


RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Agents, multilateral institutions, and fundamental institutional change in international society: The case of Russia's peacekeeping policy

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## Abstract

Drawing on recent debates in English School (ES) theory, this article develops an analytical framework for examining how states use multilateral institutions, or what ES theorists call 'secondary institutions', to reshape 'primary institutions', i.e. fundamental practices in international society. The framework highlights the role of states' agency in international institutional change by shedding light on strategies that they employ to bring about changes in primary institutions. It posits that, although they can seek to directly remould primary institutions, states in practice often seek to bring about primary institutional changes through existing or newly formed secondary institutions and that this is especially the case at the level of regional international societies (RISs). The article demonstrates the utility of the framework by using it to analyse the case of Russia's peacekeeping policy in the post-Soviet regional international society (PSRIS), focusing on its efforts to institutionalise the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as an alternative 'peacekeeping' actor.

**Keywords:** CSTO; English School; international society; peacekeeping; Russia

## Introduction

Barry Buzan's *From International to World Society?* has contributed greatly to 'reconvening' the English School of International Relations (ES).<sup>1</sup> This book has helped to entrench in ES theory the conceptual distinction, originally proposed by Samuel M. Makinda, between the terms 'primary institutions', which refers to fundamental practices in international society, and 'secondary institutions', which refers to multilateral institutions and regimes.<sup>2</sup> Much debate in the ES literature today revolves around the relationship between these two types of institutions.

Drawing on ES theory, this article develops an analytical framework for examining how states use secondary institutions to reshape primary institutions. The framework highlights the role of states' agency in international institutional change by casting light on strategies that they employ to contest and reshape primary institutions. It posits that, although they can seek to directly reshape primary institutions, states in practice often seek to bring about primary institutional changes through existing or newly formed secondary institutions and that this is especially the case at the level of regional international societies (RISs).

<sup>1</sup>Barry Buzan, 'The English School: An underexploited resource in IR', *Review of International Studies*, 27:3 (2001), pp. 471–88 (p. 479); Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, p. 167; Samuel M. Makinda, 'Hedley Bull and global governance: A note on IR theory', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 56:3 (2002), pp. 361–71 (p. 366).

The article demonstrates the framework's utility by using it to analyse the case of Russia's peacekeeping policy in the post-Soviet regional international society (PSRIS), focusing on its efforts to institutionalise the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as an alternative 'peacekeeping' actor. Since the Cold War's end, Russia has challenged some of the basic norms and principles underpinning peacekeeping, which can be categorised as a primary institution by the ES's criteria, and has made use of two regional secondary institutions in the PSRIS to this end: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the CSTO. This article focuses particularly on the latter, which has recently come under the spotlight after its intervention in Kazakhstan in January 2022. This case study illustrates the utility of the framework in analysing how states utilise secondary institutions to reshape primary institutions.

This article proceeds in six stages. The first section puts forth a framework for analysing how states utilise secondary institutions to reshape primary institutions. The article then discusses the nature of Russia's revisionism and examines its approaches to some key primary institutions, including sovereignty and what is commonly called 'great power management' in ES theory, with a view to highlighting the intention behind Russia's peacekeeping policy.<sup>3</sup> The third section conceptualises peacekeeping as a primary institution, and the fourth section looks at Russia's approach to this institution, focusing on so-called Russian peacekeeping in the PSRIS and highlighting the roles of secondary institutions in its peacekeeping policy. The fifth section examines the strategies that Russia has employed to develop the CSTO as an alternative 'peacekeeping' actor, and the CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan in January 2022 is analysed in the sixth section, followed by the conclusions.

### English School theory and institutional change in international society

Much of the recent ES literature has explored the relationship between primary and secondary institutions. Buzan has put the term 'primary institutions' on the map by defining them as 'relatively fundamental and durable practices, that are evolved more than designed'.<sup>4</sup> In addition, primary institutions, as he defines, 'are constitutive of actors and their patterns of legitimate activity in relation to each other'.<sup>5</sup> They are not mere habitual behaviours but 'durable and recognised patterns of shared practices rooted in values held commonly by the members of interstate societies' and 'embodying a mix of norms, rules and principles'.<sup>6</sup> Examples include sovereignty, diplomacy, multilateralism, the balance of power, great power management, and international law.<sup>7</sup> As discussed later, peacekeeping can also be regarded as a primary institution. Secondary institutions, according to Buzan, are 'intergovernmental arrangements consciously designed by states to serve specific functional purposes', such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).<sup>8</sup> Secondary institutions correspond to what liberal International Relations (IR) theories call multilateral institutions or international regimes.

There are debates in the ES literature about how to theorise the relationship between these two kinds of institutions. Buzan assumes the primacy of primary institutions over secondary ones. As he argues:

For the English School, secondary institutions are reflective and supportive of primary ones, and their possibilities are constrained by the broader framing of primary institutions within which they necessarily operate.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, pp. 183–4.

<sup>4</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, p. 167.

<sup>5</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, p. 181.

<sup>7</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, p. 187.

<sup>8</sup>Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Buzan, *Introduction to the English School*, p. 30.

