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Russia and Carl Schmitt: the hybridity of resistance in the globalised world

Bohdana Kurylo¹

ABSTRACT The rise of state dissidence has challenged the hegemony of Western liberalism on the international relations stage. Russia's ongoing involvement in the Ukraine crisis is a case in point. Russia's dissidence threatens not only the already fragile European order, but also the potency of liberalism as a system of international norms. Hence, a great deal of attention has been given to trying to determine the possible failures and solutions of global governance in dealing with Russia. In contrast, this article argues for the need to understand state resistance from the perspective of the dissenting state. By drawing upon Carl Schmitt's influential critique of globalizing liberalism, the article attempts to analyse what Russia's resistance reveals about the subtle mechanisms of global liberal governance. On the basis of Schmitt's theory, the article establishes that Russia's dissidence can be an attempt to preserve state sovereignty and its unique "way of life", as well as state pluralism on the global arena. In fact, to eradicate conflict, liberal governance attempts to suppress state pluralism as a potential cause of conflict. In the long run, however, this risks provoking radical resistance in response. The article then analyses the "hybrid" strategy of Russia's resistance employed in the Ukraine crisis, based on which it identifies the major weaknesses of liberal governance. The article concludes that the inadequacy of international law to deal with unconventional forms of warfare and refusal to acknowledge the possibility of animosity can significantly debilitate liberal governance. This article is published as part of a collection on global governance.

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Introduction

In the post-war years, the international order became dominated by the United States and advanced industrial Western democratic states. The end of the Cold War allowed liberal governance to spread universally without major opposition. It was around this time when the notion of “global governance” came into widespread usage, describing the system of multilateral institutions and regulatory mechanisms established to manage international relations and secure peace (Ikenberry, 2011). Nowadays, however, the global hegemony of liberal governance is being shaken by the rise of dissident states. From India’s refusal to accept the Non-Proliferation Treaty to Britain’s decision to leave the European Union—the forms and impact of state resistance vary. While some states only seek to negotiate new bargains, the intentions of others, such as North Korea, are an apparent menace to the international order.

The modern form of state dissidence is best exemplified by Russia, threatening the *status quo* established in the post-Cold War era by challenging the hegemony of the liberal order (European Union Committee, 2015). The election of Vladimir Putin ended the reluctant Russo-Western cooperation and set a pattern of dissidence against the international liberal norms through military aggression in Georgia and Syria. The evolution of Russia’s version of state dissidence is exemplified by the clandestine Russian attempt to destabilize the Ukrainian government (Trenin, 2014). Having annexed Crimea in March 2014, Russia has given indirect support (for example, supply of armaments) to the militant insurgencies in Donetsk and Luhansk (Sakwa, 2015a; Snetkov and Lanteigne, 2015). Russia also deployed around 30,000 troops along the Ukrainian border, sparking fears of future invasion (Tsygankov, 2015). This article does not intend to go into details of the Ukrainian events, as it rather seeks to analyse global liberal governance through Russia’s dissidence.

A number of studies have already analysed the threats that Russia poses to the established international order (Karatnycky and Motyl, 2009; Herpen, 2014; Jahn, 2015; Sakwa, 2015a; Shevtsova, 2015; Laruelle, 2016). Many of them have proposed some useful solutions to prevent further escalation of the conflict (Motyl, 2014; Wilson, 2014; Alexandrova-Arbatova, 2015; Crosston, 2015; Tsygankov, 2015; Veebel, 2015; Haukkala, 2016). However, immediate events have enjoyed significantly more attention than their wider implications, calling for a deeper analysis. Furthermore, more research needs to be done on the impact of globalizing liberalism from the standpoint of the modern state. Speaking of Russia’s dissidence from the perspective of global governance risks presenting Russia as a deviation from the norm. Rather than determining whether Russia is a traditionalist and expansionist power intending to reconquer its former lands, this article argues that the governance-centric approach to state resistance occludes the bigger picture.

Therefore, the article turns to German philosopher Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) and his critique of liberal governance. Mainly because of his support of the Nazi party and anti-Semitism, the twentieth century witnessed Schmitt’s work being largely neglected by scholars of global governance. Nonetheless, the revival of Schmittian scholarship in the last two decades suggests that the full potential of his ideas is yet to be discovered (Dyrberg, 2009; Teschke, 2011). Like the modern dissident state, Schmitt experienced Western governance from the receiving end—both in the case of his year-long internment by the American forces for participation in the Nazi “conspiracy to wage aggressive war” and in the wider post-war context of West Germany (Drolet, forthcoming). Several authors have already drawn the parallels between Schmitt and Russia, suggesting that one may be useful for understanding another. One of the forerunners, Grigorov

(1997) suggested that Russia’s constitution was based on the Schmittian perception of authority. More recently, Filippov (2008) and Baumgarth (2015) referred to Schmitt to understand Russia’s domestic policy and the foundations behind Vladimir Putin’s presidency. In contrast, Russia’s foreign policy has enjoyed comparatively less attention. Only Auer (2015: 967) incorporated Schmitt into his study of the revival of Russian imperialism, which he classified as “the most serious challenge to Europe’s peace since the end of the Cold War”.

