of a restructured *Großraum*. Furthermore, Prozorov (2010) draws on Schmitt to explain the Russian–Georgian war. Although he concludes that Schmitt's concept of *nomos* cannot grasp Russian Foreign Policy, he offers an interesting perspective on Russia's role in the region. Kurylo (2016), too, relies on Carl Schmitt for her critique of liberalism from a Russian perspective. Although there is little literature that sees Schmitt as a blueprint for Russian Foreign policy, I could find one that inspired the research question of my thesis. Auer (2015) has worked out some of the similarities between Schmitt and Putin's Foreign Policy and draws his own conclusions– that a harder and stronger approach towards Russia is necessary. I do not necessarily agree with this conclusion, but his article is an inspiring example for how Schmitt can be used in this context. Snyder (2014) argues that especially Russian fascism under the Russian political scientist Dugin is largely influenced by Schmittian thinking. He characterizes the community of Eurasia as a hierarchical, anti–liberal, fascist system supported by Dugin and other fascists. However, he is careful not to draw a direct connection between Dugin and Putin.

This short state of the art already illustrates how diverse and ambiguous interpretations of Schmitt's thoughts are. Meuter (1994, p. 11) gave his introduction to Schmitt's oeuvre the title “About the incomprehensibility of Carl Schmitt”. He emphasized that even after a long study of all of Schmitt's works, one is hardly able to grasp Schmitt's concepts and see a coherent philosophy connecting all of them. Against this background, the following sections should be considered a short overview of Schmitt's main concepts and arguments.

## **2.2 The political and the enemy**

The fact that Schmitt (1963a) has dedicated a whole book to the *Concept of the Political* implies that he does not content himself to give a short definition of the term. Meier (1994) maintains that he does not give any clear definition at all. Schmitt argues that all abstract concepts are defined and constituted through the utmost opposites they can take, such as good–evil, ugly–pretty and profitable– valueless (Schmitt, 1963a). He investigates whether there is such a distinction for politics, too (Meier, 1994). He reasons that friend and enemy are the criteria which describe the Political (Schmitt, 1963a). According to Meier (1994), Schmitt then tries to argue for the independence of the political sphere from morality, economics and aesthetics (Meier, 1994). According to the philosopher, political enmity must not be associated with the other abstract criteria mentioned (good, evil, etc.). Evil, in a political sense, does

not build on an evil human kind as such. It is political necessity (Schmitt, 1963a) and describes a pure theoretical or practical dissociation (Schmitt, 1963a). The enemy is “the other, the stranger” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 27) whose “being different” may mean in the extreme case a negation of one’s own way of life (but it does not have to). Schmitt draws a distinction between the political enemy and the private enemy. Citing the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus commands every Christian to “love your enemy”, the philosopher argues that, in this passage, the private enemy (*inimicos*) is meant, not the political *hostis*. Defending a public enemy is hence not a contradiction to Jesus’ request.

Besides describing the essential opposites of the political, the friend–enemy–distinction has another role for Schmitt. He considers it the prerequisite for a community to exist, because a community builds its unity and collective identity from distinguishing itself from another, foreign community. The concrete enemy is determined by the sovereign and his identity can change (Schmitt, 1963a). But there must be at least one enemy.

Although he insisted that the political is independent from morals, economics and aesthetics, Schmitt maintains that every distinction made between two groups of people becomes political once it is strong enough to produce a friend–enemy division (Schmitt, 1963a). This seems highly contradictory because it acknowledges a relationship between the separate fields. But the insistence on the independence of the political just serves the aim of highlighting its special character. Once this is done, Schmitt goes one step further and puts it on a superior level. To provoke a war, the antagonistic relationship must be political. He explains that religious and moral differences may become political when maximally intensified, but the oppositions they contain are too weak (Schmitt, 1963a). Only when a community’s way of life is threatened by a foreign group, it will resort to violence. And it is this possibility of war is the deciding criterion for enmity (Schmitt, 1963a).

With his emphasis on enmity and war, Schmitt’s theory appears to be belligerent and aggressive at first glance. Yet, the philosopher clearly says that the possibility of war does not need to be glorified or idealized (Schmitt, 1963a). Also, the enemy does not need to be an eternal adversary (Schmitt, 1963a). With time, friends can become enemies and vice–versa, depending on who the community constructs as enemy or rather whose identity constitutes an existential threat.

Related to that point is Schmitt’s critique of liberalism which I explain later. He notes that wars fought by liberal states are exceedingly cruel because they characterize their enemy as “inhuman beast” or as a threat to humanity (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 37). Thus, they are unlimited in their means and ambitions

aiming at the total elimination of their opponent. Related to this critique, he insists that there is no ideal, law or policy that could justify a war (Schmitt, 1963a), only the threat of one's own way of life.

### **2.3 The state and sovereignty**

In *The Value of the State and the Meaning of the Individual*, Schmitt argues that individual freedom, in the sense of material security, is not the field or competence of neither law nor philosophy (Schmitt, 1914). Further, he stresses the importance of distinguishing between ethical autonomy, which an individual has, and autonomy outside the law, which it does not have because the law rules everything and everyone within the state. Schmitt had a very pessimistic conception of men whose actions basically are influenced by “rampant and narrow-minded egoism and crudest instincts” (Schmitt, 1914, p. 85). In this perspective, it makes sense that, for him, the state, respective the sovereign at its head, is the guarantor of law and order and the restrainer of chaos.

In his book *Political Theology*, the notion of sovereignty is as fuzzy as the definition of the political. For Schmitt, “sovereignty is a limit-concept” (German: *Grenzbegriff*)<sup>3</sup> (Schmitt, 2009, p. 13) whose nature cannot be defined, and which is inseparably linked to the state of exception (Schmitt, 2009). But he characterizes the sovereign as the one who decides what is in the interest of the state and the people in a case of exception or emergency. Hereby Schmitt only enumerates the interests of public and state (Schmitt, 2009) without differentiation, probably, because for him they were identical.

What makes sovereignty a limit-concept is that only in the case of utmost emergency and distress, it is relevant at all since, in normal times, the law regulates everything (Schmitt, 2009). But in the case of emergency, the sovereign has a special role because he is both included and excluded in the legal order. One could say that he is at the limit of the political order, because he determines the nature of the order in this case. Schmitt continues that, since no state of emergency can be completely defined by law covering all possible events, the sovereign decides when such a situation presents itself and which power he has in that case. A constitution can only determine who that person is but not his competences.

Turning to the external dimension of sovereignty, Schmitt states that a people who wishes to avoid the “efforts and risks” of political sovereignty and does not defend it, will end up under the protection of another people who is willing to assume that task and to whom it will then pledge obedience (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 53). However, this does not lead to a world state under the strongest or most willing state.

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<sup>3</sup>The German term “*Grenzbegriff*” has been translated differently in the literature without that a norm has become clear. Some authors speak of “delimiting concept” or “borderline concept”. But since the official translation of the term “*Grenzwert*”, which is to mathematics what the “*Grenzbegriff*” is for philosophy, is “limit value”, I opted accordingly for “limit-concept”.

Whilst one state remains, another must necessarily exist as his counterpart, his *other*, from whom the people distinguishes itself (Schmitt, 1963a). From this assumption, Schmitt concludes that there can only be an international pluriverse. The unity and sovereign existence of one state is only secured through the existence of the enemy, of the other state which defines the first one. Without the coexistence with its enemy, a state would cease to exist as political unit.

The shortcoming of Schmitt's *Concept of the political* as of 1929 is its focus on the state as the critical and unitary actor in domestic and international politics. In the preface to the new edition of *The Concept of the Political*, published in 1963, Schmitt (1963a) reaffirms the validity of the friend–enemy distinction in the era of the Cold War which conceals all other former clear distinctions: politics and economics, military and civil, war and peace. However, he is able to see the altered role of the state in the modern political system. He reaches the conclusion that “statehood” has come to an end (Schmitt, 1963a). Schmitt explains that the essence of the state after World War II is only “administrations or bureaucracies” (Howse, 2006), not a powerful state. While acknowledging the end of traditional statehood, he does not offer any insight on what comes next. Howse (2006, p. 95) says: “[H]e honestly had no answer”. This also makes sense when one takes into account Schmitt's way of working: He always based his analysis on historical, past events or present circumstances, but he never tried to develop possible scenarios for the future.

## **2.4 The Nomos of the Earth and the *katechon***

With over 300 pages, *The Nomos of the Earth* is one of Schmitt's largest works. I claim, it is also one of the most ambitious and prosaic ones. In the introduction, Schmitt explains that his book will try to find “das Sinnreich” of the Earth (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 6) which already in German is an ambivalent term, to put it nicely. One could also say that the word does not exist in this form in contemporary German. I suppose that it means that Schmitt attempts to find an ordering principle, a sense on earth or in earthly presence in general. This appears logical against the background of the disappearance of the old Eurocentric world order which the rise of the “New World” entails (Schmitt, 2011a). Schmitt continues in this cryptic way, saying that the earth is promised to the peaceful ones. Only they could decipher the constituting principle of the new world order (Schmitt, 2011a). This introduction shows that in the book, published in 1950, Schmitt comes to terms with his political past and German history. For example, Mehring (2011) claims that, in *The Nomos of the Earth*, Schmitt sums up his war experiences

from a historical perspective of Eurocentric international law. I suggest that this book is more than that. It reflects in a very comprehensive way Schmitt's post-war understanding of the spatial and political order of the world, of the role of the United States, of just war and discriminating warfare. At the same time, especially in the introduction and the last page, it sounds philosophical and ambiguous. In the beginning, Schmitt speaks about peace on earth. In the end, he states that an era of wars of extermination has been brought about the peoples by technical progress and the dominance of economics over politics. In this perspective, the beginning and the end of the book cannot be reconciled.

### **Order and space**

The philosopher starts by demonstrating that law and earth are inseparably connected. He calls it the "threefold root of law and justice" (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 13). First, the peasant gets to know justice when he harvests the fruits of his seeds. Second, the cultivation process requires the drawing of lines or boundaries which, in turn, uncover the underlying rules of farming. The third aspect are buildings and railings which stand for the organizing principle and distribution of power in a community (Schmitt, 2011a). Schmitt, then, assigns this threefold root of law and justice to the domain of international law. He asserts that international law, too, is founded and deals with processes of land-taking and land-demarcation. The taking of land has two consequences: 1) the repartition of land and power within the taken territory and 2) the juxtaposition with other landowners (nations).

What follows is a historical perspective on land order beginning with a European, continental order which was replaced by England's rise to a sea power in the 16th century followed by the discovery of the New World (Schmitt, 2011a). Only in the 17th and 18th century with the "opening" of the Oceans, nations started to perceive themselves as part of a global order (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 24). Before, the logic of world order in the European Middle Ages distinguished between Christian territory and non-Christian territory which needed to be missionized. This order was upheld by the cooperation of the Pope and the Christian Emperors. Schmitt claims that, although wars were fought between Christian rulers, followed by land repartition, this did not change the division of the world into Christian and pagan territories. In the following, the philosopher proceeds to explaining how the "Empire of the Christian Middle Ages" acted as *katechon* (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 29). Schmitt defines *katechon* as the historical power which may delay the appearance of the Antichrist and the end of the order it is situated in (Schmitt, 2011a). He claims that only through the *katechon*-concept the emergence of new world orders throughout history can be understood from a Christian perspective. Finally, he gives a definition of *nomos* which is the

first land-taking in the sense of land-division and -distribution (Schmitt, 2011a). This understanding of the word goes back to Aristotle which considered it as being a kind of balancing counter-power to democratic decision-making, as some kind of superior source of law. However, Schmitt insists that *nomos* cannot be translated by law or rule. It is the spatial visualization of the political and social organization of a people (Schmitt, 2011a). He continues that not every occupation is an act of land-taking, but if it is permanent, it might give rise to a new spatial order. He criticizes legal scholars who defend the internal legal order without asking how this order and the state are constituted and bound to the land-taking. They do not understand that there are different kinds of law: inter-, intra- and extra-state law.

In the following, Schmitt describes in detail how the discovery of the New World first led to a confirmation of European power and dominance. European powers started thinking globally and divided the globe along their overseas' territories. The main characteristic of the overseas' territories was that they were excluded from the European public law for the lack of any authority who could enforce a global public law. This means that, in contrast to the European continent, no legal boundaries ("Hegung") existed which would have limited warfare in means and ambition, especially when it comes to the genocide of indigenous peoples (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 62). But the public law in Europe, too, underwent significant changes.

In the Middle Ages, a *just* war needed to be approved by the pope and justified by theological arguments. Above all, just wars were fought against "pagans". In the 16th century, European powers turned from realms to mostly secular states. With this, public law became inter-state law. States were to be the constitutive element of the spatial order. In consequence, wars fought between European states became wars between equals. They were concluded by peace agreement after the "trial of strength" (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 114) and not by elimination of the enemy, as it was the case in the colonies.

### **From European to international law**

At first, when the United States started to gain influence as a new, powerful country, the European public law dissolved into international public law between civilized states, meaning Europe and North America. But eventually, with the acceptance of Asian countries in the community of civilized nations at the beginning of the 20th century, it turned into international law valid for all states. According to Schmitt, what first only could be said for market capitalism, was reflected until 1939 in the understanding of the law of the people and the League of Nations: the absence of any understanding for the necessity

of a spatial order of the world. Instead, it gave place to a “spaceless global Universalism” (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 208). This Universalism was insofar problematic that it reflected that there was no new *nomos* at all. The world was in a period of transition from the Eurocentric *nomos* to a new, undetermined one. Italy’s annexation of Ethiopia, tolerated by the most influential members of the League of Nations, demonstrated how little the League was able to deal with questions of international public law, all above the limitation of warfare, according to Schmitt. In this case, all legal norms and treaties were ignored with the explanation that “peace and quiet” (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 215) are more important than abstract norms of non–recognition of annexation by force. Schmitt insists that the years between 1919 and 1939 show that if the norms of international public law are not based on a concrete spatial concept of the order of the world, they stay empty and meaningless. The League wanted to be “European as well as universal” (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 216).