Kilian Spandler, however, questions this, arguing for examining secondary institutions as ‘autonomous objects of analysis’ and emphasising ‘the complex dynamics between the two levels’.<sup>10</sup>

Picking up on this line of argument, a group of ES scholars have published a collective volume titled *International Organization in the Anarchical Society*, in which they set out the hypothesis that secondary institutions are not only reflective of, but can also bring significant changes to, ‘the constitutive principles and practices’ of primary institutions.<sup>11</sup> In this book, Cornelia Navari and Tonny Brems Knudsen draw attention to four key aspects of the interplay between these two types of institutions: (1) secondary institutions are reflective of primary institutions; (2) secondary institutions can, ‘by design or evolution’, bring about changes in primary institutions; (3) such changes may have transformative impacts on the character of international society; and (4) regional secondary institutions can help to adjust existing primary institutions to suit regional needs or even create new ones for their respective RISs.<sup>12</sup>

Based on this understanding, the book puts forward frameworks for understanding institutional change in international society. Knudsen, for example, views primary institutions as consisting of ‘constitutive principles’, which define their roles and functions in international society, and of ‘reproducing practices’, which support and maintain those principles.<sup>13</sup> He then proposes to distinguish between ‘change *in* a primary institution’ – by which he means ‘changes in the practices by which the constitutive principles [underpinning a primary institution] are reproduced or maintained’ – and ‘change *of* a primary institution’ – by which he means ‘changes in the constitutive principles themselves’.<sup>14</sup> This framework is useful for analysing how the institutional structure of international society changes.

### *The role of agency in international institutional change*

This framework, however, says little about the role of states and their agency in international institutional change. As Navari points out, ES theory is ‘a form of structuration theory’, and therefore ES theorists should pay attention to ‘*both* structures and agents’.<sup>15</sup> The institutional structure of international society is sustained through practice, and it is the interaction among ‘interested agents’ that is the key to explaining the stability and change of institutions in international society.<sup>16</sup> Interested agents, according to Navari, are political actors with intentions, purposes, and goals and include both state and non-state actors.<sup>17</sup> When seeking to achieve their goals, interested agents are usually guided by the prescriptions and standards set by existing institutions, and, in so acting, they reaffirm the validity of those institutions.<sup>18</sup> In some cases, however, interested agents seek to achieve their goals by revising the existing institutional setting or by creating a new one. As Navari puts it, ‘the agents create the structures within which they act’.<sup>19</sup> This line of argument points to

<sup>10</sup>Kilian Spandler, ‘The political international society: Change in primary and secondary institutions’, *Review of International Studies*, 41:3 (2015), pp. 601–22 (p. 602).

<sup>11</sup>Cornelia Navari and Tonny Brems Knudsen, ‘Introduction: A new approach to international organization’, in Tonny Brems Knudsen and Cornelia Navari (eds), *International Organization in the Anarchical Society* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 1–20 (p. 8).

<sup>12</sup>Navari and Knudsen, ‘Introduction’, pp. 8–9.

<sup>13</sup>Tonny Brems Knudsen, ‘Fundamental institutions and international organizations: Theorizing continuity and change’, in Knudsen and Navari (eds), *International Organization in the Anarchical Society*, pp. 23–50 (p. 33).

<sup>14</sup>Knudsen, ‘Fundamental institutions and international organizations: Theorizing continuity and change’, pp. 38–9, emphasis in original.

<sup>15</sup>Cornelia Navari, ‘Agents, structures and institutions: Some thoughts on method’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 33:4 (2020), pp. 467–70 (p. 467), emphasis in original.

<sup>16</sup>Cornelia Navari, ‘Modelling the relations of fundamental institutions and international organizations’, in Knudsen and Navari (eds), *International Organization in the Anarchical Society*, pp. 51–75 (pp. 66–8).

<sup>17</sup>Navari, ‘Modelling the relations of fundamental institutions and international organizations’, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup>See Cornelia Navari, ‘The concept of practice in the English School’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 17:4 (2010), pp. 611–30.

<sup>19</sup>Cornelia Navari, ‘Agents versus structures in English School theory: Is co-constitution the answer?’, *Journal of International Political Theory*, 16:2 (2020), pp. 249–67 (p. 263).

the importance of looking at the role of states' agency when considering changes in or of primary institutions.

Focusing on the agency of states requires taking their *intentions* into account. What Navari calls '*intentional explanation*', which she defines as 'explanation by reference to the intentions of specified agents', is of great importance in explaining states' actions, including their deliberate attempts to contest primary institutions.<sup>20</sup> Admittedly, such attempts may or may not succeed, and unintended institutional changes can occur. It is also the case that some primary institutional changes occur without anyone intending them. Indeed, ES theory often describes primary institutions as something that develops gradually or 'evolve[s]'.<sup>21</sup> The occurrence of unintended and/or unexpected institutional changes, however, does not reduce the importance of intentionality for the analysis of the role of states in international institutional change. On the contrary, the meanings of states' actions, including the strategies they employ to contest primary institutions, become intelligible only by grasping their intentions.

The argument so far highlights the importance of states' agency in international institutional change but says little about *how* they seek to remould primary institutions. The literature on norm contestation provides some theoretical insight that helps unravel this question. This literature has examined different types of contestation strategies adopted by states and other actors in international relations. Antje Wiener, a pioneer in this area of research, defines norm contestation as 'a *discursive* practice that critically engages norms'.<sup>22</sup> A similar idea is also proposed by Spandler, who emphasises the role of 'discursive actors' in international institutional change.<sup>23</sup>

Recent literature, however, has challenged the exclusive focus on discursive contestation, pointing out that disapproval of norms can also be expressed in a *non-discursive* manner. Anette Stimmer and Lea Wisken, for example, emphasise 'non-discursive forms of contestation' or 'forms of contestation outside the world of discourse' and distinguish 'discursive contestation', which refers to 'contestation by means of discourse', from '*behavioural* contestation', which refers to 'contestation by means of *actions*'.<sup>24</sup> These two types of contestation are not mutually exclusive. As they argue, actors in world politics typically 'use both, either at the same time or sequentially'.<sup>25</sup> This differentiation is useful for analysing strategies which states employ to contest and reshape primary institutions.

