A Liberal Peace?: The Growth of Liberal Norms and theDecline of Interstate Violence

Patrick Gill-Tiney

Abstract
How have understandings of fundamental norms of international society changed over time? How does this relate to the decline of interstate violence since 1945? Previous explanations have focused on regime type, domestic institutions, economic interdependence, relative power, and nuclear weapons, I argue that a crucial and underexplored part of the puzzle is the change in understanding of sovereignty over the same period. In this article, I propose a novel means of examining change in these norms between 1970 and 2014 by analyzing the content of UN Security Council resolutions. This analysis is then utilized in quantitative analysis of the level of violence dispute participants resorted to in all Militarized Interstate Disputes in the period. I find that as liberal understandings of fundamental norms have increased, that the average level of violence used has decreased. This points to a crucial missing component in the existing literature: that institutions can only constrain when political actors share the right norms.

Keywords
international security, interstate conflict, liberal peace, militarized interstate disputes, democratic peace, international institutions

1Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Corresponding Author:
Patrick Gill-Tiney, St John’s College, University of Oxford, St Giles’, Oxford OX1 3JP, United Kingdom. Email: patrick.gill-tiney@politics.ox.ac.uk
Interstate disputes have declined in average severity over the post-1945 period, a trend apparently accelerated by the end of the Cold War. Yet, explaining this has proved difficult. Many explanations have noted the importance of the spread of democracy over the same period (Doyle 1983; Maoz and Russett 1993; Russett and Oneal 2001), with a result, that a focus on regime type and domestic institutions have dominated the literature. Others have argued that this is in fact a capitalist peace (Gartzke 2007; Schneider and Gleditsch 2010), or the result on interplay between the Kantian Triad of democracy, free trade and international organizations (Appel 2018; Kinne 2013a). More critical voices have suggested this is less the result of liberal institutions and practices and more the result of superpower politics and alliance blocs during the Cold War (Farber and Gowa 1995; Kydd 2005; Layne 1994; Rosato 2003), great power politics (McDonald 2015), unipolarity since 1990 (Monteiro 2014), and the advent of the nuclear age (Waltz 1990). The spread of democratic regimes, international organizations, and free trade though are about more than just expected utilities, amelioration of the information and commitment problems, and enforcement mechanisms. Rather, they are also about ideas. How do liberal ideas inherent to these institutional developments shape policymaker responses during interstate disputes? How has the increasing acceptance of these ideas over the last seventy-five years altered dispute patterns?

This article shows that liberal interpretations of sovereignty, which emphasize international law, interdependence, free trade, democracy and individual rights and freedoms, have become increasingly prevalent in UN Security Council resolutions since 1970. Given that two non-western states, Russia/Soviet Union and China, are permanent members, I argue that the content of these resolutions reflects broad consensus between major powers—both western and non-western—as how these norms should be interpreted. This is not the same as arguing that these states share preferences or interests, rather, substantial differences remain, largely along the cleavage between the United States, Britain and France on the one hand and China and Russia on the other (Einsiedel and Malone 2018, 156-58).1 Yet, the collective positions of these states have evolved over time, suggesting a shift in how sovereignty is understood. The dominant role that these states have in shaping the international order means that their collective understandings may be taken as representative of the normative structure of international society at any point in time, with the expectation that this impacts all states in the system.2

I argue that as liberal interpretations of these fundamental norms increase, the likelihood of a dispute participant resorting to violence decreases. Through content analysis of all UN Security Council resolutions between 1970 and 2014 I first create a measure of the strength of liberal interpretations of sovereignty. This is then utilized in quantitative analysis of dispute participants in the period to explain the variation in the level of violence employed. I find statistical and substantive support for my theory, showing empirically that the growth in liberal norm interpretations is negatively associated with the likelihood of a state resorting to violence in an interstate dispute.
This is not to argue that structural arguments are wrong, far from it, nor is it to reject the roles of conventional and nuclear capabilities in shaping interstate conflict behavior. Rather, state power does matter, that is why the collective interpretations of the permanent members of the UN Security Council are used to understand the system. Domestic veto players, intergovernmental enforcement mechanisms, and trade dependency all do shape the responses of policymakers during an interstate dispute. However, the intersubjective ideas they carry with them into disputes are also crucial to understand why some disputes escalate, and others do not.

This article contributes to our understanding of the role that ideas have in shaping interstate conflict in two ways. Firstly, I contribute to the large literature which has sought to understand the role which norms play in selecting for certain behaviors over others. Most of the work within this area has been qualitative and has either charted the development of specific bundles of norms over long periods (Keene 2012, 2013; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Sandholtz 2007) or focused on the life-cycle of specific norms (Eckstein 1988; Finnemore 2000; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Krook and True 2012; Nadelmann 1990; Sandholtz 2007; Sandholtz and Stiles 2008). I build upon these insights by arguing that the norm of sovereignty has been re-interpreted over time, and that the collective nature of reinterpretation means that it can be used to examine its impact in interstate conflict.

Secondly, this article provides an innovative means of exploring ideas in a quantitative framework. The quantitative interstate conflict literature has heavily favored structural and power-based explanations for actor behavior. This has come at the particular expense of norms. Whilst there is widespread acceptance that norms matter amongst these scholars, they have tended to set aside norm-based explanations given the difficulty of objective measurement. This difficulty revolves around the problem of having surety that multiple actors share an idea, that is, intersubjective understanding. The most obvious sources of data to assess this would be a survey of policymakers or the content of international legal documents. This first avenue is incredibly difficult to gain anything but anecdotal responses too. Policymakers are hard to get access to and may misrepresent their own thoughts and actions to show themselves in as best light as possible. Ensuring that any respondents have understood the survey in the same way is difficult given language differences, whilst response rates are likely to be so low as to prevent a non-random sample from being acquired, even if the potential pool of relevant participants is widened to include all senior politicians and bureaucrats, both incumbent and preceding.

Some of these problems are resolved by utilizing the texts of international legal documents. Given that these are generally carefully and cautiously written the researcher is more certain that the drafters actually share an understanding of the topic. Recent work by Allee and co-authors (Allee, Elsig, and Lugg 2017; Allee and Lugg 2016) have innovatively utilized content analysis of interstate trade deals to explore how much is replicated in subsequent deals, which sheds light on the relative power of the participants. This has certainly gained deeper understanding of the topic, but is not a suitable approach for this research questions for two
reasons. Firstly, these deals are generally drafted by small numbers of states, that is, they may not be assumed to represent the preferences and interests of non-parties. Secondly, whilst interpretations are spelled out, these may be mechanistic rather than ideational, making it unclear what the broader normative position may be. This is made more acute by the drafting being done by bureaucrats and lawyers rather than policymakers themselves. Whilst some direction is no-doubt given by the latter, assuming a high level is problematic. Utilizing the content of UN Security Council resolutions addresses these problems because the documents may be assumed to be political, that is, though member states are represented by ambassadors, a high-level of involvement by their state governments is typical given the importance attached to security issues. Moreover, since the permanent membership is diverse in interests and preferences, and these members can veto unpalatable resolutions, they may be reasonably assumed to provide insight into intersubjective understandings.

Existing Explanations of Interstate Conflict and the Role of Norms

Two existing literatures are built on here, firstly, the broad democratic peace literature, including its offshoots and opponents, and secondly, scholarship on the evolution of international norms. The former literature initially focused upon regime type, and over time has been widened to include more fine-grained analyses of domestic political structures in any state (Bell and Quek 2018; Fearon 1994; Gries et al. 2020; Huth and Allee 2002; Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020; Weeks 2012; Weiss 2013; Weiss and Dafoe 2019). However, the approach in all of these works is to examine structures, that is, formal institutional constraints encountered by decision makers, rather than norms, that is, the role of shared principles, perceptions and expectations of behavior.