In *The Nomos of the Earth*, Schmitt made very clear that for him, international public law serves only one purpose: to limit war and avoid wars of extinction. He highlights that, if international law merely seeks to abolish war without looking for limitations of legitimate forms of war, most likely, it will give rise to new forms of, then, total war (Schmitt, 2011a).

He sees in the United States the main factor for the changing *nomos*. Schmitt draws the conclusion that the Monroe Doctrine from 1823, which has been followed ever since, made clear that the U.S. drew a metaphoric line between Europe and the Western Hemisphere, between peace and chaos, between decency and corruption (Schmitt, 2011a). They tried to isolate themselves from the European continent politically, morally and socially. While underlining that the U.S. was the only guarantor of liberty and peace, they expanded their global economic influence. According to Schmitt, the U.S. became the new center of international public law, and the new center of the civilized world (Schmitt, 2011a). But, especially under President Wilson, they did not stay isolated and neutral. The United States entered the First World War in 1917 with the explanation that “the freedom of the world and the peace of the peoples” justified it (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 272). For Schmitt, this signifies the change of identity from isolationist to essentially interventionist. This change is made clear in the Stimson Doctrine of 1932 where 1) the U.S. reserves itself the right to not recognize states which have been created by “illegal violence” and 2) criminalizes wars between two states by calling them “wrongdoers and lawbreakers” (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 284). Together with the practice under President Wilson to only recognize **democratic** states, this has led to a power shift to the United States as the new center of world order. According to Schmitt, this has

an important effect on the new *nomos*. He terminates his analysis at this point after having implied that the U.S. considers the whole world its territory (Schmitt, 2011a).

In the last chapter, Schmitt examines the effects of the changing purpose of war. He claims that war has become a mean of extermination. When war ceased to be a “duel”, it also ceased to take place between just enemies (*justus hostis*). This is one factor for that a war is considered just. The second determinant is the just cause (*justa causa*) which has become dominant. Schmitt argues that the discrimination of the enemy as criminal has led to a total form of war. This was fostered by a relocation of the “theatre of war” (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 298) and the introduction of new weapons of mass destruction and distant warfare. The enemy is discriminated in legal and moral terms which makes his annihilation just(ified). The use of these weapons must indeed be well justified, Schmitt insists. But at the same time, he seems to doubt that any kind of enmity can justify their use. He concludes this question in a rather cryptic way citing Henry Adams: “[W]hen the foe is not what they say he is, what are **they**?” (emphasis added) (Schmitt, 2011a, p. 299).

## Reception

When it comes to the reception of Schmitt’s work, Koskeniemi (2004, p. 495) criticizes that “Schmitt gives the impression of describing a “concrete order” when he is simply describing the logical corollaries of a theory of domestic absolutism” during the times of European public law. Still, he underlines himself that for Schmitt, reducing complexity and protecting internal order were priorities which the absolute states could realize (Koskeniemi, 2004). In addition, Hooker (2009) argues that Schmitt’s focus on the nation state is a weakness that makes it hard to apply the concept to politics in the 21st century. For Howse (2006, p. 101), “Schmitt’s problem was that he stuck to a faith in, and hope for, a new division of the world that would allow the kind of enmity that for him constituted the ‘political’”.

In response, Prozorov (2010) highlights that Schmitt’s point was not that the spatial order is fixed, but that a positive law needs to be related to, or seek orientation with, the *nomos* it aims to rule (Prozorov, 2010). However, he perceives it as a major limitation of Schmitt’s *nomos* that the concept is only able to deal with the absence of any spatial order as a “temporary stage in the transition toward a new *nomos*”. That there might not be any *nomos* at all, but only a permanent situation of anomie, is not a possible scenario in Schmitt’s case (Prozorov, 2010).

While not giving an explicit answer to the question what comes after the state, Schmitt foresaw ongoing conflicts over the European *Großraum* (Howse, 2006). His theory of greater areas assumes that



newly formed regional entities including different, but culturally homogenous communities will replace the old nation states (Rech et al., 2017). Those regional entities would be governed by a “Reich as the unquestioned leading power on all ‘internal’ affairs of the *Großraum* and its international representative outside of it” (Rech et al., 2017, p. 148). Yet, Howse (2006) maintains that the political does not vanish. Instead, the political dimension of the relationship between the “owners” of the greater areas would then be expressed in a “tremendous, reciprocal “match of powers””.

Rech et al. (2017) focus more on the imperialistic touch of the greater area concept: besides being loyal to national absolutist ideas, it “also offers no hint at the constant dynamics of dissolution, integration, and transgression of identities” which are an essential part of large political communities. Even though Schmitt always insisted on the necessary absence of plurality inside the political entity, this is clearly not the case for a European *Großraum*. Even less valid is it for a the Eurasian one which the Russian President Putin is advocating. Those identities, the authors continue, “are permanently open to contestation and resistance” in the age of Globalization.

In the eyes of Hooker (2009), Schmitt’s main achievement is the ability to accept painful facts about politics, e.g. that there will be war as long as communities exist and that no meaningful existence of any human being is conceivable without the possibility of extinction. In relation to that, he interprets Schmitt’s concept of the political as being “a wholly independent category that seeks to express the most manifestations of man in society” (Hooker, 2009, p. 17). Moreover, Hooker (2009, p. 3) underlines that the only norm Schmitt sets is that “live should be serious”. Koskenniemi (2004, p. 495) agrees that, for Schmitt, “nihilism is worse than anarchy”. Any other normative basis, from which Schmitt writes, is hard to decipher and allows no easy access to his writings in general (Koskenniemi, 2004). As a help for interpretation, Koskenniemi (2004) refers to an interview Schmitt gave in Madrid in 1951, where he outlined the negative effects of a pure philosophical perspective of history. This either results in a perpetual repetition of the same power politics (political realism) or the merger of humanity and technology (political liberalism) resulting in the destruction of human kind. As I mentioned above, Schmitt’s way out is a Christian conception of history (Koskenniemi, 2004). The *katechon* whose role can be taken by different actors during history, holds the anti-Christ at distance until the end of time is to come (Koskenniemi, 2004). Koskenniemi (2004) concludes that only from this perspective

[...] the last 100 pages of *Nomos* receive their meaning and [...] can be united as a political rejection of everything represented by those that seek “world unity” under a secular philosophy of history and thus fall under what Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “For when they shall say peace and security, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” (Koskenniemi, 2004, p. 502)

On the other hand, McCormick (1998) disagrees with the use of a theological approach towards Schmitt. He points out that only his early works, such as *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* which have been published before his excommunication and break with the Catholic church, can be interpreted from a theological perspective. I tend to agree with Koskenniemi (2004) because I think that Schmitt, even when he wrote *The Nomos of the Earth* after his break-up with the Church, explicitly developed his ideas from a Christian conception of history and the role of the *katechon*. However, this should not limit the reading of the book to be a theological one since Schmitt's philosophical perspective is mostly juridical combined with geographic considerations in the widest sense.

Prozorov (2010) argues that the concept of *katechon* has never been more relevant: with the loss of influence of religion in modern Europe, the state has become the only retainer of chaos and destruction. For instance, immediately one could think of the U.S. as self-proclaimed guardian of liberal values and human rights in the world, to name just one example. In his analysis of the Georgian war in 2008, Prozorov (2010) has analyzed the role of Russia acting as a *katechon* in the post-Soviet space preventing it from falling apart. Other authors made similar observations. Koskenniemi (2004) mentions Russia as assuming the role of *katechon* preventing a moralization of politics –and with that the coming of the liberal, universal anti-Christ. Also, Engström (2014) focused on new Russian messianism using the same concept. She argues that Russia sees itself as a restraining factor vis-à-vis the interventionist U.S. American foreign policy and the evil approaching from the Far and Middle East (Engström, 2014). This “responsibility for the fate of the world” is explicitly based on Christian values (Engström, 2014, p. 376).

Teschke (2011, p. 80) claims that Schmitt neglected “social relations of sovereignty” and the real locus of power occupied by the public whose compliance with exceptional measures the sovereign needs to ensure. According to him, Schmitt never took into account power relations within the state treating the latter as unitary actor. Teschke (2011, p. 87) states that both, the political and geopolitical Schmittian concepts, “prioritize and valorize the political and geopolitical over and against the social”. This is not true insofar as Schmitt did not forget about social identities when he said that pluralism within the state destroys the unity of the community and hence the state itself. Further, when insisting on the need for an *other*, he implicitly went from the assumption that collective identities are often constructed against, or in contrast to, external identities. Also, at the beginning of *The Nomos of the Earth* Schmitt showed that he considers the social order and the *nomos* to be interrelated, with the social preceding the *nomos*. Still, one cannot but agree that Schmitt's criteria of internal homogeneity are far from being achievable

or even desirable from an ethical point of view.

## **2.5 Critique of liberal universalism and a unipolar world order**

In *The political* as of 1963, Schmitt attempts to show that, even though the “era of statehood” has come to an end, “its concepts are maintained” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 10). Of course, for him, this is the concept of the political. Hence, throughout the book, Schmitt demonstrates that even liberalism in the age of technology cannot escape this dimension, cannot neutralize these oppositions but even increases them. This gives rise to total war or wars of extinction. I claim that Schmitt’s argument can be divided in three aspects: 1) a political critique based on the liberal concept of politics which is closely interconnected with 2) a critique of the alleged peacefulness of liberalism and 3) a philosophical critique of the dominance of values in liberal discourse.

### **Liberalism as political concept**

At first, the philosopher explains why, according to him, liberalism cannot escape “the consequence of the political” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 78). He argues that, without exception, all political terms and ideas have an opposite which is differentiated, negated or fought (Schmitt, 1963a). Hence, when a state emphasizes how liberal it is, intentionally or not, this also highlights which state is not liberal. Unless all states are equally liberal, this cannot but create a new line of enmity. Liberalism tries to separate the spheres of economy, science, religion and ethics to neutralize their conflict potential. But at the same time, it subjects politics to all of them (Schmitt, 1963a). Schmitt argues that each of those spheres can intensify oppositions to a degree that they become political again. For him, this is clear in the case of economy under liberalism (Schmitt, 1963a). Hence, the political prevails in disguise. Schmitt criticizes liberalism for turning the enemy into a competitor, a mere opponent (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 28) concealing the nature and consequences of that relationship. No-one could deny that peoples have been forming alliances and associations along the distinction of friend from enemy since the beginning of civilization and will keep on doing so forever (Schmitt, 1963a).

Moreover, liberalism does not have “an own positive theory about statehood and politics” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 69). The only role that sees liberalism for the state is to secure the freedom of the individual. It is just the administrative arm of society (Schmitt, 1963a). Thus, it tries to reduce the power of the state in favor of the individual’s freedoms and interests (Schmitt, 1963a). But, according to Schmitt, a liberal individual as such is a contradiction to the concept of a political community because it would

never sacrifice itself for the survival of his people (Schmitt, 1963a). In liberalism, there is no place for a strong state. It both reduces the state to a society and its people to a mere public of consumers (Schmitt, 1963a).

### **The liberal way of war**

In one of his later works, *The Theory of the Partisan*, Schmitt maintains that, while liberal vocabulary might be pacifistic, liberalism as a political form is not less war-prone than any other form of politics (Schmitt, 1963b). Related to liberal universalism, he predicts a time of liberal world hegemony whose main characteristic is that enmity will be so horrible that “maybe one is not even allowed to talk about the enemy or enmity and both will be banned and condemned” before the extermination of the other begins (Schmitt, 1963b, p. 95). Obliteration of the enemy will be abstract and absolute at the same time (Schmitt, 1963b). This kind of violence will be presented as serving a higher purpose, a universal norm, for which no price is too high (Schmitt, 1963b).

He also argues that “with ethical and judicial norms one cannot justify a war” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 50). As I will show later, by scholars this has been interpreted as a critique of *just war* discourse and human rights intervention. In this context, Schmitt also criticized the League of Nations as an organization which does not abolish war since it does not abolish states. On the contrary, it introduces more forms of war by legitimizing or sanctioning violence between states (Schmitt, 1963a).

However, on a theoretical level, Schmitt considered the possibility of a unified world under perpetual peace. Still, as he sees it, a pacifistic world would be an unpolitical one where contrasts and differences might exist, but no friends and enemies (Schmitt, 1963a). If someone was really committed to constructing a depoliticized, universal human society, he would at first need to abolish statehood as such (Schmitt, 1963a). An international organization like the League of Nations could only fulfill the criterion to represent humanity if it was to deny the right to war to all other groups while not claiming the right to war itself (Schmitt, 1963a). Any organization bringing about that universal unpolitical entity would be reduced to a cooperative based on production and consumption (Schmitt, 1963a). But who would be responsible for the centralization and its control? Schmitt warns to think this would be a problem handled as it goes, by itself or spontaneously (Schmitt, 1963a).

In the last chapter of *The political*, liberalism is rarely mentioned as such. However, many authors seem to have deducted their Schmittian critique of liberalism from this chapter. This is explained by the fact that, here, Schmitt outlines how the attempt to abolish wars through neutralization of areas which

contained a friend–enemy distinction, has eventually led to an intensification and totalization of war.