### ***The role and use of secondary institutions in primary institutional change***

Instead of seeking to reshape primary institutions directly, states can, and often do, seek to achieve this through utilising secondary institutions. As discussed above, secondary institutions can bring about primary institutional changes 'by design or evolution'.<sup>26</sup> The differentiation between discursive and behavioural contestation mentioned above is also useful for understanding secondary institutions' roles as 'sites and drivers' of primary institutional change.<sup>27</sup> States can utilise secondary institutions as forums where they discursively contest and reshape primary institutions through argument. However, secondary institutions are not merely talking shops; states seeking to challenge and remould primary institutions can also 'act through' secondary institutions.<sup>28</sup> In other words,

<sup>20</sup> Cornelia Navari, 'What the classical English School was trying to explain, and why its members were not interested in causal explanation', in Cornelia Navari (ed.), *Theorising International Society: English School Methods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 39–57 (p. 46), emphasis in original.

<sup>21</sup> Charlotta Friedner Parrat, 'On the evolution of primary institutions of international society', *International Studies Quarterly*, 61:3 (2017), pp. 623–30 (pp. 628–9).

<sup>22</sup> Antje Wiener, *A Theory of Contestation* (New York: Springer, 2014), p. 21, emphasis added.

<sup>23</sup> Spandler, 'The political international society', pp. 618, 620, 622.

<sup>24</sup> Anette Stimmer and Lea Wisken, 'The dynamics of dissent: When actions are louder than words', *International Affairs*, 95:3 (2019), pp. 515–33 (pp. 515–16, 519), emphasis added.

<sup>25</sup> Stimmer and Wisken, 'The dynamics of dissent', p. 522.

<sup>26</sup> Navari and Knudsen, 'Introduction', pp. 8–9.

<sup>27</sup> Navari and Knudsen, 'Introduction', p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, 'Why states act through formal international organizations', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42:1 (1998), pp. 3–32.

states can utilise secondary institutions to engage in discursive and/or behavioural contestation aimed at bringing about changes in or of primary institutions.

It is important to consider *why* some states choose to reshape primary institutions through utilising secondary institutions rather than in a more direct fashion. For one thing, states often 'act through' secondary institutions because the latter not only help to make collective actions more efficient, but also help to legitimise the former's policies and actions.<sup>29</sup> Inis L. Claude, for example, argues that this 'collective legitimization' function is one of the key roles that the UN has come to perform in contemporary international society.<sup>30</sup> While this is the case, other secondary institutions, including regional ones, can also, and often do, perform the same function. Another reason is because, as Navari argues, secondary institutions can influence and alter the 'preference structures' and 'balance of power' among interested agents, which in turn 'feeds back into the understanding of the foundation [i.e. primary] institutions of international society'.<sup>31</sup> In other words, states can utilise secondary institutions to gain multilateral acceptance of, and support for, their attempts to change primary institutions.

It is also necessary to consider *which* secondary institution or institutions states use to bring about primary institutional changes. The UN plays important roles in primary institutional change. However, given its near-universal membership and resultant differences in the member states' interests and values, it can often be difficult to reach consensus on proposed primary institutional changes at this global secondary institution. Alternatively, states seeking to change primary institutions can turn to regional secondary institutions within which such consensus can be achieved relatively easily. As already discussed, regional secondary institutions can be utilised to modify or shape primary institutions at the level of RISs.<sup>32</sup> The literature on the role of the European Union (EU) as 'normative power Europe' illustrates this point.<sup>33</sup> Hiski Haukkala, for example, describes the EU as a 'Regional Normative Hegemon' in his analysis of European Neighbourhood Policy.<sup>34</sup> It is therefore necessary to pay attention to both the UN and regional secondary institutions when discussing the roles of secondary institutions in primary institutional change.

In addition, it is necessary to analyse how the UN and regional secondary institutions interact in processes of primary institutional change. While they can act independently of the UN, regional secondary institutions often seek to build a cooperative relationship with the UN and to gain its political approval and endorsement to increase the legitimacy of their policies and activities. For instance, Spyros Blavoukos and Dimitris Bourantonis argue that 'the EU ... has persistently sought an enhanced status of representation and political status in the UN structure to upgrade its international identity and exhibit its multilateral credentials'.<sup>35</sup> Such a *recognition-building* strategy can often be observed in the area of peacekeeping.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, it is vital to point out that, when states set out to challenge and modify primary institutions through secondary institutions, there are, broadly speaking, two options open to them.

<sup>29</sup> Abbott and Snidal, 'Why states act through formal international organizations', pp. 4–5.

<sup>30</sup> Inis L. Claude Jr., 'Collective legitimization as a political function of the United Nations', *International Organization*, 20:3 (1966), pp. 367–79.

<sup>31</sup> Navari, 'Modelling the relations of fundamental institutions and international organizations', pp. 68–72. See also Navari, 'Agents versus structures', pp. 261–3; Navari, 'Agents, structures and institutions', pp. 468–9.

<sup>32</sup> Navari and Knudsen, 'Introduction', p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> See Ian Manners, 'Normative power Europe: A contradiction in terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40:2 (2002), pp. 235–58.

<sup>34</sup> Hiski Haukkala, 'The European Union as a regional normative hegemon: The case of European Neighbourhood Policy', in Richard G. Whitman (ed.), *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 45–64.

<sup>35</sup> Spyros Blavoukos and Dimitris Bourantonis, 'Inter-organizational relations in a nested environment: Regional organizations in the UN', in Stephen Aris, Aglaya Snetkov and Andreas Wenger (eds), *Inter-organizational Relations in International Security: Cooperation and Competition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 38–53 (p. 43).

<sup>36</sup> See Michael Barnett, 'Partners in peace? The UN, regional organizations, and peace-keeping', *Review of International Studies*, 21:4 (1995), pp. 411–33; Hikaru Yamashita, 'Peacekeeping cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations', *Review of International Studies*, 38:1 (2012), pp. 165–86.

