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Security Cooperation as a primary institution of western international society

Rita Floyd¹

Abstract:

How do western states respond to real or perceived security threats? Do they tend to respond to the same threat in haphazard ways, or does their response follow similar patterns? By analysing the response to a number of diverse contemporary threats – the Crimean crisis, North Korea’s nuclear proliferation, climate change and the 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic – this article shows that the security responses by different western states to the same threat tend to be consistent across states, while they also tend to follow a seemingly self-evident pattern of behaviour. In light of these findings, the article suggests that the joint pursuit of security (for short: security cooperation) has replaced war as a primary institution at the western core of sub-global international society.

In order to make this argument this article develops a new approach to analysing primary institutions: the practice-based method. While this method is inspired by Peter Wilson and Kilian Spandler’s idea that practitioners’ behaviour and rhetoric matters to institutional status, it draws analytical purchase also from Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot’s influential practice-based theory to International Relations.

Keywords: English School, Canadian School, security cooperation, practice, institutions, NATO, North Korea, Climate change, Ebola

Introduction

What happens when there is a threat to states at the western core of global international society?² Do western states respond in disparate and unsystematic ways to the threat, or do they tend to address insecurity in similar ways? If the response is alike across states, to what extent does the response follow a routinized and self-evident pattern e.g. does it always include the same steps, for instance, condemnation? Moreover, do states – as part of their response - tend to establish certain actors as principal? Finally, do shared practices on threat management and insecurity come to define ‘the fundamental principles, rules, and norms

¹ I would like to thank the following individuals for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this finished article: Kevoork Oskanian, Barry Buzan, Laust Schouenborg, Kilian Spandler, Adam Quinn and Mark Webber. My thanks also to participants at the second POLSIS annual English School workshop May 2019, as well as to Jonathan Floyd for frequently acting as a sounding board. [Last but not least my thanks to Aran Martin and the team at CPAR for giving me time to complete a revision as well as for their helpful feedback.](#)

² The language and idea of a Western core and a periphery of additional sub-global international societies, as well as primary institutions to separate ES institutions from those talked about by regime theory (i.e. secondary institutions) follows Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

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upon which their mutual relations are based'?³ This paper seeks to answer such questions with regards to four illustrative case-studies. The four cases have been chosen purposefully because of their diversity of certain important characteristics. Two of the cases - armed aggression by Russia in Crimea; the nuclear threat from North Korea - are agent-intended threats. Meaning threats (be they real or perceived) that involve an agent (here a state), who has both the intention to do harm and the capabilities to do it. Moreover the Russia/Crimea case is an example of an agent-intended threat that is geographically 'in area' as a direct threat for members of 'the West', while the case of North Korea is – with the exception of Japan - geographically largely out of the immediate Western area.

A further two examples—climate change and infectious disease (here specifically the Ebola virus disease)—are best classed as agent-caused threats. In other words, these threats are caused by one or more agents' behaviour, but not intended by them⁴; as such these examples cover many of the security threats that have become recognised only after the end of the Cold War. The specific choice of climate change and the Ebola virus disease as examples of agent-caused threats was made on the basis that the first is a truly global threat already affecting the West, while Ebola is localised in a non-Western region (Western Africa), albeit with the real possibility for spreading towards the West.

The purpose of the analysis goes beyond establishing how states in the West respond to specific threats. The principal aim of this paper is to establish whether security cooperation (that is, the joint pursuit of security) is, in fact, a primary institution of the Western core of international society?⁵

³ K.J. Holsti, *Taming the sovereigns*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 25

⁴ I differentiate between two sub-types of agent-caused but not intended threats: 1) by obliviousness, i.e. when people do not realize that their combined actions are potentially threatening to other entities; or b) by harmful neglect i.e. when relevant agents fail to protect against foreseeable harmful events/consequences (cf. Rita Floyd, *The Morality of Security: A theory of just securitization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) chapter 3

⁵ While I recognise that evidence collected from just four illustrative cases is limited, my aim with these empirical examples is not to settle the case once and for all, but to show *prima facie* plausibility of the existence of security cooperation as an institution of the Western core of contemporary international society. Because the

Primary institutions (PIs) is a concept advanced by the English School (ES) of International Relations. PIs are the fundamental components of international order which in turn determines the nature of any given specific sub-global international society. Primary institutions are important, because they enable us to understand more fully the nature of any given international order/society, including its possibilities (e.g. in terms of secondary institutions, or cooperation) but also its shortcomings (most notably regarding justice). Famously by an institution ES scholars do ‘not necessarily imply an organisation or administrative machinery, but rather a set of *habits and practices* shaped towards the realisation of common goals’.⁶

This article took shape as a result of two observations. First, that while security concerns are an important feature of the English school scholarship (be it as Great Power management, the balance of power, or humanitarian intervention)⁷ the status of security and its role in international society has not been spelled out and empirically analysed in a systematic and methodologically sophisticated manner).⁸ One possible reason for this lacuna is widespread agreement with Robert Jackson’s⁹ view – here paraphrased by Cornelia Navari that: ‘Security, in general, and security practices in particular are subject to such continual reformulation that security norms struggle to achieve stability’.¹⁰

Second, given that war has decayed as an institution at the Western core of international society¹¹, and that threats have not decreased, it is reasonable to question, therefore, whether *security cooperation* has *replaced* war as an institution. This is in

cases chosen cover a diverse set of threats: intended and unintended, ‘in area’ and ‘out of area’, definitively-directed to [states at the Western core](#) and merely potentially they are sufficient for my purpose here.

⁶ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2002), 71, my emphasis

⁷ Consider also that at least two of Bull’s three elementary and primary *goals of international societies* are about generating security as a state of being.

⁸ cf. Barry Buzan, ‘The English School: A neglected approach to International Security Studies’. *Security Dialogue*, 46, no 2, 2015: 126-143.

⁹ Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

¹⁰ Cornelia Navari, ‘The concept of practice in the English School’ *European Journal of International Relations*, 17 no 4, 2010: 620

¹¹ James Mayall, *Nationalism and international society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Holsti, *Taming the sovereigns*,

particular the case if Barry Buzan, for whom '[t]he West as a whole has achieved fully-fledged Cooperative status [...]',¹² is correct when he asserts that within cooperative international societies it is probable that 'war gets downgraded as an institution, and other institutions might arise to reflect [...] joint projects(s)'.¹³

In order to understand what is meant by security cooperation it is necessary to break down this concept into its components. Security tends to have one of two meanings. On the one hand, it refers to the condition of feeling and being secure¹⁴, which is achieved when states and individuals enjoy freedom from fear (i.e. negative peace) and want (comprehensive human security). On the other hand security refers to a particular form of politics, to wit the high politics of security that may involve an extraordinary policy response, or at least the credible threat thereof. Importantly, security politics may or may not lead to greater overall security as, in Jonathan Herington's¹⁵ terms, 'a state of being', but—for the most part—security action is motivated by the idea to achieve or increase security as a state of being in international society. Depending on the type and nature of the threat, this may or may not involve the use of military force.¹⁶ In security cooperation, security thus refers to defensive actions aimed at ensuring security as a state of being.

Moving on, the cooperation part of 'security cooperation' aims to capture this paper's working hypothesis that the pursuit of security – at the Western core of IS - has become a joint endeavour. This does not necessarily mean that *all* security threats are addressed by formal security institutions, but merely that relevant states have aligned on how they address insecurity and perforce what they consider to be threatening. In short, what matters is that they have compatible security policies aimed at achieving the same or similar ends.

¹² Buzan, *From International to world society?*, 237

¹³ *ibid.*, 160

¹⁴ Jonathan Herington, 'Liberty, Fear and the State: Philosophical Perspectives on Security' In P. Bourbeau (editor) *Security: Dialogue across disciplines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 31

¹⁶ This also means that a possible primary institution of security cooperation is separate from peace as another possible institution of international society.