As dissidence is always a correlative notion, the holistic analysis of state dissidence should also examine the hegemonic system to which it applies (Hamati-Ataya, 2011). This article argues that, by analysing the dissidence of Russia, it is possible to uncover the subtle mechanisms of global liberal governance. Following a synopsis of the aims of global governance, it attempts to convey Schmitt’s view of international politics and the dangers of liberal de-politicization of the international realm. On the basis of Schmitt, this article identifies the defence of the sovereignty of the state, its way of life and pluralism of international order as possible justifications for the resistance of the modern state. Indeed, by undermining state sovereignty, globalizing liberalism attempts to suppress difference of states as a potential cause of conflict. In turn, this risks provoking radical resistance in the long run. Most importantly, the article demonstrates that state resistance is important for understanding the weaknesses of global governance. The analysis of Russia’s “hybrid” strategy of resistance shows that the over-reliance on law and the inability to identify its enemies make global liberal governance vulnerable to exceptional cases of resistance. After all, liberalism might be strengthened from reflecting on state dissidence and developing a strategic response to deal with its dangers.

Eliminating conflict in the “post-political” age

The disappearance of the Westphalian relationship of “just enmity” has been thought of as one of the main strengths of the “post-political” global governance. Based on the influential analysis by Mouffe (2000), the concept of the “post-political” refers to governmental practices that are premised on consensus, rather than struggle, as the basis of the liberal international order. Its proponents often emphasize that, “even though liberal states have become involved in numerous wars with non-liberal states, constitutionally secure liberal states have yet to engage in war with one another” (Doyle, 1983: 213). The harmony of international relationships derives from the general understanding that peace and cooperation bring more benefits than their absence. The phenomenon of enmity appears only in the context of something to be eventually neutralized or turned into friendship. The establishment of the European Union, democratic states and the transatlantic security cooperation signifies the movement towards the concept of international “friendship” (Prozorov, 2006: 86).

The point of departure for the liberal project to eliminate war is its belief in the sanctity of the freedom of the individual (Doyle, 1983). Despite acknowledging difference on the surface, liberals see individuals to be fundamentally uniform in the sense that all are concerned with self-preservation and prosperity. Consequently, all “share an interest in peace, and should want war only as an instrument to bring about peace” (Owen, 2000: 344). This is connected to Nader’s (1990) belief that conflict is a feature of a necessarily unhealthy, outdated and dysfunctional society. The behaviour of the non-liberal “other” is perceived as inherently irrational. Nader’s concept of “harmony ideology” argues that aspiring for harmony and minimizing confrontation brings real harmony and security in the world. The apparent condition for such ultimate harmony seems to be a world consisting of only

liberal democratic states, for only they can represent the actual will of their citizens to live in peace and stability.

In addition to the discursive de-legitimization of conflict, there is its increasing “moralization” (Mouffe, 2000; Prozorov, 2006; Garsten and Jacobsson, 2011). The tendency of moral evaluation of codes of conduct has been intensified since the Second World War, when the concept of the enemy started having an inherently negative connotation. The most apparent example of this was the creation of International War Crimes Tribunals after the Second World War and the new category of “crimes against humanity”. Since then, the notion of humanity has become the liberal *raison d'état* corroborated by the United Nations Charter. Any obstacle—whether war, authoritarianism or anarchy—becomes illegitimate by definition.

A consensual model of politics suppresses the possibility of dissent by purifying the political agenda from potentially contentious issues. The expression of frustrations, antagonisms and disagreements occur outside of legitimate channels. Usually, such dissidence is spontaneous, short-lived and unable to pose a significant threat to global governance. However, the attitude towards dissidence changes when it comes to dissidence of the state in the international arena. Non-liberal states are viewed as potentially dangerous, since they may seek to usurp other states. Thus, a considerable emphasis falls at the pre-emption of conflict and state misbehaviour.

Global police power plays a distinct pre-emptive role in global governance, significantly weakening the regulatory capacity of the state (Ryan, 2013). The global police can be understood as “a supranational investigative body with enforcement powers” that maintains good international order (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012: 130). It operates through different transnational regulatory bodies, such as NGOs, international organizations, states, public and private actors, united by the common task of maintaining global security and liberal order. The idea of a global police takes its origins from the notion of a “good neighbourhood”, which was then transformed into “one neighbourhood” and embodied in the creation of United Nations (Ryan, 2013: 448). The actions of the global police do not depend on democratic approval, and there is no counter-power that can legitimately scrutinize them (Jennar, 2004). This is sometimes called “governance without government”, which, as Garsten and Jacobsson (2011: 425) clarify, is governance through “steering” from heterarchical power centres. In contrast to the conventional understanding of police, the regulatory modes of the global police are not limited to rule-setting, but also include monitoring and “soft law”—quasi-legal guidelines and codes of practice (Ibid.). Rather than being constraining, various centres of the global policing gradually encourage and discipline states to frame their policies in accordance with global models (Meyer, 2007: 263). In the post-Cold War era, guiding Russia and many East European states towards the liberal future became one such example (Ryan, 2013).

In the case of an international threat, the enforcing capacities of global policing depend on the pre-emptively formed consensus against specific activities that are recognized to endanger international security. The dissenting actor faces criminalization of their behaviour, its universal condemnation and general isolation. According to Articles 41 and 42 of the UN Charter (1945), if the threat is not liquidated, the UN may choose to take more forceful action. Various governmental bodies unite in using “diplomatic pressure or incentives, economic measures or coercive action, often in combination” (Feinstein and Slaughter, 2004: 145). In the case of the current crisis in Ukraine, the pre-emptive measures taken against Russian aggression were the economic sanctions imposed against Russia’s major officials. The EU and NATO also suspended their cooperation with Russia, aiming to achieve its political and economic isolation.