One avenue is to have recourse to existing secondary institutions. While this may be a less costly option, existing secondary institutions can turn out to be ineffective venues for seeking primary institutional changes, especially when they, or some of their member states, are inculcated with existing primary institutions. Alternatively, states can set up new secondary institutions with a view to reshaping primary institutions. Combining Julia C. Morse and Robert O. Keohane's concept of 'competitive regime creation' with what Navari calls 'secondary institutionalisation', which refers to 'institution-building', this article conceptualises this strategy as *competitive secondary institutionalisation*.<sup>37</sup> Morse and Keohane do not discuss how the strategy of forming new multilateral institutions impacts on primary institutions, but this article posits that the impact of this strategy is not limited to specific issue areas but extends to primary institutions of international society. States can use competitively institutionalised secondary institutions for various purposes, but this article focuses on the roles of such secondary institutions in reshaping primary institutions. Moreover, it is worth pointing out that the strategy of competitive secondary institutionalisation can be coupled with the strategy of recognition-building mentioned above so as to boost the global standing of newly created regional secondary institutions.

In what follows, I shall show the utility of the analytical framework presented in this section by taking up the case of Russia's peacekeeping policy in the PSRIS. Before this, however, it is necessary to present an overview of recent literature on Russia's revisionism and its attitudes towards some key primary institutions in order to grasp the intention behind its attempts to reshape the primary institution of peacekeeping in the region.

### Russia's revisionism and international society

The literature on Russia's revisionism helps to understand the intention and goals behind its foreign and security policy, including its peacekeeping policy. If Russia is a revisionist power, what *kind* of revisionist power is it?

According to Buzan, there are three types of revisionist states. First, those who are satisfied with the existing institutions of international society but are seeking to enhance their status are called '*orthodox revisionist*' states. Second, those who are seeking to challenge and reshape existing institutions of international society but are largely satisfied with or at least willing to accept their status are called '*reformist revisionist*' states. Third, those who are intent on changing both the institutional structure and their status in international society are called '*revolutionary revisionist*' states.<sup>38</sup>

Which one of these labels best describes Russia? Richard Sakwa argues that Russia's foreign policy under President Vladimir Putin is characterised by 'resistance to the liberal hegemonic order' and that Russia sees itself as 'the guardian' of the traditional norms, values, and principles of pluralist international society.<sup>39</sup> As he argues:

The essence of *neo-revisionism* is not the attempt to create new rules or to advance an alternative model of international order but to ensure the universal and consistent application of existing norms. ... A revisionist state would seek to challenge the existing balance of power in the system and threaten the foundations of the system itself. This does not apply to contemporary Russia. It is a country that seeks to enhance its status within the existing framework of international society.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Julia C. Morse and Robert O. Keohane, 'Contested multilateralism', *Review of International Organizations*, 9:4 (2014), pp. 385–412 (pp. 392–3); Navari, 'Agents, structures and institutions', p. 468.

<sup>38</sup> Barry Buzan, 'China's rise in English School perspective', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 18:3 (2018), pp. 449–76 (p. 461), emphasis in original. See also Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2007), pp. 241–6.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Russia against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 128–9, 134.

<sup>40</sup> Sakwa, *Russia against the Rest*, p. 131, emphasis added.



Tatiana Romanova concurs with this view, saying that Russia is primarily interested in ‘upgrad[ing] Moscow’s status’ in international society.<sup>41</sup> In this view, Russia can be seen as an *orthodox* revisionist power.

This view, however, has been contested by those who point to differences between Russia’s approach to the PSRIS and its approach to wider global international society. Roy Allison argues that, while there is little evidence to suggest that it has been seeking to revise international legal principles and it often presents itself as a protector of the pluralist international order, Russia views the CIS region as ‘a regional zone of exception outside the global system of international law or the operation of the UN Charter.’<sup>42</sup> Even Sakwa seems to subscribe to this view when he mentions that Russian leaders were ‘not interested in creating an alternative set of values, but sought adherence to the existing framework of international society centred on the UN *while carving out space for its own normative world order at the regional level*.’<sup>43</sup> This suggests that, while it may be described as an orthodox revisionist power at the global level, Russia is more of a *reformist* revisionist power in the PSRIS, where it retains its status as a regional hegemon. Borrowing Samir Puri’s phrase, this article henceforth refers to Russia’s sustained attempts to bring about regional institutional changes as ‘regional revisionism.’<sup>44</sup> As discussed below, so-called Russian peacekeeping can be seen as a manifestation of its regional revisionism.

Russia’s regional revisionism goes hand in hand with its attitudes to some key primary institutions. To begin with, its regional revisionism is reflected in its rather idiosyncratic approach to the primary institution of sovereignty. Although Russian legal discourse often emphasises the importance of state sovereignty, Russia has also acted in ways that undermine the sovereignty of its neighbouring states in the PSRIS.<sup>45</sup>

Russia’s approach to sovereignty reflects its self-image as a great power.<sup>46</sup> Great power status constitutes the core of Russia’s state identity, and it is widely considered in Russia that this status is only achievable by maintaining strong military capabilities.<sup>47</sup> In addition, Russian leaders believe that ‘the re-establishing of a stronger regional position in the CIS’ is essential for holding onto and strengthening its global great power status.<sup>48</sup> Retaining and reinforcing its standing as a regional hegemon in the PSRIS has been one of the central goals that Russia has tenaciously pursued in its foreign and security policy.<sup>49</sup> It is this great power thinking that has given rise to Russia’s regional revisionism, and such thinking has also informed so-called Russian peacekeeping in the PSRIS.

The idea of the great power informs not only Russia’s self-image, but also its understanding about how international order should be governed. As Allison explains, Russia views ‘a concert of great powers’ as fundamental to maintaining international order.<sup>50</sup> In ES terminology, Russia attaches importance to the primary institution of great power management. The idea that the great powers

<sup>41</sup>Tatiana Romanova, ‘Russia’s neorevisionist challenge to the liberal international order’, *The International Spectator*, 53:1 (2018), pp. 76–91 (pp. 77–8).