So far so good, but from what I have said up to this point it is not clear how security cooperation is not simply a regulative or derivative practice, but potentially *constitutive* of cooperative international society, and as such a plausible primary institution thereof.¹⁷ To address this issue consider that Buzan has recently argued that primary institutions are ‘the facilitating conditions for securitization [in his words] the social processes by which groups of people construct something as a threat’.¹⁸ Noteworthy here is his claim that in international societies dominated by pluralist primary institutions (e.g. nationalism and territoriality) securitisation is pursued in line with such values by individual states and consequently often divisive. In cooperative international societies, which are characterised by the propensity of solidarist primary institutions (e.g. democracy, human rights and the market), however, securitisation is mostly a joint pursuit, because it tends to address (perceived) threats to these joint projects.¹⁹ Buzan overlooks, however, that if states carry out security jointly/cooperatively to achieve security as a state of being (of individuals, states or sub-global international order), so doing becomes definitive of ‘both the players and the game of international relations’.²⁰ Put differently, while Buzan says that primary institutions determine the basic character of securitisation, I suggest that it works both ways, as the joint pursuit of security (or in other words – security cooperation) comes to define the basic character of international society as *inter alia* peaceful (at least with one another), cooperative, international-law abiding, and defined by a commitment to sub-global collective security institutions (e.g. NATO & the EU).²¹

¹⁷ Andrew Hurrell, *On global order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 59; Barry Buzan, *An introduction to the English school of international relations*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2014) 17

¹⁸ Buzan, ‘The English School’, 138 & 129

¹⁹ To be sure, solidarist institutions have no intrinsic moral value c.f. Rita Floyd, ‘A new standard for the evaluation of solidarist institutions’ *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Volume 20, 2017 pp.485-510

²⁰ Buzan, ‘The English School’, 129

²¹ We might say, with Buzan, secondary institutions.

Although the concept of institutions is central to the ES, much variety exists on precisely which institutions matter. Lists of institutions advanced by different theorists are of varying lengths and of differing character. Moreover, among the many ES scholars using the concept of institution, few have employed systematic methods to ascertain what these are. Owing to the fact that we do not currently possess an accepted method by which the actual presence of institutions can be determined, the answer to the research question informing this article requires some necessary analytical ground-clearing. That is to say, *before* I can begin to examine whether or not security cooperation is a PI of the contemporary core of international society, I need to either defend one of the existing systematic methods as the best possible option, or else devise an alternative method.

Among those ES scholars that have advanced systematic methods two prominent camps have emerged: 1) functionalists who ascertain institutional status in line with the functions putative institutions fulfil in international society (proponents include Buzan and Laust Schouenborg); and 2) practice-based theorists who seek to ascertain institutional status from studying practitioners within international society (key proponents include Kilian Spandler and Peter Wilson).²² While this article aligns with the latter camp, I argue that existing *systematic* practice-based methods to institutions don't work. In their place I suggest a method for identifying institutions that draws on ideas by Canada-based Vincent Pouliot and Emmanuel Adler's version of practice-based theory. This is informed by two observations: 1) the "Canadian School's"²³ idea of practice comes close to the ES understanding of institutions; and 2) many ES scholars interested in institutions already work

²² Membership in these camps is fluid. As I will show later on certainly Buzan (in Robert Falkner & Barry Buzan, 'The emergence of environmental stewardship as a primary institution of global international society' *European Journal of International Relations*, Volume 25 No 1, 2019, 131-155) but also Schouenborg in Laust Schouenborg, *The Scandinavian international society: primary institutions and binding forces, 1815-2010*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012) transcend these camps insofar as both also look at practices. [In my view, ~~in other words~~ functionalists' ~~inquiring enquires~~](#) into practice give further weight to the importance of practice-based approaches.

²³ Some readers might object to the term school on the grounds that we are concerned with just a few people (besides Adler and Pouliot, we can also count Jérémie Cornut and Jean-Philippe Thérien). I would respond that there is no hard and fast rule when an aggregate group of people qualifies for the label school.

with ideas cogently systemized by the Canadian School (CS), yet without advancing a systematic method other scholars could employ.

The practice-based method is then used to examine the institutional status of security cooperation in western international society. I proceed as follows. If, as the ES broadly maintains, international institutions are (regulative and constitutive) practices, and practices - in line with the CS are customary and patterned ways of doing things - we can settle the case by examining how the core of international society (i.e. the West) responds to real or perceived security threats. I do this by utilizing the four contemporary illustrative case studies already noted.

Overall the article does two things. First by affirming security cooperation as a primary institution of the contemporary core of international society, it enables a better understanding of the make-up of that specific sub-global international society. For example, it allows the prediction that in spite of President Trump's verbal attacks on NATO and mounting fears that its weaker member states are susceptible to subversion by Russia²⁴; NATO is highly unlikely to disappear. Thus with NATO indivisibly tied to *security cooperation*, it has much greater staying power than some analysts fear.²⁵ Second, by developing further the method of ascertaining institutions through practice this article is a major contribution to the English School.

Insider vs Outsider approaches to institutions

Although the concept of institutions is central to the ES, the lists of institutions advanced by different theorists are of varying lengths and of differing character. Moreover, among the many ES scholars using the concept of institution, few employ a systematic method when

²⁴ Celeste Wallander, 'Nato's Enemies Within', *Foreign Affairs* July/August, 2018 pp. 70-81

²⁵ For work on the ES and NATO see Mark Webber, 'NATO: Within and Between European International Society', *Journal of European Integration*, 33(2), 2011, pp. 139-158

compiling their respective lists of institutions. The majority of ES writers seem to simply assert what institutions are without giving any sustained thought to how they have been derived. Writing in 1977, Hedley Bull, for example, simply asserted that the institutions of international society are: the balance of power, international law, diplomacy, war, the great powers, and even states. This raises the question: How did he know? And also, why (at the time he was writing), the balance of power but not nationalism²⁶, or the inequality of people?²⁷ Indeed, some ES scholars have raised the question why not conceive of peace and security as an institution of international society?²⁸ However, no scholar has done this with a view to answering this question, but merely to highlight how arbitrarily institutions are derived by ES scholars. More recently, some ES writers have sought to strengthen and develop the ES's approach to methodology and also method.²⁹ Among them— to use Peter Wilson's³⁰ terminology — the 'new institutionalists', Buzan³¹ and Schouenborg³², examine the presence of institutions in functional terms, the idea that we can ascertain institutions in terms of the functions they fulfil in international society. One such proposal focuses on whether or not prospective institutions serve one or more of the three primary goals of international order, identified by Bull as: security against violence, observance of agreements, and property rights.³³ Another such proposal identifies institutions in line with their regulative and constitutive functions, whereby the latter pertains to regulating conflicts, trade,

²⁶ Mayall, *Nationalism and international society*

²⁷ Buzan, *From International to world society?*

²⁸ Peter Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School: The Case for a Grounded Theory of International Institutions'. *International Studies Review*, 14(4), 2012 pp.567-590.; Robert Falkner, 'Global environmentalism and the greening of international society' *International Affairs*, 88(3), 2012, 503-522.

²⁹ see specifically Cornelia Navari (Ed.). *Theorising international society: English school methods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008)

³⁰ Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School'

³¹ Buzan, *From International to world society?*

³² Laust Schouenborg, 'A new institutionalism? The English School as international sociological theory', *International Relations*, 25(1), 2011 pp.26-44.

³³ Buzan, *An introduction to the English school of international relations*, 174

authoritative communication, international organization and the former to legitimacy and membership.³⁴

In the relevant literature functionalism has been criticised. Wilson (2012) has argued that functionalism is unable to grant real ontological status to institutions. The argument being that when institutions are tantamount to analytical lenses they flow from the respective scholar's cognition (i.e. are stipulated from 'the outside') not from what really exists. According to Wilson this has had the unfortunate effect that different functionalists have advanced diverse institutions.³⁵ While Wilson is certainly right to point out that the new institutionalists lack unity in terms of the institutions they have advanced, and consequently that functionalism as a whole, has been unable to overcome the problem of *reliable identification* of institutions, he is incorrect to argue that functionalism *necessarily* denies institutions ontological status. After all, in IR theory, analytical lenses mapping real-world phenomena are often confirmed by actors' practices not the scholar's cognition.³⁶

Be that as it may, it is also the case that some methods for ascertaining institutions award greater significance to practitioners' words and deeds than others, and as such are acutely attuned to the issue of institutions requiring ontological status. Two of the most recent approaches to institutions operate exclusively from 'the inside'. Wilson³⁷ suggests that the best way to establish which, and indeed if, institutions exist is through grounded theory which prioritises practitioners' conceptions and experiences of institutions. The second approach is offered by Spandler³⁸, who argues that the key to ascertaining institutions is to focus on shared discursive practices. A practice-based approach to institutions is promising for three reasons: 1) Starting from the 'bottom up' it can overcome the problem of unreliable

³⁴ Schouenborg, 'A new institutionalism?'