At first, he describes how the Enlightenment together with the Industrialization has influenced the dominant world view. In the 19th century, Liberalism promoted “production and consumption as the central categories of human existence” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 83). From economical thinking based on Marxist philosophy in the 19th, the industrialization process went on to introduce “a religion of technical miracles, human feats and dominations of nature” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 84). Schmitt explains this believe in technical progress with the fact that the society looked for “neutral” areas. This is how the neutrality of the state in the 19th century was philosophically established. According to Schmitt, this only exchanged civil wars based on religious differences against wars between nations (Schmitt, 1963a). The next attempt was to base state philosophy on the premises of economy. But this only led to economic wars, not to the end of all wars. In a last attempt, technology was introduced as the ultimate neutral frame of reference which would render all wars unnecessary (Schmitt, 1963a). But, Schmitt argues, in contrast to economy, technology is not an area, but a mean which serves everyone who owns it. Hence, it cannot be neutral. It cannot be the basis of human decision making or even culture from a moral–philosophical point of view. It can merely be an instrument (Schmitt, 1963a). And it will be the instrument for peace as well as for war (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 94). Technology cannot be considered the “sense” of the 20th century (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 94). The dominant paradigm emerges from the political which reveals the new friend–enemy distinctions and the strongest “kind of politics” that take possession of technology (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 94). This has led to a new discourse of war which Schmitt characterizes as follows: the worst wars are justified “in the name of peace”, the “cruellest suppression in the name of freedom” and the most terrible inhumanity in the name of humanity (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 94).

### **The discourse of values**

Following the critique of some authors, such as Koskeniemi, who say that Schmitt’s normative basis is hard to decipher, one cannot but quote Cerella (2016, p. 271) who paraphrases Schmitt: “the dignity of the person got completely lost because ‘a hundred years of rapid industrialization has essentially transformed value in an economic category, so that a metamorphosis in values, a general valorization [allgemeine Ver–Wertung], is now taking place in all spheres of our social existence’”. Liberal political discourse deals a lot with values, but Schmitt had a different perception of ethics based on what Christianity understands as decency and virtue– the good humanity is striving to. For him, the whole concept of values already entailed the juxtaposition with non-values leading to devaluation and exploita-

tion (Cerella, 2016). “Values [...] cannot establish legitimacy, they can only utilize” (Schmitt, 2011b, p. 24). The liberal discourse presents values as something objective, real, scientific. But this is a disguise for the negation of another, opposite value (Schmitt, 2011b). The value discourse seems to be of endless tolerance, but in reality, it has transferred all morals into economic vocabulary, allowing for the extinction of what is worthless (Schmitt, 2011b). Again, this argument leads to a critique of liberal universalism. While virtues and decency in an abstract sense of “being good” have a global dimension, “values as such are brought by actual people to bear upon other actual people” meaning that they are subjective and lead to a war of all against all (Cerella, 2016, p. 276).

### **Reception**

Odysseos (2007, p. 132) builds on Schmitt’s critique of liberalism saying that “humanity is not a political concept, and no political entity corresponds to it”. With its claim to represent humanity and freedom, liberalism designates every enemy as absolute, needing elimination instead of defeat (Odysseos, 2007). In fact, “modernity’s dream to end war has repeatedly had the opposite effect” (Odysseos, 2007, p. 136) through a no-tolerance policy against intolerance leading to a superficial normalization of diverse people.

Besides, Schmitt has been repeatedly criticized for misinterpreting liberalism (Richter, 1999). Since it is not my aim to decide whether Schmitt was right or wrong about liberalism, but to show the parallels between him and current Russian Foreign policy, this point is not relevant here. However, many other authors agree with Schmitt’s analysis of liberalism. Mouffe (2005, p. 14) argues that liberalism negates conflicts of the social world for which “no rational solution could ever exist”. She refers to Schmitt who analyzes that in liberalism, the individual is the ultimate point of reference (Schmitt, 1963a). This causes conflicts with collective identities. Also, the individual can only have a personal enemy, not a political enemy. Mouffe (2005) insists that there are no liberal politics, only a liberal critique of politics. Further, although defending democratic models of decision-making, Mouffe admits that “[...] every consensus is based on acts of exclusion” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 15) even within the political unit which in her eyes is governed by a we-they-distinction as well.

Rech et al. (2017, p. 147) state that “[t]o Schmitt, the idea of universal progress was not only false and dangerous but also a lure, a masked attempt to seize political control by dressing a particular political claim in universal shape”. In the time of his writings, Schmitt did not see any universalist campaign that did not eventually lead to an attempt to gain power and justify violence. When talking about Schmitt’s

opinion about universalism, to be precise, one needs to consider also Koskenniemi (2004)'s contribution towards an understanding of Schmitt. He points out that, while Schmitt strongly opposed the U.S. American liberal hegemony, he did never explicitly say that another form of universalism was not possible (Koskenniemi, 2004). Still, one wonders how to reconcile the "exclusive logic of particularism" with the "inclusive logic of universalism" (Rech et al., 2017, p. 156) in his theory.

Hooker offers a realist perspective on Schmitt. Going from the assumption that "good enmity makes good stability" (Hooker, 2009, p. 13), he criticizes scholars who only take parts of Schmitt's theory which seems useful to them and leave aside what they do not understand or agree with. He also counts Chantal Mouffe in the group of those who only use very few aspects of the theory. For Hooker (2009, p. 5), liberalism is an attempt to "disguise and temper [...] cold political realities", realities that Schmitt did not try to conceal in his theory. He summarizes Schmitt's main *leitmotiv* as follows: "In so far as he had one, Schmitt's 'project' was to allow diverse truth claims in a context that could ultimately tolerate diversity" (Hooker, 2009, p. 6). The absence of the pluriverse on the other hand would only lead to nihilism (Hooker, 2009) meaning a total negation of any ideal, morals, values and the belief in the purposelessness of human existence.

In the following, I continue with the analysis of President Putin's speeches after having justified my choice of research material and proceeding.

### **3 Putin's political rhetoric through the lenses of Carl Schmitt**

#### **3.1 Choice of research material**

The speeches I analyze were made between 2012 and 2018, beginning with Vladimir Putin's third presidential term. Primarily, this timeframe is justified by the apparent change of rhetoric after 2012 which has been noticed by several authors, such as Engström (2014), Makarychev et al. (2014), Kurylo (2016), and Chaban et al. (2017). Of course, the limited scope of my study makes a short timeframe necessary as well. The speeches were chosen accordingly in order to guarantee a variety of format, time and audience.

In relation to the concrete speeches, there are different reasons why I include them in the analysis. Putin's speech in the Valdai Club in 2014 has received wide coverage in English language newspapers. They discussed it under headlines such as "Putin accuses United States of damaging world order" (Anishchuk, 2014) or "Putin Lashes Out At West For Destabilizing World" (Gardels, 2014). The Valdai

Club in Russia was established in 2004 with the aim to promote dialogue between “Russian and international intellectual elites” (Valdai Club Foundation, 2018). The Valdai Club audience differs from the target audience of other speeches insofar as it consists of mostly Russia–friendly speakers. In 2014, 108 experts, historians, political analysts from 25 countries (Putin, 2014b) took part.

The 2013 Valdai speech is included to see whether the 2014 Valdai speech differs significantly from its precedent. In 2013, “more than 200 Russian and foreign politicians, public and spiritual leaders, philosophers and cultural figures” (Putin, 2013b) participated.

The President’s Addresses in 2014 and 2016 are among the speech sample, too. Target audience and subject differ from the Valdai speeches significantly since they were held in front of a domestic audience. Nevertheless, since speeches of the Russian President are usually widely covered in the international media too, it cannot be excluded that Vladimir Putin also wanted to send a message to friends and opponents on the international scene.

The Address by President of the Russian Federation on March 18, 2014 became known as “Crimea speech”. The President addressed in it “State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives” (Putin, 2014a) with the plea to take on Crimea and Sevastopol as new “constituent entities within the Russian Federation” (Putin, 2014a). This speech is particularly interesting because it discusses the Crimean crisis from a Russian viewpoint, just like the Valdai speeches, but in front of a domestic audience.

One year earlier, the New York Times published President Putin’s “Plea for caution from Russia”. In this article, he directly addressed U.S.–American readers informing them about the Russian perception of US interventionist politics. Again, the audience and the different form of the text will hopefully contribute to having a more complete analysis of Putin’s Foreign policy discourse.

Exceptionally, I analyze one speech which does not fall into the set timeframe which is Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. It has received extraordinary attention in the media. For instance, in 2007, the Financial Times wrote that “Putin rails against US foreign policy” (Fidler et al., 2007). Later, Goble (2017) treats the Munich speech as the key hint for predicting the Crimean crisis under the headline: “Like Hitler, Putin told the West in advance what he’d do – and the West ignored him”. In 2017, Clark (2017) states that “Putin’s Munich speech continues to resonate”. In retrospective, this speech seems even more groundbreaking than it was at that time. Since there are many references to the Munich speech in the literature (Morozova, 2009; Engström, 2014; Bukkvoll, 2016; Forsberg et al.,



2017) as well, I think it is justified to include it in the sample.

Founded in 1963, the Munich Security Conference is the world's biggest meeting of international security and military officials as well as of representatives from the defense industry. It aims at promoting peace and mutual trust through dialogue in international relations (Stiftung Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz (gemeinnützige) GmbH, 2018). In 2007, it invited "politicians, military officials, entrepreneurs and experts from more than 40 nations" (Putin, 2007). President Putin characterizes it as "representative" for the International political community.

As well as the Munich speech, the speech held on the occasion of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 28 in 2015 had an international audience. While the choice of words was more prudent, the Russian President spoke about the same issues as in the other speeches: the importance of the UN, the non-violability of sovereignty and American exceptionalism. Hence, it can be used to compare the argument with the other speeches.

Speaking chronologically, Putin's interview given to NBC-moderator Megyn Kelly in March 2018 is the last one I analyze. It shows, whether Putin's rhetoric has significantly changed during the timeframe and whether the format has had an influence on what he says and how.

### **3.2 Proceeding**

Martin (2015, p. 34) suggests pursuing a rhetorical analysis in three steps: 1) describing the rhetorical context, 2) tracing the rhetorical argument and 3) demonstrating the rhetorical effect of the speech. I will outline the historical context where I see it necessary to understand what is said. However, mostly, the international crises Vladimir Putin refers to can be considered general knowledge. Time, place and audience I have mentioned already in the preceding section. Instead of simply tracing the argument, I am going to follow the two questions suggested by Gee (2004) for discourse analysis. I already gave examples in the introductory part, so I just recall them here: which concepts, terms, events, actors are (dis)connected and why? And how are the main reference objects characterized? Further, I analyze the effect, or give an interpretation in the same part. Since I divided Schmitt's concepts or insights into topical paragraphs, I follow a similar structure in the analysis here. Several topics come up again and again in the texts, such as international law, the critique of Western liberalism, unipolarity and Russia's role in the global order. This is why I use them as structuring elements.

While I tried to explain transparently my choice of speeches and my approach, I am aware of its

limitations. First, my research material is not an exhaustive, comprehensive list of speeches given by President Putin during his third presidential term. Moreover, only analyzing pieces of language leaves aside actions and reactions that take place in practice. Although I take the context of the speeches into account, I cannot carry out a comprehensive foreign policy analysis. Besides, even the frame of the context is limited to foreign policy while domestic politics obviously have a huge influence on which strategy for political relations with other countries is designed and put into effect. I already mentioned the frame problem in the introduction, so I will not go into details again. Furthermore, I can only assume that the context of the speeches has an influence on the content and the language.

But how much influence certain factors really have, like direct and indirect audience, time, place and current events, I cannot but suspect. Hence, I simply mention these external factors without claiming causality between them and the respective form of the speech. In addition, I use a political, not a linguistic approach to discourse analysis with the disadvantages this entails. These are, above all, a certain methodological superficiality and the absence of a multidisciplinary approach (Martin, 2015).

Besides, I am only working with official translations from Russian into English, published by the Russian government. Therefore, I face the risk that that meaning is simply lost in translation or that terms have a very different connotation in English than in Russian (Hill, 2016).

Finally, it could very well be that the Russian President does not mean a thing of what he says because his strategy is based on deception and lies, as Hill (2016) argues. But even if that were so, his speeches stay the principal tool of communication with the Western audience who must deal with the same problem as I do. We can only act “as if” he meant what he says. Finally, I would like to emphasize that I cannot claim the existence of a connection between Carl Schmitt and Putin’s political rhetoric. The German philosopher is rather a tool which is used to understand the logic behind Russian Foreign policy discourse better and explain it on a theoretical basis.

### **3.3 Analysis**

For the analysis, I presume the existence of a consistent U.S. American and European normative discourse based on certain values which I will briefly outline. Scholars tend to put these countries together in the same group of political regimes. For instance, Ware (1992, p. 130) states that “[d]espite the disagreement about what they should be called, there is little disagreement that today they [liberal democracies] include among their number Britain, France, Germany, the U.S. and more than 40 other regimes”.

Even if liberal democratic norms and neoliberal discourse might be used in a rather contradictory and flexible way (Venugopal, 2015), going into much detail here is not necessary for my approach since President Putin does not seem to have a very nuanced perception of Western foreign policy either. Let us take German foreign policy as an example. According to the ministry of foreign affairs<sup>4</sup>: “Alongside European integration, the transatlantic partnership is the most important pillar of German foreign policy. The US is Germany’s closest ally outside Europe.” This is a clear message to Russia. Further, the UN is one among many important international institutions: “Germany primarily defines its peace and security policy in multilateral terms, that is, within the framework of international institutions and structures such as the EU, NATO, the United Nations, the OSCE, the G7 and the G20.” Germany is “committed to peace and security around the world”. Germany promotes “the strengthening of democracy, the rule of law and human rights worldwide” which assumes that the Western model should be implemented all over the world. “Peace, security, stability and sustainable development” can only be guaranteed where those norms are respected. Further, “Germany regards multilateralism as the most important principle for international order and will remain committed to this principle in the future.” Some principles are less explicit but still important for Western liberalism. For instance, liberal democracies claim “to protect the civil liberties of the individual” (Ware, 1992, p. 131) and that they are the “sole legitimate form of human governance” (Cooley, 2015, p. 50). Risse et al. (1999, p. 8) describe the bloc of liberal states as a “sphere of peace, democracy and human rights” where a “identity transformation” of states is intended and achieved. Essential is also the conviction that “the international system is steadily ‘evolving’ towards a more peaceful, moral, liberal future” (Bloomfield, 2016, p. 314).

