

The Russian Federation, the United States, and International Order as a Social Construct

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To what extent are we justified in speaking of Soviet/Russian and US political leaders, *qua* sentient beings, as ‘conscious of certain common interests and common values, [thereby] form[ing] [international] society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of [principles, norms and] rules in their relations with one another, and share in the workings of common institutions’? To what extent have the respective political leaderships conceived of their states as great powers encumbered with the burden of maintaining international order and the very existence of the international society? Building on English School theorizing and constructivist methodology, I answer these questions by advance two principal claims: first, the historical record demonstrates that the two states’ political leaderships are presently – and were in the past – ‘conscious of certain common interests[,] common values’, common principles, norms and rules, and ‘share in the workings of common institutions’ so as to maintain the ‘pattern or disposition of international activity that sustains [the] goals of the society of states’. And second, the political leaderships have conceived of their respective states as great powers indispensable to the maintenance of international order, stability, and the very existence of international society.

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1. Introduction

International order and international society¹ – the central ontological facts of international politics according to English School (ES) scholars – are both normatively ‘desirable’ and empirically ‘possible’. They are normatively ‘desirable because [they] constitute a *rational political order for humanity taken as a whole*. ... [A] multiplicity of political authorities – a [well-ordered] society of states – is the *best arrangement*

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¹ For a fuller account of the distinction that English School scholars draw among the concepts ‘international system’, ‘international society’ and ‘international order’ see below, Part II.

for realising the good for humanity taken as a whole'.² Moreover, international society and international order are

possible even under conditions of 'anarchy'. That is, despite the lack of world government, global politics is *not* a never-ending war of all against all, but a social order [underwritten by well-established principles] norms [and rules], written and unwritten, which guide behaviour. These rules are the foundation of an international society that makes it possible to establish long periods of peace [among] states, though not necessarily [a Kantian] 'perpetual peace'.³

The fundamental reason 'global politics is not a never-ending war' – the foremost reason it is 'a social order [underwritten by well-established principles] norms [and rules]' such that the 'domestic analogy'⁴ is not the principal ontological reality – is the indispensable role that great powers play in maintaining international society and international order.⁵ Still, states and societies (whether international or domestic) are not natural occurrences – they are *not*, in the language employed by constructivists, brute facts. Rather, they are imagined, socially produced and reproduced facts which

² C. Brown, 'World Society and the English School: An "International Society" Perspective on World Society', *European Journal on International Relations*, 2001, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 423–441.

³ M. Pietrzyk, 'Explaining the Post-Cold War Order: An International Society Approach', *International Journal of World Peace*, 2001, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 31–54.

⁴ The analogy is an attempt on the part of realist (Hobbesian or Machiavellian) thinkers in International Relations Theory (IRT) to transpose Thomas Hobbes' analysis of life in the absence of a leviathan to the international system. International politics, maintains Hedley Bull, is decidedly *not* analogous to a Hobbesian state of nature of unceasing war of all against all. More precisely, Bull finds the 'domestic analogy' wanting for three reasons. First, he writes emphatically, 'the modern international system does not entirely resemble Hobbesian state of nature' (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, New York, NY: Palgrave, 1977, p. 44). Thus, 'absence of a world government is no necessary bar to industry, trade and other refinements of living' (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 45). Moreover, 'notions of right and wrong in international behaviour have always held a central place' (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 46). Hobbes, of course, posits that the absence of a 'common sword', industry, refinements of living, notions of 'Mine or Thine', and notions of right and wrong are unimaginable. Moreover, Hobbes postulates that in the absence of a sovereign, 'society' is inconceivable and 'worst of all, [there is a] continual fear and danger of violent death' (T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. XIII, New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909; available at: <http://www.bartleby.com/34/5/13.html>; accessed on 30 December, 2015). The 'second weakness' of the 'domestic analogy', argues Bull, 'is [that it is] based on the false premises about the conditions of order among individual and groups other than the state'; namely, 'It is not ... the case that fear of a supreme government is the only source of order within a modern state' (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 46). Consequently, Bull suggests that instead of analysing international affairs through Hobbes' lens, we would be better served to turn to John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* with its more sanguine take on life in the absence of a leviathan. Finally, the third shortcoming of the 'domestic analogy' is the idea that states are not as fragile as individual human beings, prone as human beings are to diseases, hunger, thirst, and exhaustion (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 47). It is not, after all, inconceivable that a state loses and then subsequently regains its sovereignty. (For the present discussion of the 'domestic analogy' I draw on A. Jankovski, 'Social Construction, Informed Preferences, and Citizens' Support for U.S. Counterterrorism Policy', PhD diss. Miami, FL: University of Miami, 2013).

⁵ For an account of the importance of great powers and great powers' management for the maintenance of international society see below, Part II.

exist solely because human beings have agreed that they do and have intersubjectively shared those understandings.⁶ More specifically, then, it is ‘sentient’⁷ beings – the great powers’ political leaders – who assume for their states the special prerogative to preserve and shape international society. Indeed, they are accorded such prerogatives – albeit at times reluctantly – by the political leaders of the lesser powers.

It follows, if one accepts the foregoing, that the relations between Soviet and American political leaders during the Cold War and between Russian and American political leaders presently are profoundly important to the orderliness of international society, for these are the political leaderships of two of international society’s dominant powers. Two closely related questions, therefore, recommend themselves with great urgency, particularly in light of the many current crises battering international society:⁸ First, to what extent are we justified in speaking of Soviet/Russian and US political leaders, *qua* sentient beings, as ‘conscious of certain common interests and common values, [thereby] form[ing] [international] society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of [principles, norms and] rules in their relations with one another, and share in the workings of common institutions’?⁹ And second, to what extent have the respective political leaderships believed the Soviet Union/Russian Federation and the United States to be great powers encumbered with the burden of maintaining international order, stability, and, therefore, the very existence of the international society?

Building on English School theorising and constructivist methodology in International Relations Theory (IRT),¹⁰ I answer these questions by advancing two principal

⁶ On this point see, *inter alia*, B. Buzan, ‘From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School’, *International Organisation*, 1993, Vol. 47, No. 3, p. 319. Of course, the imagined nature of states and societies is one point of commonality, out of many, between ES and constructivism. I explore this, in greater detail, in Part II.

⁷ B. Buzan, ‘The English School: An Unexploited Resource in IR’, *Review of International Studies*, 2001, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 471–488, p. 476.

⁸ ISIL, the Syrian crisis, PRC’s claims in the South China Sea, Russia’s ostensibly impressive military modernisation, US use of drones for the purpose of extrajudicial killings, and the crisis over Russia’s takeover of Crimea easily come to mind.

⁹ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, New York, NY: Palgrave, 1977, p. 13.

¹⁰ Given that ES and constructivist theorising form the core of this paper’s empirical analysis, it is important to recall two important points: first, the English School’s ‘intellectual terrain’ – its ‘common ground’ – is ‘demarcated by acceptance of “three preliminary articles”: (1) a given tradition of inquiry; (2) a broadly interpretive approach to the study of international relations; and (3) an explicit concern with the normative dimension of IR theory’ (B. Buzan, ‘The English School’, *op.cit.*, p. 474). Respecting the ‘tradition of inquiry,’ Hedley Bull notes that ‘[t]heoretical inquiry into International Relations is ... philosophical in character. It does not lead to cumulative knowledge after the manner of natural science. ... [We] may identify the assumptions that are made in each camp, probe them, juxtapose them, relate them to circumstances, but we cannot expect to settle the controversy except provisionally, on the basis of assumptions of our own that are themselves open to debate’ (H. Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations: The Second Martin Wight Memorial Lecture’, *Journal of International Studies*, 1976, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 114). For his part, Barry Buzan notes that the ‘strong strand of normative and ethical inquiry in the English School remains robust. Its most natural link, as Rengger argues, is with the parallel tradition of political theory’ (B. Buzan, ‘The English

claims: first, the historical record demonstrates that the political leaderships of the two great powers are presently – and were in the past – ‘conscious of certain common interests[,] common values’, common principles, norms and rules, and ‘share in the workings of common institutions’ so as to maintain the ‘pattern or disposition of international activity that sustains [the] goals of the society of states’.¹¹ And second, the political leaderships of the Soviet Union/Russian Federation and the United States have considered their respective states to be great powers indispensable to the maintenance of international order, stability, and the very existence of international society.

In view of this, I structure the argument as follows. In Part II, I outline the paper’s theoretical foundation. In so doing, I offer a précis of both the English School of International Relations and constructivism. First, I outline the central tenets of ES. Second, I examine the concept of international society. Third, I examine the primary institutions that help maintain order in the international society, focusing the discussion on great powers and great powers’ management. Fourth, I briefly examine the core principles of constructivism, constructivist Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), and constructivist methodology. Finally, fifth, I connect constructivism and ES.

Part III offers empirical analysis. I answer the questions that animate this paper’s discussion by closely examining the historical record. I show that Soviet/Russian and American officials attached – *as evident in their diplomatic exchanges* – great importance to international society and the roles that their states as great powers play in the maintenance of the same. Specifically, I concentrate on US administrations from John F. Kennedy to Barack Obama and Soviet/Russian administrations from Nikita Khrushchev to Vladimir Putin. In principle, the time period covered can be extended to include previous US and Soviet/Russian administrations. Doing so, however, would easily have made the paper cumbersome. Thus, and having to arbitrarily choose a starting point, I commence the discussion with the Kennedy White House with the understanding that future work will cover other administrations to further buttress the two principal claims advanced herein. Moreover, the already large swath of history covered demonstrates that for all the highs and lows of Soviet/Russian–US relations, the respective political leaderships believe their states to be embedded in international society and to be great powers that play an essential role in the maintenance of

School’, op.cit., p. 486). While I accept these articles of faith, it is, in particular, the School’s ‘willingness to embrace history [as one of its] distinctive features’ that will stand us in good stead. And second, in addition to the English School’s embrace of history – noting, of course, that historicism is also a methodological trait of constructivism – I also employ constructivist analysis of foreign policy. Constructivists argue that social (ideational) constructs – principles and norms (I define these below) – demarcate that which social actors see as practically (im)possible and morally (un)desirable. Namely, social constructs sketch out the limits (boundaries) of human behaviour. Constructivists, therefore, posit that ‘[r]esearch must begin with what it is that social agents, as opposed to analysts, believe to be real’; research must ‘recover’ the meanings that purposive social actors attach to social phenomena’ (V. Pouilot, “‘Subjectivism’”: Toward a Constructivist Methodology’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 2007, Vol. 51, p. 364).

¹¹ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 13.

international society. In concluding Part III, I offer a further discussion of the paper's empirical section by offering rejoinders to possible lines of criticism. Finally, Part IV brings the paper to a conclusion.

2. English School and Constructivism: Précis

English School: Central Tenets

The English School is 'based on a tripartite distinction amongst international system, international society, and world society'.¹² The idea of the 'international system' finds its fullest expression in the works of scholars working in the Realist tradition of International Relations Theory (IRT) – Machiavellians or Hobbesians – scholars whom Martin Wight and Hedley Bull label 'blood and iron and immorality men'.¹³ Bull posits that for the adherents of this tradition, 'there is no international society; what purports to be international society – the system of international law, the mechanism of diplomacy or today the United Nations – is fictitious'.¹⁴ Moreover, Hobbesians argue that 'it was for each state or ruler to pursue its own interest: the question of morality in international politics, at least in the sense of moral rules which restrained states in their relations with one another, did not arise'.¹⁵

On the other hand, the idea of 'world society', situated on the opposite end of the theoretical spectrum from and standing in stark contrast to the idea of international system, is most fully elaborated by scholars working in the Liberal tradition of IRT – Kantians or revolutionists – scholars whom Wight and Bull label 'the subversion and liberation and missionary men'.¹⁶ Kantians 'rejected both the Machiavellian view that international politics was about conflict among states, and the view of the Grotians [see below] that it was about a mixture of conflict and co-operation among states'.¹⁷ Revolutionists further maintain that 'international politics [is not] about relations among states at all; at a deeper level it was about relations among the human beings of which states were composed'.¹⁸ Therefore:

The ultimate reality was the community of mankind, which existed potentially, even if it did not exist actually, and was destined to sweep the system of states into limbo. ...