Placing global policing into the wider implications of the “post-political” global order, the thesis of a leading International Relations theorist, Wendt (2003), on the inevitability of a world state illustrates a self-evident conclusion of liberal governance. According to Wendt, the most formidable inadequacy of the current collective security system is its voluntary status, which is unable to eradicate the possibility of conflict completely. Its member-states still retain their sovereignty and are likely to disobey when they find it beneficial (Wendt, 2003). Thanks to a much stronger capacity of enforcement, a world state would ensure against the instability of collective security. Together with it comes the necessity to eliminate all the possibilities of state dissidence. Yet, Wendt (2003: 523) wonders whether the purpose of retention of sovereignty is anything else than “retention of the right to decide, unilaterally, to revoke an actor’s recognized status and possibly kill them”. As Prozorov (2006: 87) argues, the ultimate goal of the liberal project is the disappearance of the international as such and creation of “a self-immanent system without an outside”.

Schmitt’s critique of liberalism

Schmitt finds his critique of the liberal international order on his concept of “the political”. For the purposes of clarity, “the political” is defined here as the struggle that roots any given socio-political order, and from which basic governmental principles derive. Starting from Schmitt’s early writings, such as *Political Theology* ([1922] 2005) and *The Concept of the Political* ([1927] 2007b), until his more mature works, such as *Nomos of the Earth* ([1950] 2003), he insists that the core of the political is the struggle between friends and enemies. The political should be distinguished from all other spheres of human activity (moral, aesthetic or economic), as the friend-enemy antinomy constitutes an independent criterion of judgement and action. Put differently, the political enemy does not need to be evil or ugly to remain “the other”. As the political is also the strongest antagonism, everything becomes divided according to the friend-enemy distinction should conflict arise. Accounting for the political as a domain of struggle shows that war is unavoidable in international relations. It is not to say that the political is nothing more than a state of war, but it, nonetheless, remains an existential possibility.

Reflecting on global liberal governance, Schmitt criticizes its attempts to subdue the political to the rule of law. He confronts the liberal tendency to escape conflict and to shield behind the fragile foundations of liberal normativism and legal formalism. Liberal politics is but the ignorance and negation of politics, its eradication. As Schmitt puts it, there is “no liberal politics, only a liberal critique of politics. The systematic theory of liberalism concerns almost solely the internal struggle against the power of the state” (Schmitt: 70). However, as the most extreme antagonism, the political sources its energy literally from everywhere and cannot be eradicated. Therefore, liberalism succeeds only in temporarily masking the political through non-political language.

Schmitt’s underlying concern is that the dominance of secular liberalism and rational individualism can be detrimental for sustaining the meaningfulness of life. In his essay given as a lecture, “The Age of Neutralisations and Depoliticisations” ([1929] 2007a: 95), Schmitt expresses his concern that the “soulless mechanism” of modern technocratic governance will cause the decay of spiritual life. Inspired by Max Weber’s analysis of “rationalization”, he claims that modern technology and bureaucracy replace human action and thought, causing increasing “disenchantment”. Strauss (1991) rightfully highlights the presence of morals in Schmitt’s theory, as it is ignorance of the

masses which Schmitt views as the most corrupting force. If through participation in politics one learns responsibility and reason, then, without the political, one ceases to be a human (Darby, 2000). The logical outcome of such conditions “is a society that is held together by the market place, where isolated individuals as competitors exchange commodities” (Turner, 2002: 106). In short, Schmitt fears that the sweeping blow of globalization and technocratic governance will engender a society full of neutralized and vegetative bodies.

On the international level, de-politicization negates the existence of a struggle between groups over what is right. Contrary to encouraging war between states, Schmitt claims that political violence cannot be justified unless it is a response to a threat to a group’s “way of life”. As Warren (1988: 35) states, to define the political “only in terms of conflict, would miss its distinctive qualities and potentials”. In the situations “when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity”, the friend-enemy distinction encourages citizens to take responsibility and sacrifice life for their form of existence (Schmitt: 28). It ensures against, what Warren (1988: 31) calls “a Nietzschean world”, or, in simplified terms, a nihilistic world in which states cannot preserve the meaningfulness of life of their communities. Without the international political space, communities would be unable to maintain their values, principles and beliefs. As McLoughlin (2009: 143) states, “liberalism negates [politics] [...] as a locus of value and reduces public political concerns to private moral or economic ones”. The political with its friend-enemy distinction holds an intrinsic ethical value because it gives meaning to the existence of the international.

Since “the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political”, Schmitt ([1927] 2007b: 19) grants the state with the role of organizing, managing and channelling political conflict. As put by McLoughlin (2009: 141), “the ability to decide for a substantive value and to realise it within the world [...] raises individuals up out of the pursuit of their individual interests”, and unites them into a true political community—the state. Thus, the state has to be autonomous from all social institutions and interests to be able to make most suitable decisions in life-and-death situations to preserve its way of life. It requires a strong sovereign who would represent a unified will of the people and remove internal opposition. Globalization of the political as the strongest antagonism further reinforces Schmitt’s emphasis on the need for state sovereignty.