### **3.3.1 International law**

In the Munich speech, the Russian President characterizes international law as “universal both in the conception and application of its norms” and connects it with safety, protecting everyone like a “stone-wall” (Putin, 2007). The only universal principles Putin recognizes are non-proliferation of mass destruction, non-intervention, sovereignty and the universal character of international law. Moreover, he pleads for non-intervention in Kosovo and Serbia and against “tell[ing] them how they should live their lives. There is no need to play God and resolve all these peoples’ problems” (Putin, 2007). When it comes to the use of force, he argues that in international law, there is a clear difference between peacekeeping (which requires UN sanctions) and the right to self-defense (which does not) implying that Russia will

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/-/229790> as of 05/30/18

defend itself when it sees fit (Putin, 2007). In the Federal Address 2014, he insists that Crimea complied with democratic procedures and international norms (Putin, 2014a). In this speech, the referendum is linked to declarations of independence in the U.S. and Kosovo and the reunification in Germany, which no-one hesitated to recognize (Putin, 2014a). According to Putin, Russia behaved correctly because they granted Crimea the right to self-determination, as the U.S. did with Kosovo. Also, he claims that Russia does not use double standards when it comes to international law (Putin, 2014b). The Russian President further explains his Crimea policy by the fact that this territory was transferred from Russia to Ukraine by Khrushchev which was illegal after Soviet law (Putin, 2014b). Back then, so the argument, it did not matter because the USSR was considered one country (Putin, 2014b). But with the putsch in Kiev the people of Crimea feared they would be harmed. Russia intervened to protect the Russian population there (Putin, 2014b). This did not violate Ukrainian sovereignty (Putin, 2014b), explains Vladimir Putin. In *The Value of the State*, Schmitt argued that “if law is to exist, it cannot be deducted from power”<sup>5</sup> (Schmitt, 1914, p. 35). In this context can be read Putin’s understanding of the universality of international law and the right to territorial and political integrity. International law must be separated from power and cannot be decided case by case. Otherwise, this leads to “double standards” and hegemonial influence on universal norms. “Russia believes that international law, not the right of the strong, must apply” (Putin, 2013b). The norm of mutually respecting a state’s sovereignty goes back to the Westphalian system, established in 1648. This old norm is considered to be universally accepted by all states. Lacking the power to face the U.S. militarily and politically, Putin uses international law as a protection against an abuse of power by the Western allies. Moreover, “[o]nly the establishment of a norm justifies the difference between right and wrong”<sup>6</sup> (Schmitt, 1914, p. 35). The same goes for Putin when he does not refer to the human suffering in Serbia, Libya or Syria but puts state sovereignty as a norm above all other considerations judging the “right and wrong” in international relations. For him, “the law is still the law” and must be followed under any circumstances, otherwise, chaos will prevail (Putin, 2013a). This passage illustrates nicely that Putin’s rhetoric does not reflect his own, flexible way of using the law.

Also, Schmitt insisted that a norm cannot be deducted from an individual or a group of individuals in the sense of a minority (Schmitt, 1914, p. 35). For Putin, the interference of the U.S. in the Russian sphere of influence under the premise of humanitarian intervention constitutes a change of norms by

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<sup>5</sup>“Wenn es ein Recht geben soll, dann darf es nicht aus der Macht abgeleitet werden [...]”

<sup>6</sup>“Nur die Aufstellung einer Norm begründet den Unterschied von Recht und Unrecht”

the NATO minority since there is no consensus in the international community about the application of the right to protect. The UN is linked with legitimacy, representation and universality (Putin, 2015) which underlines that only when there is a consensus on a matter in the UN, a norm or intervention can be considered lawful. The Russian President describes the balance of power during the Cold War as “equilibrium” upholding a “fragile peace” (Putin, 2007). Now, since the U.S. has developed an anti-missile-defense-system, the balance has been destroyed (Putin, 2007). Putin’s emphasis on law could be seen as an attempt to restore the balance of power but it is based on the assumption that all states consider themselves bound by international law. He feels that this is not the case criticizing the United States for imagining themselves to be “so powerful and exceptional” that they get impunity for every break of international law (Putin, 2015). He cannot do anything about it but denounces it again and again. He deliberately chooses a legal rhetoric when using terms such as “de facto and de jure” (Putin, 2014a) to underline that his critique is legal, not political in nature. Continuing on a very interpretative level, one could say that, since Russia is made untrustworthy in the Western media, Putin tries to counter this by a resort to supposedly politically neutral, legal argumentation. On the other hand, the Russian President presents his country as the guardian of international law (Putin, 2014b; Putin, 2013a) which is supposed to grant Russia power and legitimacy in international relations.

Several times, Putin expresses a negative attitude towards diplomacy. For instance, he characterizes it as “pleasant” but “empty” (Putin, 2007) or presents diplomats as having “tongues so as not to speak the truth” (Putin, 2014b). At another point, he says: “We talk and talk, we are like diplomats” (Putin, 2014b). Again, on a very interpretative level, one could say that this stands for a feeling of missing trust and reliability in international relations since diplomats are the oldest representatives of relations between states. International law, on the other hand, is reliable, universal and restores trust when everyone respects it, according to Putin’s narrative.

### **3.3.2 Russian identity**

“Inheriting Schmitt’s view of the political, Russia’s political identity has been largely based on differentiating itself from others (Tsygankov, 2013)” (Kurylo, 2016, p. 4). This becomes very clear in the subsequent analysis. Before this, I give a brief introduction to post-Soviet Russian identity based on the literature.

Roberts (2017) points out that, for at least ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there

was hardly any shared identity at all. She maintains that, with President Putin, this has changed. The self-perception as *katechon* gave Russia a new identity. Also, President Putin constructed the West again as the enemy. He filled a “political vacuum” (Roberts, 2017, p. 34) with a new self-understanding of the old nation and a sort of siege mentality. This resulted in a comeback to the pre-revolutionary core values of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” (Roberts, 2017, p. 35). This was not obvious after the end of the Cold War. But NATO enlargement and the recognition of Kosovo by the Western powers helped defining the new-old enemy (Roberts, 2017). As Roberts (2017, p. 30) puts it: “the West’s treatment of Russia does figure prominently in Putin’s own conceptions of Russian exceptionalism” thereby passing the ball to Putin’s geopolitical strategy and construction of a new Russian identity as the new-old superpower balancing the U.S.

Morozova (2009, p. 670) highlights that Russia sees itself as a “mediator between Western institutions and Eastern diversity and that of a guarantor of Eurasian and, therefore, global stability”. I am not sure that I can agree based on the speech analysis. Towards his “other” (the West), Putin employs war-like rhetoric which sounds even threatening in some part, for instance, when he describes the strength of his country which has an over 1000-year-old history and “a realistic sense of our own opportunities and potential” (Putin, 2007). Elsewhere, in the NBC interview 2018, the President equals power with the confidence that one “is doing the right thing” and is “ready to go all the way to achieve the goals” (Putin, 2018). Also, in the Valdai speech 2014, he compares Russia with a bear whose territory is threatened:

Whatever Jupiter is allowed, the Ox is not. We cannot agree with such an approach. The ox may not be allowed something, but the bear will not even bother to ask permission. Here we consider it the master of the taiga, and I know for sure that it does not intend to move to any other climatic zones – it will not be comfortable there. However, it will not let anyone have its taiga either. I believe this is clear. (Putin, 2014b)

Hill (2016) suggests that the main objective for President Putin is a secure, independent Russia but this wish only partially arrives in the ears of the Western audience. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Putin is afraid that his country could lose importance again becoming one of the extended arms of U.S. American hegemony. This influences Russian foreign policy strategy and identity building, two areas which are closely interrelated under Vladimir Putin. “Putin doubles down, he does not draw back” declares Hill (2016) and warns that a Russian President who feels threatened does not hesitate to enter again in a nuclear arms race. He is the “strong man at the top” in a tradition of tsars and Secretary Generals of the Communist party (Cede, 2010, p. 40). In contrast to this, President Putin tends to describe Russia basically as innocent for every problem in international politics. This serves a certain

strategy what I demonstrate in the following paragraphs. However, the above quote should remind the reader that Russia does not refrain from power politics, either.

### **More liberal than the liberal West**

Vladimir attempts to show that the West, all above the U.S., does not comply with the set of norms that they are promoting, such as security cooperation, free trade, international dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution. At the same time, he claims that Russia respects these norms. First, Russia is presented as essentially peaceful. In contrast to the allegedly belligerent NATO members, Russia is said to have “evolved on the basis of diversity, harmony and balance”. Russia is careful and “appealed in vain” to put the Islamic State on the list of terrorist groups, has foresight and is “always open for dialogue” (Putin, 2014b). It is responsible, tolerant and ready to continue peaceful exchanges (Putin, 2014b). Putin insists that his country “did not start” the conflict in Ukraine, the EU did (Putin, 2014b). Also, Vladimir Putin links the crisis in Ukraine to the NATO expansion which forces ex–Soviet states to “face a false choice” (Putin, 2015). In contrast to the U.S., Russia is “not planning to cobble together any blocs or get involved in exchange of blows” (Putin, 2014b). Russia is presented as the mature party here: “We urge everyone to show restraint”. Russia allegedly tries to restrain the global chaos because it “adheres to [. . .] the Treaty on the Non–Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons”, it “bear[s] responsibility” and supports dialogue (Putin, 2007). It left Georgia, so Putin, “resolved the problems we had with our Georgian colleagues” and is exclusively engaged in measures for protection and peacekeeping (Putin, 2007). The United States, on the other hand, try to expand their hegemony, e.g. through the recognition of new governments which Schmitt analyzed as an essential hegemonic means (Schmitt, 2005, p. 359). This is claimed and criticized by Putin in the case of Kosovo. However, he never goes into detail about it. In contrast to this, Russia stands for “good will, disdain for scheming and trickery and a spirit of cooperation” in the community of nations (Putin, 2015).

That relates to another aspect. Russia is presented as ostensibly selfless, generous and just. For example, it openly and “in good faith” warned before taking measures, as in case of the Ukrainian association with the European Customs Union (Putin, 2013b). In the economic area, Putin repeatedly underlines that “we are open” to cooperation and foreign investment while the developed countries enrich themselves through development programs feeding terrorism and local conflicts all the while demanding Russia to ensure “freedom of speech, free trade, and equal possibilities” (Putin, 2007; Putin, 2014b). Russia is given attributes like strong, independent, promoting dialogue and cooperation, frank and trust-

worthy, compassionate, democratic and civilized (Putin, 2014a). In the UN speech 2015, Russia, again, is characterized as “honest and frank” (Putin, 2015). In the Federal Address 2016, “our people” is linked with “responsibility, high moral standards, concern for public interests and [...] respect” rejecting “arrogance, conceit, insolence and selfishness” (Putin, 2016). In the NBC interview as well, Russia is connected with honesty and respect delivering an open and plain message vis-à-vis other countries (Putin, 2018). Russia is presented as defender of “justice, respect and trust” in international relations instead of using “talk of freedom as a cover for insulting others’ feelings” (Putin, 2016). Clearly, the West serves once more as the evil counterpart, Mammon and Sodom in one.

Third, according to the Russian President, his country is more democratic than the West. Vladimir Putin connects Russia with direct democracy, an integration-oriented, positive, peaceful agenda as well as traditional values and patriotism (Putin, 2014b). On the contrary, the U.S. is not controlled by the people but by the “American establishment”, by a minority, which defines for the rest of the world what democracy should look like (Putin, 2013b). Besides, the speaker underlines the allegedly undemocratic nature of U.S. politics by giving the example of the American Senate which refused to receive Russian members of Parliament to discuss the matter of the Syrian war (Putin, 2013b). Ostensibly in contrast to that, Russia is “ready”, “engaged”, “open to cooperation” and shows initiative to resolve problems (Putin, 2007). He attributes it with stability and fairness. In a 10-lines-long paragraph, he repeats three times that Russia “is ready” (Putin, 2007). This kind of discourse seems like a copy or a parody of the U.S. discourse on protecting liberal values in the world.

Apart from allegedly being more democratic, Russia has a greater respect for international law, according to Putin. In the Federal Address 2014, he insists that Russia never violated international law and never will. But the “U.S. and the Western countries” are related to double standards, hypocrisy, irresponsibility, cynicism, aggression, chaos and dishonesty (Putin, 2014a; Putin, 2014b). U.S. policy towards Russia is linked to attributes like ridiculous, unmodern and uncivilized. He repeatedly characterizes the U.S. as fundamentally illiberal, for instance when he says that the U.S. government refuses cooperation and tries to “halt Russia’s progress” while controlling all “internet governance tools” (Putin, 2018). Moreover, the Russian President links the U.S. with “internal struggle, [...] disorder and division” (Putin, 2018) to make it appear less stable and reliable than Russia. He makes it sound as if the United States were about to turn into a failing state.

Underlining why the allegedly degenerated liberal West is the enemy also relates to the construction



of a *katechonic* identity. That is explained in the following paragraph.

### **Russia as *katechon***

For Schmitt, a state or empire which assumes the role of a *katechon* protects an old order which is destined to dissolve eventually. The *katechon* delays this dissolution. This *katechonic* act is essentially based on certain moral concepts which sustain the current order. In this section, I demonstrate that Vladimir Putin perceives Russia as *katechon*.

He presents it as the virtuous enclave or counterpart within a chaotic and degenerated liberal world. As for Schmitt, this *katechonic* strategy serves to protect a spatial order, in this case the old Russian sphere of influence. Putin alludes to the 1000-year-old history of Russia which allows conclusions about his perception of the Eurasian *nomos*, traditionally led by a strong Russia.