<sup>42</sup>Roy Allison, ‘Russian revisionism, legal discourse and the “rules-based” international order’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 72:6 (2020), pp. 976–95 (pp. 980, 983–4).

<sup>43</sup>Sakwa, *Russia against the Rest*, p. 130, emphasis added.

<sup>44</sup>Samir Puri, ‘The strategic hedging of Iran, Russia, and China: Juxtaposing participation in the global system with regional revisionism’, *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 2:4 (2017), pp. 307–23.

<sup>45</sup>Ruth Deyermund, ‘The uses of sovereignty in twenty-first century Russian foreign policy’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68:6 (2016), pp. 957–84 (p. 957); Katarzyna Kaczmarska, ‘Russia’s *droit de regard*: Pluralist norms and the sphere of influence’, *Global Discourse*, 5:3 (2015), pp. 434–48 (p. 443).

<sup>46</sup>See S. Neil MacFarlane, ‘Russian perspectives on order and justice’, in Rosemary Foot, John Gaddis, and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Order and Justice in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 176–206 (p. 201).

<sup>47</sup>Bettina Renz, *Russia’s Military Revival* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), pp. 22–30.

<sup>48</sup>Kaczmarska, ‘Russia’s *droit de regard*’, p. 439.

<sup>49</sup>See Ruth Deyermund, ‘Matrioshka hegemony? Multi-levelled hegemonic competition and security in post-Soviet Central Asia’, *Review of International Studies*, 35:1 (2009), pp. 151–73.

<sup>50</sup>Roy Allison, ‘Contested understandings of sovereignty, the use of force and the wider international legal order: The political context’, European Leadership Network, available at: <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ELN-Narratives-Conference-Allison.pdf>.

have ‘managerial responsibility for international order’ informs Russia’s regional as well as global policy.<sup>51</sup>

Russia’s emphasis on great power management informs its approach to multilateralism. In ES theory, multilateralism is viewed as a primary institution derivative of the primary institution of diplomacy and also as the foundation of secondary institutions.<sup>52</sup> In general terms, Russia values multilateralism and is a member of various secondary institutions. However, it is worth noting that Russia has some idiosyncratic views about multilateralism; Russia tends to associate, if not confuse, multilateralism with multipolarity.<sup>53</sup> Russia’s approach to multilateralism stresses the managerial functions carried out by the great powers and is therefore often referred to as ‘great power multilateralism.’<sup>54</sup> As discussed below, Russia’s great power multilateralism shapes not only its relations with other great powers but also its approach to secondary institutions in the PSRIS where its regional dominance is virtually unchallenged.

This section has, *inter alia*, underscored three key features of Russia’s foreign and security policy: regional revisionism, great power thinking, and great power multilateralism. As shown below, these attributes have a significant bearing on Russia’s approach to peacekeeping in the PSRIS. Before delving into this issue, however, it is worth considering what peacekeeping is, how it can be understood from the standpoint of ES theory, and how it has evolved as an institution.

### Peacekeeping as a primary institution

Paul F. Diehl describes the key features of peacekeeping as follows:

the imposition of neutral and lightly armed interposition forces following a cessation of armed hostilities, and with the permission of the state on whose territory those forces are deployed, in order to discourage a renewal of military conflict and promote an environment under which the underlying dispute can be resolved.<sup>55</sup>

There has been no consensus among ES theorists as to how to conceptualise peacekeeping. Knudsen counts peacekeeping as a principle underpinning pluralist international society along with other key pluralist principles such as sovereignty and non-intervention that are treated as primary institutions in ES theory.<sup>56</sup> Buzan, however, sees peacekeeping operations (PKOs) as secondary institutions reflecting primary institutions such as territoriality and self-determination.<sup>57</sup>

The key here is to distinguish between ‘peacekeeping’ as a primary institution and ‘peacekeeping operations (PKOs)’ or ‘peacekeeping missions’ which refer to specific intergovernmental arrangements or secondary institutions created on the basis of the primary institution of peacekeeping to perform certain functions in certain area and time. Since peacekeeping has historically evolved into an entrenched international practice based on certain norms, it can be viewed as a primary institution in its own right. Just as international sanctions have evolved from mere measures to a primary institution of international society, so too peacekeeping has evolved into a primary institution.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Buzan, *Introduction to the English School*, pp. 103–4.

<sup>52</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, pp. 183, 187, 246–7.

<sup>53</sup>Renz, *Russia’s Military Revival*, pp. 40–7. See also Andrey Makarychev and Viatcheslav Morozov, ‘Multilateralism, multipolarity, and beyond: A menu of Russia’s policy strategies’, *Global Governance*, 17:3 (2011), pp. 353–73.

<sup>54</sup>See, for example, Elana Wilson Rowe and Stina Torjesen, ‘Key features of Russian multilateralism’, in Elana Wilson Rowe and Stina Torjesen (eds), *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–20 (p. 2); André Gerrits, ‘Russia in the changing global order: Multipolarity, multilateralism, and sovereignty’, in Madeleine O. Hosli and Joren Selleslaghs (eds), *The Changing Global Order: Challenges and Prospects* (Cham: Springer, 2020), pp. 85–107 (p. 97).

<sup>55</sup>Paul F. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 13.

<sup>56</sup>Tonny Brems Knudsen, ‘Fundamental institutions and international organizations: Solidarist architecture’, in Knudsen and Navari (eds), *International Organization in the Anarchical Society*, pp. 175–202 (p. 177).

<sup>57</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, p. 187.

<sup>58</sup>See Peter Wilson and Joanne Yao, ‘International sanctions as a primary institution of international society’, in Knudsen and Navari (eds), *International Organization in the Anarchical Society*, pp. 127–48.