Russia: view from the receiving end of global governance

Recovering sovereignty. Inheriting Schmitt’s view of the political, Russia’s political identity has been largely based on differentiating itself from others (Tsygankov, 2013). Rejecting the concept of “global democracy”, Russia has introduced its own alternative concept of “sovereign democracy” (Herpen, 2014: 57), for public good is a relational term that depends on a concrete situation (Oates, 2007). Sovereign democracy implies that the state alone can set the criteria of democracy for itself, protecting its unique statehood against the intrusion by the world police power. According to this theory, the aggregation of internal consensus and stability are necessary for the state to be able to defend itself in the case of external threats. Thus, the Russian political system places state sovereignty above the rule of law.

Since no juridico-political order can exist without an enforcing authority, the president is given an unquestionable authority. This conviction guides most of the decisions of the main party, United Russia, as much as the overriding majority of other parties (Ibid.). Vladimir Putin’s authority equally prevails in the upper and the lower houses of the parliament, the judiciary and the countless

“backdoor” meetings and rigged elections (Motyl, 2016). Electoral fraud and manipulated media work hard to eliminate any chances of political opposition. Russia’s legal system is not inoperative, but serves only those who are willing to abandon their animosities and unite in strengthening the state. After all, following Schmitt, the Russian government considers its opponents to be by definition outside the state law (Grigorov, 1997).

Moreover, what the West defines as a neo-imperial “aggrandisement of state power” (Herpen, 2014: 111) and “war against Ukraine” (Goble, 2016: 37), the Russian state perceives as the reconstruction of its unrestored unity (Tolz, 1998; Laruelle, 2016). For Russia, the transition to democracy and adaptation to the liberal rules of international conduct became negatively associated with losing state sovereignty (Fischer, 2012). Since the times of Kievan Rus’, Ukraine and Russia have battled and identified themselves against common enemies. Russia views the Ukrainian land as, borrowing Lukyanov’s (2010: 19) words, “a natural part of the country’s historical and cultural core”. By supporting regime change in Ukraine and its integration with the EU, the West is thought to be meddling in Russia’s “legitimate interests”. Accordingly, through the political and military enlargements of the EU and NATO, the West has been trying to weaken its sovereignty by expanding its influence closer to Russia’s borders (Rajan and Rumer, 2015; Sakwa, 2015a).

Therefore, Russia perceived the overthrow of the government in Kyiv as a state of exception that, by extension, threatened its sovereignty. The state of exception can be characterized by a breakdown of order; an unpredictable and uncontrollable situation when norms, legal rules and ethics lose their validity (McLoughlin, 2009). According to Schmitt ([1922] 2005: 5), sovereignty belongs to whoever decides on the exception and whoever is capable of dealing with it: “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception”. The sovereign decision cannot be foreseen by the constitution. In fact, it must be constitutionally exceptional (Grigorov, 1997: 275). From this perspective, the annexation of Crimea was Russia’s response to the nationalist takeover, which threatened the Russian minority living in Ukraine. In addition, the actions of the new Ukrainian government, such as the repeal of the law that made Russian the second official language, endangered the historical and cultural interconnectedness of two peoples. This could also endanger Russia’s “fabric of internal values” and, thus, its way of life (Tsygankov, 2015: 293). Consequently, the Russian state chose to restore the order by positioning itself superior to law and interfering in the crisis.

In the West, most of the criticism of the Russian state has come from a rather top-down perspective of liberal governance. For instance, Herpen (2014: 57) confronts Russia’s coercive quest for power, the absence of morals and endorsement of the doctrine of social Darwinism, according to which the strong ought to dominate the weak because of the very fact that they are stronger. According to Bugajski (2009: 15), “instead of confronting and expunging the Soviet past, the Putinists [...] diverted their attention toward a new enemy, the rapacious West evidently intent on dismembering Russia”. Discussing the “paradoxes” of Russian politics, Luzhkov (2003: 156), also condemns Russia’s foreign policy for following “the futile and mainly fabricated” rationale of “who to be friends with”. Nonetheless, the question arises: why would the state even think of confronting a significant part of itself and, in doing so, weakening its legitimacy before the people? The question is especially striking in international relations, where sovereignty is vital for state survival in the wake of the globalization of the political. Taking Russia’s perspective shows that the relationship between the state and liberal governance is inherently problematic because liberalism favours only weak states.

The sanctity of the way of life. Examining the arguments for the incontestable powers of the state, the first question that comes to mind is to what extent the public good depends on state sovereignty. Indeed, from the liberal pluralist perspective, the individual necessarily needs to be freed from the state. From this perspective, it is not logical for Russian citizens to be proud of the state aggrandizing power because it potentially amounts to the state exerting more coercion. Nonetheless, the perspective of the state helps understand the concept of liberty not as an exclusive domain of the individual, but as something that can be attributed to the political community as a whole. Here, the state appears as the embodiment of the overarching unity of differences within civil society (Rasch, 2000). This unity constitutes its unique way of life, which the state has to defend on the international level. As stated in Russia's National Security Strategy, the state policy should be directed towards "the reinforcement of the role of the state as guarantor of the security of the individual" (Security Council of the Russian Federation, 2009). According to Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (cited in Makarychev and Morozov, 2011: 362), "each country is supposed to represent its own interests, instead of delegating its functions to EU, NATO and other international organisations". This explains the citizens' pride in the state gaining more strength, as "freedom for Russia" already ensures individual freedom and, thus, stands before it (Putin, 2014a).