Ukraine is also part of this *nomos*. It is said to have a special cultural, ethnic and historical bond with Russia. President Putin expresses this idea in several of his speeches following the Crimean crisis. Whether “this historical connection truly exists in the minds of all is beside the point” (Roberts, 2017, p. 38). What matters is that it seems to go well with the beliefs of many Russians (Roberts, 2017) and is an important part of pan-Slavonic identity construction.

In this sense, according to the Russian President, Ukraine is part of the “outer greater Russian world” because Russia has its roots in Ukraine– “we are one people” (Putin, 2013b). The former president “milked the country” and did not work for the best of the Ukrainian people (Putin, 2014a). “Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites” on Maidan are connected with “terror, murder and riots” (Putin, 2014a). The “foreign sponsors” which the speaker calls the “heirs of Bandera, Hitler’s accomplice” are part of this alleged triangle of evil (Putin, 2014a). Russia, so Putin, protects the Crimean Russians from this danger (Putin, 2014a). Crimea could only stay under Ukrainian authority as long as the Ukraine protected the Russians in Crimea, but that was not the case anymore after the “upheaval” on Maidan, according to Vladimir Putin (Putin, 2014a). Russia considers Crimea its territory and felt that Ukraine could no longer assure the wellbeing of the Russians there. This exemplifies very well the Russian perception of the spatial order of the post-Soviet region. As stated above, Russia seems to consider itself the *katechonic* protector of this order based on Christian orthodoxy.

In the Federal Address 2014, orthodoxy is represented as basis for “culture, civilization and human values” (Putin, 2014a). The Russian President frequently uses religious motives when he speaks about “the Lord’s blessings” and that “God created us equal” (Putin, 2013a). For Putin, today’s world is

“rigid” and “forgoes [...] international law” and “basic decency” (Putin, 2013b). NATO countries are explicitly linked with denial of moral principles, discrimination of traditional family models, promotion of pedophilia, suppression of Christian religion and holidays and even with “belief in [...] Satan”. This leads to “moral degradation, primitivism, moral crisis” (Putin, 2013b). He implies that Christianity or religion in a broader sense is the basis for human decency (Putin, 2013b).

At the same time, he does not hesitate to indiscriminately relate morals to foreign policy and world competition. Continuing with this moral-religious rhetoric, the Russian President argues that “intellectual, spiritual and moral strength” determines if a country persists in global competition (Putin, 2013b). Several times throughout the speech, he mentions foreign policy in the same breath as spirituality and morals and talks about “values and standards for good and evil” (Putin, 2013b).

Also, he speaks about Russian future role in the global community as resulting from a “historical destiny” (Putin, 2013b). In the 2014 Federal Address, it is linked to “military glory and outstanding valor” (Putin, 2014a). The speaker treats Russia as a person highlighting that it “has passed through these trials and tribulations and is returning to itself” (Putin, 2013b). Moreover, Russia is presented as the promoter of a new conservatism which cherishes the own history, where “looking after mothers and children” is “a basic pillar” of society and where traditions and traditional faith built the national identity (Putin, 2014b).

Moreover, good–evil and right–wrong are recurrent antithesis employed by Putin. For this point it is important to recall that Schmitt criticized that, during industrialization and the rise of Capitalism, Christian decency and virtue had been replaced by economic subjective values which are contingent and depend on the person or institution who determines what is valuable. “Values [...] cannot establish legitimacy, they can only utilize<sup>7</sup>” (Schmitt, 2011b, p. 24). The liberal discourse presents values as objective while hiding the implicit negation of the opposite (Schmitt, 2011b). Accordingly, Putin’s resort to terms such as decency, morals, spirituality, good and evil, right and wrong, relates to a pre–modern rhetoric of virtues and religious morality. This seems to counter liberal *values* which are defined by the one who employs them without having universal legitimacy.

Also, the use of the attribute “civilized” or “civilization” (Putin, 2007; Putin, 2013b; Putin, 2014a; Putin, 2014b; Putin, 2015; Putin, 2018) attracts the reader’s attention. For the Russian President, as opposed to the liberal discourse, states are not defined in terms of democracy and dictatorship, but by an older, more fundamental characteristic. Nonetheless, the effect is similar. The implication that someone

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<sup>7</sup>German: *verwerten*

is behaving uncivilized takes away a part of his humanity because it reminds of the colonial rhetoric which designated the “savages” as animals who do not belong to the circle of civilized men. To deprive another country of the status as civilization, and be it implicit, can be considered far more insulting than the term “undemocratic” as such. However, it mirrors the practice of Western powers who, according to Vladimir Putin, use the status “undemocratic” as excuse to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries (Putin, 2018). So, using this term has two effects: First, it rhetorically deprives the targeted state of its basic rights and its belonging to the community of civilized nations. Second, it appeals to a far older concept than democracy based on different norms which equal those of contemporary Russian orthodoxy, nationalism and autocracy.

It must be noted that, while it seems straightforward that Vladimir Putin sees Russia as the *katechon* in the biblical sense, I do not think that he assumes that Russia is merely delaying the end of the spatial order it is situated in. This is a major difference to Schmitt’s perception of the *katechon*. Rather, I am convinced that the Russian President considers Russia the protagonist of this order; a role which is rooted in Russia’s historical role as well as in its “destiny” (Putin, 2013b).

### **An equal in international politics**

Especially through the representation of Russia as truly democratic, just and trustworthy, President Putin seems to substantiate Russia’s right to be considered an equal to the West in international relations. Putin rhetorically commits to a multipolar world order of equally respected states. For him, states are not exceptional, but unique and equal at the same time. Again, on the contrary, the Western unipolar model is said to only create vassals and to destroy the sovereignty of states rejecting the “God-given diversity of the world” (Putin, 2013b). In three lines, he uses three times the word “equal” in the 2013 Valdai speech (Putin, 2013b).

According to the Russian President, the United States’ claim to be exceptional and to have exclusive rights is “dangerous” (Putin, 2013a). This gives the impression that the United States behave in an irresponsible manner. For Russia, on the other hand, “moral principles such as justice, equality and truth” are the most important in international relations based on international law (Putin, 2014b). In relation to this, he regularly uses personifications for states in several of his speeches, for instance when he talks about humiliation of countries by the U.S. (Putin, 2007; Putin, 2014b) or that “states should live and develop” (Putin, 2007). This sounds like an imitation of human rights discourse which has been moved to the rights of states.

### 3.3.3 Critique of Western liberalism

Before going into the analysis, it is useful to remind of the context of recent U.S.–Russian interactions because they are the main focus of Vladimir Putin’s critique. The “Plea for caution from Russia” was preceded by a dispute about the use of chemicals in Syria where the U.S. claimed that, in August 2013 in the city Ghouta, the Assad regime had used chemical weapons against the Syrian population which gave them a reason to intervene in Syria. Russia defended its ally blaming the rebels (Ewers, 2015). According to Hill (2016), the US interventions in Iraq and Syria have shown Russia that military power still determines who is the global leader. That could have caused an intensification of efforts to establish a military balance again. Russia reacted according to that logic in Georgia, Syria and Ukraine which brought the country “back into the age–old game” (Hill, 2016). According to Hill (2016), Russia in a Putinian perception is a unique, ancient, special nation with exclusive privileges. Therefore, being considered a “regional power”, like President Obama said in his speech in March 2014 at the Nuclear Security Conference in The Hague, is a humiliation and a serious offense. It simply does not go along with Russia’s self–perception (Hill, 2016). Designating Russia as a threat more dangerous than terrorism and delivering weapons to Ukraine which the U.S. did according to Snetkov (2018), has not helped relaxing the relations between the two either.

Some argue that “Russia’s actions in Ukraine are best explained by the West’s provocation of Russia, epitomized by NATO’s eastward expansion” (Roberts, 2017, p. 30). For a long time, Russian fears were ignored or understated by politicians and scholars in the West and the “cultural and geopolitical vulnerability” (Roberts, 2017, p. 30). Certainly, it is important not to overvalue Western influence on Russian Eastern European strategy because it would reduce it to a mere effect of U.S. foreign policy. However, already in the 1990s, according to Pouliot (2010), the NATO–enlargement constituted a move which could only be interpreted by Russia as a threat. The decisions for enlargement were taken clearly “before Moscow reverted to a more assertive foreign policy” (Pouliot, 2010, p. 228) even though U.S. security officials recommended a dissolution of NATO to ensure lasting peace with post–Soviet Russia (Roberts, 2017).

In this context must be read the Russian President’s critique of Western liberalism. However, it should not be reduced solely to the moaning of the “loser” of the Cold War. Some points of Putin’s critique merit to be taken seriously into consideration. I will elaborate on this in the fourth chapter.

Before starting the analysis, it is useful to remind of the core critique of liberalism according to

Schmitt: He argued that liberalism is only in its rhetoric peaceful. In any other sense, it is not. Liberalism is at least as war prone as any other form of state system. It acts in three stages to impose its “economically–founded imperialism” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 77): First, it tries to make friends and allies to secure access to resources and markets. If that does not work, it uses sanctions and embargos to impose its model on the adversary. If this is still unsuccessful, it resorts to violence, but only after having framed the extinction of the enemy as “measure to assure peace”, “as sanction” because obligations were not met (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 77).

This critique is mirrored when in the Valdai speech 2013, the Russian President accuses the West of “[a]ggressively trying to export liberalism” (Putin, 2013b). He accuses NATO countries of blackmailing Russian authorities with the label “undemocratic” when they are for instance investigating in riot cases (Putin, 2013b). Furthermore, the Russian President complains that the EU makes “excessive demands” and imposes agreements in the area of trade. This resembles Schmitt’s three–stage model that I described above. Also, in this regard it seems fit to recall Carl Schmitt when he stated that “all political concepts have their concrete opposite in mind” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 31). So, when Putin calls the U.S. undemocratic, it is to present Russia as the democratic counterpart. It appears to be ironic on purpose, copying the rhetoric of the U.S. which is usually the one to designate other countries as lacking democracy.

Also, Vladimir Putin criticizes that the EU has double standards when dealing with allies and with Russia (Putin, 2013b). Again, this is identical with Schmitt’s statement that liberal states secure alliances through market access and resources while imposing economic trade barriers on competitors. The Russian President portrays the EU as exclusively profit oriented, led by “imperial ambitions”, no matter the costs for the others, and as “trying to hurt us” (Putin, 2014b). In the Valdai speech 2014 again, he complains that the Western states block mutual investments and trade relations through sanctions hindering that countries work peacefully together (Putin, 2014b). He maintains that the EU has refused a dialogue on economic cooperation while “we would have welcomed it” (Putin, 2014b). Once more, he makes sure to underline how ostensibly progressive and cooperative Russia is, in contrast to the West. This relates to the construction of Russian identity as the better, economically more liberal state, as I outlined in the previous paragraph.

In relation to the more political critique, the Russian President accuses the EU of creating “new walls” on Russia’s Western borders (Putin, 2007). This coincides with Schmitt’s warning that liberalism

will only create new dividing lines. Far from neutralizing enmity, it redefines it as well as alters the conditions to classify an enemy (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 77). Also, the contradiction between liberal rhetoric and liberal interventions criticized by Schmitt (Schmitt, 1963a), is something Putin considers himself a victim of: He links Western countries with insidiousness when, about the Italian refusal to participate in airstrikes in Syria, he was “surprised by such an open, personal position within the Western community” (Putin, 2013b). Moreover, especially the U.S. is related to breaking promises (Putin, 2007) and being unable to handle when Putin speaks “frankly and honestly” and plainly (Putin, 2013b). In relation to the alleged guarantee not to enlarge NATO eastwards after the collapse of the USSR, he says: “we got cheated”.<sup>8</sup> This frames NATO as a liar which cannot be trusted (Putin, 2013b).

Moreover, Putins’s critique of liberalism is based on demonstrating that the West has no understanding of the world in terms of geopolitics and balance of power. Besides, it does not have a plan that would go beyond the replacement of governments in crises countries. For instance, he accuses the U.S. of causing an international power imbalance by unilaterally withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic-Missile Treaty in 2002. Moreover, the Russian President characterizes the U.S. as short-sighted and namby-pamby because they “burn their fingers and recoil” and “cut the branch they are sitting on” (Putin, 2014b). In the Ukraine, the U.S. has shown that they “have no desire to resolve the conflict in Kiev” once their goals are fulfilled (Putin, 2014b). He also describes their foreign policy as “incompetent” and “misguided” (Putin, 2014b). For instance, in Syria, the U.S. caused a “major geopolitical crisis” with their “Cold War-era bloc mentality” (Putin, 2015). The same ostensibly accounts for the EU which, through the Ukraine association agreement, has “plunged the country into chaos, [...] a civil war” (Putin, 2014b).

This continues over the subject of terrorism and interventions in the Middle East, two issues which are interrelated for President Putin. To remind the reader, Carl Schmitt claimed that throughout its history, regularly, liberalism has formed alliances with illiberal elements when it served its goal (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 68). For him, this is just another aspect of the incoherence of political liberalism. For Putin, this behavior has larger consequences, e.g. when, according to him, the U.S. helped the terrorist group Al-Nusra to come to power (Putin, 2013b). Repeatedly, the U.S. are portrayed as fools because they “don’t know” what they will do once the terrorists stop fighting for their cause and start fighting the U.S. (Putin, 2013b). In Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, U.S. military operations allegedly caused state failures and killed “the elderly and children” (Putin, 2013a). What is more is that they created “training ground

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<sup>8</sup>Michal Gorbachev as well as then-Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze plainly stated that no such guarantees had ever been given by the U.S. (Kramer et al., 2017).

for terrorists” (Putin, 2014b) and provoked a new wave of terrorism (Putin, 2013a). Also, in the “Plea for caution”, the U.S. interventions are associated with attributes like “brute”, “ineffective” and “pointless” and are directly linked with the increasing number of weapons of mass destruction. According to Putin, the WMD are acquired by countries which seek to protect themselves since international law is broken on a regular basis by the U.S.