Moreover, Buzan counts institutions such as arbitration, alliances, and humanitarian intervention as primary institutions.<sup>59</sup> It is therefore reasonable to regard peacekeeping as a primary institution by the ES's criteria.

As discussed in the first section, a primary institution can be broken down into its 'constitutive principle' and 'reproducing practices'.<sup>60</sup> On the basis of this distinction, and in view of Diehl's definition quoted above, it can be argued that the constitutive principle of peacekeeping is *third-party interposition aimed at preserving the peace*, and that this principle is supported and maintained by reproducing practices such as *consent, impartiality, and limited use of force*. There are also other associated practices shaping peacekeeping, such as the practice of avoiding the direct participation of those who cannot be expected to act disinterestedly.<sup>61</sup>

The end of the Cold War marked the arrival of a new era for peacekeeping. For example, while the direct involvement of great powers was eschewed during the Cold War period, great power peacekeeping has become common practice today. The scope of peacekeeping has also been expanded in response to the changes in the global security environment.<sup>62</sup> The idea of *peace-building* originated with multidimensional UN peacekeeping operations carried out at the time. For instance, the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia performed multifarious tasks related to democratic transition, such as the provision of humanitarian support and election administration.<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, the post-Cold War period saw the UN's forays into the field of *peace-enforcement*. The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in the first half of the 1960s can be seen as the UN's first ever peace-enforcement operation, but no other peace-enforcement operations were conducted by the UN during the Cold War period. Following the adoption of *An Agenda for Peace* in January 1992, however, the UN began to venture into peace enforcement and conducted peace-enforcement operations in Somalia and Bosnia.<sup>64</sup> In ES parlance, new international practices such as peace-building and peace enforcement can be viewed as derivatives of the primary institution of peacekeeping.<sup>65</sup>

## Russian peacekeeping as behavioural and discursive contestation

Using the analytical framework set out in the first section and based on the preliminary discussions in the previous two sections, this section examines Russia's attempts to reshape how the primary institution of peacekeeping is understood and practised in the PSRIS. As one of the Permanent 5 (P5) in the UN Security Council (UNSC), Russia has contributed to the development of peacekeeping. Moreover, it has contributed its troops to several UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>66</sup> In view of this, Russia is apparently not opposed to the constitutive principle of the primary institution of peacekeeping. However, in pursuance of great power status, Russia has sought to discursively and behaviourally contest and reshape some of the reproducing practices of peacekeeping, as they are understood and practised in the PSRIS. In other words, Russia has sought to bring about changes

<sup>59</sup> Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, pp. 184, 187.

<sup>60</sup> Knudsen, 'Fundamental institutions and international organizations: Theorizing continuity and change', p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> Hilaire McCoubrey and Nigel D. White, *The Blue Helmets: Legal Regulation of United Nations Military Operations* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing, 1996), pp. 69–90.

<sup>62</sup> Pia Christina Wood and David S. Sorenson, 'Introduction', in David S. Sorenson and Pia Christina Wood (eds), *The Politics of Peacekeeping in the Post-Cold War Era* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2005), pp. 1–8 (pp. 2–3).

<sup>63</sup> Gwinyayi Albert Dzinesa, 'A comparative perspective of UN peacekeeping in Angola and Namibia', *International Peacekeeping*, 11:4 (2004), pp. 644–63 (p. 648).

<sup>64</sup> Jane Boulden, *Peace Enforcement: The United Nations Experience in Congo, Somalia, and Bosnia* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), pp. 1–6.

<sup>65</sup> Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, pp. 182–4.

<sup>66</sup> Maxim Bratersky and Alexander Lukin, 'The Russian perspective on UN peacekeeping: Today and tomorrow', in Cedric de Coning, Chiyuki Aoi, and John Karlsrud (eds), *UN Peacekeeping Doctrine in a New Era: Adapting to Stabilisation, Protection and New Threats* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 132–51 (pp. 139–41).

in peacekeeping in the PSRIS through both actions and words. Russia's peacekeeping policy, in essence, is an exemplification of its regional revisionism.

The origins of what Allison calls 'Russian-style peacekeeping' can be traced to Russian military interventions in the early 1990s.<sup>67</sup> After the Soviet break-up, Russia intervened militarily and otherwise in three former Soviet countries – Moldova (Transnistria), Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), and Tajikistan, and these interventions provided models and precedents for so-called Russian peacekeeping.<sup>68</sup> These interventions occurred as responses to regional turmoil and unrest in the PSRIS. It was widely held in Russia that regional disorder in the PSRIS could pose a real threat to its national security, and the idea that Russia should act as 'the legitimate guarantor of military and political stability in the CIS' was gaining traction in Russia.<sup>69</sup> While Russia's interventions may have contributed to stability in the PSRIS, it cannot be denied that Russia took advantage of the weaknesses of the newly independent states in the region. The Russian forces on the ground served to create a new status quo on terms favourable to their country's strategic interests.<sup>70</sup> It is also undeniable that Russia used peacekeeping to exercise its local hegemony and to strengthen its great power status in the PSRIS.<sup>71</sup> Russia's great power thinking runs through, and informs, its approach to peacekeeping.<sup>72</sup>

Russian peacekeeping in former Soviet republics in the 1990s deviated from some reproducing practices of peacekeeping, including consent, impartiality, and limited use of force. First, Russia pressured the parties concerned into giving their consent to the deployment of Russian peacekeepers, and on that account consent was not completely voluntary.<sup>73</sup> Russian interventions and involvement in the conflicts in Transnistria and Abkhazia preceded the formal agreement between the parties concerned to deploy peacekeepers to their respective conflict zones, and the role that the presence of Russian forces played in obtaining the 'consent' of the belligerents in these cases could not be ignored.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, Russia played a vital role in securing agreement over peacekeeping in the context of the conflict in South Ossetia.<sup>75</sup>

Second, Russia supported one party against the other at various stages of its peacekeeping activities, including during the early phases when it sought to obtain consent from the parties concerned, and, therefore, failed to preserve the impartiality of its peacekeeping missions. Such was the case in the civil war in Tajikistan, where Russia lent support to the pro-communist government in power as well as in the conflicts in Transnistria and Abkhazia, where Russian forces were on the side of the separatists.<sup>76</sup>

Third, Russian peacekeepers did not refrain from using force for purposes other than self-defence; force or threat of force was often used to enforce ceasefires, to secure the parties' consent

<sup>67</sup>Roy Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 126.