But does state sovereignty still matter in the liberal world where the individual difference is being ever-increasingly accentuated and cherished? The answer that Schmitt gives is a definite "yes". The reason for this is that liberal governance fosters global uniformity and hierarchy of values, while shielding behind the preservation of difference on the molecular level. More precisely, Schmitt objects to the attempts to establish a global consensus over the universality of liberal values. In his concise piece entitled *The Tyranny of Values* ([1959] 1996b), Schmitt develops a political critique of values, linking it to his earlier remarks on global governance. Its main point is that value has a natural tendency to continuously value, and that this valuation is not possible without simultaneously de-valuing. As such, "[w]hoever sets a value, takes position against a disvalue by that very action" (Schmitt). Wendt (2003: 525) insists that liberal governance does not foster uniformity because the limitless tolerance and neutrality of viewpoints allow the state to preserve its individuality. However, the narrative of "particularism within universalism" (Ibid.) eventually turns into a struggle for existence between the hegemonic and peripheral systems, for "[t]he valuation pressure of the value is irresistible" (Schmitt). In this case, the notion of humanity as a community of universal values—namely tolerance, neutrality, the rule of law, human rights and free market—is detrimental because it supersedes the value systems of individual states.

Schmitt's critique resembles the "value empire" narrative, which has been a prevailing critique of the EU among the Russian elites in the last two decades (Averre, 2009: 1690). According to Fischer (2012) and Sakwa (2015b), the EU expansion is an imperialist move to overtake Russia's sphere of influence through entrenching liberal values. Hence, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (cited in Fischer, 2012: 39) asked: "We are accused of trying to have spheres of influence. What is the Eastern Partnership? Is it a sphere of influence, we would like to understand?" Therefore, Russia fears that it will no longer be responsible for its way of life, which would be imposed on it by an external force, by extension, disciplining its people (Odysseos, 2007). As Meyer (2007: 264) claims, good citizenship of states depends on how well they serve their "people". In turn, "these 'people' are defined in standardised ways" (Ibid.). In so doing, liberal governance stands by its claim to foster political plurality

only insofar as plurality takes place within the already predefined umbrella of difference.

Defending international pluralism? As show above, there is a strong correlation between the sovereignty of the state and the preservation of its way of life. Moreover, the two are closely intertwined when it comes to the final justification of state dissidence—the recovery of pluralism within the global order of autonomous states. Herein, Schmitt envisages the international order to be a pluriverse rather than a universe, representing a plurality of interests on the global scale. As put by Rasch (2000: 12), Schmitt wants to begin "with a unity of difference to attain a difference of unities". International politics is essentially a space of difference, which are often irreconcilable. Thus, the possibility of conflict between states cannot be completely eradicated. However, as political struggle sustains the meaningfulness of life, there is nothing wrong with sovereign states asserting their power and vitality against one another (Schmitt). In the case of disagreement, it is natural for states to group themselves into "friends" and "enemies". Some states may choose to stay neutral, but this does not make them "impartial" judges, since judging also constitutes participating (Rasch, 2000). In such a way, wars would be waged according to the ethics of *raison d'état* on how to best defend one's way of life.

Nevertheless, in the modern world order, the devaluation of different "ways of life" is done with a globalizing force. In addition to the waves of de-politicization coming from the centre of global governance, the negation of difference from below causes the "abyss of total devaluation", the same nihilistic world which Schmitt (1959 [1996b]) fears. However, nihilism can easily turn into a dangerous force once there appears an actor or a group "strong enough to master the new technology" and chair the new governance (Schmitt, 2007a: 94). Schmitt's ([1978] 1987: 80) main fear is the transformational of international politics into "a world police power", where a particular group claims to represent humanity at large. Schmitt (cited in Petito, 2007: 109) presumes that the Cold War was decisive in this sense, for its "victor [was doomed to become] the world's sole sovereign". Returning to Wendt's (2003) idea of a "world state", the price of world peace is the elimination of the international as space where it is still possible to resist the totality of one order (Prozorov, 2006: 88).

With the beginning of Putin's presidency, the emphasis on the recovery of pluralism within the international system has settled deep into Russia's foreign policy agenda (Snetkov and Lanteigne, 2015). Putin (2007) has criticized the global liberal governance for being "a world of one master, one sovereign". Consequently, the modern international order is not the result of the democratic will of the people, but of a club-like conglomerate of liberal states. Thus, Russia depicts itself to be a courageous bastion against the imperialist tendencies of Western liberalism, especially its humanitarian militarism, political unilateralism and undermining of state sovereignty. It aims to undermine the dominance of the Western liberalism chaired by the United States by transforming the "unipolar" international order into a "multipolar" one (Ibid.). According to one of the most well-known radical right theoreticians in Russia, Alexandr Dugin (cited in Laruelle, 2016: 8), Russia's global mission lies in "the incarnation of the quest for a historical alternative to Atlanticism".

The Russian case shows that resistance is concomitant to the de-politicization and neutralization of the international order, calling for an even stronger suppression of difference. As Prozorov (2006: 90) explains, resistance is inevitable, "as the Other is certain to resist its violent inclusion into the homeland of liberal humanity". To maintain its absolute authority, global

governance decides to “push the discrimination of the opponent into the abyss” by abusing the universality of liberal principles (Schmitt: 321). Schmitt ([1963] 2004) continues his analysis in *Theory of the Partisan*, stating that the opponents of the global hegemony of liberalism become seen as inhuman, a non-value. They are not recognized as an enemy, but are transformed into “a disturber of peace” and thereby “an outlaw of humanity” (Schmitt: 79). The conflation of politics with morality portrays the political enemies of Western liberalism as morally corrupt “criminals”, calling for the global police intervention (Bessant, 2015: 335). War is no longer a legitimate act of state sovereignty to openly promote its interests, but a crime against humanity.