The distinction between norms and structure is not rigid. This is most clearly seen in the term “institution” which is commonly used to mean both formal structures which limit the agency of decision makers, but also a set of norms, rules, and practices which govern a specific area. To clarify the distinction being made in this article, I adapt the nomenclature used by Reus-Smit (1999) who distinguishes between constitutional institutions, norms without which a society of states could not exist, and fundamental institutions, which facilitate cooperation. The former includes sovereignty, as well as the rights of self-determination and non-intervention, and the latter contractual international law and the organizations which enforce it (both internal and external to states). In this article, I term the former “norms” and the latter “structures.”

The democratic peace literature has spurred several offshoots, the most relevant of which are those which have argued that rather than regime type the “peace” is generated by economic factors including trade interdependency and level of development (Gartzke 2007; Hegre 2000; Kim 2014; Kinne 2012; McDonald 2009, 2010;
Mousseau 2013; Schneider and Gleditsch 2010) or shared intergovernmental organization membership (Appel 2018; Kinne 2013a, 2013b; Prorok and Appel 2014). More general critiques have argued that any effect seen is due to the prior settlement of territorial disputes (Gibler 2012; Gibler and Tir 2014; Owsiak 2012), nuclear weapons (Waltz 1990), alliances (Kydd 2005), unipolarity (Monteiro 2014) or military power (Layne 1994; Rosato 2003) instead. With the exception of the latter critiques, this debate has broadly accepted the importance of norms (Doyle 1986; Moravcsik 1997; Owen 1994; Russett and Oneal 2001), especially as the “good” functioning of domestic and international structures, particularly veto players, requires political actors to have the right norms.

This relationship between norms and structures has been more closely addressed through the focus on contracts, that is, to hone in on specific economic norms and structures characterized as allowing an economic market to function “with extensive and regularized transactions among strangers that require an element of trust” (Mousseau and Xiongwei 2018, sec. Emergence Contractualist Peace). This literature argues that the relationship between peace and democracy is spurious, and rather, that both are explained by “contractualist” norms and structures (Gelpi and Grieco 2008; Mousseau, Hegre, and O’Neal 2003), which builds upon the work of (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Dahl 1997; North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009). Yet, the literature still relies upon operationalizations which are essentially structural, that is, whilst recognizing the importance of norms, the empirical testing has fallen short.

A comparatively small subset of the literature has examined norms as an explanation for the democratic peace. For Deutsch (1957), though NATO is understood as a structure, a security community is more crucially formed around shared values (norms). Kahl argues that the basis of the democratic peace is collective identity rooted in liberal democracy interlinked by intergovernmental organizations (1998). For Risse, the influence of NATO allies upon the foreign policy of the United States demonstrates the importance of liberal norms, through a mechanism which relies upon the similarity of domestic political institutions in these liberal democracies and coalition-building (1995). Though valuable additions to the literature, and in Deutsch’s case systematic in its treatment of the subject, these works fail to tackle the question of whether the democratic peace is structural or norm based since the two are entwined throughout. The difficulty in conceptualizing, isolating and operationalizing norms is a clear problem. Broadly, it is hard to isolate a norm from either the structure in which it exists or from other norms for analysis. It is also a challenge to show that any norm is truly intersubjective in understanding or to measure its effect upon some outcome of interest. Yet, without attempts to do so we are left with a partial picture, particularly for those emphasizing the importance of structures—be these domestic or international—for reducing interstate conflict. In short, the existence of a domestic legislature, independent judiciary, or interstate treaties, is only relevant if the individuals which employ them do so appropriately.
To understand this necessitates exploring the ideas in the heads of these individuals, and particularly, how these ideas are shared.

In contrast to the large, predominantly quantitative, literature which has examined the democratic peace and wider questions linking regime type to the onset, conduct and termination of interstate disputes and wars, the broader literature on interstate norms has tended to be qualitative and highly focused. This has resulted in detailed work on human rights (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999), humanitarian intervention (Wheeler 2000), and nuclear weapons (Rublee and Cohen 2018; Tannenwald 1999). There is no doubt that this has contributed to our understanding of interstate relations, yet the clear shortcoming is generalizability. That is, the specificity of these approaches, necessary to make any form of causal claim, is in a sense also the undoing.

In this article I focus on the reinterpretation of the sovereignty norm by powerful states. I argue that they have a dominant role in shaping the normative landscape of the international system by being tasked with the interpretation of norms and the maintenance of international society (Hurrell 2007; Wight 1978; Saunders 2006). Operationalizing this, I utilize UN Security Council resolutions as a means of assessing what the consensus position of the permanent members is. Content analysis is used to examine the normative framing of resolutions, allowing both an exploration of change over time, and quantitative measures of the relative strength of these ideas to be derived which can then be used in regression analysis.

**The Constraining Effect of Liberal Interpretations of Sovereignty**

Norms are dynamic, and undergo processes of evolution, creation and destruction. Change may occur gradually as actors shift their understandings towards an alternative, or suddenly through systemic, and thereby social, change. In international relations, the latter is tightly linked to sudden shifts in great power authority, which has typically occurred due to defeat and a subsequent realignment of international order. War, and its aftermath, can lead to substantial rearrangements of international order, meaning both a new distribution of power, but also a re-interpretation of international society. In examining change in understandings of sovereignty I term gradual change “evolution” and sudden change “tectonic.”

**Interpretations of Sovereignty**

The post-World War Two era allows examination of both evolutionary and tectonic change in understandings of sovereignty. Evolution occurs during relative peace, whilst tectonic change is part of major realignments of international order. The end of the Cold War, though non-violent certainly led to significant power shifts, resulting in a tectonic change. The pre- and post-Cold War eras are eras of evolution. Assessing rivalrous interpretation of norms is crucial to understanding these
changes. I outline a divergence between traditional and liberal interpretations which are used to examine change in norms, and the effect upon international conflict.

Over the post-World War Two period two interpretations of sovereignty have existed, firstly, that emphasizing territorial sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of others, and secondly, that emphasizing international law, interdependence, free trade, democracy and individual rights and freedoms in international affairs. I term the former approach to sovereignty “traditional,” and the latter “liberal.” A liberal interpretation of sovereignty, therefore, is one which places emphasis upon the actions of states, particularly those between a government and its citizens. Sovereignty in this understanding implies not only the exercise of power over a territory and people (as in the traditional understanding), but also that there are limits to the exercise of power and duties to a people (Sandholtz and Stiles 2008, 287-88).3 This has been most clearly stated in the Responsibility to Protect doctrine. I examine the relative balance between these two interpretations over time, arguing that this balance alters how sovereignty is understood, and thereby is related to the likelihood of escalation in interstate disputes.

My expectation is that the relative balance between these two modes of interpretation has shifted over the post-World War Two period to favor a liberal interpretation. This does not mean that traditional interpretations are irrelevant, rather, that they have been de-emphasized in international discourse relative to the latter. A spectrum in which purely traditional and purely liberal interpretations mark the poles is conceived of as existing, with great powers occupying positions between the two. The effect that this shift toward a liberal interpretation of sovereignty has occurred on international conflict escalation is now examined.