³⁵ Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School'

³⁶ We might say that the insider/outsider dichotomy is more fluid than Wilson suggests. cf. FN 619 below

³⁷ Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School'

³⁸ Kilian Spandler, 'The political international society: Change in primary and secondary institutions', *Review of International Studies*, 41(03), 2015 pp.601-622.

identification; 2) it is in line with the ES tradition.³⁹ Cornelia Navari, for example, has shown that Manning, Wight, Bull and Jackson all maintain that practitioners conduct is central to understanding international politics. It is therefore unsurprising that many scholars – including functionalists⁴⁰ - *inter alia* also look for patterns of behaviour regarding e.g. norms when establishing the status of institution (a fact I will return to later on). And 3) it is able to account for change of primary institutions over time (for example the move from war to security cooperation) more easily than functional explanations.

Yet, existing overt and systematic practice-based methods are not without their problems. Wilson's method is heavily inspired by grounded theory (2012) which requires the total immersion of the researcher into the subject matter (including countless hours of participant observation and (listening to) practitioner's experiences), and data collection without pre-conditioned notions of the research question. This method is – even according to Wilson⁴¹ - extremely demanding in terms of access to research subjects, time and money, and as such quite possibly unmanageable.⁴² Spandler, in turn, starts from the idea that institutions are intersubjective constructs, and not patterned self-evident behaviours. Unsurprisingly thus he proposes that we must establish their presence by locating accompanying discursive speech acts (specifically shared discourses) that give these institutions 'normative character and leads to convergent expectations about behaviour'.⁴³ One problem with focusing on shared discourses as opposed to (patterns of) behaviour is that it lowers the threshold for the ontological existence of institutions too drastically, because everything for which we can find shared discourse is potentially an institution of international society.⁴⁴

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³⁹ Navari, 'The concept of practice in the English School', 620

⁴⁰ Falkner and Buzan, 'The emergence of environmental stewardship' and Schouenborg, *The Scandinavian international society*:

⁴¹ Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School', p.587

⁴² Cf. Julianne Oktay, *Grounded theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p.126

⁴³ Spandler, 'The political international society', 612

⁴⁴ This problem of limitlessness and hence, analytical irrelevance, is a problem common to discursive approaches aiming to capture specific concepts. Consider for example the Copenhagen School's approach to security which is perhaps the most prominent discursive approach in IR theory. The original idea of

Introducing: A practice-based approach to institutions

Despite their weaknesses both Wilson and Spandler's works are important. Not only do they point to the importance of practitioners for identifying institutions, but unlike other scholars drawn to practices they emphasise the need for a rigorous method. Both authors work can be classed as part of the practice-turn literature in IR theory. Importantly, this literature disagrees on the meaning of practice; Philippe Bourbeau⁴⁵ even suggests that the concept of practice is essentially contested. Certainly for poststructuralist scholars' interested in studying practice of pivotal importance is the performative power of language, which is seen to have ontological priority. In other words, because saying something (language) *is* doing something, for poststructuralist's practice analysis focuses on discursive practices.⁴⁶ We can thus see that Navari's assertion that 'a focus on discourse or text alone threatens to leave practice behind'⁴⁷ is debatable; indeed it is possible to class Spandler's discursive method as a variant of practice-based theory.

securitization theory was that security is a speech act, meaning that issues become security threats if a powerful actor believes them to be such and (in written or spoken language) declares them as such (Ole Wæver, 'Securitization and Desecuritization' In Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed) *On Security*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) pp.46-86, at 54). That was the original formulation of the basic structure of the theory, however, Ole Wæver, as the originator of the theory, has always been acutely aware of the limitlessness-utility problem in security; this much is evident from his refusal to include individuals as referents of security as this would expand 'the security realm endlessly' (ibid: 48). It is no surprise then that 'limiters' have crept into the theory of securitisation. One of these is the requirement that the speech act has to be accepted by a relevant audience; another is the Copenhagen School's claim that the only important cases of securitizations are those that have significant consequences, which is the case when extraordinary emergency measures are adopted (Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A new framework for analysis*, Lynne Rienner: Boulder Colorado, 1998, 25-26.) The lesson from this prominent example is that discourses signifying intersubjectively held meanings are insufficient to determine theoretical concepts, be they securitization or institutions. Discourses must be matched by policy responses (i.e. tangibly doing, not just saying something) if they are to have relevance for conceptual status. This does not mean, however, that discourses are totally irrelevant. Instead, in the realm of security cooperation, for example, shared discourses enable researchers to locate relevant policies.

⁴⁵ Phillippe Bourbeau, 'The practice approach in Global Politics', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, *Journal of Global Security Studies*, Volume 2, No 2, April 2017, Pages 170–182,

⁴⁶ Lene Hansen, 'Performing practices: A poststructuralist analysis of the Muhammad cartoon crisis'. In E. Adler and V. Pouliot (ed) *International Practices* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp.280-309.

⁴⁷ Navari, 'The concept of practice in the English School', 622

Wilson's emphasis on grounded theory, in turn, sits extremely comfortably with pragmatist practice-turn scholars such as Büger and Gadinger⁴⁸, who maintain that practice-based research cannot be restricted to what practitioners do (after all, the majority of studies in IR are about that) instead the practice theorist is required to immerse herself deeply into the action, to acquire descriptions of detailed situations, and to observe participants in order to grasp the fluid structure of practice and the role practice plays in knowledge creation.⁴⁹ In other words, proponents of this interpretation do not advance up-front a definition of what practice means or involves; instead they allow the definition of practice to emerge from the analysis.⁵⁰ From this we can see that Pouliot and Cornut⁵¹ are thus quite correct when they argue that in its pragmatist variant, practice-based theory is reminiscent of grounded theory.

In addition to these two approaches to practice IR is home to a third distinct approach to practice, one primarily associated with the work of Canada-based Pouliot⁵² and Adler and Pouliot.⁵³ In what follows I want to suggest that their method for locating practices is not only more pragmatic than those discussed above, but implicitly already used by some ES scholars interested in institutions.⁵⁴ To do this, however, we need to first of all understand what the "Canadian School" is all about.

The purpose of Pouliot's practice-based theory is to avoid 'the representational bias' he views as endemic to rationalist and constructivist IR theory alike. All theorists working in the traditions of these schools he argues, commence from theorizing *a priori* what actors

⁴⁸ Christian Büger and Frank Gadinger, 'The play of international practice'. *International Studies Quarterly*, 59(3), 2015 pp.449-460.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Making sense of "international practices"' In E. Adler and V. Pouliot (ed) *International Practices* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp.36-60

⁵¹ Vincent Pouliot and Jeremie Cornut, 'Practice theory and the study of diplomacy: A research agenda'. *Cooperation and conflict*, 50, 3, 2015 297-315, 302

⁵² Vincent Pouliot, *International security in practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

⁵³ Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International practices: introduction and framework'. In Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds) *International Practices* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp.3-35. & Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International Practices', *International Theory*, 3(1), 2011, 1-36

⁵⁴ Notably Adam Watson, *The evolution of international society: a comparative historical analysis*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Holsti, *Taming the sovereigns*; Schouenborg, *The Scandinavian international society*; Falkner and Buzan, 'The emergence of environmental stewardship...'

‘think *about*’ (interests or else reflexive knowledge)⁵⁵, which ignores that practitioners themselves maintain that their actions are informed by ‘common sense, intelligence and tact’.⁵⁶ Pouliot’s ‘logic of practicality’ aims to make practitioner’s background knowledge the central focus of IR theory thus avoiding the putative representational bias encountered by mainstream IR theories. Together with Adler he argues that the focus of practice-based theory is on ‘*what practitioners do*’.⁵⁷ By contrast, we might say that the pragmatist practice/grounded theorist is concerned with *how practitioners view* the world, while discursive scholars focuses on what *practitioners say*.