¹² B. Buzan, 'The English School', op.cit., p. 474.

¹³ H. Bull, 'Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations', op.cit., p. 104. In addition to Machiavelli and Hobbes, Bull also has in mind the likes of 'Hegel, Frederick the Great, Clemenceau, [Edward Hallett] Carr, [and] [Hans] Morgenthau' (H. Bull, 'Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations', op.cit., p. 104).

¹⁴ H. Bull, 'Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations', op.cit., p. 104.

¹⁵ H. Bull, 'Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations', op.cit., pp. 104–105.

¹⁶ H. Bull, 'Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations', op.cit., p. 104.

¹⁷ H. Bull, 'Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations', op.cit., p. 105.

¹⁸ H. Bull, 'Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations', op.cit., p. 105. Kantians therefore maintain that *interstate* relations are relations 'only at a superficial and transient level' (H. Bull, 'Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations', op.cit., p. 105).

In the Kantian doctrine the world was divided between the elect, who were faithful to the vision of the community of mankind or *civitas maxima* and the damned, the heretics, who stood in its way.¹⁹

Finally, the idea of the ‘international’ society is most thoroughly articulated in the works of scholars representing precisely the English School tradition of IRT – Grotians – scholars whom Wight and Bull label ‘the law and order and keep your word men’.²⁰ In the Grotians’ account, ‘international politics had to be described not as international anarchy but as international intercourse, a relationship chiefly among states to be sure, but one in which there was not only conflict but also cooperation’.²¹ Thus, ‘the states, although not subject to a common superior,²² nevertheless formed a society – a society that was no fiction, and whose working could be observed in institutions such as diplomacy, international law, the balance of power and the concert of great powers’.²³ In contrast to Hobbesians, Grotians posit that ‘States in their dealings with one another [are] not free of moral and legal restraints: the prescription [therefore] of the Grotians [is] that states [are] bound by the rules of this international society they composed and in whose continuance they had a stake’.²⁴

The value-added of the Grotian tradition is that it is ‘*more faithful than either of the other [traditions] to the complexity of international politics*. [Martin Wight] saw the Grotian approach to international morality, for example, as founded upon the recognition that the moral problems of foreign policy are complex, as against the view of the

¹⁹ H. Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations’, op.cit., p. 105.

²⁰ H. Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations’, op.cit., p. 104. Bull has in mind the ‘classical international lawyers, Locke, Burke, Castlereagh, Gladstone, Franklin Roosevelt, [and] Churchill’ (H. Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations’, op.cit., p. 105).

²¹ H. Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations’, op.cit., p. 105.

²² Note here the rejection of the ‘domestic analogy’.

²³ H. Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations’, op.cit., p. 105.

²⁴ H. Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations’, op.cit., p. 105. See also: Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., pp. 25–26. Buzan provides a useful summary of ES: ‘Within the English School discourse, [the three traditions] are sometimes (and perhaps misleadingly) codified as *Hobbes* (or sometimes *Machiavelli*), *Grotius* and *Kant*. They line up with Wight’s “three traditions” of IR theory: *Realism*, *Rationalism*, and *Revolutionism* (though this parallel is less obvious in Wight’s original formulation than in subsequent usage of these terms). Broadly speaking, these terms are now understood as follows: International system (Hobbes/Machiavelli) is about power politics amongst states, and Realism puts the structure and process of international anarchy at the centre of IR theory. This position is broadly parallel to mainstream realism and neorealism. ... International society (Grotius) is about institutionalisation of shared interest and identity amongst states, and Rationalism puts the creation and maintenance of shared norms, rules, and institutions at the centre of IR theory. This position has some parallels to regime theory, but is much deeper, having constitutive rather than merely instrumental implications. International society has been the main focus of English School thinking. ... World society (Kant) takes individuals, non-state organisations and ultimately the global population as a whole as the focus on global societal identities and arrangements, and Revolutionism puts transcendence of the state system at the centre of IR theory. Revolutionism is mostly about forms of universalist cosmopolitanism. It could include communism, but as [Ole] Waever notes, these days it is usually taken to mean liberalism. This position has some parallels to transnationalism, but carries a much more foundational link to normative political theory’ (Buzan, ‘The English School’, op.cit., pp. 474–476).

Kantians that these problems are simple, and the view of the Machiavellians that they are non-existent.²⁵ Indeed, with Tim Dunne we must also note that in the Grotian tradition ‘we find that the societal exists alongside darker forces leading to the concentration of power, and potentially lighter forces seeking to burst out the boundaries of particularism to forge cosmopolitan community of humankind’.²⁶ *This is a crucial insight that goes to the heart of the Grotian argument.* To wit, the English School approach is *decidedly not* one that blithely ignores the ‘darker forces’ of ‘concentration of power’. In fact, the Grotian approach traces a middle road between the frequently cynical darkness of Realist accounts and the just as frequent naïveté of cosmopolitan accounts. Finally, Soviet/Russian–US relations perfectly fit the Grotian pattern. While the great powers’ relationship has seen many lows – where darker forces predominated²⁷ – Soviet/Russian and US political leaders *never ceased* to understand their states’ relationship as embedded in international society and as great powers shaping international order.

International society – the central ontological fact of international politics according to the Grotian tradition – emerges when a ‘group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of [principles, norms, and] rules in their relations with one another, and share in the workings of common institutions’.²⁸ Therefore, ‘by international order is meant a pattern or disposition of international activity that sustains those goals of the society of states that are elementary, primary, or universal’.²⁹ The goals of international society/international order are: (1) ‘preservation of the system and society of states itself’; (2) ‘maintaining the independence or external sovereignty of individual states’; (3) peace, in the sense of ‘absence of war among member states of international society as the normal condition of their relationship, to be breached only in special circumstances and according to principles that are generally accepted’; and (4) ‘the common goals of social life’.³⁰

Bull posits that five institutions – great powers’ management, balance of power, war, diplomacy, and International Law – help maintain international society/ order.³¹ While

²⁵ H. Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations’, op.cit., p. 106; emphasis added.

²⁶ T. Dunne, ‘Society and Hierarchy in International Relations’, *International Relations*, 2003, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 305.

²⁷ It may be argued that the relationship – at the time of writing – is either in the middle of one such downturn or is recovering from the downturn.

²⁸ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 13. Bull thus draws a sharp distinction between ‘international system’ and ‘international society’. He posits that systems of states emerge when two, necessary and sufficient respectively, conditions are met: (1) there is interaction – ‘sufficient contact’ – among the units of the system, states and (2) ‘sufficient impact on one another’s decisions’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 9) such that ‘the behaviour of each a necessary element in the calculations of the other’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 10). Consequently, ‘society presupposes a system’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 14).

²⁹ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 16.

³⁰ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., pp. 16–19.

³¹ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 71. ‘The concept of institutions is central to English school thinking for three reasons: first, because it fleshes out the substantive content of international society;

all five are important in their own right, I focus on great powers' management, as this primary institution of international society plays the *central role* in the maintenance of international order/international society. By great powers I mean (1) that 'there are two or more powers that are comparable in status; we imply, one might [write], the existence of a club with a rule of membership'. (2) The 'members of this club are all in the front rank in terms of military strength; that is to say, that countries which are great powers are comparable in military strength, and that there is no class of power that is superior to them'. Finally, (3) 'great powers are powers recognised by others to have, and conceived by their own leaders and peoples to have, certain special rights and duties. Great powers, for example, assert the right, and are accorded the right, to play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole. They accept the duty, and are thought by others to have the duty.'³²

Respecting the central role that great powers' management plays in the maintenance of international order, Bull writes cogently: 'Because states are grossly unequal in power, certain international issues are as a consequence settled, the demands of certain states (weak ones) can in practice be left out of account, the demands of certain other states (strong ones) recognised to be the only ones relevant to the issue in hand.'³³ Moreover,

The rights that a great power has include that of being entitled to a voice in the settlement of international issues beyond those that are of immediate concern to it. ... The duties that are expected of a great power include that of taking account of the interests and the views of other states in formulating their own policies, and the responsibility of defining its interests widely enough to encompass the preservation of an international system in which the bulk of member states regard themselves as having a stake.³⁴

second, because it underpins what English school writers mean by 'order' in international relations; and third, because the particular understanding of institutions in English school thinking is one of the main things that differentiates it from the mainstream, rationalist, neoliberal institutionalist, study of international regimes' (B. Buzan, *From international to world society? English school theory and the social structure of globalisation*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 161). And, 'By an institution we do not necessarily imply an organisation or administrative machinery, but rather a set of habits and practices shaped towards the realisation of common goals. These institutions do not deprive states of their central role in carrying out the political functions of international society, or serve as a surrogate central authority in the international system. They are rather an expression of the element of collaboration among states in discharging their political functions – and at the same time a means of sustaining this collaboration. These institutions serve to symbolize the existence of an international society that is more than the sum of its members, to give substance and permanence to their collaboration in carrying out the political functions of international society, and to moderate their tendency to lose sight of common interests' (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 71).

³² H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., pp. 194–196.

³³ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 199.

³⁴ H. Bull, 'The Great Irresponsibles? The United States, the Soviet Union, and World Order', *International Journal*, 1980, Vol. 35, No. 3, Superpower Diplomacy, pp. 437–438. Bull qualifies his statement by noting: 'The idea of the special rights and duties of great powers, moreover, embodies a principle of hierarchy that is at loggerheads with the principle of the equal sovereignty of states. Shifts in the distribution of power,

Finally, great powers manage their relations by (1) working together so as to maintain the general balance of power³⁵ and (2) seeking to avoid and control crises.³⁶ (3) Great powers seek to limit war.³⁷ (4) They unilaterally ‘exercise local preponderance’. Finally, (5) great powers establish ‘spheres of influence, interest, or responsibility’.³⁸

Constructivism: Core Principles and Affinity with ES39

Human beings, Max Weber has famously posited, are ‘cultural beings’. They are endowed with the ability to ‘take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it significance’.⁴⁰ In a Weberian mould and taking note of the kinship between constructivism and ES Barry Buzan writes of

furthermore, from time to time undermine the claims of the states to great power status and breed ambitions for it in others’ (H. Bull, ‘The Great Irresponsibles’, op.cit., p. 438).

³⁵ Bull adopts Emmerich de Vattel’s definition of balance of power as ‘a state of affairs such that no one power is in a position where it is preponderant and can lay down the law to others’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 97). The general balance ‘prevent[s] the system from being transformed by conquest into a universal empire’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 102). Crucially, ‘[b]oth general and local balances of power, where they have existed, have provided the conditions in which other institutions on which international order depends (diplomacy, war, international law, great power management) have been able to operate’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 102). The last point bears emphasis: ‘The idea that balances of power have fulfilled positive functions in relation to international order, and hence that contrivance of them is a valuable or legitimate object of statesmanship, has been subject to a great deal of criticism in this century. At the present time criticism focuses upon the alleged obscurity or meaninglessness of the concept, the untested or untestable nature of the historical generalisations upon which it rests, and the reliance of the theory upon the notion that all international behaviour consists of the pursuit of power’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 102).

³⁶ Bull, however, adds the following caveat: ‘It would be illusory’, he writes, ‘to imagine that great powers are always concerned to avoid dangerous crises, or to dampen these down when they occur. Crises are sometimes deliberately manufactured by the great powers, or deliberately brought closer to the point of war, because the preoccupation of the great power concerned is with securing diplomatic victory’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 202). Moreover, ‘it would be mistaken to assume that crises, or the intensification of them, could never play a constructive role in relation to the purposes of international order. The maintenance of the balance of power ... would scarcely have been possible without the resolve of particular great powers, or combination of them, at particular times, to issue threats and so create or intensify crises’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 203).