Finally, the interview given to the American news channel NBC in March 2018 appears like a summary of all these points in short form. It becomes clear that, from Putin’s perspective, everything Russia does is just a response, a protection to the threat posed by the U.S. in form of the missile–defense–program and NATO expansion and their “propaganda” (Putin, 2018). The language here is different, less diplomatic, less political, more frustrated and confrontational. Vladimir Putin uses the word “nonsense” frequently to describe accusations made against Russia (Putin, 2018). Allegedly, Russia only wants to prevent an arms race and “maintain balance”, whereas the US deploys missile–defense–systems in Alaska and Romania as a protection against terrorists—a justification whose logic the speaker puts into questions (Putin, 2018).

Further, the Russian President says to the interviewer (Putin, 2018): “You keep thinking that the whole world revolves around you. That is not the way it is.” Also, he criticizes again that they have double standards which means that the U.S. thinks they can interfere in the politics of other countries with the excuse to spread democracy but deny Russia the same course of action with the explanation that Russia would not spread democracy (Putin, 2018). Related to this point, Schmitt explains that the deciding element of true hegemony is not military or economic power, but the “ability to determine the content of political and legal terms” (Schmitt, 2005, p. 365). Those terms, such as democracy, respect of human rights and freedom of speech lead to a new friend–foe division (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 78) because the hegemon can designate freely who is democratic, liberal, cooperative and so on. Moreover, those who belong to the “others” are not mere political enemies, but “peace–breakers and troublemakers” (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 77). So what Putin does here, on the one hand, is to reveal the hegemonic influence of the U.S. On the other hand, he reverses roles with the U.S. by attempting to define himself who is fair, liberal and righteous.

Interesting in this perspective is Putin’s insistence on mere political differences. He maintains that there is nothing personal in the disagreement with the U.S. For instance, he describes President Bush as a “decent” person (Putin, 2007) with whom he has no personal enmity. Also, the relationship with

President Obama “is marked by growing trust” (Putin, 2013a). This reflects Schmitt’s theory where the political enemy is neither a criminal nor an inhuman beast that needs to be destroyed. He is merely a public enemy that must be pushed back into his territory to secure the state’s own survival (Putin, 2014b). Again, I need to stress that this analysis only treats the rhetoric. I do not claim that Vladimir Putin treats the U.S. better than they treat Russia. This insistence on purely political disagreements is a well–conceptualized move to make the Russian President appear more mature and objective than his Western counterpart.

### **3.3.4 On a unipolar and multipolar world order**

The Russian President characterizes today’s world as unsafe, “unpredictable” and “changing very fast” which one can see at the “dramatic transformations in global politics and the economy” (Putin, 2014b). It is “full of contradictions” with a “deformed” and “weakened” security system (Putin, 2014b). Back in the Cold war times, balance of power brought stability, but today, there is no such thing (Putin, 2014b). There are only new threats such as intensified religious and ethnic conflicts resulting in “anarchy, lawlessness and chaos” (Putin, 2014b). The recurrent reference to the perceived bipolar stability during the Cold War shows that the speaker wishes for a balancing power to the U.S. as opposed to the unipolar moment which occurred after the collapse of the USSR. In Putin’s rhetoric, a strong aversion against unipolarity is evident. In his Munich speech, he describes unipolarity with term such as unacceptable, impossible, without moral foundations, leading to “unilateral” and “illegitimate” use of force (Putin, 2007). Unipolarity has caused “new centers of tension”, “new human tragedies”, “hyper-use of force”, “disdain for the basic principles of international law” (Putin, 2007). This results in a situation of arms race where “no-one feels safe”. Speaking at the Valdai Club in 2014, he argues that the unipolarity which the U.S. aspires leads to conflict escalation, neo-fascism and the Islamic State (Putin, 2014b). The United States have “inflated national pride, manipulated public opinion and letting the strong bully the weak”. It is a “dictatorship” (Putin, 2014b). The unipolar moment after the Cold war produced a fragmentation of the world along new dividing lines, new confrontations and countermeasures (terrorism) (Putin, 2014b). The hegemon is unable to fight real threats and is struggling with his “uncomfortable, heavy and unmanageable” leadership (Putin, 2014b). “[A]spirations to world supremacy” and “the tentative to introduce precisely this concept into international relations” (Putin, 2007) are linked to all current international problems. In the Address to the Federal Assembly 2016, the President refers to



other countries, controlled from foreign governments which have to deal with “human tragedies, [...] degradation and ruin” (Putin, 2016). Clearly, for Vladimir Putin, unipolarity is one aspect which makes the world less secure. This is what Schmitt meant, too, when he argued that the universalist discourse is only a guise to hide the strive for hegemonic power and unjustified violence. The new dividing lines reveal the antagonistic nature of the international and deliberate construction of otherness to delineate one’s own identity.

Schmitt reasoned that the international sphere must be a pluriverse since without the pluriverse, the political vanishes and with it all states. This helps understanding the Russian President when he argues that “a unipolar world destroys [...] itself from within” (Putin, 2007). Further, he highlights that a unipolar order can only be anti-democratic, because it would not be the majority, but the minority ruling. One hears Schmitt warning that one state cannot speak for and defend “humanity”. It is necessary to underline here that both do not speak about world government but world hegemony which ignores every Schmittian principle of unity of the ruling majority and also the linkage of order and legitimacy to the *nomos* of the state, to its territory. A world hegemony cannot claim to be legal and legitimate in a Schmittian sense. Besides, in the Munich speech, Putin outlines that no hegemon today possesses enough resources to uphold such a system of dominance (Putin, 2007). The use force to make other nations comply with the Western liberal development model, aggressive invasion of other countries and support revolutions which end in “violence, poverty, social disasters and total disregard for human rights” can only be “short-sighted and extremely dangerous” (Putin, 2015). “[U]niversal templates” do not work (Putin, 2013b) and “blow the world order and the UN” in the worst case.

Multipolarity and multilateral diplomacy, especially between the BRIC countries, on the other hand, is named in the Munich speech in one breath with “openness, transparency and predictability” (Putin, 2007). President Putin outlines that the economic importance of the BRIC countries will translate into political and military power which will help to ensure a multipolar world order. He emphasizes that the use of force can only be an exceptional measure that must be legitimized by the UN and never by NATO or EU which are no substitutes. Also, countries in transition to democracy should be allowed to develop without external intervention (Putin, 2007). From the speech in the Valdai Club 2014, one learns that in the new world order Russia is trying to promote, stability and security would be fostered through “harmonizing basic interests”, “reasonable self-restraint”, “responsible leadership”, “multilateral mechanisms”, “effectiveness of international law” and “non-interference in the internal affairs of

any state” (Putin, 2014b). Hereby, sovereignty plays an important role because Vladimir Putin connects to more global stability. For him, sovereignty is not a “relative value” (Putin, 2014b). This is a crucial point that can be interpreted from several perspectives. Schmitt argued that only in the case of utmost emergency and distress is the question of sovereignty relevant at all because in normal times, the law regulates everything (Schmitt, 2009). Putin’s critique of U.S. non-compliance with international law, of its interference and of its interventions signalize that he could have come to the conclusion that international relations are indeed in a situation of emergency where international law has no power anymore to regulate the relations between states. References to chaos, degradation, human tragedies are everywhere in his speeches. In this case, only a sovereign state can assure the wellbeing of the nation. A second perspective is that he feels threatened by the U.S., as he repeatedly says (see critique of Western liberalism). He has the impression of “being surrounded by enemies” who wants to make of his state a shallow marionette like Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Therefore, he makes it clear to everyone that he will not tolerate any attempt to gain foreign influence in Russian affairs endangering his country’s political or territorial sovereignty. Thirdly, for Schmitt and for Putin, states must be equals. So, by nature, they are sovereign and only if a state chooses not to defend its sovereignty, it can lose it to another state who is ready to assume this task (Schmitt, 1963a, p. 53). But Russia clearly is ready to defend its sovereignty.

Schmitt predicted that in a new *nomos* of the earth, regional political constellations reigned by a powerful center will be the new organizing principle of the international pluriverse. Although one could think that President Putin would wish for the same with Russia as powerful center of Eurasia, he only speaks about a “shared responsibility to ensure international security and stability” (Putin, 2016) in general or the growing power of the BRIC. Equality plays a more important role in his discourse than a possible return of Russia as superpower. Scholars doubt that Russia would even have the means as of now. In relation to Russia’s current strength and potential, Snetkov (2018) draws a rather pessimistic picture. Compared to the powerful nation created in Putin’s speeches, the author is reluctant to see Russia as the new star on the firmament. Cooperation with China will stay limited due to Chinese unwillingness to openly oppose U.S. policies and the weak Russian economy which prevents Russia from becoming an equal partner (Snetkov, 2018). For instance, its economic performance in 2017 was even weaker than the one of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (Connolly, 2018). So even if Putin tries to present the Eurasian Economic Union as a new platform for regional cooperation, he is far from promoting a new, regions-centered world order. In the Federal Address 2016, again he connects unipolarity with chaos

and degradation which Russia restrains when “oppo[sing] any monopoly” (Putin, 2016). Together with China, Russia stands for a “world order free from the domination of a single country” (Putin, 2016). Russia is “doing the right thing”, promoting equal dialogue, justice and mutual respect in international relations (Putin, 2016). Vladimir Putin characterizes relations with the West as “cool[ed]” (Putin, 2016). The United States “attempt to break the strategic parity” risking a “global catastrophe” (Putin, 2016) through their strive for hegemony.

### **3.4 Summary of findings**

The analysis has shown that President Putin’s rhetoric can be very well explained through Carl Schmitt’s political concepts and argumentation. It has become evident that Russian identity is structured along a strong delineation from Western foreign policy which is described in a negative way. Carl Schmitt’s insistence on the sovereignty of nation states as necessity for a stable international pluriverse is a recurrent issue in Putin’s speeches. Where Putin is rather unclear in explaining why a unipolar order destroys itself from within, Schmitt lends his theory on the existence of the *other* as condition for the existence of a *we*. Also, Schmitt has outlined comprehensively how a hegemon, and the U.S. in particular, uses double standards, dominates the political discourse and presents enemies as “troublemakers” that disturb international peace and cooperation. Moreover, Schmitt helped explaining why the Russian President constantly outlines the importance of the unconditional respect of international law which must be separated from power. Further, the hypothesis was confirmed that the critique of liberalism goes in both cases together with a Christian conception of morals as opposed to contingent liberal values and “Verwertung” (in the sense of utilization or exploitation) of virtues. Besides, both show a strong aversion to the believe in universal concepts brought by one state because one state alone cannot be the legitimate representant of “humanity”. Another important point is the emphasis put in the fact that a political enemy shall not and does not need to be a personal enemy but a public adversary. It is a critique of the demonization of the enemy which prevents peaceful conflict resolution.

A difference became clear related to the topic of the equality of states in the international system. For Schmitt, regions reigned by regional superpowers could be an alternative scenario of world order whereas Putin underlines that all states are equal. However, one might wonder if the Russian President really means “all states” or rather the U.S. and Russia so I would not give too much weight to this difference. Also, Schmitt had a largely negative perception of the League of Nations while for Vladimir

Putin the United Nations are linked with qualities such as “wisdom” and “stability” (Putin, 2013a). But the League of Nations and the UN have different modes of organization and functioning. Besides, Russia has a lot more influence as a veto power in the UN Security Council than Germany had in the League of Nations, so it is obvious why their opinions differ.

As for the assumption that Putin’s perception of international relations is fundamentally different from the one of Western liberal democracy, the answer is less clear. It is obvious that perceptions of NATO and Russia differ significantly and are a constant source of conflict. Also, norms are prioritized differently: For Russia, sovereignty comes in the first place whereas the NATO members prioritize the promotion of democracy and liberal values in the world connected with the right to protect even if this violates another state’s sovereignty.

However, at least rhetorically, trust, disarmament, freedom of speech, balance of power and the UN as a universal institution have a central place for both. This leads to the conclusion that NATO expansion, U.S. intervention in the Middle East and, related to that, the alleged disrespect of sovereignty are the most dividing issues between Russia and the Western liberal democracies whereas democracy, the rule of law and human rights seem to constitute less potential for dispute from the Russian perspective. What Western democracies need to understand is that humiliating Russia, e.g. by calling it a regional power and interfering in the CIS will produce an answer which NATO countries will not like. Repeatedly, Putin has expressed the feeling of being cheated and that he cannot trust his Western colleagues without treaties and agreements signed. Undoubtedly, the Russian President cannot escape his training as KGB officer who is expected not to trust anyone (Hill, 2016). But, as the analysis has shown, his critique of Western neoliberalism is also conceptual in nature and supported by a large amount of academic literature.

In the analysis, it has become clear that Russia has the impression that Western liberal democracies are less interested in peace and stability than in extending their hegemony and economic influence. From a Western point of view, it might sound ironic that Russia wants to be the defender of the oppressed and disadvantaged in global politics. One should also not exaggerate Russia’s altruism and keep in mind that this study was only about perceptions. Nonetheless, I argue that studying Russia’s perception of the West produces valuable insights.

A further study of the perception of other countries critical to Western universalism could try to find out whether there are similarities in the conceptions of the state and the world order. Where this analysis

is concerned, it has shown clearly that Russia as well as Western democracies define themselves through differentiation from the *other* and claim to be the “good” one in the game. This makes peaceful and respectful communication difficult leading to an intensification of conflicts that does not even necessarily relate to diverging geopolitical interests.

Finally, the analysis has highlighted that Putin’s argument is twofold. On the one hand, he tries to demonstrate that Russia adheres to liberal principles, international law and justice even stricter than the West. Part of this discourse is simply ironic and without any empirical foundation, for example when it come to the respect of human rights or respect for another state’s sovereignty. However, another part of this argument is less easy to dismiss. I maintain that some aspects of Western liberalism can and should e criticized. This goes for failed state interventions in the Middle East, the enforcement of liberal universalism though hard and soft power as well as the American claim to be exceptional and to have exclusive rights. Russia is not alone in this critique, as I will outline in the next chapter.