A focus on what practitioners do, however, does not imply that IR theorists should simply devise a social ontology of everything; rather practices are substantively defined as: ‘competent performances socially meaningful patters of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world’.⁵⁸ And also: ‘By *international* practices, we denote socially organized activities that pertain to world politics, broadly construed’.⁵⁹ It helps to show that one entry in the definition of practices in the online version of the Oxford English Dictionary is ‘customary, habitual, or expected procedure or way of doing’.⁶⁰ In other words, we might say that a practice in international relations refers to a customary, self-evident course of conduct that informs what practitioners do within particular organizations or bodies (G8 meetings, NATO-Russia Council to use to examples used by Pouliot 2010, 2011). Thus, quite unlike the pragmatist variant of practice-based

⁵⁵ Pouliot, *International security in practice*, 14, emphasis in original

⁵⁶ Ibid: 12.

⁵⁷ Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*, 1, emphasis added

⁵⁸ *ibid*, 4

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 6, emphasis in original

⁶⁰ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/practice>

theory, the Canadian School is comfortable telling us what practices are in advance of the research having been carried out.⁶¹

In order to locate practices, the researcher must look for patterns of practice because practices display ‘regularities over space and time’.⁶² In addition, she can also look for the expressions of practices in discourse because practice is always communicated.⁶³ Moreover, small digressions (i.e. incompetent performances) from customary procedure do not devalue the existence of general practice.⁶⁴

Pouliot in his influential study on the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) from 2010 uses practice-based theory to examine whether peace has become normalized between the two former enemies, a finding that gives credence to the idea of a security community. Pouliot’s central method is qualitative, interviews with security practitioners partaking in the NRC or (on the Russian-side) practitioners close to government. As part of this method interviewees are asked to ‘recount other practitioners’ practices’⁶⁵, while the ‘analysis of interview transcripts [is] focused on the practical assumptions that make the interviewee’s discourse possible’⁶⁶ -Pouliot’s practice-based analysis culminates in objectifying subjective insights gained from practitioners; much simplified he does this by tracing historical influences and developments that have made contemporary practices possible.

⁶¹ Note that Wilson denounces Pouliot and Adler’s approach as an outsider approach to practices. He argues that: ‘Few practitioners would be able to comprehend a definition [of practice] so abstract and locked in specialist academic literature such as this’ (Wilson, ‘The English school...’ 580). At least two things can be objected to this. 1) theThe meaning of practices utilized by Pouliot et al. is such that it refers to a commonly accepted (i.e. by insiders and outsiders) definition of practices even if their language is – at times – challenging. Second, a focus on what practitioners do is by definition an insider approach (though contra this second point see Erik Ringmar, ‘The search for dialogue as a hindrance to understanding: practices as inter-paradigmatic research program’. *International Theory*, 2014 6(1), 1-27)

⁶² Adler and Pouliot ‘International Practices’, p.6

⁶³ *ibid*, 7

⁶⁴ Hansen, ‘Performing practices’

⁶⁵ Pouliot, *International security in practice*, 69

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 70

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Pouliot aims to understand international relations better by studying what practitioners do. This aim is shared by many within the English school.⁶⁷ More importantly still, practices also inform the ES's view of institutions. Notably 'institutions' of law, war, diplomacy, the balance of power and the great powers actually means the *regulative standards, routines and repertoires* which belong to the activities of law-making, war, diplomacy and so on'.⁶⁸ This said, the English School has perhaps a more nuanced view of practice than the Canadian School.⁶⁹ In contrast to the Canadian School, who hold that practice can change 'the ideas that individually and collectively people hold about it'⁷⁰ the English School's view of practice is not so much behaviouristic, or else, causal.⁷¹ Instead, it comes closer to Theodore Schatzki's view of practice, which entails, in addition to practical understandings and rules, also the insight that practitioners and hence practices are not neutral, instead their activities are 'normativized', or else imbued with intention.⁷²

Some scholars hold that it is impossible to infer intention from the observation of practices as there could always be alternative intentions.⁷³ Ringmar, for one, contends that: 'Social scientists who study practices, by contrast, take an outsider's view. They see people doing certain things in certain places but they cannot say why since every practice can be associated with any number of separate intentions'.⁷⁴ It seems to me, however, that Ringmar here confuses intentions with motives. Of course we cannot know what determines an actor's private choice or aim (i.e. their motives), but we can know what an actor aims at or chooses

⁶⁷ Navari, 'The concept of practice', 1

⁶⁸ Ibid 620 my emphasis, see also Richard Little, 'Britain's response to the Spanish Civil War: investigating the implications of foregrounding practice for English School thinking'. In Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds) *International Practices* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 174-199, 176

⁶⁹ Navari, 'The concept of practice', 622.

⁷⁰ Adler and Pouliot, 'International practices: Introduction and Framework', 14. Or, as Kratochwil (2011:38) op cit.: puts this ' "causal pathways" [shepherd] ideas into individuals minds'

⁷¹ Navari, 'The concept of practice', 626

⁷² *ibid*: 617 and 620

⁷³ Ringmar, 'The search for dialogue as a hindrance to understanding', 12

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 12

to do (i.e. their intentions).⁷⁵ To demonstrate, consider the widespread international practice of the public condemnation of aggressive behaviour by one state against another. A number of motives might drive states to condemn this behaviour including: 1. The need to be seen to do the right thing; 2. Deflection from one's own rogue behaviour; 3. Genuine concern; 4. The hope for stronger ties with states one knows will condemn the action. 5. Domestic politics and 6. Alliance politics. By contrast an actor's aim in condemning an aggressor state is always the same: to discredit the action/actor as unlawful, unjust or unacceptable, in short to demarcate right from wrong.

Consequently, not only are intention and practices reconcilable, but arguably the significance of practices becomes clear to the researcher when they take an actor's aim into account. After all, the aim clearly separates practice from other types of patterned behaviour.

Finally, even if there is a difference in the understanding of practice between the two schools, it does not invalidate the argument that insights from the CS are a useful starting point; to wit, the focus for both schools is with empirical investigations.⁷⁶

Given all this, I propose that it ought to be possible to use *insights* from the Canadian School's practice-based theory to identify the nature and extent of institutions in international society. Specifically researchers can look for customary, self-evident procedures on *longstanding or recurring* issues (e.g. human rights, environmental change, humanitarian intervention, insecurity etc.) within international society, and examine how these have come to influence the character of international society i.e. by giving principal status to certain actors⁷⁷, and by supporting rules, norms and values that determine mutual relations, including

⁷⁵ Elisabeth Anscombe, *Intention*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975) 18 cf. James Pattison, *Humanitarian Intervention & the Responsibility to Protect*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010 : chapter 6)

⁷⁶ Note also that the Canadian School sees few differences between the two schools. They argue: '[...] what the English School calls "the institutions of international society" [...] certainly comes quite close to our focus on socially organized and meaningful activities' (Adler and Pouliot, 'International Practices: Introduction and Framework', 4). Moreover, the Canadian School's approach too leaves room for intent. 'As a form of action, practice differs from preferences or beliefs, which it expresses, and from discourse or institutions, which it instantiates' (Adler and Pouliot, 'International Practices', 6).

⁷⁷ Holsti, *Taming the Sovereigns*, 25

what counts as their-legitimate behaviour.⁷⁸ Crucially, at this macro-level, practice-based analysis needs not and perhaps realistically cannot (due to a lack of access) take the form of observing practitioners up close in their daily jobs and by conducting interviews with them. Indeed requiring this would be no less demanding than Wilson's approach.⁷⁹ What researchers can do, however, is to observe the publically displayed behaviour of practitioners and their official language (using, for example, official interviews and speeches) in relevant situations, and in that way establish whether or not practitioners conduct themselves in 'commonsensical'⁸⁰ and patterned ways in comparable situations, including by examining whether they use broadly the same language and whether they routinely act through the same international bodies, in that way reaffirming the latter. The analysis needs to pertain to the same actors in distinct but comparable situations (in the given case: response to a range of security threats), as well as to distinct actors in the same situation. In other words, I propose that for the purposes of establishing institutions of any given sub-global international society we can take from the Canadian School their notion of practice as competent performances, as well as their idea to look for patterned behaviour. The latter is not a radical proposal. The empirical chapters of for example Holsti's *Taming the Sovereigns* (2004) or Schouenborg's *The Scandinavian international society: primary institutions and binding forces* (2012) already study what practitioners do. More recently Falkner and Buzan⁸¹, who identify patterned behaviour as one of the indicators of institutional status⁸², focus on how different US administrations' conduct climate negotiations, when they seek to establish environmental stewardship as an institution of global international society. Quite unlike Wilson and