Therefore, from the perspective of global governance, Russia’s dissidence is merely a sign of a neo-imperialist state desiring more power. Its strength and unity are condemned; its weakness is praised. Accordingly, the main problem with Russia is that it has failed to borrow liberal values and become a “normal” state (Luzhkov, 2003: 156). In fact, Russia appears as “a mythical monster”, which “every time it lies down on the ground and appears finally defeated, it rises to power again” (Herpen, 2014: 15). It is a monster because, as Shevtsova (2014: 74) claims, “instead of trying to join Western civilization, Russia is now striving to become its antithesis”. It necessarily needs to be turned into a liberal democracy and embrace the technocratic governance in the name of an external legitimizing authority. If, despite the recommendations of global police, its resistance continues, it will no longer be a form of dissent, but a criminal act.

The more total global policing becomes, the higher is the chance for the most extreme violence against the opponents of the post-political international order. By claiming universal validity, global liberal governance does not become “the opposite of force, but a force that outlaws opposition” (Rasch, 2000:10). The struggle for the highest values creates “ever newer, ever deeper discriminations, criminalisations, and devaluations, until all non-valuable life has been destroyed” (Schmitt: 94). As put by Galli and Fay (2010: 6), the notion of universalism “is discriminatory in and of itself, as it tends to read exception as error, injustice, immorality, or as the disturbance of unity that has no right to existence and must, therefore, be removed”. Schmitt ([1929] 2007a: 95) describes this dynamic by saying that “the most terrible war is pursued in the name of peace, [and] the most terrible oppression is pursued in the name of freedom”.

Nonetheless, even extreme eradication of opposition does not mean that resistance disappears, but that it is kept “on hold” or finds a different expression. All states are bearers of different ways of life, which cannot be reconciled simply by uniting them in a unipolar world order. According to Schmitt (Ibid.: 90), even “in the new domain, at first considered neutral, the antitheses of men and interests will unfold with a new intensity and become increasingly sharper”. Despite being built on the principles of neutrality and objectivity, the new international community is likely to “become immediately another arena of struggle” (Ibid.). As Mouffe (2000: 5) explains, the excess of consensus prevents conflict from channelling and causes it to become necessarily “agonistic”. Globalization is likely to cause resistance to arise with a new, unprecedented force. However, the radical unity of the world now means that conflict can no longer be contained behind the state borders. “The old gods rise from their graves and fight their old battles” right at the centre of the liberal community (Schmitt). In short, there is a danger of state dissidence transforming into radical resistance against liberal governance.

Still, there is a clear mismatch between the predictions of radical resistance and the resistance of Russia. Rather than being a purely defensive measure, Russia’s resistance is also a project that it aspires to export to other states. Dugin (cited in Laruelle,

2016: 9) calls for a transformation of “Russian distinctiveness into a universal model of culture”. Although Russia is not merely an expansionist state, the desire to expand its sphere of influence still is a major motivation for its dissidence. In fact, the belief of the great majority of Ukrainians that “Ukraine is not Russia” dismantles any claims that Ukraine is somehow part of the Russian nation (Kuchma, 2003). After all, it is no longer a historical friendship founded on fighting common enemies when one of the “friends” wages a war against the other. Thus, Laruelle (2016: 9) is right to speak of an apparent contradiction between Russia’s “exaltation of national distinctiveness” and its “desire for geopolitical and ideological expansionism and a new messianism”. Nonetheless, despite not being a true defender of a multipolar world order, Russia’s dissidence, helps expose the problematic relationship between the state and modern governance, liberalism and pluralism.

Exceptional case: hybrid resistance

The two-dimensional nature of its dissidence suggests that Russia is only a half-dissident. On the one hand, it fights against the intrusion of hegemonic liberal governance into the domestic life of states. On the other hand, Russia’s foreign policies position it as an aspiring world hegemon. Nonetheless, as stated earlier, the purpose of this article is not to criticize Russia’s behaviour, but to investigate what it uncovers about global governance. Indeed, Russia intends not only to free itself from the influence of liberal governance, but also to neutralize its hegemony. To achieve it, its dissidence is structured in such a way as to exploit the fundamental weaknesses of global liberal governance. Thus, examining the specific strategy of state dissidence can help discover the loopholes in the international order.

Russia’s dissidence during the Ukraine crisis is an exceptional case in the history of global governance, as it differs from the usual forms of warfare. The Kremlin’s vague interpretation of the international law allows it to justify the 2014 annexation of Crimea by invoking the right of all nations to self-determination stated in the United Nations Charter, portraying the annexation as Russia’s response to the “plea” of the people of Crimea (Putin, 2014b). In a similar fashion, Russia distorts the fact of its involvement in the separatist insurgency in Eastern Ukraine. However, there is strong evidence that Moscow provides the separatists with military, logistical and diplomatic support (Snetkov and Lanteigne, 2015; Lanozka, 2016). Throughout Ukraine, the Kremlin has also secured support from a pro-Russian lobby of political forces, which promote Russian interests through pro-Russian movements (Ukrainian Choice) and participation in the parliament (parties such as “Opposition Bloc”, “Our Land”, “Revival”) (Shevtsova, 2015). Nonetheless, Russia never recognized the referendums in Eastern Ukraine. Neither did it formally invade the territory of Ukraine. Consequently, international law lacks enough factual evidence to lay formal charges against the Russian state.