**Understandings of Sovereignty and Conflict Escalation**

How understandings of sovereignty impact international disputes may be explored in terms of the conflict life-cycle, that is, why a dispute emerges, why violent conflict breaks out, and how the conflict ends, or in terms of participant conduct during war. Here, I examine the effect of change in the collective understanding of sovereignty upon escalation, meaning that I assume the prior existence of international disputes. Whilst the effect of norms upon the onset of disputes is an important question, very few disputes result in the use of violence, that is, though onset is a necessary condition for violence, it is far from sufficient. I examine escalation from a non-violent dispute to a violent dispute—the use of armed force in international relations—because this is of greater substantive significance to state leaders and their citizens. Moreover, whilst reducing the likelihood of dispute onset would likely result in less international violence, the more normatively important question is how to avoid escalation, as this reduces the costs of war: human death and economic destruction.

This is not to trivialize dispute onset, and logically we might expect the growth of liberal understandings of sovereignty to also reduce onset rates as well as escalation.
likelihood. However, there are two reasons why we may doubt the substantive significance of this, firstly, dispute onset is a relatively low threshold, and secondly, onset is often triggered by events beyond the direct control of a state. To this first point, a dispute simply means that two or more actors disagree over something, oftentimes the behavior of the other side or the distribution of some good (for instance, territory). This article utilizes Militarized Interstate Disputes as the operationalization of dispute, and many disputes are comparatively minor events, with the threshold being that one of the two parties has a minimum level of militarization as part of the dispute (for example, the issuance of a deterrent, or compellent, threat). A focus on onset, therefore, would prevent observation of substantively more important actions, that is, the actual use of force against another. Secondly, many disputes begin due to accident and/or the decision making of low-level military commanders or political officials who are neither in the position to consider national interests nor strategic interactions. This means that onset may essentially be an apolitical decision which takes little or no account of the broader strategic landscape nor the structural and normative context. It is after onset, that is, when escalation is considered by policymakers, that the stakes are higher and when causal mechanisms common to this topic are most active.

Escalation then, is a political decision. In making the choice to escalate, or not, policymakers are impacted by a range of strategic factors, but crucially, are also constrained by norms. The use of force in international relations must be justified, and since 1945 the UN Charter specifies just two: self-defense and collective peace enforcement. To this, we might also add humanitarian intervention, though this remains contested. As a baseline, therefore, when faced with dispute onset, policymakers must justify their actions with reference to one of these reasons. Moreover, in making the decision to escalate, policymakers are also constrained by liberal values which emphasize diplomacy, cooperation, international law, international organizations, the rights of the individual, and to question the legitimacy of the march to war. Taken together, this slows the decision to escalate, since legal justification is needed, diplomacy is necessary, and potential economic and human costs understood, calculated and defended. A shift toward liberal interpretations thereby means a reduced probability of escalation to violence, tacitly assuming that the risk of a dispute arising in the first-place is unchanged. This leads me to my first hypothesis, which relates to the evolution mechanism of change:

**Hypothesis 1:** Given an international dispute, the risk of escalation decreases as liberal interpretations increase.

An alternative explanation is that any impact of normative change is actually a result of the end of the Cold War, that is, the redistribution of power between great powers, typically resulting from system-wide conflict results in qualitative differences in interpretations of fundamental norms between peace-periods. Whilst the end of the Cold War did not involve a system-wide war, it did mark the end of
sustained rivalry between great powers. The pre- and post- periods can thereby be compared. Given the rivalry of the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War, and the relative dominance of the United States post-Cold War, we might expect qualitative differences in conflict behavior to be observable in the two time periods, attributable, perhaps, to a greater emphasis upon liberal interpretations in the post-Cold War era. The dramatic change in the distribution of power triggered a significant change in the consensus surrounding interpretation of fundamental norms of international society. This leads me to my second hypothesis, which captures the tectonic change mechanism:

**Hypothesis 2:** The risk of dispute escalation decreases given a systemic increase in liberal interpretations of sovereignty attributable to the end of the Cold War.

**Method**

I use multiple logistic regression to estimate the effect of change in the normative landscape on the use of force by dispute participants. To address the underlying selection problem, that is, that dispute onset is non-random, I also estimate maximum likelihood and twostep Heckman selection models. Substantive significance from the logistic regression is then explored utilizing the observed values for predicted probabilities approach (Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013). Standard errors are robust and clustered by year, where model specification allows (that is, not in the Heckman twostep model). This is to take account of the data structure since years differ by the number of Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) which onset and the number of participants in these MIDs. Because the independent variables are annual values, the same value is given to all dispute participants in the same year. If standard errors were not clustered by year then there would be substantial within-cluster correlation.

This paper models the hostility level of interstate disputes as a monadic phenomenon. Much of the literature on democratic peace theory utilizes a dyadic setup, either directed or undirected. I opt for a monadic structure for three reasons, firstly, because many of the theoretical explanations for the democratic peace are in essence, monadic explanations, with a dyadic version layered on top. For instance, the core claim of much of the literature is that democracy reduces the hostility of foreign policy, a monadic claim, because leaders are accountable to citizens who have a low tolerance for the costs or war, and because legislatures and a free and independent media provides greater scrutiny of policymaking, slowing the march to war. The dyadic version of this—the interaction of joint democracy—relies on the signals that these same processes provide to another actor. It is puzzling, therefore, that empirical findings have tended to show support for the latter, but not for the former. Secondly, the difficulty in finding empirical support for any monadic
explanation means that a higher threshold is being set here by using a monadic approach. Thirdly, the argument I make, that liberal norms reduces the hostility level of interstate disputes, may have varying effects according to the regime type of dyads. However, that claim is not made here, rather I argue that these norms exist for all in international society, not for a subset, and that they act directly upon policymakers, not only when policymakers interact with their international counterparts.

**The Sample**

I base my analysis on the Correlates of War MIDs dataset (Palmer et al. 2020), taking this dataset as being the population of interstate disputes. Three restrictions reduce the dataset from the total to a sample, firstly, that data availability for control variables results in some cases being dropped from analysis. This is a small but not insignificant number. Secondly, data availability for the independent variable restricts the start of the dataset to 1970 (explained in more detail below). Thirdly, the latest MIDs dataset (v5.0) finishes in 2014, truncating the end of the dataset. This gives forty-five years for analysis.

The unit of analysis is dispute participant year, that is, a case is a dispute participant in the year in which they joined a MID. This allows control variables to be specific to the country-year. For the forty-five years in the dataset there are a total of 3,004 dispute participants (cases), this number falls to 2,920 as a result of the aforementioned missing data problem. For the Heckman selection models the unit of analysis is country year. For years in which a state was a participant in more than one dispute, the year was duplicated, with only the dispute-specific data varying. For the forty-five years in this dataset there are a total of 8,864 cases, this falls to 8,675 as a result of missing data.

In some cases, it was possible to address the missing data problem. For regime type, Polity IV has missing data both for states with populations smaller than 500,000 and for states under occupation or lacking a government due to revolution (a total of ninety-four country-years). Where only one or two years were missing from a time-series I interpolated (ten cases), for all others, I utilized Freedom House to estimate values for eighty-four cases missing a value for regime type. However, this gives a sample corresponding to 96.6 percent of the dispute participants in the total population. The cases included are highly diverse in time, geographic location, military power, regime type, reliance upon international trade, and in ownership of nuclear weapons. However, those omitted do appear to be non-random, that is, systematic reasons do exist for excluding these cases. Two variables account for the fall in number of cases, these are IGO membership (six missing) and trade dependency (eighty-three missing). The cases missing for the latter, for example, are disproportionately communist states, with both East Germany and Czechoslovakia featuring repeatedly.
Independent Variables

To assess the relative prevalence of liberal interpretations of sovereignty in international society I utilize content analysis of UN Security Council resolutions. This data source ensures that all major powers have at least tacitly supported the language used in the resolution since, should it be unpalatable, they may either present an alternative or simply veto the resolution. I argue that the language used in successful resolutions reflects consensus on how sovereignty should be interpreted since the permanent members are diverse in terms of their preferences, interests, histories, and cultures.