The second part of the argument is essentially moral. The Russian President has put orthodoxy and conservatism at the center of Russian identity construction. For that, he receives much critique from outside, but also support from the Russian public. For me, this raises the question whether, in the liberal part of the world, there is truly a place for religion and cultural traditions which are diametrically opposed to a liberal, capitalist, and even democratic state? This question needs to be answered in order to avoid violent counter–reactions to the democratization and liberalization process.

## **4 Which order and which norms?**

### **4.1 Priorities in international cooperation for the “non-West”**

From the rhetorical analysis of Vladimir Putin’s speeches, one can deduct a couple of priorities which should guide international cooperation on a normative level from a Russian perspective. These are:

- recognition of the world order as multipolar where all states are treated as equals
- inviolability of international law or rather the consequent prosecution of any violation (only) by the United Nations
- commitment to non-intervention and unconditional recognition of state sovereignty
- respect for traditional values

“Traditional values” is a rather vague term. For Putin, according to the analyzed speeches, this seems to mean orthodox morals and virtues, and related to this, a Christian-conservative attitude towards same-sex relationships, appreciation of mothership and older people, a return to a belief in a strong Russian fatherland, and an indeterminate righteousness. Further, he makes allegations to the strength and courage of the Russian people. According to Petito (2016), traditional values often come along with a revival of religious consciousness and way of life that tries to differentiate itself from the Western model.

As Cooley (2015) shows, Russia does not stand alone with the request to respect traditional values. It is the first and most loudest to defend the inclusion of “traditional values” on the UN Human Rights framework together with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. It does so against the opinion of the EU which argues that traditional values are subjective and cannot be part of human rights. But China is a prominent defender of diversity within the community of nations too and the strongest promoter of non-interference in the affairs of sovereign states and against “the imposition of political and economic conditionalities by global-governance institutions” (Cooley, 2015, p. 52). Not only Eurasian countries are turning against political influence from the outside. While Russia is one of the countries which are the most hostile to foreign NGOs on their territory, also “Ecuador, Ethiopia, Hungary, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Sudan, Venezuela, Vietnam, and even Canada” have started controlling founding of foreign NGOs more thoroughly and introduced restrictions (Cooley, 2015, p. 54) as a reaction to the “color revolutions” in the former USSR-states. Cooley (2015, p. 56) warns that new regional cooperation groups created among these countries have designed “legal frameworks that could serve to institutionalize authoritarian and anti-constitutional practices.” Although this is a legitimate concern, one should not use the label “undemocratic” to dismiss reasonable requests from the “other” part of the community of nations. Ignoring these requests might eventually threaten peace and cooperation more fundamentally than an authoritarian regime per se as the analysis of Putin’s discourse has highlighted. I claim that this critique is part of the vulnerability of the current global order. As Dunne (2009, p. 109) argues, “in the period since 1990, the incidence of initiating inter-state war has been lower among authoritarian states than among democracies”. I claim that the attempt to balance inter-state peace and the promotion of human rights all over the world is doomed to fail. There can be no universally respected human rights all over the world at this point **without** intervention from the liberal West and there can be no peace in the long run **with** those interventions because they create counter-reactions. Dunne (2001, p. 69) makes the point when he says that “[i]f one inhabited a world where forceful intervention was accepted as a legitimate

and routine practice then sovereignty would cease to be intelligible” which is exactly what states such as Russia and China are afraid of. I also claim that Russia’s critique points to the general criticism which non-Western, developing states raise in relation to the hegemony of liberal universalism. This is why, in this last section, I am going to explore concepts for a different structure of world order which deliver valuable insights about how a more inclusive pluralist approach could look like.

Chantal Mouffe has tried to take into account the critique of American hegemony in her plea for a multipolar world order. Based on a Schmittian understanding of the political and the pluriverse, she argues for agonism in international relations. Her concept will be outlined in the following paragraph.

## **4.2 Chantal Mouffe: A multipolar world order**

Chantal Mouffe has followed up with Schmitt’s theory about the political and employs it for her own concept of democracy and a multipolar world. Mouffe (2005, p. 13) defines *the political* as the “dimension of agonism [...] [c]onstitutive of human societies”. Politics, on the other hand, are “practices and institutions through which an order is created” (Mouffe, 2005). She disagrees with Schmitt about the impossibility of a pluralist demos and democracy (Mouffe, 2005). She agrees that “every identity is relational” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 19) which means that an *other* is needed for the construction of one’s own identity. But she continues that “[w]hat democracy requires is drawing the we/they distinction in a way which is compatible with the recognition of the pluralism which is constitutive of modern democracy” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 18). The antagonistic relationship must be channeled by democratic means (Mouffe, 2005, p. 25). However, this is only possible when politics do without moralization of political opposition. “When politics is played out in the register of morality, antagonisms cannot take an agonistic form.”(Mouffe, 2005, p. 80). In her model, adversaries may have irreconcilable perspectives, but they need to be accepted as legitimate (Mouffe, 2005, p. 56). Conflicts are part of the human condition but, in her opinion, it is possible to create practices, discourses and institutions that allow for the agonistic form (Mouffe, 2005, p. 134). Still, a “[c]onsensus is needed on the institutions which are constitutive of liberal democracy and on the ethico–political values that should inform the political association, but there will always be disagreement concerning the meaning of those values and the way they should be implemented” (Mouffe, 2009, pp. 551,552).

As I said before, where Schmitt sees a nation as a political homogenous entity, Mouffe applies his theory to domestic politics and argues that the political is also present within communities (Rummens,

2009, p. 378). As a precondition to a peaceful democratic coexistence, every domestic us–them distinction must only be temporary and flexible, leaving the ultimate “locus of power” (Rummens, 2009) empty. In her theory about a multipolar world order, Mouffe suggests that, likewise, for peaceful international relations, those relations must be turned from enmity in agonism. But she does not explain how it should be managed to prevent the opposition between regimes from turning into agonistic destructive relationships (Rummens, 2009, p. 385). In “Which World Order: cosmopolitan or multipolar”, Mouffe (2008) criticizes the prevailing assumption that “Western liberal democracy is the necessary framework for the implementation of human rights”. She argues that this is only one option for a good regime. However, Mouffe insists on the existence of certain requirements or conditions which must be fulfilled by a good regime (Mouffe, 2008). Briefly, she presents some authors who offered insights in what these conditions could be. First, she mentions Raimundo Panikkar who argues that human rights fulfill the function of assuring human dignity in liberal democratic societies (Panikkar, 1982). In other societies, while the concept of human rights might not exist as such, other values fulfill that function. Panikkar (1982, p. 80) basically criticizes three assumptions that go along with the human rights regime: Firstly, that there would be “a universal human nature common to all peoples”. Secondly, that the individual was an end in itself and distinguishable from its social environment and society (Panikkar, 1982). Thirdly, that free individuals with conflicting interests and liberties can only be organized in a democratic society (Panikkar, 1982). In his work, Panikkar (1982) argues that human rights are not a universal concept. His arguments include that they emerged historically as class rights and are still used as a political weapon from the West against his opponents. Mouffe mainly draws the conclusion from Panikkar’s words that a cross-cultural dialogue is needed about how human dignity is seen in other cultural contexts which contest the hegemony of the human rights regime (Mouffe, 2008). If human rights, or whatever term one would like to use, could be reformulated in a culturally more comprehensive way, respect for them could be indeed the qualifying characteristic of a good regime, argues Mouffe (2008). That she draws this conclusion from Panikkar who explains very clearly why human rights are not a universal concept, comes rather unexpectedly. In a nutshell, Mouffe seems to suggest a change of language, a reframe of human rights, which would make it suddenly acceptable for all cultures:

In my view, a political theory that wants to take *value pluralism* in its multiple dimensions seriously needs to make room for the pluralism of cultures, forms of life and political regimes. This means that we should add the recognition of plurality of forms of the democracy to the recognition of a plurality of understandings of *human rights* (Mouffe, 2008, p. 462).



However, she insists that such a plurality of understanding of democracy cannot exist inside one political entity because it would call the legitimacy of that political entity into question (Mouffe, 2008). On that point, she is in harmony with Schmitt. On the other hand, even on a global scale, Mouffe insists on the importance of shared ethico-political values which allow different interpretations of equality and liberty, but no illiberal or undemocratic states (Erman, 2009). At the same time, she stays vague on what norms or rules states would need to consent to exactly in an agonistic pluralistic state system (Erman, 2009). What she is sure about is that international institutions are necessary to regulate international relations but need to be reformed in a way that allows real pluralism (Mouffe, 2008). Here, the difference between Mouffe and Schmitt becomes very clear: While Schmitt's national realism makes it hard to accept his claims, Mouffe's theory is far from being realistic at all. Today's conflicts are rarely about different interpretations of liberal democracy, but about so-called liberal democracies confronting autocratic or theocratic regimes under the premise of human rights protection. Schmitt offers a viable analysis of those relations. What Mouffe wants to achieve is less clear. She seems to try to reconcile a realist analysis of politics with an idealist approach of restructuring international relations. Apart from the fact that she is not very concrete in her suggestions (Schmitt is not, either), she excludes a huge part of non-democratic states from her liberal pluriverse which then becomes an empty promise. The same argument can be found by Caraus (2016, p. 99) who argues that the idea of a "functional equivalent of human rights [...] is circular and contradictory, reaffirming what it intends to deny". Every order is hegemonic through exclusion of alternatives (Caraus, 2016, p. 97). Following Mouffe's logic, "the possibility to contest can be denied to someone on the grounds that they are not part of the Western tradition and practices" (Caraus, 2016, p. 105). Caraus (2016) maintains that extrapolating the agonistic model to the international scene would be a hegemonic act.

Moreover, Vasquez (1998, p. 296) insists that multipolarity is not necessarily more stable than bipolarity or any other polarity. Hurrell (n.d., p. 227) urges not to neglect the impact of transnational movements, civil society and international regimes, for example in environmental governance.

Thaler (2010) has a more positive critique. He underlines the importance of Mouffe's theory of the political which has as consequence that no consensus can be fully inclusive since without "them" there is no "us" (Thaler, 2010). There is always at least one group excluded from the democratic consensus because this group serves to build the identity of its adversary. At the same time, Mouffe's agonistic model of struggles between different groups within democracies wants to avoid the outbreak of extreme

violence by providing other peaceful means to express enmity (Thaler, 2010). However, this only works out if the adversaries share a minimal basis of democratic values. “Without the exclusion of a certain class of illicit contenders, there would be no chance to include another class of proper contenders” (Thaler, 2010, p. 790). Thaler stresses Mouffe’s contribution towards a critique of moralizing politics in the name of liberal universalism which tries to create a global human community without taking into account the political. However, Thaler (2010) underlines that Mouffe herself is motivated by moral judgement when she opts for a mitigation of conflict and a pluralist community of nations. Propagating a “purity of politics” (Thaler, 2010, p. 787) which is separated from morals cannot work out because even this project itself is normative. Thaler opts for a “consensus that limits the range of sovereign self-expression in the society of nations” based on a “minimal morality” (Thaler, 2010, pp. 796-797). Yet, he concludes, it must be determined what form and content this consensus should take.

### **4.3 Which moral principles?**

Mouffe leaves it open on which norms the community could agree. At the same time, she insists that such a consensus is necessary to achieve an actual and stable multipolar order. Vladimir Putin’s Russia and other like-minded states try to promote the unconditional rule of international law as this consensus. They present it as objective and unquestionable. But international law is not domestic law. According to Allott (1999, p. 7), the “most painful irony is that the introduction of criminal justice into international society will have the incidental effect of seeming to legitimate the social evil that it does not condemn. [...] The false innocence of legal impunity will encourage the evil-doers in their arrogance.” As Allot argues, international law is selective in what wrong it chooses to correct dependent on who is in charge and power. In his eyes, a change must be normative, cognitive and intrinsic to every human being because as of now, “[t]he introduction of international criminal jurisdiction into the present state of international society is a crude extrapolation of the most primitive, the least efficient, and the most morally dubious of systems for socializing human beings” (Allott, 1999, p. 4). I am not going into detail about how positive change might be introduced according to Allot, but he sheds light on the fact that international law alone will not bring about stable peace and equality in international relations. Of course, there need to be rules which “facilitate orderly coexistence between culturally diverse communities” (Dunne, 2001, p. 90).

Rawls (1993) in his *Law of the Peoples* emphasized, too, that commitment to moral principles is necessary to guide the interpretation and application of positive international law. Also, he underlined

that, although liberal democracy is not a prerequisite, nations need to be peaceful and no-expansionist in order to respect and consent to a global moral framework. Further, “a society’s legal order must impose moral duties and obligations on all persons in its territory, and it must embody a reasonable consultation hierarchy that will protect those rights” (Rawls, 1993, p. 52). The guiding principles he suggests are not very different from what international law has been based on so far, which are: “1. Peoples (as organized by their governments) are free and independent, and their freedom and independence are to be respected by other peoples. 2. Peoples are equal and parties to their own agreements. 3. Peoples have the right of self-defense but no right to war. 4. Peoples are to observe a duty of non-intervention. 5. Peoples are to observe treaties and undertakings. 6. Peoples are to observe certain specified restrictions on the conduct of war (assumed to be in self-defense). 7. Peoples are to honor human rights” (Rawls, 1993, p. 46). As he himself admits, these principles are very general and need to be specified from case to case. Rawls shows that it can be assumed that even between liberal and non-liberal states, there is a consensus on certain basic moral principles which should reign in international relations. Point 7 is most likely to produce the most dissent because human rights are seen as being born out of a liberal conception of citizenship and individuality. Mouffe has tried to be sensible on this point by taking into account non-Western perspectives which led her to suggest a reformulation of principles of human dignity based on the communalities between different cultures. Rawls, on the other hand, has a different understanding of what human rights are or how they are justified. In his eyes, human rights are “of universal application and hardly controversial in their general intention” because a “role of human rights is precisely to specify limits to [state] sovereignty. [...] They are part of a reasonable law of peoples and specify limits on the domestic institutions required of all peoples by that law. In this sense they specify the outer boundary of admissible domestic law of societies in good standing in a just society of peoples” (Rawls, 1993, p. 59). They fulfill three specific roles in that they are “a necessary condition of a regime’s legitimacy and of the decency of its legal order”, and because “[t]heir fulfillment is also sufficient to exclude justified and forceful intervention by other peoples”. Finally, “[t]hey set a moral limit to pluralism” in the community of peoples (Rawls, 1993, p. 59). From this perspective, they are simply another form of the ethico-political values Mouffe requires for her pluralistic community of states. I also tend to agree that basic human rights as such are not the problem here, but rather instrumentalization and misuse as a pretext for an intervention by the Western states.