³⁷ Great powers do this by way of: (i) ‘attempt[ing] to avert war by accident or miscalculation’; (ii) ‘reduc[ing] misunderstanding or misinterpretation by the great powers of one another’s words and actions’; (iii) ‘settl[ing] or contain[ing] political disputes [among] the great powers by negotiation’; (iv) ‘control[ing] competition in armaments, through tacit and formal arms-control agreements’; (v) ‘prevent[ing] wars among the lesser powers which may expand to embrace the great powers, or, if they occur, to limit them geographically and end them quickly’; ‘and [vi], ‘more generally, [by] manag[ing] and direct[ing] the relationships of the lesser powers with one another and with the great powers, with this end in view’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 206).

³⁸ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., pp. 202–207.

³⁹ For the discussion on constructivism, I draw on two of my earlier works: A. Jankovski, ‘Social Construction’, op.cit.; and, A. Jankovski, ‘Ideas y normas como determinantes de la política exterior: el caso de Guerra Aérea durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial’, in M. Sera Vázquez and A. Lozano (eds.), *La Segunda Guerra Mundial: A 70 años*, Huatulco, Mexico: Universidad del Mar, 2015, pp. 523–554.

⁴⁰ J. Gerard Ruggie, ‘What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge’, *International Organisation*, 1998, Vol. 54, No. 2, p. 856.

the view that *sentience makes a difference, and that social systems cannot be understood in the same way as physical ones. When units are sentient, how they perceive each other is a major determinant of how they interact. If the units share a common identity (a religion, a system of governance, a language), or even just a common set of rules or norms (about how to determine relative status, and how to conduct diplomacy), then these intersubjective understandings not only condition their behaviour, but also define the boundaries of a social system.*⁴¹

Building on Weber's insight, constructivists' central ontological claim is that 'human interaction is shaped primarily by ideational factors, not simply material ones'.⁴² Constructivists, therefore, focus on social constructs, 'things like money, sovereignty, and rights, which have no material reality but exist only because people collectively believe they exist and act accordingly'.⁴³ It is important to note that the material world, nevertheless, pushes back and material structures remain important. Or, as Wendt writes: 'The world is still out there constraining our beliefs and may punish us for incorrect ones. Moctezuma had a theory that the Spanish were gods, but it was wrong, with disastrous consequences'.⁴⁴

Closely related is a second claim: the social setting – that which they construct – provides social actors with an 'understanding of their interests'. The social setting 'constitutes' those interests.⁴⁵ Social agents, thus, 'bear identities, rights, and obligations (to name a few) in their own consciousness'.⁴⁶ As such, principles, norms, and rules⁴⁷

⁴¹ B. Buzan, 'The English School', op.cit., p. 476–477.

⁴² M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, 'Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2001, Vol. 4, p. 392. See also: J. Checkel, 'The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', *World Politics*, 1998, Vol. 50, No. 2, pp. 325–326

⁴³ M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, 'Taking Stock', op.cit., p. 393. See also V. Pouilot, 'Subjectivism', op.cit., p. 361.

⁴⁴ A. Wendt, 'Constructing International Politics', *International Security*, 1995, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 75.

⁴⁵ J. Checkel, 'The Constructivist Turn', op.cit., p. 326. See also: M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, 'Taking Stock', op.cit., pp. 392–393.

⁴⁶ E. Adler, 'Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations*, 1997, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 325.

⁴⁷ To clarify the distinction among 'principles', 'norms' and 'rules', I turn to Stephen Krasner's classic articulation of 'international regimes' – noting, with Buzan, also the affinity between ES and the literature on 'regime theory' (see: B. Buzan, 'From International System to International Society', op.cit., *passim*). Krasner writes that '[p]rinciples are beliefs of fact, causation and rectitude' while 'norms' are 'standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations'; finally, 'rules are specific prescriptions of proscriptions for action' (S. Krasner, 'Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables', *International Organisation*, 1982, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 185–205; quote on p. 185). While not addressing explicitly the concepts of principles and norms, Bull has an extensive discussion on rules. He notes, in articulation not that dissimilar from Krasner's, that rules are 'general imperative principles of conduct' (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 5). Indeed, rules 'spell out the kind of behaviour that is orderly' (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 52). Additionally, 'rules may have the status of': (i) 'moral rules'; (ii) 'international law'; (iii) 'custom or established practice'; or (iv) merely 'operational rules or "rules of the game"' (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 64).

have ‘structural characteristics’. They are the ‘medium and propellant of social action; they define the limits of what is cognitively possible and impossible for individuals’.⁴⁸ Therefore, ‘implicit in many constructivist accounts is a model of human interaction ... where rule-governed action and logic of appropriateness prevail. Such logics involve reasoning by analogy and metaphor and are not about ends and means. Under them, agents ask “What kind of situation is this?” and “What should I do now?” – with norms helping to supply the answer. Norms therefore constitute ... agents, providing them with understanding of their interests’.⁴⁹

From an English School viewpoint, Bull notes that there are ‘three complexes of rules that play a part in the maintenance of international order’:⁵⁰ first, there is

[...] the complex of rules that states what may be called the fundamental or constitutional normative principle of world politics in the present era. This is the principle that identifies the idea of a society of states, as opposed to such alternative ideas as that of a universal empire, a cosmopolitan community of individual human beings, or a Hobbesian state of nature or state of war, as the supreme normative principle of the political organisation of mankind.⁵¹

The second complex of rules involves ‘rules of coexistence’. These include a ‘complex of rules which restrict the place of violence in world politics’ and ‘a further complex of rules of coexistence which prescribe the behaviour appropriate to sustain the goal of carrying out of undertakings’.⁵² Finally, there is a ‘complex of rules concerned to regulate cooperation among states – whether on universal or on more limited scale – above and beyond what is necessary for mere coexistence’.⁵³ Still, I must quickly underscore, as Bull does, that in the ‘absence of ... a supreme [global] government’, the complexes of rules are sustained by way of states collaborating in the primary institutions of international society – *in particular ‘the managerial system of the great powers’*.

Inasmuch as principles, norms and rules have ‘structural characteristics’, they also ‘serve as independent variables for explanations of foreign policy behaviour’. Specifically, they have the characteristic of ‘intersubjectivity’, which ‘distinguishes [them] from individual convictions’,⁵⁴ and the characteristic of ‘immediate orientation to behaviour’, which ‘distinguishes [principles] norms [and rules] from ideas, values, and “causal beliefs”’. It is at this point that I part company with Boekle, Rittberger and Wagner. They note, by way of an example, that the ‘statement “lying is bad” embodies

⁴⁸ E. Adler, ‘Seizing the Middle Ground’, op.cit., p. 325.

⁴⁹ J. Checkel, ‘The Constructivist Turn’, op.cit., p. 326.

⁵⁰ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 64.

⁵¹ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 65.

⁵² H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 66.

⁵³ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 67.

⁵⁴ H. Boekle, V. Rittberger, and W. Wagner, ‘Norms and Foreign Policy: Constructivist Foreign Policy Theory’, *Tübinger Arbeitspapiere zur Internationalen Politik und Friedensforschung*, 1999, p. 5.

[merely] a general statement of values as a principle, while the commandment “Thou shalt not lie” is a concrete, socially shared, value-based expectation of behaviour, i.e., a norm’.⁵⁵ Although they are merely ‘general statement[s] of values’ and not ‘concrete, socially shared, value-based expectation of behaviour’, principles do circumscribe that which sentient, cultural beings see as practically (im)possible and morally and ethically (un)desirable courses of action. Indeed, principles act as the very foundation upon which rules are, later in time, erected. Rules represent, on this account, the actualisation and crystallisation of principles and norms.

Moreover, ‘the strength of a [principle,] norm [or rule] (and thus the strength of [their] influence on (foreign) policy behaviour) depends on two properties: on [the] *commonality*, that is on how many actors [within] a social system shared a value-based expectation of behaviour, and on [the] *specificity*, that is on how precisely [principles,] norm[s] [or a rule] distinguish appropriate from inappropriate behaviour’.⁵⁶ Commonality is high ‘if all the actors in a social system ... share a certain value-based expectation of behaviour’. It is of ‘medium degree’ when ‘shared “only” by a majority of actors’. Finally, commonality is ‘low’ when ‘only a minority of actors shares a certain expectation of behaviour’. Low commonality is problematic for ‘it is impossible to formulate a constructivist prediction’. More specifically, ‘constructivists hold that [principles and] norm[s] can only be ascribed influence on a state’s behaviour if [they] can claim at least a medium degree of commonality’.⁵⁷ Indeed,

An increase in the commonality of [principles,] norms [and rules] goes along not only with their assumed impact on behaviour but also with the robustness of a constructivist explanation. The lower the commonality of a value-based expectation of behaviour, the greater the risk that this expectation is not an independent variable but that the effect of a previously ignored independent variable is manifesting itself in both the expectation of behaviour and in the non-compliant behaviour that can be observed.⁵⁸

Principles norm and rules that are highly specific ‘clearly distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.’ By contrast, an

[...] unspecific expectation of behaviour allows for a wide range of behavioural options which can be justified as appropriate, and will thus scarcely enable the actors within

⁵⁵ H. Boekle, V. Rittberger, and W. Wagner, ‘Norms and Foreign Policy’, op.cit., p. 6.

⁵⁶ H. Boekle, V. Rittberger, and W. Wagner, ‘Norms and Foreign Policy’, op.cit., p. 7. Bull analysis at this point is quite telling. He notes that rules – and, of course, this applies to principles and norms as well – are ‘mere intellectual constructs’ such that ‘they play a part in social life only to the extent that they are effective’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., pp. 52–53). Naturally, ‘any effective rule of conduct is normally violated from time to time’; indeed, ‘if there were no possibility that actual behaviour would differ from prescribed behaviour, there would be no points in having the rule and vice versa’ (H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 53).

⁵⁷ H. Boekle, V. Rittberger, and W. Wagner, ‘Norms and Foreign Policy’, op.cit., p. 7

⁵⁸ H. Boekle, V. Rittberger, and W. Wagner, ‘Norms and Foreign Policy’, op.cit., p. 7.

a social system to determine when a norm has been violated. Consequently, unspecific norms are unsuitable as a standard for appropriate behaviour and therefore as an independent variable[s] with which to explain foreign policy behaviour.⁵⁹

The principles, norms and rules of ‘international society’ as evidenced by the preceding discussion, are highly *specific* inasmuch as they ‘clearly distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour’. This fact makes them exceptionally suitable ‘standard[s]’ for social actors to divine appropriate from inappropriate behaviour. As such, the principles, norm and rules of international society are also appropriate as ‘independent variable[s] with which to explain foreign policy behaviour’. Most importantly for the present discussion, *the key principle of international society maintains that great powers have special rights and obligations for the maintenance of the society of states. Thus, the central ‘belief of fact, causation, and rectitude’ is that the great powers will maintain the general balance of power, avoid and control crises, limit war, exercise local preponderance, and establish spheres of influence.* Moreover, the principles, norms and rules of international society are of at least medium (and, I would submit, of high) *commonality* inasmuch as they are shared by a majority of the actors – and, crucially, they are shared by the great powers as indispensable actors of international society.

Constructivist methodology rests on three pillars: First, ‘induction is the primary mode of knowing because social facts constitute the essence of constructivism’. Thus, ‘*Research must begin with what it is that social agents, as opposed to analysts, believe to be real*’; *research must ‘recover’ the meanings that purposive social actors attach to social phenomena.*⁶⁰ Thus, Finnemore and Sikkink posit:

Constructivists are sceptical about claims to all-encompassing truth and instead produce and evaluate ‘small-t’ contingent claims. Such partial and contingent claims may still constitute causal explanation, albeit in a somewhat different sense than realists or liberals understand causality. *For constructivists, understanding how things are put together and how they occur is not mere description. Understanding the constitution of things is essential in explaining how they behave and what causes political outcomes.* Just as understanding how the double-helix DNA molecule is constituted materially enables understandings of generics and disease, so, too, an understanding of how sovereignty, human rights, laws of war, or bureaucracies are constituted socially allows us to hypothesise about their effectiveness in world politics. Constitution in this sense is causal, since how things are put together makes possible, or even probable, certain kinds of political behaviour and effects.⁶¹

⁵⁹ H. Boekle, V. Rittberger, and W. Wagner, ‘Norms and Foreign Policy’, op.cit., p. 7.