The UN Security Council, despite the concerns that it entrenches a distinctly hierarchical approach to international relations through its permanent and veto-wielding members, retains a high degree of authority through the widely shared perception that it is the appropriate venue for discussion of interstate security and decision-making mechanism. Its function is both political and legal, since its decisions themselves generate precedent, and thereby create, maintain, and challenge custom. To this end, Johnstone (2003) argues that the Security Council is an interpretive community which “serves as a venue for persuasion based on law” (p. 477). Similarly, Hurd (2007) argues that the political contestation which surrounds the Security Council reinforces, rather than undermines, the collective belief in its legitimacy (p. 193). Moreover, as long ago as 1966 Claude (1966) argued that the UN provides collective legitimation to political actions4 and he speculated that habitual use of the UN as a means “for pronouncing on the international acceptability of national policies and positions may inspire statesmen to behave with moderation and circumspection” (p. 379). This argument has proved in substance correct, that is, though policymakers may disregard the UN, they certainly must factor it into their strategic calculations, not least for fear of reputational damage. The Security Council, therefore, is unique source of authority in international relations, and thereby, particularly valuable for the purposes of interpreting the normative landscape in which states operate.

An alternative data source is UN General Assembly resolutions, and given that this institution involves all UN members, it may be viewed as more representative of international society. However, though it is one of six principal organs of the UN, and has the power to oversee the budget, appoint the Secretary-General, and appoint non-permanent members of the Security Council, it is dwarfed in its power by the Security Council. Moreover, since its setup gives one-vote to each member, politically powerful members are given the same formal voting power as much weaker members. This does not reflect the relative role different states have upon shaping international society. In summary, its powers are weaker, and its voting structure means it does not reflect the balance of political power in the international system.

A further criticism of the use of UN Security Council resolutions is that the document produced is not an accurate reflection of the politics which craft them, that is, a significant amount of debate occurs in private (Einsiedel and Malone 2018,
where alternative strategies may be used to persuade members to vote for a resolution can be employed.\(^5\) As Vreeland and Dreher (2014) report, this includes the likely promise of financial support from the IMF and/or World Bank, as well as bilateral support. Clearly these processes are crucial to understanding the politics of the Security Council, yet, this is not as problematic for the method proposed as first seems since I focus on the roles of the permanent members. Though promises of quid pro quos and financial support may still play a role, veto power means that ultimately unpalatable resolutions can be blocked. Though resolutions today require at least nine affirmative votes to pass, that is, at least four non-permanent members in addition to the five permanent members, the scenario in which non-permanent members have been able to block, or have even threatened to block, a resolution endorsed by all five permanent members has not yet occurred. Again, this suggests that private debate and side-payments, which may be summarized as the “drafting process,” are less crucial to understanding interpretations of global norms than for understanding specific substantive votes.

To analyze the content of the resolutions I created dictionaries, shown in Table 1, of terms relating to two concepts, traditional and liberal. These dictionaries were then applied to all UNSC resolutions from 1970 through to 2014. In my operationalization of liberal and traditional I use small, conservatively constructed dictionaries, to increase external validity. The terms used for operationalization are tightly related to the two underlying concepts. Examples of the terms used to operationalize liberal norm interpretations include “interdependence,” “law” and “free*.” As much as possible, efforts were made to prevent false-positives, that is, cases in which the stem returns a word not considered related to liberal values. An example of this is “democ*,” which returns both “democracy” but also “Democratic,” part of more than one official state name (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo). Traditional is comprised of five terms, including “sovereign*” and “territor*.” For both liberal and traditional, some important terms could not be used, for example, “democratic peace” for the former and “internal affairs” for the latter, as they are comprised of two words.

Two issues are worth noting about the collation of the resolutions. The resolutions were downloaded in session-volume as pdf files. Firstly, this necessitated extracting

| Liberal                  | Traditional       |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| institution*             | interference      |
| interdependence          | non-interference  |
| law*                     | non-intervention  |
| free*                    | sovereign*        |
| humanit*                 | territor*         |
| protect                  |                   |
| responsibility           |                   |
the text data from these pdfs into plain text for content analysis software to read. This process was particularly tricky for older volumes, since they were not originally created utilizing a computer word processor. This necessitated utilizing an online program to “read” these pdfs by identifying the contents as words. This process was reasonably, though not wholly successful, that is both false-positive and false-negatives were generated. However, given the huge volume of material, no other means were available for transcribing the file contents. Secondly, volumes compiled prior to 1970 are simultaneously in both English and French. Though I attempted the same transcription process as for volumes after 1970 it proved too difficult to sift out the English and French content. Therefore, the dataset begins in 1970. Table A1, in the Appendix, gives the annual counts for both liberal and traditional norm references.

The references to these terms were counted annually utilizing Yoshikoder (Lowe 2015), open-source content analysis software freely available online. The independent variable created is the ratio of liberal references to the total number of words per year. As this is a very small number, this is multiplied by 1,000 to aid interpretation. I then lagged the variable so that values for 1970 are used to predict 1971, and so on.

Figure 1 compares counts of liberal references to those to traditional references. As can be seen, references are approximately equal until the end of the Cold War. Then, there is substantial bifurcation, with a small increase in references to traditional norms which then levels off, compared with a rapid increase in references to liberal norms which sharply increases again from around 2006. These trends are partly explained by the total number of words in resolutions, which grows throughout, and particularly from the end of the Cold War. This is unsurprising given the demise of the Soviet Union, the domestic liberalization of Russia, and attempts by
the western permanent members—and especially the United States—to reinvigorate the use of the UN Security Council and to imbue it with a liberal mission since 1991. Of greater importance is that China appears to have tacitly supported this move toward liberal norms. This is surprising, as though the post-Mao era was marked by significant economic and more limited domestic liberalization, the crushing of the 1989 uprisings in Tiananmen Square and elsewhere, does not appear to have resulted in renewed Chinese opposition to references to liberal norms at the international level.

Figure 2 shows the independent variable utilized, the count of references to liberal norms relative to the total number of words in resolutions, lagged by one year and multiplied by 1,000. As can be seen, for the period 1970 to 1992 the trend remains relatively static, between one and two. However, a substantial change occurs from 1992, following the end of the Cold War, as references to liberal interpretations begin to rapidly grow. Clearly, the post-Cold War is qualitatively different in the use of liberal norms in UN Security Council resolutions.

Figures 1 and 2 suggest that an important shift in international society has occurred over the past forty-five years, with the change post-Cold War being especially impressive. I take this as evidence that over this period conceptualizations of sovereignty have become increasingly liberal. Given that this data is gleaned from UN Security Council resolutions, requiring at the very least the tacit approval of the resolution’s content through abstaining by each of the P5 members, I argue that this implies where consensus on interpretations of norms lies for the great powers.
In summary, the independent variable the count of references to liberal norms relative to the total number of words in resolutions, lagged by one year and multiplied by 1,000. This variable is utilized in three different model specifications to explore the relationship with MID hostility level. Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the dependent variable, independent variables, and the control variables.

**Dependent and Control Variables**

The dependent variable, MID hostility level, is a dummy version of the Correlates of War MID hostility level variable. It is coded as 1 if the MID participant resorted to the use of armed force (4 or 5 in the original coding) and is a 0 if the participant took actions short of using armed force (1, 2 and 3 in the original coding). This recoding was done for two reasons, firstly, the key conceptual issue being explored is whether force is actually used against an adversary, or not. The original variable maps on to this quite poorly given that it contains five possibilities. Secondly, it is apparent from exploring the variable that the crucial distinction is between the use of force and actions short of this. This is reflected in the distribution of cases across the original variable which coalesce around two values, 3 (display of force) and 4 (use of force).