Rawls goes along with the line of argument of non-Western states when he says that “not all regimes

can be reasonably required to be liberal; otherwise, the law of peoples itself would not express liberalism's own principle of toleration for other reasonable ways of ordering society nor further its attempt to find a shared basis of agreement among reasonable people" (Rawls, 1993, p. 37). The question is: "What form does the toleration of non-liberal societies take in this case?" (Rawls, 1993, p. 37) and "Where are the reasonable limits of toleration to be drawn?" (Rawls, 1993, p. 37) This again raises the problem: who decides about these limits?

Moreover, Rawls takes into account that some countries may not comply with the Law of Peoples. In this case, "the well-ordered peoples may pressure the outlaw regimes to change their ways; but by itself this pressure is unlikely to be effective." He sees denial of all military aid or of economic and other assistance and the exclusion from mutually beneficial cooperative practices (Rawls, 1993, p. 62) as a basic instrument against dissent. This sounds very much like the American policy towards Russia before Trump and has not helped foster peaceful cooperation. When all states are treated as equals, there cannot be one state or any group of states deciding when limits are reached. Also, Rawls justified a limited right to protect the society of just peoples by intervening in extreme cases in the internal affairs of states plus making all nations honor it in the long run. This sounds like another hegemonial project in disguise. Although nearly every approach for a new world order does aim at integrating as many parts of the international community as possible, the emphasis on consent shows the impossibility to realize such a model and underlines the strength of Mouffe's approach to bank on dissent and try to channel it. Schmitt's, Mouffe's and Rawls' ideas leave the reader with a couple of problems whose practical implications are experienced in international relations every day. Schmitt, while explaining convincingly why the international system is and must be a pluriverse and why probably there will always be at least a limited form of warfare, also insisted on internal homogeneity of the ruling unit. This does not meet the reality of very diverse societies all over the world. However, one could also interpret his words in the way that homogeneity is just a form of describing the necessary consensus on moral principles which guide positive law within a political unit. This is assumed to be the case in most of the states, although the concrete principles might differ. In liberal democracies, this would be for instance a catalogue of individual freedoms, the rule of the law and equal rights for all citizens. Still, there is the problem that Schmitt's theory is founded on the assumption of the state as political actor. He himself mentioned this in his later works without delivering a new concept for the new era.

The main issue with Mouffe's approach is that it is extremely vague about which principles should

guide the international pluriverse and which form channels should take for expressing agonism in a peaceful and effective way. There is no guidance as to how her approach can be realized. Further, from a non-liberal perspective there will be no agreement that only democratic states can be part of this legitimate community of states. Her approach is still based on a strong form of exclusion of non-democratic states. Although she justifies this with the necessity of a consensus on ethico-political values, this is not a convincing argument. There are several principles to which most, if not all, states agree, as Rawls has argued. While I understand from a Schmittian point of view that there will also be an “other” as opposed to an ingroup, I do not see how Mouffe’s concept will lead to decreasing conflict potential and violence when excluding theocratic and autocratic states. Also, her perspective is exclusively state-centric. As for Rawls, his principles might be the basis for interpreting international law, but he does not provide any suggestions on how to improve relations between states, or as in this paper’s case, between Russia and the West, since his Law of the Peoples was developed as a basis for just war thinking (Rawls, 1993). Besides, the probability is high that in practice, these principles will contradict or hinder each other. And they are said to be universal in a static sense, denying the possibility of changing moral frames of reference. Rawls himself pointed to the problem of extending the principles of justice to future generations. For instance, in their basic formulation, these principles do not include environmental rights and rights of future generations which might be seen by some as much more important and urgent than the sovereignty of states.

#### **4.4 Critique of the critique: towards a multiplex-multicivilizational world order?**

Thaler (2010) pointed to a very important weakness of Schmitt’s (and Mouffe’s) theory: There are no pure and neutral politics. By nature, every political project is normative even if it is not intended to be, because every philosopher brings with him or her his moral frame of reference which influences his or her ideas. Walzer (1990) in his “Lecture on human values” has discussed the ambivalence between universal values and a people’s right to self-determination and particularism. Although this lecture dates to 1990, it still offers an interesting perspective on a problem which has dominated discussions about human rights until today. He adopts a post-development viewpoint when he writes that, to start with, “there is no universal history, but rather a series of histories (which probably do not converge or converge only at the mythical end of time— like the many national roads to communism) in each of which value can be found” (Walzer, 1990, p. 514). For him, this is one of the main characteristics of what he

promotes as “reiterate universalism”. This means that Walzer regards values such as “[i]ndependence, inner direction, individualism, self-determination, self-government, freedom, autonomy” as universal in so far as they are valid for all people in all cultural circumstances, “but they all have particularist implications” (Walzer, 1990, p. 518). Put in different words, one could say that all subscribe to these values but interpret them in different ways. He explains this idea on the example of the often-discussed value of individualism: Western understanding of the rights of an individual “does not get at the thing-in-itself; it does not suggest the only legitimate or authentic way of being an individual. In fact, it is entirely possible to inherit a life and still possess it as one’s own; and it is also possible to find a life, literally light upon it, with no forethought at all. In any account of autonomy, there has to be room not only for different self-determinations but also for different kinds of self-possession” (Walzer, 1990, p. 520). With that statement he criticized the arrogance of the Western liberal countries who tend to think they know what a good life should look like, in form of a career, a plan, a project. Walzer claims that not all people share this understanding of self-realization because “custom, feeling, and habit” influence it (Walzer, 1990, p. 524). He defends the right for self-determination “even if I believe that unworthy or wrongful choices will often be made” (Walzer, 1990, p. 519). As a guiding principle, “people should be treated in accordance with their own ideas about how they should be treated [...] according to the ideal standards of their own way of life” (Walzer, 1990, p. 530). While this sounds convincing, questions arise when people within a state have very different ideas about these ideal standards –which is very likely in a plural society– and the state fails to protect them. In a very general way, Walzer suggests that, in this case, “[t]he largest requirement of morality, then, the core principle of any universalism, is that we find some way of engaging in that activity while living in peace with the other actors” (Walzer, 1990, p. 532). In comparison to Rawls, this kind of universalism seems more adequate to capture pluralism on the international stage, but it is also vaguer and leaves the question of justice and protection of minorities open, reducing it to a temporal imperfect stage in the realization of universal standards in a certain country. Although I support his emphasis on peace between states ruling out interventions under the pretext of human rights, his suggestions imply that violence of a state against its own people will not be punished. He explains this by the fact that “values and virtues of justice are a matter for rational argument; in principle, they should be similar, if not identical, everywhere”. Walzer admits himself that “[i]t is not easy, however, to make practical sense of this distinction” (Walzer, 1990, p. 524). On the other hand, one could wonder how many cases there have been where human rights violations were

the effective reason, and not just a pretext, for interventions and sanctions since these measures tend to hit civilians even harder than the ruling elite's original wrongdoing. For instance, in the case of Syria, "the indirect effects of [U.S and EU] sanctions, especially the challenges it creates for Syrians to access banks accounts, makes the import of medical instruments and other medical supplies immensely difficult, nearly impossible. It also makes it far more expensive" (Walker, 2016, p. 21). Real international human rights interventions sanctioned by the UN seem to be rather the exception than the rule.

Walzer's concept is already very centered on cultural communities or nations and not states as main actors in international relations. But the issue of who really is the agent in politics nowadays and by consequence, whom to target and include in strategies for a pluralist order, stays unresolved. Petito (2016) suggests thinking of states as protagonists in international politics, but of civilizations as frame of reference. He prefers to think of a new world order as multiplex–multicivilizational instead of multipolar because multipolarity is grounded in a Eurocentric concept of history. It goes back to the *concert* order during the *Westphalian peace* which some, Schmitt before all, would like to see revived. He insists that the internal and international future of states must be postcolonial and will also be postsecular as a cultural revolt against the West and challenge of the universal liberal prophecy (Petito, 2016). Petito (2016) underlines that dialogue and regionalism are necessary for peace between states while the civilization-based thinking bears a strong potential for clash and conflict with "civilizational macroregional great powers ready for collision" (Petito, 2016, p. 85). Therefore, the organization of civilizations in regions should not take place along traditional cultural lines, but take new forms, such as a closer cooperation and organization of the MENA region including Christian, Muslim and Jewish civilizations. Also, he claims that integrating Turkey into the European community might decrease conflict potential between Europe and Oriental Asia in the long run (Petito, 2016). "A similar point can be made to support the creation ex novo of multicultural forms of regional cooperation and integration which are, in any case, arguably justifiable on functionalist grounds in response to the common challenges brought about by the processes of globalization" (Petito, 2016, p. 86).

While Mouffe, Rawls, Walzer and Petito differ in the perception of agency in international political relations and the role of democracy in a multipolar world, they also have some points in common. First, they criticize the claim of liberalism that it was the only political philosophy to guarantee peace and freedom. Secondly, especially Mouffe, Petito and Walzer emphasize that culture and religion continue to have an important influence on norms and values in some states. Disrespect for these particular values in

the framework of international norms can provoke non-compliance and even violent opposition. Thirdly, even though some might argue that Putin's discourse simply serves certain strategy, this chapter has shown that his critique does not stand alone. Petito, Walzer, Mouffe and Rawls all have underlined that the dominant Western unipolar system has reached its limits. Petito predicts that the West is about to face a cultural and religious revolt. As the authors have shown, this challenge of the liberal prophecy has partially been provoked by the failure of liberalization projects and the U.S. American exceptionalism claim. Furthermore, economic differences and injustice will probably continue to grow which could intensify conflicts between liberal, developed states and mostly non-liberal, developing states.

## 5 Conclusion

According to Hurrell (n.d., p. 287), a stable and legitimate form of international society faces three core challenges: capturing common interest, managing unequal power, and mediating difference and value conflict. This nicely sums up the problems which the above-presented approaches discuss and try to resolve. None of them are able to deliver an ultimate solution. As Rawls stressed in relation to his theory: it "does not cover everything, and we should not expect it to" (Rawls, 1993, p. 38). One cannot reasonably hope for an easy solution to these complex challenges on which the last chapter focused.

Also, one would be naive to think that the United States will stop being the protagonist for freedom and democracy. Admittedly, foreign policy under President Trump seems to have made a turn towards a sort of isolationism and disengagement. But I hesitate to believe that this change includes American citizens and the political elite as well. I tend to think that this is a temporary occurrence. Furthermore, while currently President Trump is focused on a trade war with Europe, this does not mean that at some point, he changes his strategy vis-à-vis the Russian Federation.

In a confrontation or crisis such as in Ukraine, no-one should expect the Russian President to pull back either, now that he has successfully constructed a Russian identity based on strength, predestination to rule and orthodox values. However, it has become clear again that Russia's and America's identities are in conflict with each other. And, at least on a rhetorical level, it has shown that the understanding of sovereignty and the Eurasian *nomos*, the interpretation of history, the moral foundation of society and the importance of religion, differ significantly between the West and Russia. As the last chapter suggested, Russia does not stand alone in this respect. So, in my opinion, more efforts should be made on both sides to understand the opposite position on these issues.



What can be said is that international politics must find a means to allow for different value and truth claims. Under no circumstances, this does mean that human rights should be relativized or modified because they clash with religious values. However, as Walzer has underlined, the respect of human rights under every government is a long-term project and we need to “find some way of engaging in that activity while living in peace with the other actors” (Walzer, 1990, p. 532).

When enforcing liberal and democratic values by means of military or economic pressure, the Western States betray their own values and norms. This gives rise to accusations of hypocrisy and hegemony against the U.S. and the EU, as the analysis has shown. Moreover, it has made clear how important leading by example is in this context. Certainly, the U.S. and the member states of the EU need to face political challenges and no-one can expect them to always find a perfect solution that does not hurt the interest of any other state. Nonetheless, I maintain that there is potential for improvement when it comes to allowing other countries to share the power and defend their traditional values against liberal universalism. Above all, in this matter, states should be treated the same. Western states appear implausible when they maintain alliances with some undemocratic, illiberal states such as Saudi-Arabia because it suits their economic interests and, on the other hand, criticize Russia for not respecting the freedom of speech and sexual rights.

Furthermore, Russia’s rhetoric, but also the rise of right extremism in Europe, show that the public support for a strong national identity is high. Why this is so, is another question. But, at least now, post-state approaches to representation and government have little chance of success. A civilizational-regional model like Petito’s is an original and forward-looking approach and I am not saying that non-governmental actors cannot exert pressure on the state. But, against the background of the analysis of this thesis, it is incompatible with the current foreign policies of the U.S., the EU and Russia. It seems that, if only temporary, the strategies to mitigate anarchy in international politics have failed and balance of power is anew the top priority. Again, one of the factors is that some states have the impression that their identity and values do not have equal rights compared to liberal-democratic ones. That does not mean that, from an ethical perspective, I agree with Russia. Nonetheless, letting the fronts harden further under the pretext of defence of liberal values will not serve the peace between Russia and the West, and it will definitely send a message to countries which support Russia’s critique.

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