⁶⁰ V. Pouilot, ‘Subjectivism’, op.cit., p. 364; emphasis added.

⁶¹ M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, ‘Taking Stock’, op.cit., p. 394; emphasis added.

Second, ‘interpretation constitutes the central methodological task as constructivism takes knowledge very seriously’. Constructivists must ‘search for meaning’.⁶² And *three*, constructivist methodology is ‘inherently historical’. On this account, constructivists ‘see the world as a project under construction, as becoming rather than being’.⁶³ Constructivism’s insistence on historicism, of course, once more points to its kinship with it. More precisely, and given the structural characteristics of ideas, constructivists ‘ask three main questions’, posit Finnemore and Sikkink: ‘(a) How do new ideas emerge and rise to prominence? (b) How do ideas become institutionalised and take on a life of their own? (c) How, why, and when do ideas matter in any particular circumstances?’⁶⁴

3. Soviet/Russian–American Relations and the Problem of International Order: Recovering the Meanings of Cultural, Sentient, and Purposive Actors

Having laid-out the theoretical groundwork, I now proceed to answer the questions that motivated this study. Recalling that ideational constructs have ‘structural characteristics’; given that the principles, norms, and rules of international society are of high specificity and of (at least) medium commonality such that we can be justified in considering them to be the ‘medium and propellant of social action’; considering that principles, norms and rules ‘define the limits of what is cognitively possible and impossible for individuals’; to what extent may we speak of Soviet/Russian and US political leaders (*qua* cultural, sentient beings) as being ‘conscious of certain common interests and common values, [thereby] form[ing] [international] society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of [principles, norms and] rules in their relations with one another, and share in the workings of common institutions’? And, to what extent have their respective political leaderships considered the Soviet Union/Russian Federation and the United States to be great powers encumbered with the burden of maintaining international order, stability, and therefore the very existence of the international society?

Consider the historical record spanning the US administrations from Kennedy to Obama and Soviet/Russian administrations from Khrushchev to Putin. In his first substantial letter⁶⁵ to Chairman Nikita Khrushchev, drafted 22 February 1961, President John Kennedy, in recognition of Soviet and American role as great power managers of the international system/society, wrote of the ‘heavy responsibility which rests upon our two Governments in world affairs. I agree with [you]’, continued the President,

⁶² C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 5; quoted in V. Pouilot, ‘Subjectivism’, op.cit., p. 364.

⁶³ E. Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 11; quoted in V. Pouilot, ‘Subjectivism’, op.cit., p. 364.

⁶⁴ M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, ‘Taking Stock’, op.cit., p. 405.

⁶⁵ The two had exchanged perfunctory messages after John F. Kennedy became the President-elect.

‘that if we could find a measure of cooperation on some of these current issues this, in itself, *would be a significant contribution to the problem of insuring a peaceful and orderly world*’.⁶⁶ The President also recognised the idea that – as Tim Dunne⁶⁷ would have it – ‘societal exist alongside darker forces’; Kennedy, thus, wrote: ‘I think we should recognise, in honesty to each other, that there are problems on which we may not be able to agree. However, I believe that while recognising that we do not and, in all probability will not, share a common view on all of these problems, *I do believe that the manner in which we approach them and, in particular, the manner in which our disagreements are handled, can be of great importance*’.⁶⁸ Finally, the President stressed the importance of diplomacy – posited, it will be recalled, by Wight, Bull, and other English School scholars as one of the primary institution of international society: ‘we should make more use of diplomatic channels for quite informal discussion of these questions, not in the sense of negotiations (since I am sure that we both recognise the interests of other countries are deeply involved in these issues), but rather as *a mechanism of communication which should, insofar as is possible, help to eliminate misunderstanding and unnecessary divergences, however great the basic differences may be*’.⁶⁹

For his part, Nikita Khrushchev – during a meeting with Llewellyn Thompson, the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union – ‘said that he had received many letters from statesmen abroad and that these emphasised that *much depended upon Soviet relations with the US*’. Khrushchev also noted that ‘*Great powers could not be made to do things against their vital interests by UN votes. The veto provision in the UN charter had been very wise and something must be done so that the UN Secretariat could not act in favour of one side*’.⁷⁰ In addition to taking note of Khrushchev’s emphasis on the

⁶⁶ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, Vol. VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges, Document 7, Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v06/d7>; accessed on 27 July 2015; emphasis added.

⁶⁷ T. Dunne, ‘Society and Hierarchy in International Relations’, op.cit., p. 305.

⁶⁸ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, Vol. VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges, Document 7, Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v06/d7>; last accessed 27 July 2015; emphasis added.

⁶⁹ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, Vol. VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges, Document 7, Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v06/d7>; accessed on 27 July 2015; emphasis added. Note that in his statement, Kennedy articulated two aspects of diplomacy that Bull emphasises: ‘communication’ – indeed, Bull posits this to be the primary function of diplomacy – and the ‘minimisation of the effects of friction in international relations’ (Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 165).

⁷⁰ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, Vol. V, Soviet Union, Document 44, Airgram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State, available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v05/d44>; accessed on 28 July 2015; emphasis added. Note that Khrushchev emphasised the idea – which Hedley Bull articulates – of ‘great powers management’.

idea the ‘much depended upon’ US–Soviet relations, we should also note the accent he places on the wisdom of the veto power for the P5 – namely, the vesting (following World War II) of special prerogatives and responsibilities in the great powers and encumbering them with the maintenance of international society.

Chairman Khrushchev, in a letter to President Lyndon B. Johnson, dated 2 April 1964, once more wrote in terms that betray his belief in the importance of international order/international society and, more specifically, in the central role played by the two great powers in sustaining this order. The Chairman posited that ‘the state of Soviet-American relations *exerts a great influence upon the situation throughout the world*’.⁷¹ On 17 April 1964, President Johnson met with the Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly Dobrynin. During their Oval Office conversation, Ambassador Dobrynin ‘agreed that progress had been made’ and further noted – paralleling the position taken by Khrushchev in his letter to Johnson – that ‘*history had made our two countries responsible for much that went on in the world whether we wanted this or not*’. Dobrynin further noted – perfectly in keeping with the ES/constructivism approach employed here – that ‘this power was *personified in the persons of President Johnson and Chairman Khrushchev*’.⁷²

In a letter to President Johnson, dated 20 April 1964, Chairman Khrushchev wrote:

*Hardly anyone would dispute the fact that the military confrontation between the USA and the USSR in Europe is one of the fundamental sources of international tension. We did not, and do not, want this confrontation. As long as John and Ivan, gripping sub-machine guns, are tensely eyeing one another across the boundary between the two German states, the situation will remain dangerous, regardless of what anyone says. After all, they are both backed up by weapons of maximum destructiveness. In no other part of the world are our soldiers standing directly opposite one another; isn't that in itself something positive? Therefore, even if, for whatever reasons, we both cannot send our soldiers home immediately, it would be natural for us to reduce—at least gradually—the level of the Soviet-American armed confrontation area.*⁷³

In the immediate aftermath of Khrushchev’s removal, President Johnson and Secretary Rusk met with Foreign Minister Gromyko and other members of the Soviet delegation during the 19th session of the United Nations General Assembly. In a nod to the import of great power relations in the managing of international affairs, Foreign

⁷¹ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 21; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d21>; accessed on 23 July 2015; emphasis added.

⁷² United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 27; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d27>; accessed on 23 July 2015; emphasis added.

⁷³ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 36; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d36>; accessed on 23 July 2015; emphasis added.

Minister Gromyko ‘said that *the first and the main question which was of interest to the Soviet Union was that of the prospects for U.S.-Soviet relations*’. And, although US Operation Flaming Dart – the 7 February 1965 US retaliatory bombing of Hanoi while Premier Kosygin was there – led to a temporary decline in US–Soviet relations, the leaderships of the two powers continued to believe that their relations are constitutive of and nestled in an international society. The United States government, like the Soviet one, sought to ‘keep “channels of communication open during [this] fluid and critical period”’.⁷⁴ To that end, for example, Vice President Hubert Humphrey dined with Ambassador Dobrynin. Both interlocutors pressed their respective cases hard but their discussion always betrayed an understanding of the import of great powers’ relations. Dobrynin pushed Humphrey:

[...] we can’t understand why you are testing us now. We are in a quandary. *Don’t you think your relations with the USSR are of high priority?* If you do, then why do you bomb North Vietnam? Why do you test us? Or ..., is it because you base your policy on Soviet-Chinese differences and you don’t think we’ll aid Hanoi? If so, you’re wrong. Why do you do this? Our relations ... seemed to have improved. What’s gone wrong? The President had said he might come to Russia and he wanted our leaders to come here. ... Don’t you understand as a Socialist State we are morally and ideologically bound to come to the assistance of a sister Socialist State? *We can’t be a leader and stand by and ignore the bombing of the North Vietnamese.* Is it because your policy is based on Soviet-Sino differences[?] These differences are real. But you are pushing us together. You will force us to admit there can’t be peaceful co-existence. ... But I can’t understand why you bombed when Premier Kosygin was there. I can’t understand what your government was thinking of. *Do you care about your relations with the Soviet Union?* The fact that you bombed while our new Premier was present leads us to the opinion that you don’t care, or is it because you’re trying to confront us? Can you imagine the USSR bombing another country being visited by President Johnson? If we wanted to confront you, then perhaps. But for any other reason? Kosygin is a new Premier; do you seek to embarrass him?⁷⁵

Note that consonant with ES theorising, Dobrynin impressed upon the Vice President the idea that the Soviet Union, *qua* great power, had certain special responsibilities, lest it be seen as shirking its duty vis-à-vis a client state. For his part, Humphrey pushed back just as hard, and also noted the importance of great powers management of international society. Dobrynin and the Soviet leadership had to ‘understand’,

⁷⁴ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 102; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d102>; accessed on 25 July 2015.

⁷⁵ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 103; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d103>; accessed on 25 July 2015.

commented the Vice President, that the ‘United States is a major power. It was sensitive about being attacked by others’.⁷⁶

An equally telling conversation took place in Moscow among Chairman Alexei Kosygin, the undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Averell Harriman, and US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Foy Kohler. US–Soviet ‘bilateral relations, [Kosygin] maintained, were the most *important subject in maintaining peace*’.⁷⁷ In September 1966, Foreign Minister Gromyko and President Johnson met in New York. President Johnson ‘discussed the meeting in a telephone conversation with [Senator James William] Fulbright ... calling it a “*very delightful, scintillating, stimulating, exciting, enjoyable hour and 45 minutes*”. It was “very, very frank. Both of us spoke rather bluntly. He does by nature and I did by purpose”’.⁷⁸

On this occasion, too, Gromyko noted that he ‘*presumed that there was an awareness of the responsibility of the United States and of the Soviet Union in world affairs. ... [Gromyko] could declare on behalf of the Soviet Union that it was in our mutual interest to work for better relations. If the United States Government and Mr. Johnson, as President, were willing to take steps to promote international détente to improve relations, they would not find the Soviet Union lacking in response as this was in accord with the wishes of both the Soviet Government and its people*’.⁷⁹

Remarkably telling of the extent to which the two powers constructed their relations in terms of international society, order, and stability are the US–Soviet negotiations over the Glassboro summit between Kosygin and Johnson. Llewellyn Thompson met on 16 June 1967 with Ambassador Dobrynin to deliver to the Soviet side an oral message from the President. On this occasion:

I [Ambassador Thompson] said the President had himself had no word whether Chairman Kosygin was coming to our country or not.⁸⁰ *He wanted the Chairman to know that if so he would be welcome. The President would be glad for him to see our country and would offer him every hospitality. If Kosygin wished to see the President, he would be welcome to see him. He would invite him to visit him in the White House and would be glad to provide any type of hospitality or formality or informality that he would wish.*

⁷⁶ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 103; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d103>; accessed on 25 July 2015.