⁷⁸ *ibid*, and Barry Buzan, 'Revisiting world society' *International Politics*, 2017 online first, p.10

⁷⁹ Please note that Pouliot himself does not consider interviews panaceas, but rather surrogates that 'go some distance' 'imperfectly make[ing] up for the impossibility of participant observation in certain settings. (*International Security in Practice*, 70)

⁸⁰ Pouliot, Vincent. "The logic of practicality: A theory of practice of security communities." *International organization* (2008): 257-288, at 258

⁸¹ Falkner and Buzan, 'The emergence of environmental stewardship'

⁸² The other two indicators are evidence of the institution as a transnational value and formation of secondary institutions

Spandler, however, none of these writers is informed by a *systematic* method that can easily be reproduced by others and thus become the standard method for ascertaining institutional status. My claim is that (broadly) the Canadian School's way of doing things can provide the ES with precisely such a systematic method.⁸³

Depending on the issue, at the macro-level of institutions, it suffices to focus the analysis on the representatives of individual countries and that of relevant collectives (e.g. the EU).⁸⁴ For the issue of security cooperation this approach certainly is justified because, whilst the number of actors in the realm of security is ever growing⁸⁵, at the Western core of international society states not only hold the monopoly on violence, but here they also *generally* accept the Hobbesian duty to protect their citizens from insecurity.⁸⁶

Using this approach, and with a view to establishing whether security cooperation is a primary institution at the core of global international society, this article now examines the Crimean crisis, North Korea's nuclear proliferation, climate change and the Ebola epidemic. I reason that if it is the case that primary institutions are (regulative and constitutive) practices, and practices in turn are customary, routine, or expected performances (i.e. ways of doing things) then it ought to be possible to establish the existence of security cooperation by charting what happens when the core of international society is faced with a common security threat.

The Western core and the response to agent-intended threats

⁸³ Although this paper was completed before I read Buzan's 2020 call for a method that puts 'primary institutions onto firmer empirical ground' (Barry Buzan 'Three ideas for taking the English school forward', Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 33:4, 2020, 499-501, at 500) this paper can [be](#) read as answering this call.

⁸⁴ Cf. Navari, 'The concept of practice in the English School'

⁸⁵ Cf. Rita Abrahamsen and Anna Leander eds., (2015) *Routledge handbook of private security studies*. Abingdon: Routledge.

⁸⁶ I recognise that while this is generally true, digressions exist. [P](#)olice power, for example, can and is being abused.

In February 2014, the Russian Federation invaded the Ukrainian peninsula Crimea and subsequently annexed the territory by referendum. The annexation was justified by Russian President Putin as necessary on humanitarian grounds, specifically to protect Russian speakers in the region. Russia's actions were a response to the ousting of the democratically elected President Victor Yanukovich on 21 February 2014 and the instalment of a temporary government in Kiev deemed illegitimate by both Russia and Russian speakers in Crimea, but legitimate by the West. Regardless of how Russia has justified its actions, Russia's actions are a clear breach of a multilateral security assurances agreement signed in 1994 by *inter alia* Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Ukraine. The Budapest Memorandum guarantees Ukraine sovereignty and territorial integrity in exchange for relinquishing its nuclear weapon status. How did states at the Western core respond to this unprecedented event in post-Cold war affairs? In the first instance, Western leaders reacted by condemning the act. The then European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, for example, said:

There is no place for the use of force and coercion to change borders in Europe in the 21st century. The EU will not recognize the annexation of Crimea by Russia. We call upon Russia to take steps to de-escalate the crisis. We will continue to engage and use all diplomatic and political means to stabilise the situation and prepare the ground for a genuine political solution.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Catherine Ashton, 'Speech by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton' at the Annual Conference of the European Defence Agency 27 March 2014 p.1 accessed 30 September 2020 available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/statements/docs/2014/140327_05_en.pdf

Meanwhile, US President Barack Obama said in his speech to the European Parliament in March 2014: '[...] Russia's violation of international law, its assault on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, must be met with condemnation, not because we're trying to keep Russia down, but because the principles that have meant so much to Europe and the world must be lifted up.'⁸⁸ Condemnation was accompanied by warnings. Obama, for example, warned Russia not to get militarily involved in Ukraine, and after the referendum warned Putin of the consequences of this action⁸⁹, although he did not explain what any such response might be.

A third notable element of the response was the pulling together of existing alliances/collective security arrangements. Western states did not go it alone, but rather NATO and the EU served throughout as major fora for expressing condemnation and uttering warnings and later on in the crisis, also, for action. In this specific case, this is perhaps unsurprising; after all Russia's actions were (at least partially) a result of both organisations' eastern enlargement.⁹⁰ In other words, Russia's move to annex Crimea was levelled at these organisations more than any one state within the West. Beyond condemning Russia's actions, NATO beefed up its military presence along its Eastern border to give security assurances to its eastern member states. It also suspended all cooperation with Russia, including the work of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in order to force Russia to comply with 'international law and its international obligations and responsibilities'.⁹¹ While this may be unprecedented in the history of NATO, freezing out non-compliant members in order to ensure amenability

⁸⁸ Barack Obama, Obama gives speech addressing Europe, Russia on March 26 2014 available: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-president-obama-gives-speech-addressing-europe-russia-on-march-26/2014/03/26/07ae80ae-b503-11e3-b899-20667de76985_story.html [accessed 08/12/2020]

⁸⁹ BBC (2014) Ukraine crisis: Obama warns Russia against intervention, 1 March available <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26394846> [accessed 16/10/2019]

⁹⁰ Cf. John Mearsheimer, 'Why the Ukraine crisis is the West's fault: The liberal delusions that provoked Putin'. *Foreign Aff.*, 93, 2014, 1-12; Robert J. Art, 'Creating a Disaster: NATO's Open Door Policy. *Political Science Quarterly*, 131(2), 2016, pp.341-363.

⁹¹ NATO (2014) Wales Summit Declaration accessed 15 October 2019 available here: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en [accessed 02/10/2020]

is a standard practice within international relations—after all in one rationale informing the use of international sanctions.

A further step was that member states of the core of international society turned to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) when they sought resolution S/2014/189, which aimed to declare that the referendum in Crimea has no validity and called on all states not to recognise it.⁹² This bill was unsurprisingly vetoed by permanent member Russia while China abstained. Shortly afterwards, US' Permanent Representative Samantha Power went on to co-sponsor a bill in the United Nations General Assembly on the “Territorial Integrity of Ukraine” adopted by 100, with 11 against and 58 abstentions.⁹³ The final step in the West's response was the issuing of a series of wide ranging sanctions against Russia. In the absence of UNSC approval this response was jointly coordinated by the EU and the United States. Punitive sanctions include diplomatic measures (e.g. cancellations of summits with Russia), restrictive measures (e.g. asset freezing and visa restrictions), and economic sanctions targeting produce and goods from Russian Crimea.⁹⁴ Interesting for our purposes here is that the Western core of international society responded to this—in the post-Cold war era—unprecedented event *not* by a series of unprecedented and uncoordinated actions. Instead the overall Western response followed—to any regular observer of international relations— a familiar pattern consisting of: condemnation, warning, collective security assurances, requests for legitimation by the U.N., and finally, sanctions.

In order to substantiate the claim that the Western core of international society responds to agent-intended threats by following a typical chain of response, I wish to put

⁹² UNSC, S/RES/189 15 March 2014 <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/s2014189.php>[accessed 02/10/2020], p.2

⁹³ UNGA , General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize changes in Status of Crimea Region 27 March 2014, available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm> [accessed 02/10/2020]

⁹⁴ EU, EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine crisis, 2017 accessed available at: https://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine-crisis_en [accessed 15/10/2019]

forth a second example. I have chosen here to look at the nuclear threat posed by North Korea right up until the Singapore Summit in June 2018. Since leaving the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003 the country has carried out six underground nuclear tests and dozens of missile tests. A flurry of such activity occurred in 2017, including the underground test of a hydrogen bomb on 3 September 2017.