The innovation of Russia’s resistance lies in the implementation of hybrid techniques of warfare, which have departed from relying on direct military force. “Hybrid warfare” can be understood as the use of military force while claiming otherwise, which is supplemented with the weaponisation of information, ideas, business and other areas of life (Pomerantsev and Weiss, 2014; Shevtsova, 2015; Lanozka, 2016). Simultaneously, the Kremlin continues to emphasize the importance of abiding by international law and using diplomacy rather than force to resolve conflicts (Snetkov and Lanteigne, 2015). Such camouflaging allows the Russian state to pursue its interests and bypass the normative principles of liberal governance. Whereas it is easy to criminalize an overt aggression, the major international

institutions, such as UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council, are powerless when it comes to hybrid warfare.

The technique of hybrid warfare shows the insufficiency of international law in dealing with exceptional cases. There is a strong correlation between the liberal fear of conflict and its attempts at de-politicization of the international realm. To eliminate the possibility of resistance to its global hegemony, liberal governance tries to neutralize difference between states by imposing on them the rule of law. In the process, however, the system becomes a hostage of its own rules. By excluding the space for difference, it loses the flexibility necessary for dealing with exceptional cases. Schmitt ([1922] 2005: 13) considers the power of law to be limited to the periods when the world enjoys peace and stability, a situation he calls “a homogeneous medium”. However, the onset of exceptional circumstances turns liberal constitutionalism into a mirage, for “[t]here is no norm which could be applied to a situation of chaos” (Ibid.). Thus, Schmitt ([1963] 2003: 220) warns against the liberal reliance on law, which merely is “a collection of somewhat valid norms” that have no relation to political reality. In the case of the Ukraine conflict, there is simply no such provision in international law that could prosecute hybrid warfare.

In addition to the camouflaged warfare directly on Ukrainian soil, the danger of Russia’s hybrid warfare rises because of its ability to permeate the Western space. Russia widely exploits the notion of freedom of information to spread disinformation across the West. It sponsors pro-Russian media outlets in the West and uses social media to deliver its interpretation of events, which often totally reverses the Western perspective (Pomerantsev and Weiss, 2014). In the United Kingdom, for instance, the European-wide news channel, Euronews, has fewer viewers than the pro-Russian channel, Russia Today (Shevtsova, 2015: 32). Weaponisation of information demonstrates the weaknesses of one of the main liberal principles of governance—freedom of information and expression. In the meantime, Russia is placing new limits on the Internet content and media outlets with foreign capital inside Russia. From 2012, the Russian Federal Security Service can demand to erase all web-content deemed “harmful” even without a court order (Ibid.). According to the idea of the sovereignty of one’s way of life, there is nothing extraordinary about the state having its interpretation of reality. However, the acceptance of Russian propaganda within the liberal community is a prime example of the self-destructive effects of liberal governance (Miazhevich, 2014).

Furthermore, Russia incites internal divisions within the liberal states. While demanding that its elites repatriate their foreign assets, Russia funds and creates alliances with Eurosceptic think tanks and political parties in Europe. The French National Front, the UK Independence Party and German Die Linke Party have all been outspoken defenders of Russia’s foreign policies (Shevtsova, 2015; Lanoszka, 2016). Some of the main NATO and EU members, such as Germany, France, Greece and Italy, have also been ready to overlook Russia’s dissidence because of their strong economic ties with Russia (Mankoff, 2013: 265). Such “accommodationist” positions are extremely counterproductive for the liberal community, as they only facilitate Russia’s dissidence and discredit the decision-making powers of the world sovereign.

In effect, hybrid warfare is part of Russia’s wider project of “hybrid resistance” used to undermine liberal governance. The main characteristic of hybrid resistance is the presence of a silent dissenter, which enters the hegemonic system only to gradually undermine it by using its own rules. The focus of liberalism has always been on assimilating everybody into its way of life, aiming to eliminate potential conflict. In fact, Goble (2016: 38) still praises the liberal “ability to integrate outsiders”. However, as mentioned earlier, the attempts to include every state into the

liberal international community do not eliminate resistance, but rather agonizes it further in the long term. It becomes more difficult to control internal dissidence, as the distinction between the Self and the Other disappears (Prozorov, 2006). The result of the liberal pretence of not having the Other is that the nature of the opponent remains unclear. As Bugajski (2009: 17) warned, “much of the West does not understand the kind of threat that Russia poses and is not actively engaged in countering” it.

The strategy of hybrid resistance had helped Russia to learn the weak spots of the liberal international order long before the start of the Ukraine conflict. Indeed, the post-Cold War euphoria of the “end of ideology” weakened the vigilance of the West in relation to Russia. The belief in Russia as an “honest” partner survived through different frictions—the Chechen Wars, the gas wars with Ukraine and the Russo-Georgian War. In its strategy of resistance, Russia did not take the position of the enemy of the West. It entered the “global homeland” only to resist it from within. For decades, Russia has upheld a formal democratic image, simulated adherence to international liberal standards and claimed to be a partner of the West. The “liberal dress-up game” brought a notable openness throughout the West towards Russia’s participation in liberal multilateral institutions (Ibid.: 22). The 1990s alone witnessed the acceptance of Russia into the Council of Europe and the G7 (later becoming G8), as well as the signing of agreements with the European Union and NATO. As Putin (2014b) remarks, Russia and the West now “belong to the same civilization”.