I control for other explanations of MID hostility level including state military strength, regime type, trade dependency, intergovernmental organization membership, nuclear weapons, the length of the dispute and the Cold War. In addition, for the Heckman selection models, I impose an exclusion restriction in the form of an additional regressor in the selection equation, the cubic polynomial of the time since the state last experienced a MID (Carter and Signorino 2010). Two variables are used to control for military strength of the MID participant, military personnel (logged) and military expenditure (logged), each taken from the Correlates of War National Material Capabilities dataset version V. When a MID participant has

| Variables                      | Observations | Mean | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| MID hostility level dummy      | 3,004        | 0.45 | 0.50               | 0       | 1       |
| Liberal norms, 1 year lag     | 8,864        | 3.30 | 2.11               | 0.42    | 7.64    |
| Military personnel, log       | 8,864        | 3.43 | 2.19               | 0       | 8.47    |
| Military expenditures, log    | 8,864        | 11.53| 5.01               | 0       | 20.36   |
| Nuclear weapons               | 8,864        | 0.08 | 0.27               | 0       | 1       |
| Dispute length                | 3,004        | 0.37 | 1.07               | 0       | 13      |
| IGO membership                | 8,844        | 53.75| 22.29              | 0       | 129     |
| Trade dependency              | 8,864        | 0.75 | 0.55               | 0.01    | 5.99    |
| Polity score                  | 8,864        | 11.50| 7.40               | 0       | 20      |
| Cold War                      | 8,864        | 0.44 | 0.50               | 0       | 1       |
| Dispute onset                 | 8,864        | 0.34 | 0.47               | 0       | 1       |
| Time                          | 8,860        | 6.20 | 7.48               | 1       | 45      |

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics.
greater military capabilities it is, firstly, more able to take hostile action, and secondly, may be more likely to view this as appropriate.

Regime type is controlled for utilizing the Polity 2 variable from Polity IV. Monadic versions of democratic peace theory expect democracies to be more peaceful in their foreign policies than non-democracies, and therefore, less likely to resort to the use of armed force during a dispute. Trade dependency is controlled for utilizing the trade dependency variable from the Penn World Tables, v9.1 (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2013). States that are more dependent upon trade, that is, a greater share of their GDP comes from imports and exports, are likely to be more sensitive to disruption to trade than states which are less dependent. This should mean they are less likely to escalate disputes to armed conflict. Intergovernmental organization membership is an annual count of the number of such organizations that the dispute participant is part of,⁶ this is taken from the Correlates of War Intergovernmental Organizations dataset, v3 (Pevehouse et al. 2020). It is expected that the greater the number of memberships the lower the likelihood of using force since these memberships may help to resolve the information and commitment problems and/or provide alternative avenues for diplomacy.

Dispute length is a simple count of the number of years that a dispute lasts, with the expectation that the longer the dispute the more likely it is that a participant will use force to try and resolve it. Nuclear weapons is a dummy variable to account for whether the participant has nuclear weapons, or not. States with nuclear weapons should be more confident in using conventional armed force, and therefore more likely to escalate, since their survival is assured. Cold War is a dummy variable which records whether the Cold War is ongoing in that year, or not. The expectation is that disputes are more likely to escalate in the Cold War due to superpower rivalry, proxy wars, and diplomatic deadlock, than after the Cold War.

Finally, for the Heckman selection models two additional variables are required. Firstly, a dummy variable for dispute onset used in the selection equation. Secondly, to impose an exclusion restriction, as Cameron and Trivedi (2010, 561) recommend, I use the cubic polynomial of the time since the state last experienced a MID. Time, along with the squared and cubic versions, is a continuous variable counting the number of years since the state last experienced a dispute onset. In essence, arguing that a history of conflict predicts a future of conflict. However, there is little reason to think that this predicts the hostility level of future disputes, that is, the probability of escalation.

Results

Table 3 presents the results from five different model specifications. Models 1, 2 and 3 utilize multiple logistic regression, whilst Model 4 utilizes the Heckman two-step model, and Model 5 the Heckman maximum likelihood model. In all five models, save for Model 4 where the specification does not allow it, the standard errors are clustered by year. In Models 1, 2 and 4, the coefficient for liberal norms is negative
Table 3. The Effect of Norm Strength upon MID Hostility Level.

| Variables                  | (1) Logit | (2) Logit | (3) Logit | (4) Heckman two-step | (5) Heckman ML |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|---------------|
| Liberal norms, 1 year lag | -0.158*** | -0.103*** | -0.121*   | -0.031*** 0.028*     | -0.031* 0.028 |
|                           | (0.035)   | (0.030)   | (0.069)   | (0.009)  (0.015)     | (0.017)  (0.039) |
| Military personnel, log   | 0.048     | 0.048     | -0.010    | 0.226*** 0.268***    | -0.008 0.226*** |
|                           | (0.045)   | (0.046)   | (0.010)   | (0.013)  (0.012)     | (0.012)  (0.021) |
| Military expenditures, log| -0.006    | -0.005    | -0.003    | 0.015** 0.014*       | -0.003 0.014* |
|                           | (0.019)   | (0.019)   | (0.003)   | (0.006)  (0.004)     | (0.004)  (0.008) |
| Nuclear weapons            | -0.047    | -0.045    | -0.029    | 0.649*** 0.657***    | -0.026 0.657*** |
|                           | (0.153)   | (0.153)   | (0.029)   | (0.077)  (0.035)     | (0.035)  (0.097) |
| Dispute length             | 0.669***  | 0.667***  | 0.088***  |                      | 0.088***   |
|                           | (0.087)   | (0.085)   | (0.008)   |                      | (0.012)   |
| IGO membership             | -0.008**  | -0.008**  | -0.001*** | -0.001   -0.001      | -0.001  -0.001 |
|                           | (0.004)   | (0.004)   | (0.001)   | (0.001)  (0.001)     | (0.001)  (0.002) |
| Trade dependency           | -0.061    | -0.059    | -0.005    | -0.037   | -0.006  | -0.040 |
|                           | (0.109)   | (0.110)   | (0.020)   | (0.034)  | (0.025)  | (0.050) |
| Polity score               | -0.030*** | -0.030*** | -0.006*** | -0.009*** | -0.006***  | -0.009*** |
|                           | (0.007)   | (0.007)   | (0.002)   | (0.003)  | (0.002)  | (0.004) |
| Cold War                   | -0.084    | -0.022    | -0.057    | -0.023   | -0.023  | -0.060 |
|                           | (0.260)   | (0.036)   | (0.064)   | (0.066)  | (0.066)  | (0.147) |
| Time                       | -0.281*** |          |          | -0.279*** |          |
|                           | (0.017)   |          |          | (0.036)   |          |
| Time^2                     |          | 0.017***  |          | 0.017***  |          |
|                           |          | (0.002)   |          | (0.003)   |          |
| Time^3                     | -0.000*** |          |          | -0.000*** |          |
|                           | (0.000)   |          |          | (0.000)   |          |
Table 3. (continued)

| Variables                      | (1) Logit | (2) Logit | (3) Logit | (4) Heckman two-step | (5) Heckman ML |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|---------------|
|                               | Outcome   | Selection | Outcome   | Selection            | Outcome       | Selection    |
| Constant                      | 0.310***  | 0.595**   | 0.687*    | 0.868***             | 0.912***      | -0.647***    |
|                               | (0.101)   | (0.281)   | (0.407)   | (0.090)              | (0.113)       | (0.264)      |
| Inverse Mills ratio           |           |           |           | -0.110***            | -0.207**      |
|                               |           |           |           | (0.039)              | (0.088)       |
| ρ                             |           |           |           |                      | -0.735***     |
|                               |           |           |           |                      | (0.015)       |
| ln(σ)                         |           |           |           |                      |               |
| Robust standard errors clustered by year | Yes    | Yes       | Yes       | No                   | Yes           |
| Observations                  | 3,004     | 2,920     | 2,920     | 8,675                | 8,675         |