Already in March that year the country provoked general outrage by firing several intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICMBs) towards its North East Asian neighbours, specifically Japan. As with the example of Russian aggression, the Western response was not chaotic, unsystematic, or uncoordinated. Instead, after each such incident North Korea's actions were condemned by world leaders, including Western ones. For example, Europe's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini condemned North Korea's March 2017 launch of ICBMs as a violation of 'multiple U.N. Security Council Resolutions [and as] illegal'.⁹⁵ Meanwhile NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said: 'I strongly condemn these consistent provocations and violations of binding U.N. Security Council resolutions which undermine regional and international security'.⁹⁶ Condemnation of North Korea's actions is usually accompanied by warnings. For example, in September 2016 after the fifth nuclear test, Obama warned Pyongyang of serious consequences from 'unlawful and dangerous actions'.⁹⁷ Unlike the Ukraine crisis, North Korea's nuclear aspirations were a long-standing problem and over a dozen U.N. Security Council (from 2006-2017) resolutions condemning North Korea's testing of nuclear weapons and missiles exist. The cornerstone of the response has been the imposition of UNSC

⁹⁵ European Union External Action service (EEAS) 'Statement by the HRVP Federica Mogherini on the launch of ballistic missiles by the DPRK' 6 March 2017, available at https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/22019/statement-hrvp-federica-mogherini-launch-ballistic-missiles-dprk_en [accessed 02/10/2020]

⁹⁶ NATO (2016) Statement by the NATO Secretary General on North Korea's announcement, 6. September 2016 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_135008.htm [accessed 15/10/2019]

⁹⁷ The White House, Statement by the President on North Korea's Nuclear Test September 9 2016 [available at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/09/statement-president-north-koreas-nuclear-test](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/09/statement-president-north-koreas-nuclear-test) [accessed 02/10/2020]

approved sanctions. Other responses, specifically military action, were ruled out as this might result in retaliation utilizing the nuclear capability. This means that warnings uttered by Western states tend to pertain to sanctions. Notably, in Obama's press statement referred to in the above, the U.S. President warned that 'the international community [is] to vigorously implement existing measures imposed in previous resolutions, and to take additional significant steps, including new sanctions'.⁹⁸ This explains why S/RES/2321 from the 30 November 2016 imposed new sanctions including a binding cap on coal exports; bans the export of precious metals; targets diplomats and prohibits the sale of helicopters and vessels to North Korea.⁹⁹

The incidents from early March 2017 once again made Western (and other) leaders stress the importance of collective security. Following the incidents the United States and Japan called for an emergency session on the issue in the UNSC. A press release by UNSC's President Matthew Rycroft issued after the meeting on the 7 March 2017 strongly condemned North Korea's actions, yet aside from calling on all U.N. member states to implement the existing sanctions regime does not foresee any further actions or change of policy.¹⁰⁰ Further and more wide-ranging sanctions still came into place on 5 August 2017 when the UNSC unanimously passed S/RES/2371. This resolution came in response to North Korea ignoring the international community's warnings following the events from March and testing/firing further ballistic missiles towards Japan on the 3 July and 28 July 2017, respectively. Finally, the testing of the hydrogen bomb on the 2 September 2017 was met with widespread condemnation by world leaders and members of the UNSC, as well as by the widely shared

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ UNSC, S/RES/2321 2016 available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/407/50/PDF/N1640750.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed 15.10.2019]

¹⁰⁰ (UNSC, 2017a). UNSC (2017a) Security Council Press Statement on Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Ballistic Missile Launches 7 March, available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12741.doc.htm> [accessed 15.10.2019]

view that further sanctions (passed unanimously by the UNSC on 11 September as S/RES/2375) and negotiations not military force are key to solving the issue.¹⁰¹

To summarize, both cases show that ~~the (Western) core's~~ ~~the West's~~ response followed a typical pattern. Instead of either not knowing how to respond (including to the unprecedented situation—for the post-cold war era—of Russian aggression) or responding in an uncharacteristic way, both responses involved a series of interrelated and, at times, overlapping steps consisting of: condemnation, warnings, collective security assurances, a turn to the U.N., and sanctions. Most importantly, these steps are seemingly carried out without thinking, or rather they follow a learned routine on how to best respond. Indeed, they are familiar to anyone who regularly follows developments in international politics. Of course, typical responses initially become established for good reasons. In the context of security, condemnation clearly serves to signify who is in the right and who is in the wrong; warnings of consequences show intent and act as deterrents; addressing issues through collective security institutions signify a belief in the collective; approval from the UN, especially the security council, legitimises (further) action. Economic and diplomatic sanctions are a standard method most parties can agree to, partly because unlike warfare these measures carry comparatively low costs for the imposing state. The analysis also shows how practices are constitutive of international society. First and foremost how security is practiced – i.e. cooperatively-, identifies key actors as pivotal (in the given case the EU, NATO and the UNSC). Unless these secondary institutions are affirmed through practices they are immaterial. Institutionalisation of collectives, in turn, helps to define how members located at the core relate to each other (i.e. peacefully, with solidarity). Beyond this, the way security is practiced influences how the western core deals with aggressors. Notably in both cases

¹⁰¹ UNSC (2017b) Security Council Condemns Underground Nuclear Test by Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with Members Calling for Tougher Sanctions accessed 4 September : available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12978.doc.htm> [accessed 15.10.2019]

examined the response is marked by restraint, economic and diplomatic sanctions as opposed to military action, and the latter only as a last resort. There are a number of reasons for this, including an interest in the preservation of the self (i.e. sub-global international order); however, it is also the case that economic and diplomatic sanctions are the prerogative of collectives because the effectiveness of sanctions depends in large part on the number of states upholding them.

The Western core and the response to agent-caused threats

Moving on to agent-caused but not intended threats, how does the Western core of international society tend to respond to such threats? My examples in this context are global climatic change and infectious disease, specifically the Ebola virus disease crisis from 2014 and 2016. Both of the examples discussed are new security threats, that is to say they are issues that have only recently (i.e. in the post-Cold War era) become part of the academic study of security, a development that is in part a reflection of the opening up of states and institutions' (NATO, the EU and the UN's) security agendas. Given that these actual or perceived security threats are relatively new, it is—in the context of this article—telling to see how the Western core of international society responds. Specifically, have unconventional threats triggered diverse and unsystematic responses? The short answer to these questions is no. If we look at how the [Western core](#) responded to these new threats we see a response pattern similar to much more familiar agent-intended threats involving declarations and a turn to the UN. In other words, we can see recurring patterns of behaviour, which in turn affect the make-up of international order at the core of international society.

The crucial difference between agent-intended and agent-caused threats is that there is no one intending to do harm, and without this it makes little sense to condemn the actions of

an aggressor; instead political leaders at the Western core responded in the first instance by recognizing the issue as a security threat. Recognition is, in practice, inseparable from a securitization speech act (a securitizing move), i.e. the process whereby issues become elevated to security threats by virtue of the identification of an existential threat to a valued referent object coupled with a point of no return (unless we act now it will be too late to act).¹⁰²

In the West climate change became widely recognized as a security threat in 2007-2008. It is feasible to attribute this to the fact that 2007 saw the publication of the third Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that gave near certainty to the link between human actions and climate change and catapulted the issue into the limelight. Soon thereafter, numerous Western politicians linked climate change to security. The United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett, for example, linked climate change and overt violent conflict saying that, the then topical, Darfur crisis was 'a struggle between nomadic and pastoral communities for resources made more scarce through a changing climate'.¹⁰³ In Germany, the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group's Security Strategy for Germany advised that: 'Climate change is not only an environmental or energy issue—it also presents a security threat'.¹⁰⁴ In France, a White Paper issued by Nicolas Sarkozy referred to the security implications of climate change.¹⁰⁵ The individual declarations and observations were echoed by the West's predominant collective security actors. In early 2008 Javier Solana then High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy introduced the EU's stance on the issue arguing that: 'Climate change is best viewed as a threat multiplier which

¹⁰² Buzan, et al *Security: A new framework for analysis*

¹⁰³ The Guardian (2007) 'Climate change could lead to global conflict, says Beckett', 7 May accessed 01/10/2020 at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/may/11/politics.greenpolitics>

¹⁰⁴ CDU/CSU (2008) A security strategy for Germany Resolution of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group, p.6 from May 6, 2008, available https://www.cducusu.de/sites/default/files/Sicherheitsstrategie_Resolution_080506_Engl.pdf [accessed 01/10/2020]

¹⁰⁵ Nicolas Sarkozy, 'The French White Paper on Defence and National Security', (New York: Odile Jacob Publishing Corporation, 2008)

exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability. The core challenge is that climate change threatens to overburden states and regions which are already fragile and conflict prone. It is important to recognise that the risks are not just of a humanitarian nature; they also include political and security risks that directly affect European interests'.¹⁰⁶ While NATO's then Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said in 2008 that 'NATO must prepare for a new era of global insecurity threatened by climate change and energy shortages'.¹⁰⁷ Individual threat recognitions and securitizing moves were followed by a turn to the United Nations for action and legitimation.