<sup>68</sup>See Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 109–72.

<sup>69</sup>Maxim Shashenkov, 'Russian peacekeeping in the "near abroad"', *Survival*, 36:3 (1994), pp. 46–69 (p. 49).

<sup>70</sup>Pavel K. Baev, 'Russia's experiments and experience in conflict management and peacemaking', *International Peacekeeping*, 1:3 (1994), pp. 245–60 (pp. 247–8).

<sup>71</sup>Dov Lynch, 'Post-imperial peacekeeping: Russia in the CIS', available at: <https://fhs.brage.unit.no/fhs-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/99555/IFSInfo0203.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; Lena Jonson and Clive Archer, 'Russia and peacekeeping in Eurasia', in Lena Jonson and Clive Archer (eds), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 3–29 (p. 4). See also Dov Lynch, 'Peacekeeping in Transnistria: Cooperation or competition?', *The International Spectator*, 41:4 (2006), pp. 55–67.

<sup>72</sup>See S. Neil MacFarlane and Albrecht Schnabel, 'Russia's approach to peacekeeping', *International Journal*, 50:2 (1995), pp. 294–324 (p. 318); Shashenkov, 'Russian peacekeeping', pp. 50–1.

<sup>73</sup>Jonson and Archer, 'Russia and peacekeeping in Eurasia', p. 9.

<sup>74</sup>Roy Allison, 'Peacekeeping in the Soviet successor states', available at: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/cp018e.pdf>; Baev, 'Russia's experiments', pp. 246, 250–3.

<sup>75</sup>Baev, 'Russia's experiments', p. 251.

<sup>76</sup>Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, pp. 127–8; Baev, 'Russia's experiments', pp. 246–53; Anthony Kellett, 'Soviet and Russian peacekeeping 1948–1998: Historical overview and assessment', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 12:2 (1999), pp. 1–47 (pp. 20, 25).

to Russian peacekeeping as discussed above, and to bring about conditions favourable to Russian strategic interests. Russian peacekeeping in the 1990s failed to draw a clear line between the primary institution of peacekeeping and peace enforcement, which is derivative of peacekeeping.<sup>77</sup> On the face of it, Russian ‘peacekeeping’ operations appear similar to UN peace-enforcement operations in the 1990s in terms of ‘the use of high levels of force.’<sup>78</sup> However, the former were not based on the UNSC’s resolutions mandating peace enforcement.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, given its dominant position in the PSRIS, Russia could hardly be seen as a disinterested and impartial actor. Moreover, Russian peacekeeping was characterised by ‘involvement in peacekeeping operations by military contingents from parties directly engaged in the conflict.’<sup>80</sup> For example, the peacekeeping operations in Moldova included troops from Russia, Moldova, and Transnistria, and those carried out in South Ossetia included troops from Russia, Georgia, and South Ossetia.<sup>81</sup> The inclusion of the parties to the conflict may have served to foster cooperation among them, but it also served as a way to organise peacekeeping missions while at the same time limiting the involvement of state and non-state actors from outside the PSRIS.

These features of Russian peacekeeping marked a departure from some of the key reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping and represented Russia’s *behavioural* contestation aimed at bringing about changes *in* peacekeeping. Russia’s deviations from some of the key reproducing practices of peacekeeping were not just an ad hoc response to security issues caused by the Soviet collapse but were reflections of its regional revisionism. This is evidenced by the fact that Russia sought to contest peacekeeping *discursively* as well as behaviourally in the 1990s, presenting what other states viewed as deviations from peacekeeping as ‘innovations worthy of emulation.’<sup>82</sup> In a speech delivered at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1993, Andrei Kozyrev, then Russian foreign minister, called on the international community to recognise ‘non-traditional methods’ in peacekeeping and to support Russian peacekeeping operations in the PSRIS by providing material and financial assistance.<sup>83</sup> The intention of this discursive contestation was to gain publicity for Russian peacekeeping as an alternative way of resolving conflicts, but many states, especially those in the West, looked askance at it because of its potentially distortive impact on peacekeeping.<sup>84</sup>

### *The role of secondary institutions in Russian peacekeeping*

This subsection looks at how Russia attempted to use secondary institutions to buttress its behavioural and discursive contestation of some of the key reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping. In order to fend off the criticism that Russia’s peacekeeping operations in the PSRIS deviated from some of the reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping, Russia had recourse to secondary institutions in an attempt to multilateralise and collectively legitimise its peacekeeping operations. More specifically, Russia presented them as CIS-sanctioned peacekeeping operations.<sup>85</sup>

CIS peacekeeping, however, was not without problems. Despite its multilateral facade, the CIS was a Russian-dominated body. CIS peacekeeping in the 1990s was in fact a disguised form of

<sup>77</sup> Allison, ‘Peacekeeping in the Soviet successor states’; MacFarlane and Schnabel, ‘Russia’s approach to peacekeeping’, p. 308; Shashenkov, ‘Russian peacekeeping’, p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> Domitilla Sagramoso, ‘Russian peacekeeping policies’, in John Mackinlay and Peter Cross (eds), *Regional Peacekeepers: The Paradox of Russian Peacekeeping* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003), pp. 13–33 (p. 20).

<sup>79</sup> Kellett, ‘Soviet and Russian peacekeeping’, p. 37.