⁷⁷ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 118; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d118>; accessed on 25 July 2015.

⁷⁸ See <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d178#fn1>.

⁷⁹ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 178; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d178>; accessed on 25 July 2015.

⁸⁰ Note that Kosygin arrived in New York on the morning of 17 June for the Emergency Special Session of the UN General Assembly, which he addressed on 19 June” (see: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d218#fn2>; accessed on 31 July 2015).

*If Mr. Kosygin wished to be away from the hurly-burly of a big city, the President would be glad to see him at Camp David where there would be facilities for any members of his party that he would wish to bring. This would give the opportunity for relaxed talks in a comfortable and isolated location.*⁸¹

Ambassador Dobrynin informed Ambassador Thompson that Kosygin would not mind meeting with the President in New York – or somewhere in the vicinity of New York. Secretary Rusk advised against rushing to New York. He noted,

We do believe, pending some change in the situation, that there would be enormous political loss to you if Kosygin were to go home without a conversation between the two of you. We could not rely wholly upon his refusal to come to Washington since he has indicated that he would see you in New York. *You should bear in mind that his theory is that he is visiting the United Nations and not the United States. It just happens that the United Nations is in the United States.* You have said on other occasions that you would “go anywhere, see anybody” in the interest of peace. If it became generally known (as it would from the Russians) that you had refused to see Kosygin in New York, we believe that you would be under very severe domestic criticism—quite apart from international public opinion.⁸²

Both Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara⁸³ and the Special Assistant for National Security, McGeorge Bundy advised the President to meet with Kosygin – albeit Bundy gloomily noted that Kosygin ‘has not gone at this in a gracious way, to put it mildly, but he is within his rights in visiting the UN, and the custom of working by indirection goes back in the Russian character at least 200 years’.⁸⁴

The Special Assistant to the President, Walt Rostow, also weighed-in on the matter. He noted:

On a cold, hard, objective basis I am confident that your net impact on Kosygin (and through him on his colleagues) will be positive. I have had the privilege of seeing you

⁸¹ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 218, Memorandum of Conversation; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d218>; accessed on 1 August 2015.

⁸² United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 220, Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d220>; accessed on 1 August 2015.

⁸³ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 221, Memorandum from Secretary of Defence McNamara to President Johnson; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d221>; accessed on 1 August 2015.

⁸⁴ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 222, Memorandum from the President’s Special Consultant (Bundy) to President Johnson; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d222>; accessed on 1 August 2015.

deal with a wide range of governmental leaders. Your batting average justifies this confidence. Kosygin should feel both the steel and compassion; the determination and flexibility; *and, above all, your willingness to treat the Soviet Union as one of the two older responsible children in the human family if they will so behave*. For these reasons, on balance, I am for the meeting, if it can be arranged in ways which leave you feeling comfortable and not cornered.⁸⁵

Of course, of particular importance to the argument advanced herein is Rostow's remark about 'willingness to treat the Soviet Union as one of the two older responsible children in the human family' – although, of course, 'if they will [only] behave'.

The two leaders met on 23 June 1967 – for two hours – accompanied only by two interpreters. The following exchange between Johnson and Kosygin wonderfully captures the ES argument which I advance. Here we witness the leaders – *qua* cultural, sentient beings – of the two great powers engaging in personal diplomacy, becoming acquainted, and insisting that if the two of them, and their respective governments, carefully manage this crucial relationship, their grandchildren would not know of 'war-connected calamity'.

Inquiring of the Chairman as to the size of his family, and learning that there were just two children, i.e., Mr. Kosygin and his sister, the President remarked that he was one of five children in his family. *It often happened that the oldest brother, himself, and the oldest sister had to take special pains in order to avoid disputes and differences between them so as to set a good example for the other children in the family. Frequently, the oldest brother has to provide guidance to the rest of the children. While he did not want to appear to be paternalistic towards the Chairman's country, and its leaders, he thought that if we could work more closely together, the two countries could ultimately develop and multiply their resources so as to help their peoples to a better life. ... [The] President thought that if we could build upon the fact that while we have difficult problems, we did have the same goals, this would be a useful and constructive attitude to take for the leadership of both countries. In 3 or 4 instances, we had already made a good beginning. The President hoped that his grandson would not have to experience a Pearl Harbor or a Siege of Leningrad or any other kind of war-connected calamity. He was sure that Chairman Kosygin felt the same way and thought it necessary to move further in that direction. ... They [the Communist Party and the Government and people of the Soviet Union] wanted to do everything in their power to develop peaceful and amicable relations with all the countries of the world. History had entrusted him and the President with great responsibility in this respect. Not everything in this world could be measured in roubles or dollars; there were many other overriding humane considerations which had*

⁸⁵ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 223, Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d223>; accessed on 1 August 2015; emphasis added.

to guide their work in the direction of developing peace in the world and providing their peoples with a better standard of living.⁸⁶

We also observe the President's reference to older siblings and the burden they carry in regard to a family's younger children as an allegory for the great burden undertaken by the great powers in the management of the international society and 'providing guidance' in the manner of 'older brothers'.

Indeed, US actions vis-à-vis Israeli activities

[...] illustrated the great responsibilities of the two powers; the other countries were a part of the family but it was up to the older brothers to provide proper guidance. As a result of the Chairman's communications, we had gotten busy and it was perhaps a result of the initiative displayed by the Chairman that we had managed to alleviate the situation, even if only temporarily. The big question was really this: if we could achieve some measure of success after the fighting had already started, why could we not have done so before the start of hostilities? We appreciated what the Chairman had done in this respect.⁸⁷

Subsequent US and Soviet administrations constructed their relations in similar terms. During the early days of his administration, in a letter to his Secretary of State William Rogers, President Richard Nixon outlined his thinking on the US–Soviet bilateral relationship. The President wrote:

I believe that the basis for a viable settlement is a mutual recognition of our vital interests. *We must recognize that the Soviet Union has interests; in the present circumstances we cannot but take account of them in defining our own. We should leave the Soviet leadership in no doubt that we expect them to adopt a similar approach toward us.* This applies also to the concerns and interests of our allies and indeed of all nations. They too are entitled to the safeguarding of their legitimate interests.⁸⁸

During a meeting with Ambassador Dobrynin on 17 February 1969, President Nixon conveyed to the Soviet Ambassador his thinking – initially, it will be recalled, expressed to Secretary Rogers and further discussed within the Administration – on

⁸⁶ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 229, Memorandum of Conversation [between Chairman Kосygin and President Johnson]; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d229>; accessed on 1 August 2015; emphasis added.

⁸⁷ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, Document 229, Memorandum of Conversation [between Chairman Kосygin and President Johnson]; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v14/d229>; accessed on 1 August 2015; emphasis added.

⁸⁸ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. XII, Soviet Union, Document 10, Letter from President Nixon to Secretary of State Rogers; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v12/d10>; accessed on 5 August 2015.

the relations between the two great powers. The President's remarks to Dobrynin are telling in terms of the emphasis he placed on great powers managing their relations, particularly via diplomatic channels. Nixon

[...] wished to set forth in a completely candid way his *view of the relationship between the two super powers, as they are now commonly referred to*. We must recognise that there are basic differences between us. *This has been true historically of the relationship between great powers, and it is equally true now. We both have a responsibility to moderate these differences, to see to it that they do not result in a sharp confrontation, and in the President's view the most effective way of doing this was to keep the lines of communication open. This is the task of diplomacy—to recognize that great powers will differ and to insure that differences be resolved by peaceful means.*⁸⁹

In an undated memorandum, President Nixon's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger offered his reflections on a possible summit meeting with the Soviet leadership and recognised the role that great powers play. He wrote: 'Certainly, in the last 15 years or so ... *there has been the element of coresponsibility for the survival of mankind that is so uniquely part of the American-Soviet relationship by virtue of our size and power*'.⁹⁰

The two superpowers continued to regard one another as members – *and the primary guardians* – of international society during the Administration of Ronald Reagan, notwithstanding the President's strong anti-communism and articulation of the Soviet Union as the 'evil empire'. President Reagan used the occasion of Leonid Brezhnev's passing to 'quickly [make] a *bid to ease tensions with the Kremlin by sending a conciliatory condolence message to Moscow*. The President emphasised the *American desire for "an improved relationship" and for finding "areas where our two nations can cooperate to mutual advantage"*'.⁹¹ After Yuri V. Andropov was selected as successor, the Reagan administration used Brezhnev's funeral – Vice President George Bush and Secretary of State George Shultz led the US delegation – 'as an opportunity to tell the new Soviet leadership that the United States desires better relations but is prepared to continue its military build-up if the Russians prefer confrontation'.⁹² Vice President George H. W. Bush 'met briefly' with Andropov on 15 November 'in what

⁸⁹ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. XII, Soviet Union, Document 14, Memorandum of Conversation; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v12/d14>; accessed on 6 August 2015; emphasis added.

⁹⁰ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. XII, Soviet Union, Document 199, Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon; available at: <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v12/d199>; accessed on 16 August 2015; emphasis added.

⁹¹ 'Aftermath: Uncertainty and Opportunity', *The New York Times*, 12 November, 1982, Section A; Page 1, Column 5; Foreign Desk; emphasis added.

⁹² *The New York Times*, "News Summary" (November 13, 1982: Section 1; Page 25, Column 1; Metropolitan Desk).

was described by the Americans as a “frank, cordial, and substantive” session and by the [Soviets] as an exchange “on the fundamental matters of Soviet-US relations”.⁹³

The Soviets ‘seemed to place some importance on Mr. Bush’s presence. The meeting with Mr. Andropov was reported on the evening television news, and TASS said Soviet leaders expressed gratitude “for the respect shown on the part of the U.S. Administration for the memory of Leonid Brezhnev”’.⁹⁴ Naturally, both superpowers posited that ‘an improvement in relations awaited some action by the other’.⁹⁵ Finally, telling in the context of the argument presented here, ‘Lawrence S. Eagleburger, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, said: “From our point of view if they can improve their relationship, *that’s good for world stability and peace, and not something we are going to be greatly concerned with.*”’⁹⁶

Relations warmed up to the extent that President Reagan, ‘in an interview ... with *The Sunday Times of London*’, said that he and Andropov are ‘in touch constantly’⁹⁷ seeking areas of discussions for a meeting that could be beneficial to both sides’. In fact

President Reagan met with the Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly F. Dobrynin, in February to assure him that the United States *was sincere about negotiating with Moscow*. ... Mr. Reagan is trying to convince the Western European allies and the American public that he is willing and able to have serious talks with Moscow. According to diplomatic sources, the Reagan overture was followed by a series of positive public signals from Soviet leaders. But the effort seems to have fallen apart in the aftermath of Mr. Reagan’s ‘focus of evil’ speech in early March and charges by Yuri V. Andropov, the Soviet leader, that Mr. Reagan had told an untruth about Soviet missile deployment. ... Asked today about the meeting, a White House official said: ‘The President and Mr. Shultz met with Ambassador Dobrynin for a discussion of United States-Soviet relations. The meeting

⁹³ G. Schmemann, ‘Bush Meets with Andropov in Brief, “Substantive” Talks’, *The New York Times*, November 16, 1982: Section A; Page 10, Column 1; Foreign Desk.

⁹⁴ G. Schmemann, ‘Bush Meets with Andropov in Brief, “Substantive” Talks’, *The New York Times*, 16 November, 1982, Section A; Page 10, Column 1; Foreign Desk. Indeed, the ‘Tass account of the meeting said Mr. Andropov had stressed that the Soviet Union “is ready to build relations with the U.S.A. on the basis of full equality, non-interference, mutual respect in the interests of the peoples of the two countries and normalisation of the international situation”. ... Mr. Bush’s conciliatory comments, like those by Mr. Shultz at a news conference Sunday, seemed intended to portray the Reagan Administration as prepared to ease the tensions between the two powers even while affirming existing policies’ (G. Schmemann, ‘Bush Meets with Andropov in Brief, “Substantive” Talks’, *The New York Times*, 16 November, 1982, Section A; Page 10, Column 1; Foreign Desk).