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*p < .1.
**p < .05.
***p < .01.
and highly statistically significant ($p < .01$). In Models 3 and 5, the coefficient remains negative, as hypothesized, but at a lower level of statistical significance ($p < .1$), with the actual p-value being 0.082 in Model 3, and 0.065 in Model 5. Crucially, the relationship between liberal norms and dispute hostility level are robust after accounting for a selection effect. The F-test for stage 1 of the two-step exceeds 226, far above 10, the conventional threshold used for weak instruments. I take these models as allowing rejection of the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 1, that is, dispute participants are less likely to use force when the strength of liberal norms is higher.

Models 3, 4, and 5 are the crucial tests of the theory presented here since they include the full set of control variables. Crucially, even with the inclusion of Cold War, the coefficient for the independent variable attains statistical significance in all three. This is important, since Figures 1 and 2 strongly suggest that the end of the Cold War had an important impact upon the proliferation of liberal norms in the content of UN Security Council resolutions. What this shows is that this change, though no doubt important, is insufficient, that is, the growth of liberal norms was occurring anyway. Despite Figures 1 and 2 suggesting a tectonic change occurred following the end of the Cold War, the statistical results suggest longer term change underpinned this, and crucially, explains escalation. For this reason, the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 2 is accepted, that is, systemic change did not usher in tectonic change which dramatically altered the likelihood of dispute escalation.

Focusing on Model 5, which address both the selection issue and allows standard errors to be clustered by year, several additional variables are statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level or higher in the outcome equation. Dispute length has a positive coefficient, suggesting that as length increases, escalation becomes more likely, as we would expect. Both polity score and IGO membership have negative coefficients, suggesting that the more democratic a state is, and that the more IGO memberships a state has, the less likely it is to use force in a dispute.

Five control variables are not statistically significant at any conventional level, trade dependency, military personnel, military expenditure, nuclear weapons, and Cold War. This is, perhaps, less surprising than it seems. Firstly, being dependent on trade may instead make a state more likely to escalate a dispute, that is, to use force, since they are particularly sensitive to trade being disrupted. The threat or action of imposing economic sanctions against such a state may be sufficiently worrisome to escalate to direct conflict as Copeland has argued (2015). The finding for military expenditure and military personnel is superficially perplexing, since relative power is crucial to understanding the likelihood of winning, and thereby is crucial to strategic interactions. However, both of these variables are statistically significant in the selection equation, with both having positive coefficients, that is, making dispute onset more likely. It would seem then that these strategic calculations shape onset, but once a dispute is underway, that other variables shape escalation. Work on nuclear weapons meanwhile has repeatedly found them to have surprisingly little impact upon conventional disputes, that is, whilst they may ensure state survival and
stave off territorial threats to home territory, they do little to bolster compellent or deterrent threats short of this (Sechser and Fuhrmann 2013), that is, there is likely to be a subset of particularly acute disputes in which nuclear weapons do have an effect, but most disputes may simply not be salient enough for nuclear threats—either explicit or implicit—to be credible. Surprisingly, given the clear pattern observable in Figures 1 and 2, Cold War appears to have no impact upon the likelihood of dispute participants utilizing force. Given the bluntness of this control, a simply dummy variable bound by time, this may be less surprising than as first appears. Though the Cold War was systemic in nature, it did not have an equal effect upon all regions, at all times, nor in all disputes. That is, there may be subsets of disputes, perhaps involving major powers—particularly the United States and Soviet Union/Russia—for which this control would be very relevant, but for most disputes it is too blunt to gain leverage on the variation observed.

In the selection equation for Model 5, time, polity score, nuclear weapons, military expenditure, and military personnel are statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level or higher. As the time since the last MID onset occurred increases, the probability of onset decreases, as expected. Polity score has a negative effect on the probability of dispute onset as the democratic peace literature argues. Nuclear weapons, military expenditure, and military personnel all increase the risk of dispute onset, which suggests either that these cases face more severe threats, or that having greater military capabilities emboldens leaders. By contrast, liberal norms, trade dependency, IGO membership, and the Cold War are not statistically significant. The former suggests that despite global superpower tensions that dispute onset was not significantly different to in the post-Cold War era, which suggests we should be cautious about the commonly held supposition that interstate war has declined. The findings for both trade dependency, and liberal norms, are surprising. It may be that neither are able to constrain leaders so early in the conflict cycle, since dispute onset itself may be shaped by apolitical actors and events, for instance, by accident.

To interpret the substantive significance of the findings I calculate predicted probabilities for Models 3, 4 and 5. For both Heckman models, I use the conventional approach, that is, to input the mean for each control variable, and then vary the value for the liberal norms, to explore the effect upon the dispute hostility level. By contrast, for the logit model I utilize the observed values approach to predicted probabilities (Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013). To explore the substantive significance of the findings I vary liberal norm strength by fixing it to the value taken at its 25th percentile (1.15) and its 75th percentile (4.64). Table 4 reports the mean predicted probability, along with the effects when the independent variable is at its 25th and 75th percentiles. The effect is the difference between these two. As can be seen, the effect of varying liberal norms strength is a $-10.4$, $-10.4$, and $-9.6$ percentage point reduction, depending upon the model specification. This is both remarkably consistent, despite the selection issues, as well as a substantial reduction in the likelihood of a MID participant utilizing force.
Table 4. Predicted Probabilities.

|                      | Heckman Two-way |                         | Heckman Maximum Likelihood |                         | Logit                  |                         |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
|                      | Predicted       | 95 Percent CI          |                             | Predicted               | 95 Percent CI          | Predicted               | 95 Percent CI          |
| Mean predicted effect| 0.4503          | 0.4448 0.4558          |                             | 0.4504 0.4218 0.4790    |                        | 0.4503 0.4240 0.4767    |
| Norm strength 75th   | 0.4118 0.4071 0.4164 |                   |                             | 0.4118 0.3568 0.4668    |                        | 0.4131 0.3636 0.4661    |
| percentile           |                 |                         |                             |                         |                        |                         |
| Norm strength 25th   | 0.5154 0.5107 0.5201 |                   |                             | 0.5154 0.4431 0.5877    |                        | 0.5094 0.4419 0.5764    |
| percentile           |                 |                         |                             |                         |                        |                         |
| Effect               | −0.1036         |                         |                             | −0.1035                 |                        | −0.0963                 |

Note: Rounded to four decimal places.
To further examine whether this effect is generated by the Cold War, and thereby to further examine Hypothesis 2, I subset the effect of varying norm strength both during and after the Cold War using Model 3. The results are shown in Table 5 and indicate that the predicted effect is similar in both time periods. Norm strength, therefore, is substantively significant in both time periods, meaning that it is not merely picking up the impact of the Cold War and suggests that a tectonic change of norms did not occur.