In April 2007, in a session sponsored by former foreign secretary Margaret Becket during the UK's presidency of the council, the UNSC discussed the security implications of climate change for the first time. In subsequent years, the issue was discussed by the UNGA in 2009, culminating in resolution A/RES/63/218 "Climate change and its possible security implications", and again by the UNSC in 2015. These debates ensured that the issue remained on the world political agenda. Yet widespread "securitization"¹⁰⁸ however, was never intended to give way to extraordinary measures.¹⁰⁹ No climate conscious Western state proposed drastic, unprecedented measures that would ensure the cutting of man-made carbon emissions, which are the root cause of climate change. Instead, these fora enabled the West (and other interested member states) who were at the forefront of this (notably the small low-lying Island states located in the South Pacific which are existentially threatened by climate

¹⁰⁶ Javier Solana, 'Climate change and International Security', 2008 Available at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/99387.pdf [Accessed 01/10/2020]

¹⁰⁷ The Telegraph, 'Climate change and energy crisis threaten global security, Nato secretary general warns' 3rd June 2008, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/2070551/Climate-change-and-energy-crisis-threaten-global-security-Nato-secretary-general-warns.html> [accessed 01/10/2020]

¹⁰⁸ In inverted commas because in the relevant scholarly community there is considerable debate on the issue of when securitization is complete/succeeds i.e. does it need simply audience acceptance or also policy change etc. Here I simply mean the speech act and audience acceptance.

¹⁰⁹ Angela Oels, 'From 'securitization' of climate change to' climatization 'of the security field: comparing three theoretical perspectives'. In: Scheffran J., Brzoska M., Brauch H., Link P., Schilling J. (eds) Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict. Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace, vol 8. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. 2012) 185-205.

change induced sea-level rise), to stress time and again the importance of global action in the form of a new binding global carbon emissions regime. The EU's representative at the signing of the UNGA resolution A/RES/63/281, for example, argued: "The European Union strongly believes that a global response to climate change is a critical element of international relations [...] The United Nations system must obviously play a pivotal role in that response. The adoption of this text is also a reminder of the urgent need for common action to fight climate change. The European Union, in this sense, remains firmly committed to reaching an ambitious global climate agreement at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen six months from now."¹¹⁰ Likewise, at the same meeting, the US representative stated: 'We are encouraged by the General Assembly's ability to achieve broad consensus on a resolution concerning the urgent issue of climate change, particularly in these crucial remaining months leading to the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen'.¹¹¹ In other words, climate change - conceived as a security issue or not - was always going to be addressed as all other environmental issues: through a new global environmental regime and as such with deeply routinized behaviour.¹¹²

My final example is the international community's handling of the Ebola crisis in 2014 and 2016, which was orchestrated and led by the Western core of international society. This crisis originated and affected mostly West Africa where over 11,000 people died from the disease, with most cases occurring in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. Unlike with climate change, human communicable infectious diseases do not require prolonged official recognition concerning the real existence of the threat, instead here the first step is the

¹¹⁰ UNGA (2009) General Assembly 63rd session 85th plenary meeting Wednesday, 3 June 2009, 10 a.m. New York <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/CC%20A%2063%20PV.85.pdf> [accessed 15.10.2019] p.5

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.19

¹¹² Indeed even President Trump (sometimes at least) seems to believe that the Paris treaty agreement needs to be re-negotiated

recognition that [a hitherto localised](#) ~~the~~ disease has the ability to threaten global security.¹¹³

US President Obama, for example said on the 16 September 2014: ‘In West Africa, Ebola is now an epidemic of the likes that we have not seen before. It’s spiralling out of control. It is getting worse. It’s spreading faster and exponentially [...] if the outbreak is not stopped now, we could be looking at hundreds of thousands of people infected with profound political and economic and security implications for all of us. So this is an epidemic that is not just a threat to regional security - it’s a potential threat to global security [...]’.¹¹⁴ Similarly, in Europe, the Council of Ministers agreed that Ebola presents ‘a threat to international peace and security’¹¹⁵, while the UK’s Prime Minister David Cameron argued: ‘If we do not significantly step up our collective response now, the loss of life and damage to the political, economic and social fabric of the region will be substantial and the threat posed to our citizens will also grow’.¹¹⁶ While the EU’s Catherine Ashton said that the virus ‘represent[ed] an unprecedented crisis which requires an unprecedented response’.¹¹⁷ Along with the stating of the threat level these reactions included assurances to the public at home. Obama, for example, said: ‘In the unlikely event that someone with Ebola does reach our shores, we’ve taken new measures so that we’re prepared here at home’.¹¹⁸

Threat recognition by individual states and collective actors (the European Union) was followed by a turn of—among others—Western leaders to the global level i.e. to the UN and its various bodies, which includes the World Health Organization (WHO). On the 18

¹¹³ Globalization, including air travel enables infectious diseases to morph from an epidemic into a pandemic.

¹¹⁴ Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on the Ebola Outbreak, 16 September 2014 available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/16/remarks-president-ebola-outbreak> [accessed 02/10/2020]

¹¹⁵ Diederick Kramers, D. (2014) ‘Ministers agree to agree on ramping up EU Ebola response’ available at: <https://www.devex.com/news/ministers-agree-to-agree-on-ramping-up-eu-s-ebola-response-84600> [accessed 01/10/2020]

¹¹⁶ David Cameron, Ebola virus: PM calls on European Council for action, 21 October 2014, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ebola-virus-pm-calls-on-european-council-for-action> [accessed 1/10/

¹¹⁷ Ashton in Kramers op.cit. 2014).

¹¹⁸ Obama, B. (2014b) Remarks by the President on the Ebola Outbreak, 16 September available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/16/remarks-president-ebola-outbreak> [accessed 15/10/2019]

September, US Ambassador Samantha Power convened a UNSC session on the Ebola Virus crisis. This session resulted in the unanimous adoption of S/RES/2177, which constituted the general framework for the global response and consolidated the UN's leadership in this matter. Specifically, it reaffirmed the appointment (by the UN Secretary General) of a United Nations System Senior Coordinator for Ebola Virus Disease as well as that of a Deputy Ebola Coordinator and Operations Crisis Manager, who had been appointed on the 5 of September 2014 in order to coordinate the worldwide response to the crisis, while it also emphasized the role of 'all relevant United Nations System entities' (including that of the World Health Organisation) to the crisis.¹¹⁹ A central part of the WHO's involvement was oversight of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) the U.N.'s first-ever emergency health mission, consisting of five steps: 'stopping the outbreak, treating the infected, ensuring essential services, preserving stability and preventing further outbreaks'¹²⁰. To meet these goals the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon also temporarily amended the mission goals of UNMIL (the U.N.'s peacekeeping mission to Liberia since 2003), putting UN peacekeepers in charge of monitoring the human rights situation in the country.¹²¹ Notably, Ebola survivors in Liberia have faced severe discrimination and stigma.¹²²

Resolution S/RES/2177 also commended member states to donate money and resources to the cause. Figures from the World Bank suggest that Western states and multilateral organisations donated the largest amount of money. Of \$459 million received by 22 April 2016, the vast majority of donations came from ~~the~~ Western states, with the United

¹¹⁹ UNSC, S/RES/2176, 15 September 2014, available at [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2176\(2014\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2176(2014))[accessed 01/10/2020] p.3

¹²⁰ Ban Ki-Moon (2014) Remarks to the Security Council on Ebola 18 September 2014 available at <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2014-09-18/secretary-generals-remarks-security-council-ebola> [accessed 16/10/2019]

¹²¹ Ban Ki-Moon (2014) Letter dated 28 August 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, available at https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/644 [accessed 16/10/2019]

¹²² Overholt L, Wohl DA, Fischer WA II, Westreich D, Tozay S, Reeves E, et al. (2018) 'Stigma and Ebola survivorship in Liberia: Results from a longitudinal cohort study'. PLoS ONE 13(11): e0206595. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0206595>

States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway among notable donor states.¹²³ While it is clear that this unprecedented (in scale) security issue involved some unprecedented steps (specifically the creation of UNMEER and the ability and willingness of the international community to come together), here as with the other security issues discussed in this article, the security response made use of existing institutions and bodies, and it was in line with the UN's values. Indeed, although health emergencies are not part of the UN's official remit for the 'responsibility to protect',¹²⁴ norm some have argued that the international community's response to Ebola was R2P in action,¹²⁵ stressing that R2P is not exclusively about the use of military force, but instead about capacity building and suitable responses to grave emergencies. Certainly, while the language of R2P was not directly used, S/RES/2176 stressed that 'Liberia bears primary responsibility for ensuring peace, stability and the protection of the civilian population'.¹²⁶ Resolution S/RES/2177, in turn, opened by recalling the same, but went on to acknowledge that unless the disease is contained 'peacebuilding and development gains of the most affected countries concerned could be reversed in the light of the Ebola outbreak',¹²⁷ thus placing the responsibility to protect with external actors.