⁹⁵ Andropov noted that ‘the problems will not disappear by themselves if the talks are held for the sake of talks, as it unfortunately happens not infrequently’ and added that ‘let no one expect a unilateral disarmament from us’. For his part, Reagan noted that ‘it takes two to tango’ (B. Gwertzman, ‘U.S. Welcomes Moscow Interest in Easing Stress’, *The New York Times*, 24 November 1982, Section A; Page 1, Column 5; Foreign Desk).

⁹⁶ B. Gwertzman, ‘U.S. Welcomes Moscow Interest in Easing Stress’, *The New York Times*, 24 November 1982, Section A; Page 1, Column 5; Foreign Desk, emphasis added. Note Eagleburger’s position that cordial relations between the two powers are propitious for world peace and stability.

⁹⁷ Note here that President Putin made a similar statement with respect to he and President Obama being constantly in touch over the Syrian crisis (see below).

was an *element in the diplomatic dialogue which we have conducted with the Soviet Union since the beginning of the Administration*'. The official said they had addressed 'a comprehensive agenda', including human rights and arms control. According to other officials, *Mr. Reagan* told Mr. Dobrynin that he wanted the Soviet leaders to know that he was sincere about wanting to improve relations, that he was serious about arms control and that he wanted lines of communication to stay open. Mr. Dobrynin was said to have asked with whom he should deal, and Mr. Reagan pointed to Mr. Shultz. Mr. Reagan's only other meeting with Mr. Dobrynin had been in November, when the President visited the Soviet Embassy to express condolences on Leonid I. Brezhnev's death.⁹⁸

By June 1983, 'Reagan Administration officials [were] saying that the outlook for Soviet-American relations [was] a little bit brighter than it [had] been in the [previous] few years, although they [were] quick to add that neither side [had] changed its substantive position and they [were] hard put to show exactly where improvements will occur'. It is noteworthy that the officials posited that '*We do not want to – and need not – accept as inevitable the prospect of endless, dangerous confrontation with the Soviet Union*'. Moreover, 'while Soviet history provides "no basis for expecting dramatic change", it "also teaches that gradual change is possible"', noted the unnamed US official.⁹⁹

US–Soviet relations became 'constant preoccupation [for President Reagan] – the touchstone by which all other issues are judged. Even at the height of the Beirut hostage crisis last summer, the Russians were never far from his thoughts'.¹⁰⁰ The November 1985 summit between Mikhail Gorbachev and Reagan did not produce any major breakthroughs. Nevertheless, 'officials expect Soviet-American relations to remain relatively stable and non-confrontational as each side concentrates on domestic economic matters'.¹⁰¹ Moreover, a senior Reagan administration official noted that the

[...] Administration's working assumption [was] twofold: Mr. Reagan would not challenge Moscow hard in its areas of vital interest, and Moscow would not respond in strength in other areas such as Angola, Nicaragua, Libya and Cambodia. Most of the officials acknowledged that Afghanistan was a harder case for Moscow and were not sure how the Russians would respond if Stinger shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles reach the hands of the Afghan rebels. ... Most of the officials also minimized the importance of the possibility that Moscow would interpret the new Administration assertiveness against its client states as an overall challenge to Soviet global power. In other words, they did not think

⁹⁸ L. Gelb, 'February Attempt by Reagan to Assure Soviet is Disclosed', *The New York Times*, 1 April 1983, Section A; Page 1, Column 3; Foreign Desk.

⁹⁹ L. Gelb, 'Two Readings of the Climate Governing Relations between the Superpowers', *The New York Times*, 17 June, 1983, Section A; Page 8, Column 1; Foreign Desk.

¹⁰⁰ M. Kalb, 'Foreign Policy: Where Consensus Ends', *The New York Times*, 27 October 1985, Section 6, Page 103, Column 1; Magazine Desk.

¹⁰¹ L. Gelb, 'Policy Struggles by U.S. and Soviet on Verge of Shift', *The New York Times*, 5 April 1986, Section 1, Page 1, Column 6; Foreign Desk.

that Soviet leaders would react as American leaders did in recent years to a seeming shift in the overall balance of power and to the appearance that their country was weak.¹⁰²

The above quote is yet another indication of the extent to which the leadership of the United States – then personified by President Reagan – understood international politics in terms synonymous with ES/constructivist theorising. Namely, great powers are responsible for the overall well-being of the international society, with the added caveat that there also exists a division of labour between the great powers such that each is responsible for ‘its areas of vital -interest’.

After roughly a decade-long interregnum (1992–2000) during which the Clinton administration ‘administered the spinach treatment’¹⁰³ to a badly enervated Russian Federation, led by an increasingly erratic Boris Yeltsin, the campaign team of the future president George W. Bush faced a Russian Federation with new – younger and energetic – president, Vladimir Putin. The foreign policy members of the team, the Vulcans, led by Condoleezza Rice, ‘did not advocate neglect of Russia. The[y] believed the best way to repair United States-Russian relations was to begin to treat Russia like an *international power*’.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, ‘Bush campaign adviser Robert Blackwill explained that Bush planned to focus on Russia and China and “not Haiti, not Somalia” because these were countries that could threaten American national security interests’.¹⁰⁵ Thus, ‘*For Bush’s advisers, Russia was still a great power, but one in decline. Which made it erratic and dangerous*’.¹⁰⁶

In a 2000 *Foreign Affairs* essay, Condoleezza Rice – at the time candidate Bush’s foreign policy advisor – opined that ‘American foreign policy in a Republican administration should refocus the United States on the national interest and the pursuit of key priorities. These tasks are ... to focus U.S. energies on comprehensive relationships with the big powers, particularly Russia and China, that can and will mould the character of the international political system’.¹⁰⁷ Thus,

For America and our allies, the most daunting task is to find the right balance in our policy toward Russia and China. Both are equally important to the future of international peace, but the challenges they pose are very different. ... *Russia ... has many of the attributes of a great power: a large population, vast territory, and military potential. But its economic weakness and problems of national identity threaten to overwhelm it. Moscow is determined to assert itself in the world and often does so in ways that are at*

¹⁰² L. Gelb, ‘Policy Struggles by U.S. and Soviet on Verge of Shift’, *The New York Times*, 5 April 1986, Section 1, Page 1, Column 6; Foreign Desk.

¹⁰³ See A. Shleifer and D. Treisman, ‘The US and Russia: They Don’t Need Us’, <http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/shleifer/files/shleifertreismansept282010fa.pdf>; accessed on 24 October, 2015, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ J. Goldgeier and M. McFaul, ‘George W. Bush and Russia’, *Current History*, 2002, p. 313.

¹⁰⁵ J. Goldgeier and M. McFaul, ‘George W. Bush and Russia’, op.cit., p. 313.

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem, p. 313.

¹⁰⁷ C. Rice, ‘Promoting the National Interest’, *Foreign Affairs*, 2000, Vol 79, No. 1, pp. 46–47.

once haphazard and threatening to American interests. The picture is complicated by Russia's own internal transition—one that the United States wants to see succeed.¹⁰⁸

Moreover – and we observe the consonance between Condoleezza Rice's statement and the statements of presidents Nixon and Reagan – '*the United States needs to recognise that Russia is a great power, and that we will always have interests that conflict as well as coincide*'.¹⁰⁹ And, towards the end of the President's eight years in office, the now Secretary of State Rice wrote – again in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* – that 'our relations with traditional and emerging great powers still matter to the successful conduct of policy'.¹¹⁰ Indeed,

By necessity, our relationships with Russia and China have been rooted *more in common interests than common values*. ... Yet it is useful to remember that Russia is not the Soviet Union. It is neither a permanent enemy nor a strategic threa. Russia is not just a great power; it is also the land and culture of a great people. And in the twenty-first century greatness is increasingly defined by the technological and economic development that flows naturally in open and free societies. That is why the full development both of Russia and of our relationship with it still hangs in the balance as the country's internal transformation unfolds.¹¹¹

Secretary Rice concluded:

Our relationships with Russia and China are complex and characterised simultaneously by competition and cooperation. But in the absence of workable relations with both of these states, diplomatic solutions to many international problems would be elusive. Transnational terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, climate change and instability stemming from poverty and disease these are dangers to all successful states, including those that might in another time have been violent rivals. *It is incumbent on the United States to find areas of cooperation and strategic agreement with Russia and China, even when there are significant differences.* ... *Russia and China carry special responsibility and weight as fellow permanent members of the UN Security Council, but this has not been the only forum in which we have worked together.*¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ C. Rice, 'Promoting the National Interest', pp. 55-57. See also J. Goldgeier and M. McFaul, 'George W. Bush and Russia', op.cit., p. 313.

¹⁰⁹ C. Rice, 'Promoting the National Interest', pp. 59-60. See also J. Goldgeier and M. McFaul, 'George W. Bush and Russia', op.cit., p. 313. And, in a '31 December 2000 [*Chicago Tribune*] column, Rice emphasized again that "the United States needs to recognize that Russia is a great power" and therefore "U.S. policy must concentrate on the important security agenda with Russia"' (J. Goldgeier and M. McFaul, 'George W. Bush and Russia', op.cit., p. 315).

¹¹⁰ C. Rice, 'Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World', *Foreign Affairs*, 2008, Vol. 87, No. 4, p. 2.

¹¹¹ C. Rice, 'Rethinking the National Interest', op.cit., pp. 3-4; emphasis added.

¹¹² C. Rice, 'Rethinking the National Interest', op.cit., pp. 4-5; emphasis added.

Finally, presidents Putin and Obama understand international politics in ways that correspond to ES theorising – particularly with respect to the special place the great powers enjoy within the society of states. In a speech delivered to the Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2007, the Russian President took to task the United States for its ‘almost uncontained hyper use of force’ and its ‘aspiration to world supremacy’. President Putin noted that without a proper balancing of military might, especially among the society’s great powers all we are left is an ‘unacceptable but also impossible’ unipolar world.¹¹³

The President of the Russian Federation also noted that the Russian Federation is a great power that needs no prodding to perform its proper function as custodian of international society:

We very often – and personally, I very often – hear appeals by our partners, including our European partners, to the effect that Russia should play an increasingly active role in world affairs. ... It is hardly necessary to incite us to do so. Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy. We are not going to change this tradition today. At the same time, we are well aware of how the world has changed and we have a realistic sense of our own opportunities and potential. And of course we would like to interact with responsible and independent partners with whom we could work together in constructing a fair and democratic world order that would ensure security and prosperity not only for a select few, but for all.¹¹⁴

A recent CBS/PBS interview with Charlie Rose is also revealing of President Putin’s thinking on international politics and his overall understanding of the same along the ES lines rehearsed above. The Russian President told Charlie Rose that he is not opposed to the United States – as a great power – ‘exercising [international] leadership. ... [What] we are *against* [is] *thoughtless actions* that lead to such negative situations that are difficult to rectify’. Russian actions in Syria are not, therefore, a matter of

¹¹³ V. Putin, ‘Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/24034>; accessed on 24 October 2015. ‘However, what is a unipolar world? However one might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one centre of authority, one centre of force, one centre of decision-making. It is world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within. ... [W]hat is happening in today’s world ... is a tentative to introduce precisely this concept into international affairs, the concept of a unipolar world. And with which results? Unilateral and frequently illegitimate actions have not resolved any problems. Moreover, they have caused new human tragedies and created new centres of tension. Judge for yourselves: wars as well as local and regional conflicts have not diminished. ... And no less people perish in these conflicts – even more are dying than before. Significantly more, significantly more’ (V. Putin, ‘Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/24034>; accessed on 24 October 2015).