**Conclusion**

Previous scholarship has explained the onset and hostility level of interstate disputes in terms of power relations, trade dependency, regime type, and nuclear weapons. What these works have missed, discounted, or been unable to operationalize, is the normative environment of international society, that is, what behaviors are considered (in)appropriate. I find this normative environment to not only have significantly changed since 1970, but to also have significant leverage in explaining patterns of interstate disputes. I find strong evidence that a dispute participant’s likelihood of resorting to hostile action has diminished as liberal interpretations sovereignty have proliferated. This is not an effect explained by the end of the Cold War, nor is it one limited to only democracies or liberal states. Furthermore, normative change appears to have been evolutionary, rather than a tectonic change.

The findings have important implications for understanding the risk of violence in interstate disputes and for scholars interested in norms. Firstly, much of the policy focus has been upon domestic political institutions and interstate economic ties. This is illustrated by debates over the success of the European Union in preventing conflict between its member states. The organization is argued as having bolstered transitions to democracy from formerly fascist and communist regimes, whilst the common market has raised standards of living and provided common economic interests reducing economic competition. The findings presented here suggest that just as important is the normative framework for understanding disputes, and that as interdependence, international law, and individual rights and freedoms have been emphasized over territory, that escalation has diminished. In an era of apparently

*Table 5. Predicted Effect of Norm Strength Subset by Cold War.*

|                        | Effect of Moving Norm Strength from 25th to 75th Percentile | 95 Percent CI |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| During Cold War        | -0.098                                                    | -0.197 0.007  |
| Post Cold War          | -0.095                                                    | -0.197 0.006  |
| Effect                 | 0.003                                                     | -0.002 0.005  |

*Note: Rounded to three decimal places.*
increasing tensions between major powers, and deep tensions over much of the liberal intergovernmental architecture, policymakers should be wary of what the weakening of this framework may mean for the escalation of disputes. These findings suggest that this is a dangerous path to tread.

The findings should also stimulate interest in trying to bridge the gap between quantitative studies of conflict which have tended to focus on structural dimensions of states, and qualitative studies which have emphasized the importance of norms. Here, an attempt has been made to do just this by utilizing content analysis, in short, allowing ideas to be quantified and then compared with alternative, generally structural, explanations. There is no doubt that this approach could be improved, and the author welcomes constructive attempts to build upon this work. Four improvements or alternative specifications could be made, firstly, to extend back the start-date to 1946 to capture all resolutions. This would require human coders given the format the data is available in. Secondly, alternative dictionaries could be applied to the data to either explore alternative understandings of norms (or other content) or to challenge the robustness of the coding used here. Thirdly, the unit of analysis could be shifted from being an annual count to being resolution specific, that is, it is possible that a small number of resolutions account for most of the references to liberal (or traditional) interpretations of norms in any year. Fourthly, the model could be setup in dyads, either directed or undirected, to examine whether the effect identified varies according to the regime type of dyad members.

Appendix

Table A1. Content Analysis Annual Word Counts.

| Year | Liberal | Traditional | Total Words |
|------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| 1969 | 9       | 25          | 7,813       |
| 1970 | 22      | 28          | 11,009      |
| 1971 | 9       | 35          | 8,840       |
| 1972 | 8       | 41          | 12,658      |
| 1973 | 7       | 15          | 12,322      |
| 1974 | 6       | 14          | 10,522      |
| 1975 | 4       | 10          | 9,530       |
| 1976 | 10      | 53          | 15,947      |
| 1977 | 7       | 35          | 14,915      |
| 1978 | 13      | 38          | 11,235      |
| 1979 | 22      | 61          | 19,689      |
| 1980 | 23      | 66          | 17,902      |
| 1981 | 5       | 23          | 10,690      |
| 1982 | 16      | 27          | 17,328      |

(continued)
Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors for their feedback and comments.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.
Funding
The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD
Patrick Gill-Tiney https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7949-2698

Notes
1. Though this relationship between the two is driven more by shared opposition to the western three, rather than necessarily sharing interests.
2. For a discussion of this assumption, see Barnett and Finnemore who argue that “one of the primary functions of the United Nations is to legitimate specific decisions, values, and principles governing international order, some of which might be a reflection of the views of the strong, and some of which might be a reflection of more universal sentiments” (2018, 70) and that because the UN is viewed as a universal organization that it is the locus for debates on the legitimacy of the norms and principles which underpin the international order.
3. This liberal understanding suggests a future in which sovereignty must be consensual, but this is hugely complicated by questions of regime type and self-determination.
4. Claude argued that the General Assembly was more important in this regard than the Security Council since the relative powers and different purposes of these two organs allows any state to propose motions. However, the historical record has shown the opposite to be true, that is, whilst the Security Council is exclusive and in many respects hamstrung by the competing interests of its permanent members, the authority of its successful resolutions are far superior in their effect than the motions passed in the General Assembly. For example, the 2005 World Summit famously led to the General Assembly passing a resolution endorsing the Responsibility to Protect, yet, the political and legal impact of this was dwarfed by a similar resolution passed by the Security Council the following year since this body has both the authority to enforce international peace and its permanent members—especially the United States, Britain and France—are the actors with the requisite power projection capabilities necessary for successful military intervention.
5. Einsiedel and Malone note that: “Because of the need to reach a consensus among the P-5 ‘vetocracy’ for any decision, the permanent members tend to negotiate draft resolutions among themselves before submitting them to the full body for discussion. And before a draft is negotiated by all of the P-5, it has generally been discussed by the P-3 [the United States, Britain and France], which generate the vast majority of initiatives” (2018, 158).
6. The annual count was created by recoding IGO membership. I consider full or associate membership to be membership, with observer status not being included.

References
Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2006. Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
Allee, Todd, Manfred Elsig, and Andrew Lugg. 2017. “The Ties between the World Trade Organization and Preferential Trade Agreements: A Textual Analysis.” *Journal of International Economic Law* 20 (2): 333-63. doi: 10.1093/jiel/jgx009.

Allee, Todd, and Andrew Lugg. 2016. “Who Wrote the Rules for the Trans-pacific Partnership?” *Research & Politics* 3 (3). doi: 10.1177/2053168016658919.

Appel, B. J. 2018. “Intergovernmental Organizations and Democratic Victory in International Crises.” *Journal of Politics* 80 (1): 274-87. doi: 10.1086/694256.

Barnett, Michael N., and Martha Finnemore. 2018. “Political Approaches.” In *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, edited by Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws, 61-78. 2nd ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bell, Mark, and Kai Quek. 2018. “Authoritarian Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace.” *International Organization* 72 (1): 227-42. doi: 10.1017/S002081831700042X.

Cameron, A. Colin, and P. K. Trivedi. 2010. *Microeconometrics Using Stata*, Rev. ed. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

Carter, David B., and Curtis S. Signorino. 2010. “Back to the Future: Modeling Time Dependence in Binary Data.” *Political Analysis* 18 (3): 271-92. doi: 10.1093/pan/mpq013.

Claude, Inis L. 1966. “Collective Legitimization as a Political Function of the United Nations.” *International Organization* 20 (3): 367-79. doi: 10.1017/S0020818300012832.

Copeland, Dale C. 2015. *Economic Interdependence and War*. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Dahl, Robert A. 1997. “Development and Democratic Culture.” In *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies*, edited by Larry Jay Diamond, 34-39. Journal of Democracy Book. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Deutsch, Karl W. 1957. *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, Center for Research on World Political Institutions.

Doyle, Michael. 1983. “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (3): 205-35.

Doyle, Michael. 1986. “Liberalism and World Politics.” *The American Political Science Review* 80 (4): 1151-69. doi: 10.1017/S0003055400185041.

Eckstein, Harry. 1988. “A Culturalist Theory of Political Change.” *The American Political Science Review* (1927) 82 (3): 789-804. doi: 10.2307/1962491.