In summary, the examples of the West's response to global climatic change and the Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa in 2014 and 2016 show that even when faced with new types of security threats (specifically agent-caused but not intended threats) the Western core of international society seems to instinctively know how to respond. As with agent-intended threats responses to intent-lacking threats follow a series of routine steps

¹²³ WHO (2016) West Africa Ebola Outbreak: Funding April 2016, available at <https://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/funding-requirements/en/> [accessed 16/10/2019]

¹²⁴ This is restricted to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity

¹²⁵ Lloyd Axworthy, 'Resetting the Narrative on Peace and Security: R2P in the Next Ten Years' In Alex Bellamy and Tim Dunne (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect*, (Oxford University Press, 2016) 968-983; Moore, J. (2014) 'The Responsibility to Protect and the Ebola Outbreak', OUP blog, available at <https://blog.oup.com/2014/09/responsibility-protect-r2p-west-africa-ebola-outbreak-pil/> [accessed 02/10/2020]

¹²⁶ UNSC, S/RES/2176, p.1

¹²⁷ UNSC S/RES/2177 18 September 2014 available at: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2177\(2014\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2177(2014)) [accessed 01/10/2020] p.1

consisting of recognition, securitizing moves, mobilisation of the UN, and issue specific responses (regime building in case of climate change and R2P in the case of Ebola); much of which is familiar from the responses to agent-intended threats. Indeed, as with those types of threat, in dealing with agent-caused threats ~~Western states give the West gives~~ primacy to joint handling of the threat, and to collective security institutions. So doing, in turn reaffirms/constitutes these actors, while institutions formalise that actors relate to each other peacefully, cooperatively and with solidarity. As with agent-intended threats a commitment to security cooperation also influences the nature of the security response. A global climate change regime has a chance of succeeding only if all major polluters are party to it; while R2P (in both its second and third pillar) is the obligation of a collective. Put differently, these ‘solutions’ to security threats are products of security cooperation.¹²⁸

Conclusion

This article has sought to establish whether or not *security cooperation* (i.e. the joint pursuit of security), is a primary institution at the Western core of international society. Knowledge of primary institutions is important as it enables us to understand the character of distinct sub-global international societies (including how they differ from one another), while it also allows us to - within reason - predict how different situations will be dealt with in any given international society. I have argued that while the existing systematic methods by ‘insiders’ point in the right direction in so far as they focus on practitioners for ascertaining institutional status they are impracticable. I have further argued that this important idea to focus on practices can be salvaged if we reorient the analysis towards a practice-based method inspired by the Canadian School around Pouliot and Adler. Specifically this inspiration pertains to two

¹²⁸ Admittedly a global climate regime draws in actors from the periphery, where security cooperation might not be an institution. This regime is however powered by the core, and pushed through by its vanguard position.

moves. First, to accept the CS's view of practice as competent performances, and to align this with the ES notion of institution, and second to utilize their idea that practices can be located by examining whether we can find evidence of customary, self-evident and routinized behaviour in relevant situations. Noteworthy is that many of the CS's ideas and ways of conducting analysis are – albeit - implicitly already a part of some ES scholar's work.

An application of practice-based theory that charted what practitioners do when faced with a diverse range of security threats (real or perceived) suggested that the response tends to consist of a pattern of behaviour involving: 1) condemnation of the threatening action or recognition of the issue in question as threatening; 2) where appropriate, warnings to an aggressor or promises for protection; 3) utilization of collective security actors (the EU, NATO); 4) search for legal back-up through UN Security Council resolutions; and 5) sanctions or other relevant measures (i.e. regime formation and R2P type relief operation/crisis management).

Although the number of cases examined was limited, it is important to stress that the habitual conduct identified is recognisable even in responses to recent security threats where the West appears much less united. For instance, while in the conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Libya military action was/is endorsed only by some key actors and opposed by others, in all these cases [states at the Western core](#) ~~the West has~~ performed all of the aforementioned five steps, with non-military sanctions put into place in all cases. After all, security (as a state of being) is not exclusively provided through military means. Moreover it is important to remember that breaches in conduct by some do not devalue the existence of common practice.¹²⁹ Indeed, I would like to suggest that President Trump's rejection of the nuclear deal with Iran is so shocking to the US's Western allies (France, Germany, the UK and the wider EU) precisely because it is an open breach with the institution of security cooperation.

¹²⁹ Hansen, 'Performing practices'

That is, the President's rogue conduct gives further credence to the existence of this institution.

The research also shows that collective security actors are indicative of cooperative international societies,¹³⁰ because they are also constituted by the way security is practiced. Thus in the majority of cases a turn to collective security organisations (i.e. the EU, NATO) formed a key part of the response, while in the Ebola crisis case collective action was conducted through the WHO but financed mostly by ~~the~~ [Western states](#). Moreover, security cooperation regulates behaviour among members (often through formal collective institutions), while it also very much informs the nature of the responses to threats.

The research finding that security provision follows self-evident routinized patterns is important because it directly debunks Jackson's¹³¹ longstanding observation that security norms are instable and subject to perpetual reform. Instead, we must recognize that even when there are new types of threats and unprecedented negative developments conforming to old/well-known threat types, practitioners in the West respond following a well-trodden path. They do not respond by rogue, unforeseeable reactions, even though such behaviour might be warranted by the gravity of the situation. Moreover, such security practices have shaped the rules and norms of how states engage with one another (in other words what counts as legitimate behaviour), while it has also given rise to key collective security actors and specific responses.¹³² In short, we can now say that security cooperation is a primary institution at the Western core of international society. As such this research also confirms Buzan's¹³³ assertion that within cooperative international societies, new institutions arise, i.e.

¹³⁰ Buzan, *From international to world society?*

¹³¹ Jackson, *The global covenant*

¹³² In the words of Falkner and Buzan, 'The emergence of environmental stewardship...' we might say that security cooperation has established itself as a transnational value, while secondary institutions have formed around this primary institution.

¹³³ Buzan, *From international to world society?*160

institution that would be incompatible with international societies that are either asocial, power political or defined by coexistence, as none of these support joint projects.

As every significant contribution to research this article raises issues for further research. Notably, while this article has shown that security cooperation is now an institution at the core of international society, it has not charted its historical emergence. Put differently this article does not conduct Pouliot's objectification steps, which help him - through historical contextualisation and process tracing - explain the rise of current practices. In the given context such an analysis would help to show how the institution of war has disappeared thus making way for security cooperation.

Moreover, in the relevant literature primary institutions have been further divided into master and derivative institutions. The former are stand-alone, the latter are contained within the former or else generated by them.¹³⁴ A full study of security cooperation in these terms is beyond the scope of this article, but it seems to me that because this institution is contained within a whole range of Master PI's: sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, equality of people, it either deserves stand-alone status or else it challenges the idea of Buzan's neat hierarchy altogether.

Finally, beyond being able to identify a conclusive role for security cooperation in international society, this article is important because it suggests a coherent method for deriving institutions. Using the practice-based approach, researchers can explore what other entities are meaningfully called institutions of international society. Such work could be historical or contemporary; it could seek to verify institutions already identified by ES scholars, while it could also compare the differences between distinct sub-global international societies, much of which pertains to the nature of the institutions there present.

¹³⁴ *ibid* 182