¹¹⁴ V. Putin, ‘Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/24034>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

‘stepping into the vacuum of American leadership’ or even of ‘challenging American leadership’ but rather a responsible great power preventing terrorist organisations from filling the power vacuum.¹¹⁵

Prodded by Rose about ‘want[ing] Russia to play a more significant role in the world’, the Russian Federation being a ‘major power because of the nuclear weapons [it] possess[es]’, and a ‘force to be reckoned with’, President Putin once more noted his pride of the greatness of the Russian Federation. He added, ‘We have much to be proud of: Russian culture and Russian history. We have every reason to believe in the future of our country. But we have no obsession that Russia must be a super power in the international arena. The only thing we do is *protecting our vital interests*’. Moreover, of course Russia is ‘a force to be reckoned with’, ‘otherwise what are these [nuclear] weapons for’. Nevertheless, ‘we proceed from the assumption that nuclear weapons and other weapons are the means to protect our sovereignty and legitimate interests, not the means to behave aggressively or to fulfil some non-existent imperial ambitions’.¹¹⁶

President Putin also stressed the importance of the leaderships of the great powers communicating in order to better manage their relations and, as a result, provide stability for the international society. ‘When in New York [for the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly], will you request a meeting with President Obama’, asked Rose. ‘We are always open for contacts of any kind: at the highest level, at the level of ministries and agencies, at the level of special services, if necessary’, replied President Putin. He added, ‘I have called President Obama, and President Obama called me on various issues. *This is part of our regular contacts; there is nothing unusual or extraordinary about it*’.¹¹⁷

Charlie Rose then asked the President, ‘Do you think he [Obama] listens to you? ... Do you think he considers Russia an equal?’ President Putin’s response was telling:

I think that we all listen to each other when it does not contradict our own ideas of what we should and should not do. But, in any case, there is a dialogue and we hear each other. ... How can I know what he thinks? I repeat we have peer-to-peer interpersonal relationships, we respect each other in any case and we have business contacts at quite a good working level. And what do the American President, the French President, the German Chancellor, the Japanese Prime Minister or the Chinese Premier of the State Council

¹¹⁵ V. Putin, ‘Interview to American TV Channel[s] CBS and PBS’, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/50380>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹¹⁶ V. Putin, ‘Interview to American TV Channel[s] CBS and PBS’, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/50380>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹¹⁷ V. Putin, ‘Interview to American TV Channel[s] CBS and PBS’, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/50380>; accessed on 24 October 2015. Note here the consonance of President Putin’s statement – about having regular contacts with President Obama – and a similar statement made by President Reagan (see above) that he is ‘in touch constantly’ with Chairman Andropov (B. Gwertzman, ‘Reagan Can Foresee Summit Meeting’, *The New York Times*, 21 March 1983, Section A; Page 3, Column 1; Foreign Desk).

or the Chinese President think, how do I know? We judge not by what seems to us, but by what people do.¹¹⁸

Finally, the following exchange between Rose and President Putin is significant. The President noted that he ‘think[s] about [US-Russian cooperation] all the time’ – recalling that President Regan was said to have obsessed over US-Soviet relations (see above) – and is ‘taking efforts to make the world more predictable, more stable.’ Moreover, in a statement perfectly reminiscent of the statements exchanged between Soviet and US officials (see above), President Putin noted that as ‘the [two] biggest nuclear powers,’ the United States and the Russian Federation are left ‘with an extra special responsibility.’ Finally, the Russian Federation and the United States, concluded the President, have interests which – while frequently at odds – do, on occasion, coincide.¹¹⁹

An interview by President Putin with Swiss media of 27 July 2015 perfectly encapsulates the ES/constructivist argument advanced here. Responding to a journalist’s question on ‘a kind of imperialist policy by the United States’, President Putin began

¹¹⁸ V. Putin, ‘Interview to American TV Channel[s] CBS and PBS’, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/50380>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹¹⁹ The full exchange is worth quoting in considerable detail:
 CHARLIE ROSE: Think out loud for me though, because this is important. How can the United States and Russia cooperate in the interest of a better world? Think out loud.
 VLADIMIR PUTIN: We think about it all the time. One of our objectives today is very important for many people, for millions of people on our planet – it is joining efforts in the fight against terrorism and other similar challenges: countering drug trafficking and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, fighting famine, preserving environment and biodiversity, taking efforts to make the world more predictable, more stable. And, finally, Russia...
 CHARLIE ROSE: Stable where?
 VLADIMIR PUTIN: Everywhere, in all parts of the world. You mentioned yourself that Russia and the United States are the biggest nuclear powers, this leaves us with an extra special responsibility. By the way, we manage to deal with it and work together in certain fields, particularly in resolving the issue of the Iranian nuclear program. We worked together and we achieved positive results on the whole.
 CHARLIE ROSE: How did it work? President Obama has often thanked you for the assistance that you gave in reaching the final accord. What did you do? What did your negotiators contribute, your Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov?
 VLADIMIR PUTIN: The thing is, however strange it may seem, that the interests of the United States and of the Russian Federation do coincide sometimes. And in this case, I just told you that we have a special responsibility for non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, our interests certainly coincide. That is why together with the United States we worked hard and consistently on resolving this problem. Russia was guided not only by these reasons but also by the fact that Iran is our neighbour, our traditional partner, and we wanted to bring the situation back on track. We believed that this settlement will help to improve the security situation in the Middle East. In this respect, our assessments of what happened on Iran’s nuclear program almost fully coincide with the assessments of our American colleagues....
 CHARLIE ROSE: Is that what you would like to rekindle, the sense of partnership with America against common enemies?
 VLADIMIR PUTIN: Not against common enemies, but in each other’s interests (V. Putin, ‘Interview to American TV Channel[s] CBS and PBS’, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/50380>; accessed on 24 October 2015).

his answer by noting that the United States ‘have been conducting an imperialist policy for a long time’.¹²⁰ He then added that

[...] when the United States withdrew from it and began to create a missile defence system as part of its global strategic weapons system, we immediately said: we will be obligated to take reciprocal steps to maintain a strategic balance of power. I want to say something very important: we are doing this for ourselves, to ensure the security of the Russian Federation, but we are also doing it for the rest of the world, because this strategic stability ensures the balance of power. ... A strategic balance allowed peace throughout the planet and prevented major military conflicts in Europe and throughout the world.¹²¹

The Russian President is also perfectly aware of the fact that lighter, societal forces coexist with darker forces of confrontation – recalling once more Tim Donne’s quote. In an October 2014 interview with the Serbian daily *Politika*, President Putin noted that ‘this is not the first downturn in relations between our countries. We hope that our partners will realise the futility of attempts to blackmail Russia and remember what consequences discord between major nuclear powers could bring for strategic stability. For our part, we are ready to develop constructive cooperation based on the principles of equality and genuine respect for each other’s interests’.¹²²

Finally, after his meeting with his US counterpart in the backrooms of the UN General Assembly, President Putin met the press and was asked to assess the current state of US–Russian relations. The President, yet again, spoke in terms that can readily be analysed in terms of the English School paradigm – stressing the import of great powers’ management. The President noted:

Unfortunately, the relations between Russia and the United States are at a fairly low level; this is clear without any comments from me. But it was not our initiative to cause such a slump in relations between Russia and the United States. That is the position of our American partners. Is it good or is it bad? I think it is bad – both for bilateral relations and for global affairs. But that is the choice made by the United States. We are always prepared to develop contacts and restore full-scale relations. As for today’s meeting, it was very useful and, what is particularly pleasant, it was very sincere. I think that our American partners explained their position quite clearly on many issues, including settling the situation in Ukraine and Syria, as well as the Middle East overall. Indeed, surprising as it may seem, we have many coinciding points and opinions about all these

¹²⁰ V. Putin, ‘Interview with Swiss Media’, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/50066>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹²¹ V. Putin, ‘Interview with Swiss Media’, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/50066>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹²² V. Putin, ‘Interview to *Politika* Newspaper’, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/46806>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

issues. We also have differences, which we have agreed to work on together. I hope that this work will be constructive.¹²³

President Obama also gave a nod, in his 2015 speech to the UN General Assembly, to the import of great powers' management. 'For two years', President Obama observed, 'the United States and our partners – including Russia, including China – stuck together in complex negotiations. The result is a lasting, comprehensive deal that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, while allowing it to access peaceful energy'.¹²⁴ President Obama discussed great powers' management during a town-hall meeting with future Chinese leaders. The President observed – in the context, of course, of Sino-American relations – that 'more is to be gained when great powers cooperate than when they collide. That is a lesson that human beings have learned time and again, and that is the example of the history between our nations'.¹²⁵ The President concluded – in a statement that eloquently encapsulates the main theme of this paper – that '*a burden that great countries, great powers, have, is to act responsibly in the community of nations. And my hope is, is that the United States and China together can help to create an international norms that reduce conflict around the world*'.¹²⁶

During the heady days of the 'reset' in US–Russian relations, President Obama spoke of the notion that great powers have special responsibility although not in the 19th century style of great powers balancing among themselves. The President made the following remarks during the 7 July 2009 graduation ceremony at the New Economic School in Moscow:

So as we honour this past, we also recognise the future benefit that will come from a strong and vibrant Russia. Think of the issues that will define your lives: security from nuclear weapons and extremism; access to markets and opportunity; health and the environment; an international system that protects sovereignty and human rights, while promoting stability and prosperity. These challenges demand global partnership, and that partnership will be stronger if Russia occupies its rightful place as a great power. Yet unfortunately, there is sometimes a sense that old assumptions must prevail, old ways of thinking; a conception of power that is rooted in the past rather than in the future. There is the 20th century view that the United States and Russia are destined to be antagonists, and that a strong Russia or a strong America can only assert themselves in opposition to one another. And there is a 19th century view that we are destined to vie for spheres of

¹²³ V. Putin, 'Answers to Journalists' Questions', http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/press_conferences/50394; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹²⁴ UN Speech 2015.

¹²⁵ B. Obama, 'Remarks by President Barack Obama at Town Hall Meeting with Future Chinese Leaders', 16 November 2009; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-town-hall-meeting-with-future-chinese-leaders>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹²⁶ B. Obama, 'Remarks by President Barack Obama at Town Hall Meeting with Future Chinese Leaders', 16 November 2009; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-town-hall-meeting-with-future-chinese-leaders>; accessed on 24 October 2015; emphasis added.

influence, and that great powers must forge competing blocs to balance one another. These assumptions are wrong. In 2009, a great power does not show strength by dominating or demonising other countries. The days when empires could treat sovereign states as pieces on a chess board are over.¹²⁷

Explicating the President's 2015 National Security Strategy, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Susan Rice, stated that 'Across a range of issues, with an array of partners, the United States is proudly shouldering the responsibilities of global leadership. As President Obama made clear during his State of the Union address: "The question is not whether America leads in the world, but how." The answer is: we are pursuing an ambitious, yet achievable agenda, worthy of a great power. The President's Budget directly supports his strategy.'¹²⁸ And, President Obama noted that he and President Xi had 'agreed to continue to build a new model of great power relations based on practical cooperation and constructively managing our differences'.¹²⁹

Finally, Vice President Biden also took up – albeit briefly – the theme of great powers' management in his 22 May 2015 Commencement Address to the graduates of the US Naval Academy. The Vice President stated that 'the great powers have stepped back from the brink of mutual assured destruction [but] there are new fault lines. These new fault lines will continue to divide the great powers'.¹³⁰ Naturally, the Vice President couldn't but note that the Academy's graduates 'will play a major role in protecting a Europe whole, free and at peace at a time when Russian aggression threatens Europe's frontier'.¹³¹

Discussion

The above empirical section gives rise to – at the very least – two possible lines of criticism: first, am I justified in simply assuming that Russian/Soviet and American leaders attached the same meaning to the concepts employed herein – concepts such