Internal dissidence is difficult to eradicate since the outsider has already become part of the community, making its members dependent on itself. Nowadays, the mere fact of the possession of Security Council veto power by Russia constrains global decision-making. The 1992 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which permits Russia to possess nuclear weapons, is enough to install fear of a nuclear war across the West. Because of the economic interconnectedness with Russia, global policing does not dare to impose truly harsh sanctions (Mankoff, 2013). Russia is aware of this, and, thus, it aims to eventually conclude a deal with the West that would force the Ukrainian government to accept a “reorganization” of its land. Indeed, in the name of conflict neutralisation, the West is likely to eventually compromise its values and hope that concessions could appease Russia and return to the status quo.

Therefore, understood in Schmitt’s sense, the failure to preemptively make a clear friend-enemy distinction is another weakness of global liberal governance. For Schmitt, the willingness to face conflict is more beneficial than its deferment. Contrary to being afraid of war, he claims it to be a necessary part of establishing relationships between states. Galli and Fay (2010: 5) also suggest that conflict can be “a form of reciprocal recognition” of each state’s sovereignty. Facing the enemy seems to be even more pertinent once global governance realises the vicious circle, into which its desire to escape conflict ensnares it. It tries to neutralize difference as the root cause of conflict by bringing every state into the liberal community, but provokes stronger resistance in the end. After all, despite the endless discussions in assemblies, the liberal reality does not become any more peaceful (Hirst, 1999).

More realistically, however, the lessons that one may take from Schmitt’s critique are not as straightforward as suspending the rule of law, declaring one to be the enemy and entering an open confrontation. Contrary to the return to the pre-war state of international enmity, the friend-enemy distinction can be understood as stronger vigilance when it comes to outsiders of the liberal community. Furthermore, precisely because of its ambiguous nature, Russia’s resistance calls for a more subtle solution than an open confrontation. Rather than legislating on

the exception, the urgent task of liberal governance is to make the international law and its enforcement more adaptable to hybrid warfare. Together with exposing the lack of flexibility of international law, hybrid dissidence also points at the limitations of a predominantly military approach. Indeed, since the start of the Ukraine crisis, NATO has increased its military exercises and strengthened its high readiness capabilities (Lanowska, 2016). While the military approach is effective in preventing large-scale military attacks, hybrid warfare involves only minimal violence, the usage of which it can easily deny and conceal. Moreover, the international liberal order needs to confront pro-Russian advocates within itself that prevent it from agreeing on a coherent policy towards Russia (Mankoff, 2013). The West needs to reconsider whether propaganda aimed to undermine its unity and conceal the truth can legitimately be defended as freedom of speech. The final lesson that can be extracted from Schmitt's critique of liberal governance is that the security of "friends" is crucial for the security of oneself. Therefore, the sovereignty of Ukraine should not be compromised by accepting Russia's annexation of Ukrainian lands regardless of the benefits of temporary pacification it might bring.

Conclusion

This article was guided by the belief that our understanding of global governance is incomplete without the consideration of the dynamics between the giving and receiving ends. The aggression of the Russian state during the Ukraine conflict has brought most of the focus to Russia's behaviour, or rather its misbehaviour. The explanations have varied from Russia's domestic problems, its expansionist appetites to simply the desire for international recognition. However, it is questionable whether those explanatory approaches truly capture the perspective of the receiving end of global governance, when Russia is readily viewed as the deviant actor in this configuration. Thus, by considering the theoretical input of Carl Schmitt, this article took the standpoint of the dissenting state to problematize global governance.

Schmitt shows that the proliferation of liberal regimes and international organizations is certainly not the only means through which global governance attempts to achieve world peace. A much greater role is played by certain de-politicizing techniques aimed at suppressing differences between states as the root causes of conflict. In this case, the resistance of the modern state comes in response to the weakening of its sovereignty, devaluation of its way of life and imposition of a uniform international order. Herein, however, global governance underestimates the nature of international politics, which is founded upon a plurality of different visions of life. As difference and conflict are interconnected, the political is the strongest antagonism, which means that de-politicization results in resistance. The more global governance attempts to eradicate the "abnormal" behaviour, the more radical resistance it engenders.

Insofar as state dissidence reflects the identity of the system, it also reflects the identity of the dissident. Likewise, the resistance of the Russian state extends beyond measures of self-defence and arises as an attempt of a competing system to spread its way of life. Consequently, it is aimed at undermining liberal governance in the most effective way—from its core. Hybrid warfare used in the Ukraine crisis cannot destroy liberal governance on its own, but it does demonstrate that its major weakness lies in the lack of flexibility of modern law in dealing with exceptional cases. More significantly, hybrid warfare is key to understanding the wider project of Russia's strategy of hybrid resistance. The exceptionality of Russia's resistance is based on its possession of the insider's knowledge of the weaknesses of liberal governance, as

well as its substantial presence in the system of global governance. Therefore, stronger vigilance when it comes to outsiders of the liberal community is essential for the very existence of liberal governance. This article concludes that hybrid challenges require more subtle solutions than those of military confrontation. Possible solutions might include modifying international law to make it more adaptable to non-linear challenges, strengthening internal unity and prioritizing the security interests of the "friends" of the international liberal order.

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Data availability

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

Additional information

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