Einsiedel, Sebastian von, and David Malone. 2018. “Security Council.” In *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws (Eds), 140-164. 2nd ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Farber, Henry S., and Joanne S. Gowa. 1995. “Polities and Peace.” *International Security* 20 (2): 123-46. doi: 10.2307/2539231.

Fearon, James. 1994. “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes.” *American Political Science Review* 88 (3): 577-77. doi: 10.2307/2944796.

Feenstra, Robert, Robert Inklaar, and Marcel Timmer. 2013. “The Next Generation of the Penn World Table.” NBER Working Paper Series, 19255, NBER, Cambridge, MA. doi: 10.3386/w19255.
Finnemore, Martha. 2000. “Are Legal Norms Distinctive?” New York University Journal of International Law and Politics 32 (3): 699.

Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change.” International Organization 52 (4): 887-917. doi: 10.1162/002081898550789.

Gartzke, Erik. 2007. “The Capitalist Peace.” American Journal of Political Science 51 (1): 166-91. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00244.x.

Gelpi, Christopher, and Joseph Grieco. 2008. “Democracy, Interdependence, and the Sources of the Liberal Peace.” Journal of Peace Research 45 (1): 17-36. doi: 10.1177/0022343307084921.

Gibler, Douglas M. 2012. The Territorial Peace: Borders, State Development, and International Conflict. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Gibler, Douglas M., and Jaroslav Tir. 2014. “Territorial Peace and Democratic Clustering.” Journal of Politics 76 (1): 27-40. doi: 10.1017/S0022381613001059.

Gries, Peter, Andrew Fox, Yiming Jing, Matthias Mader, Thomas J. Scotto, and Jason Reifler. 2020. “A New Measure of the ‘Democratic Peace’: What Country Feeling Thermometer Data Can Teach Us about the Drivers of American and Western European Foreign Policy.” Political Research Exchange 2 (1): 1716630. doi: 10.1080/2474736X.2020.1716630.

Hanmer, Michael J., and Kerem Ozan Kalkan. 2013. “Behind the Curve: Clarifying the Best Approach to Calculating Predicted Probabilities and Marginal Effects from Limited Dependent Variable Models.” American Journal of Political Science 57 (1): 263-77. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2012.00602.x.

Hegre, Havard. 2000. “Development and the Liberal Peace: What Does It Take to Be a Trading State?” Journal of Peace Research 37 (1): 5-30. doi: 10.1177/002234330037001001.

Hurd, Ian. 2007. After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hurrell, Andrew. 2007. On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Huth, Paul K., and Todd L. Allee. 2002. The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century. Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Series Number 82). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Johnstone, Ian. 2003. “Security Council Deliberations: The Power of the Better Argument.” European Journal of International Law 14 (3): 437-80. doi: 10.1093/ejil/14.3.437.

Kahl, Colin H. 1998. “Constructing a Separate Peace: Constructivism, Collective Liberal Identity, and Democratic Peace.” Security Studies: The Origins of National Interests 8 (2-3): 94-144. doi: 10.1080/09636419808429376.

Keene, Edward. 2012. “The Treaty-making Revolution of the Nineteenth Century.” The International History Review 34 (3): 475-500. doi: 10.1080/07075332.2012.675224.

Keene, Edward. 2013. “International Hierarchy and the Origins of the Modern Practice of Intervention.” Review of International Studies 39 (5): 1077-90. doi: 10.1017/S0260210513000193.
Nadelmann, Ethan A. 1990. “Global Prohibition Regimes: The Evolution of Norms in International Society.” *International Organization* 44 (4): 479-526. doi: 10.1017/S0020183000035384.

North, Douglass C., John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast. 2009. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Owen, John. 1994. “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace.” *International Security* 19 (2): 87-125.

Owsiak, Andrew P. 2012. “Signing Up for Peace: International Boundary Agreements, Democracy, and Militarized Interstate Conflict.” *International Studies Quarterly* 56 (1): 51-66. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00699.x.

Palmer, Glenn, Roseanne W. McManus, Vito D’Orazio, Michael R. Kenwick, Mikaela Karstens, Chase Bloch, Nick Dietrich, Kayla Kahn, Kellan Ritter, and Michael J. Soules. 2020. “The MID5 Dataset, 2011-2014: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description.” https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/MID5s/mid-5-data-and-supporting-materials.zip/view. Accessed 8 May 2020.

Pevehouse, J. C. W., T. Nordstrom, R. W. McManus, and A. S. Jamison. 2019. “Tracking Organizations in the World: The Correlates of War IGO Version 3.0 Datasets.” *Journal of Peace Research* 57 (3): 492-503.

Prorok, Alyssa K., and Benjamin J. Appel. 2014. “Compliance with International Humanitarian Law: Democratic Third Parties and Civilian Targeting in Interstate War.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58 (4): 713-40. doi: 10.1177/0022002713478569.

Reus-Smit, Christian. 1999. *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Risse, Thomas. 1995. *Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy*. Princeton Studies in International History and Politics. Princeton, NJ: University Press.

Risse, Thomas, Steve C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1999. *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations (66). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosato, Sebastian. 2003. “The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory.” *American Political Science Review* 97 (4): 585-602. doi: 10.1017/S0003055403000893.

Rublee, Maria Rost, and Avner Cohen. 2018. “Nuclear Norms in Global Governance: A Progressive Research Agenda.” *Contemporary Security Policy* 39 (3): 317-40. doi: 10.1080/13523260.2018.1451428.

Russett, Bruce M., and John R. Oneal. 2001. *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*. Norton Series in World Politics. London, UK: Norton.

Sandholtz, Wayne. 2007. *Prohibiting Plunder: How Norms Change*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Sandholtz, Wayne, and Kendall Stiles. 2008. *International Norms and Cycles of Change*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Saunders, Elizabeth N. 2006. “Setting Boundaries: Can International Society Exclude ‘Rogue States?’” *International Studies Review* 8 (1): 23-54. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2486.2006.00552.x.

Schneider, Gerald, and Nils Petter Gleditsch. 2010. “The Capitalist Peace: The Origins and Prospects of a Liberal Idea.” *International Interactions: A Capitalist Peace?* 36 (2): 107-14. doi: 10.1080/03050621003784689.

Sechser, Todd S., and Matthew Fuhrmann. 2013. “Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail.” *International Organization* 67 (1): 173-95. doi: 10.1017/S0020818312000392.

Tannenwald, Nina. 1999. “The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-use.” *International Organization* 53 (3): 433-68. doi: 10.1162/002081899550959.

Tomz, Michael, Jessica L. P. Weeks, and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2020. “Public Opinion and Decisions about Military Force in Democracies.” *International Organization* 74 (1): 119-43. doi: 10.1017/S0020818312000341.

Vreeland, James Raymond, and Axel Dreher. 2014. *The Political Economy of the United Nations Security Council: Money and Influence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Waltz, Kenneth. 1990. “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities.” *American Political Science Review* 84 (3): 731-31. doi: 10.2307/1962764.

Weeks, Jessica L. 2012. “Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict.” *American Political Science Review* 106 (2): 326-47. doi: 10.1017/S0003055412000111.

Weiss, Jessica Chen. 2013. “Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Nationalist Protest in China.” *International Organization* 67 (1): 1-35. doi: 10.1017/S0020818312000380.

Weiss, Jessica Chen, and Allan Dafoe. 2019. “Authoritarian Audiences, Rhetoric, and Propaganda in International Crises: Evidence from China.” *International Studies Quarterly* 63 (4): 963-73. doi: 10.1093/isq/sqz059.

Wheeler, Nicholas J. 2000. *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Wight, Martin. 1978. *Power Politics*. Bloomsbury Collections. New York: Continuum.