¹²⁷ B. Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the New Economic School Graduation', 7 July 2009; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/video/President-Obamas-Address-at-the-New-Economic-School-in-Moscow/#transcript>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹²⁸ S. Rice, 'Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan Rice on the 2015 National Security Strategy', 6 February 2015; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/06/remarks-national-security-advisor-susan-rice-2015-national-security-strategy>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹²⁹ B. Obama, 'Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China before Bilateral Meeting' 6 September 2013; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/06/remarks-president-obama-and-president-xi-peoples-republic-china-bilatera>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹³⁰ J. Biden, 'Commencement Address by the Vice President at the United States Naval Academy', 22 May 2015; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/22/commencement-address-vice-president-united-states-naval-academy>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

¹³¹ J. Biden, 'Commencement Address by the Vice President at the United States Naval Academy', 22 May 2015; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/22/commencement-address-vice-president-united-states-naval-academy>; accessed on 24 October 2015.

as ‘international society’ and ‘international order’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘great powers management’ – in their official diplomatic exchanges? Might it be the case that officials meant different things by these concepts given their differing socio-cultural contexts? Second, in the empirical analysis I employ only English-language sources to the exclusion of Russian-language sources. Is this not a problem?¹³²

I address each in turn. I claim that *it is decidedly the case that the political leaderships of two great powers attached in the past – and do currently – the same meaning to concepts such as international society’ and ‘international order’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘great powers management.* I buttress my claim by stating three interrelated propositions. First, the paper covers roughly fifty years of US–Soviet/Russian relations. While not infrequently battered by crises – crises which they have successfully weathered – and always containing plenty of irritants – as is, indeed, the case with most great power relationships – the US–Soviet/Russian relationship has been remarkably orderly. The relationship has witnessed the signing of scores of important bilateral and multilateral treaties, including, but not confined to, the Antarctic Treaty (1959), the Hot-Line Agreement and the Limited Test Ban Treaty (1963), the Outer Space Treaty (1967), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968), the Seabed Treaty (1971), Biological Weapons Convention (1972), SALT I/ABM (1972), the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the Vladivostok Accord (1974), the Helsinki Final Act (1975), SALT II (1979), Conventional Forces in Europe (1989), START I (1991), and New START (2013). *It is, therefore, hardly to be imagined that the superpowers could have maintained any relations – much less orderly relations, having undertaken many highly intricate negotiations – if they were not in agreement as to the meaning of the concepts employed during their diplomatic exchanges.*¹³³

Second – and stating an obvious but not trivial fact – Soviet–American and Russian–American relations were (are) conducted, in the main, by professional ‘diplomats’. The import of this is twofold. (i) Diplomacy, writes Bull in his classic exposition of ES, ‘facilitates communication between the political leaders of states and other entities in world politics’;¹³⁴ and, more importantly, ‘[d]iplomatists are specialists in precise and accurate communication. *They are more than mere couriers or heralds; they are experts in detecting and conveying nuances of international dialogue, and are equipped not merely to deliver a message but to judge the language in which it should be couched, the audience to whom and the occasion at which it should be presented.*¹³⁵ This is key inasmuch as

¹³² I owe a debt of gratitude to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the importance of these two lines of criticism.

¹³³ It is crucial to note, and, indeed, is perfectly in keeping with ES theorising, that the nuclear and conventional balances of power are the two most important balances (see: H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., pp. 108–109). Therefore, the signings and ratifications of the above-mentioned instruments are clearly representative of great powers’ management of international society.

¹³⁴ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 163.

¹³⁵ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p. 173; emphasis added.

[...] there is more to communication than the exchange of messages; messages have to be understood and interpreted. They have to convey mood and intentions as well as information. Their meaning depends on their context: the persons who send them and receive them, the circumstances in which they are sent, the previous history of exchanges on the subject. The significance of a message may lie in what it omits as well as in what it includes, in the choice of a phrase rather than another in conveying an idea.¹³⁶

Soviet/Russian and American ‘diplomatists’ have been working closely ever since the United States officially recognised the Soviet Union in 1933. The idea that these ‘specialists in precise and accurate communication’ – ‘experts in detecting and conveying nuances of international dialogue’ – working for over 80 years did not agree on a common meaning of key concepts of international society simply strains credulity.

What is more, (ii) the diplomatic *dramatis personae* did not drastically change throughout the many years of great powers’ relations. Consider but one case: Anatoly Dobrynin. He served as Moscow’s envoy to the United States for roughly 25 years – spanning the administrations from Kennedy to Reagan.¹³⁷ Indeed, until Alexander Haig and George Shultz took over the seventh floor at Foggy Bottom, Ambassador Dobrynin had ‘easy access’¹³⁸ to the State Department including the ‘privilege of entering the department through the downstairs parking garage’,¹³⁹ and, as evidenced above, he regularly met with high-ranking US officials.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, even President Reagan – for all of his bluster about the ‘evil empire’ – was eager (see above) to establish excellent relations with the Soviet Union, such that one important channel was the Dobrynin-Shultz channel.¹⁴¹

On the US side, Secretary of State Alexander Haig worked on Kissinger’s staff at the National Security Council; furthermore, when he replaced Haig, Secretary Shultz met with a number of Kissinger’s staffers, William G. Hyland, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, and Brent Scowcroft, to discuss the nuances of US–Soviet relations.¹⁴² Even members of President Obama’s administration had extensive experience in Soviet/Russian–US relations. Secretary of Defence Robert Gates earned his PhD in Soviet history; and, as of 1966, he had spent 27 years in the Central Intelligence Agency – including roughly

¹³⁶ H. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, op.cit., pp. 172–173.

¹³⁷ *The Telegraph*, ‘Anatoly Dobrynin’, 8 April 2010; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/politics-obituaries/7568616/Anatoly-Dobrynin.html>; accessed on 21 January 2016. See also: L. Gelb, ‘February Attempt by Reagan to Assure Soviet is Disclosed’, *The New York Times*, 1 April 1983, Section A, Page 1, Column 3; Foreign Desk.

¹³⁸ L. Gelb, ‘February Attempt by Reagan to Assure Soviet is Disclosed’, *The New York Times*, 1 April 1983, Section A, Page 1, Column 3; Foreign Desk.

¹³⁹ G. Lee, ‘A Kremlin Promotion that Didn’t Happen’, *The New York Times*, 22 July 1985, First Section, A1.

¹⁴⁰ Recall his dinner with Vice President Humphrey.

¹⁴¹ B. Gwertzman, ‘U.S. Welcomes Moscow Interest in Easing Stress’, *The New York Times*, 24 November 1982, Section A, Page 1, Column 5; Foreign Desk.

¹⁴² B. Gwertzman, ‘Shultz Discusses Policy on Soviet with Key Experts’, *The New York Times*, 22 August 1982, Section 1, Page 1, Column 1; Foreign Desk.

three years as its head – and nine years on the National Security Council as one of Washington’s most well-respected Kremlinologist.¹⁴³ The same principle applies, therefore: it is well-nigh impossible to imagine that roughly the same diplomatic *dramatis personae* – experts, it will be recalled, in communication – acting as principal interlocutors for decades and their respective leaderships’ chief advisors – did not come to agree on a common meaning of key concepts of international society.¹⁴⁴

Three, it would be entirely incorrect to assert that I am merely assuming that US and Soviet/Russian interlocutors meant the same things by the concepts employed. I *demonstrate* this empirically. Recall, for instance, the Kosygin-Johnson meeting in Glassboro. Both leaders were perfectly comfortable with the older brother allegory; they understood, accompanied by only two translators, that the allegory was meant to convey the idea of great powers (older brothers) managing the relations of the lesser powers (take care of younger siblings). Thus, both Kosygin and Johnson understood that the allegory illustrated the import of great powers in managing international society. I offer other examples in Part III, and I will do no more here than once more direct the reader’s attention to them.

Finally, the exclusive reliance on English-language sources *is*, indeed, problematic. Still, a few words are in order: first, I rely – to a great extent – on memcons of conversations between US and Soviet interlocutors. The memcons had to be, *and indeed are*, meticulously taken down as they served as guidelines for the formulation of US policy towards the Soviet Union. Second, the government of the Russian Federation is incredibly Internet-savvy. Thus, while still ‘English-language source’, the speeches and commentaries by Putin and Medvedev are translations from the Russian language provided by the ministry of foreign affairs and the Kremlin. Finally, I plan a book-length treatment of this problem. In it, I will employ Russian-language sources.

4. Conclusion

By closely examining the historical record – spanning US administrations from Kennedy to Obama and Soviet/Russian administrations from Khrushchev to Putin – I was able to show that the political leaderships of the two great powers are currently – and were in the past – ‘conscious of certain common interests and common values,’ common

¹⁴³ *United States Department of Defence*, ‘Dr. Robert M. Gates – Former Secretary of Defence’; <http://www.defense.gov/About-DoD/Biographies/Biography-View/Article/602797>; accessed on 21 January 2016.

¹⁴⁴ It is also not unimportant to note that Russia’s two principal diplomats, Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister, as well as Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Federation’s United Nations envoy, are products of the Soviet system. Lavrov had a long-term international organisations experience in both the Soviet and Russian foreign ministries (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, ‘Lavrov, Sergey Viktorovich’, http://archive.mid.ru/bul_ns_en.nsf/kartaflat/en03.01; accessed on 21 January 2016). And, Churkin, for instance, was Dobrynin’s second secretary in Washington and was ‘well-tailored diplomat, displaying an array of English slang and the Gorbachev emphasis on image’ (see: M. Weisskopf, ‘Soviet Testifies on Capitol Hill; Thrust-and-Parry Reveals Few New Details of Accident’, *The Washington Post*, 2 May 1986, First Section, A1).

principles, norms and rules, and ‘share in the workings of common institutions’ so as to maintain the ‘pattern or disposition of international activity that sustains [the] goals of the society of states’. And second, I was able to show that the political leaderships of the Soviet Union/Russian Federation and the United States have conceived of their respective states as great powers indispensable to the maintenance of international order, stability, and the very existence of international society.

Recalling briefly the historical record, President Kennedy wrote to Chairman Khrushchev of the ‘heavy responsibility which rests upon our two Governments in world affairs’ and that US–Soviet cooperation ‘would be a significant contribution to the problem of ensuring a peaceful and orderly world’. The 35th President of the United States – while stressing the importance of diplomacy – also recognised that ‘there are problems on which we may not be able to agree’. His Soviet counterpart, Chairman Khrushchev, also understood that ‘much depended upon Soviet relations with the US’. In a letter to Kennedy’s successor, the Chairman noted that ‘the state of Soviet-American relations exerts a great influence upon the situation throughout the world’; and, Khrushchev’s Washington envoy, Dobrynin, stressed that ‘history had made our two countries responsible for much that went on in the world whether we wanted this or not’. Chairman Kosygin also maintained that US-Soviet ‘bilateral relations ... were the most important subject in maintaining peace’ and noted that he ‘presumed that there was an awareness of the responsibility of the United States and of the Soviet Union in world affairs’. President Johnson noted that the two great powers like ‘oldest brother[s] [have] to provide guidance to the rest of the children’, that is, the lesser powers. President Nixon believed that ‘the basis for a viable settlement is a mutual recognition of our [US and Soviet] vital interests’. The 37th President also stressed the importance of diplomacy and moderating the differences between the great powers and was perfectly aware that ‘there has been the element of coresponsibility for the survival of mankind that is so uniquely part of the American-Soviet relationship by virtue of our size and power’. President Reagan’s Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Eagleburger, posited that ‘From our point of view if they can improve their relationship, that’s good for world stability and peace, and not something we are going to be greatly concerned with’. Indeed, the 40th US President also stressed diplomatic dialogue and officials in his administration noted that ‘We do not want to – and need not – accept as inevitable the prospect of endless, dangerous confrontation with the Soviet Union’. Indeed, US–Soviet relations became ‘constant preoccupation [for President Reagan] – the touchstone by which all other issues are judged’. Finally, I demonstrated that for all of the difficulties in their relations, presidents Bush (43), Obama, Putin, and Medvedev also perceived their states’ relations in terms of international society.