<sup>80</sup> Jonson and Archer, ‘Russia and peacekeeping in Eurasia’, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Allison, ‘Peacekeeping in the Soviet successor states’.

<sup>82</sup> Kellett, ‘Soviet and Russian peacekeeping’, p. 37; Lynch, ‘Post-imperial peacekeeping’.

<sup>83</sup> UN Doc A/48/PV.6, 28 September 1993, p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 129; Jonson and Archer, ‘Russia and peacekeeping in Eurasia’, p. 18.

<sup>85</sup> Allison, ‘Peacekeeping in the Soviet successor states’; Anna Kreikemeyer and Andrei V. Zagorski, ‘The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)’, in Jonson and Archer (eds), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, pp. 157–71 (p. 157).

Russian peacekeeping, and the role of multilateralism in CIS peacekeeping operations was significantly undermined by Russian dominance both within the CIS and on the ground.<sup>86</sup> These features of CIS peacekeeping were reflective of Russia's great power multilateralism; Russia values and acts through secondary institutions only insofar as doing so strengthens its status and role as a great power. Another problem was that, in the cases of Abkhazia and Tajikistan, the CIS decisions and mandates sanctioning peacekeeping operations and missions followed, not preceded, the initial involvement by Russia.<sup>87</sup>

In order that the CIS would acquire international recognition as a legitimate peacekeeping actor, Russia resorted to the strategy of recognition-building. Russia appealed to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and the UN for recognition of Russian and CIS interventions in the PSRIS as legitimate 'peacekeeping' missions.<sup>88</sup> Russia hoped that these secondary institutions would help to collectively legitimise its military interventions in the PSRIS. Moreover, Russia made diplomatic efforts so that the CIS could gain recognition as a regional arrangement as defined under the UN Charter's Chapter VIII and enhance its authority as a regional secondary institution.<sup>89</sup>

The strategy of recognition-building, however, yielded little success in this instance, since members of the UN and the CSCE were wary of Russian and CIS operations in the PSRIS and had misgivings about recognising them as 'peacekeeping' operations.<sup>90</sup> CSCE authorisation was not forthcoming. It was decided at the Rome Council Meeting held in December 1993 that the CSCE would only give political support to peacekeeping operations that adhered to internationally accepted rules and standards concerning peacekeeping.<sup>91</sup> However, Russia was unwilling to give the CSCE a strong role in monitoring Russian and CIS peacekeeping in the PSRIS.<sup>92</sup> At the UN, Russia managed to achieve some positive results in terms of recognition-building. For example, the CIS was given *observer* status in March 1994.<sup>93</sup> Russia viewed the CIS's observer status as the first step towards the latter's becoming a regional arrangement as defined under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, Russia managed to secure a UN mandate for the CIS's operation in Abkhazia. However, the mandate made no reference to Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, nor did it describe this Russian-dominated secondary institution as a 'regional organisation'.<sup>95</sup> This reflected the cautious approach taken by the international community towards Russian and CIS military operations in the PSRIS.

Although members of the CSCE, which was reorganised into the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1995, and of the UN had been unwilling to recognise Russian and CIS operations in the PSRIS as legitimate peacekeeping operations, it is important to note

<sup>86</sup>See Center on International Cooperation, *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2008* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008), p. 90; Kreikemeyer and Zagorski, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States', pp. 161–2.

<sup>87</sup>Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, pp. 130–1; Jonson and Archer, 'Russia and peacekeeping in Eurasia', p. 17; Kreikemeyer and Zagorski, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States', pp. 160–1.

<sup>88</sup>Ian Hurd, 'Legitimacy, power, and the symbolic life of the UN Security Council', *Global Governance*, 8:1 (2002), pp. 35–51 (p. 44); Jonson and Archer, 'Russia and peacekeeping in Eurasia', p. 10; Paul Taylor and Karen Smith, 'The United Nations (UN)', in Jonson and Archer (eds), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, pp. 189–212 (pp. 200–1).

<sup>89</sup>Kreikemeyer and Zagorski, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States', p. 169.

<sup>90</sup>Baev, 'Russia's experiments', p. 252; Jonson and Archer, 'Russia and peacekeeping in Eurasia', p. 18; Lynch, 'Post-imperial peacekeeping'.

<sup>91</sup>Piotr Switalski and Ingrid Tersman, 'The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)', in Jonson and Archer (eds), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, pp. 173–87 (pp. 179–80).

<sup>92</sup>See Jakub M. Godzimirski, 'Russia and the OSCE: From high expectations to denial?', in Rowe and Torjesen (eds), *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 121–41 (pp. 126–7); Ettore Greco, 'Third party peace-keeping and the interaction between Russia and the OSCE in the CIS area', in Michael Bothe, Natalino Ronzitti, and Allan Rosas (eds), *The OSCE in the Maintenance of Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997), pp. 267–88 (p. 272).

<sup>93</sup>UN Doc A/RES/48/237, 24 March 1994; Taylor and Smith, 'The United Nations', p. 201.

<sup>94</sup>See Kreikemeyer and Zagorski, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States', p. 169.

<sup>95</sup>Taylor and Smith, 'The United Nations', p. 201.

that some degree of cooperation did exist between these secondary institutions and Russia/CIS. For instance, in the early 1990s, the CSCE sent its observer missions to Moldova, Georgia, and Tajikistan, and the UN established the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the UN Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT).<sup>96</sup> These international observers were sent to oversee not only ceasefires and conflict resolution but also the Russian and CIS ‘peacekeeping’ activities on the ground.<sup>97</sup>

Nevertheless, the activities of these secondary institutions in the PSRIS were often constrained.<sup>98</sup> By the mid-1990s, Russia had become disillusioned with these secondary institutions, and a consensus among Russian leaders had emerged that Russia should not allow them to interfere in what it viewed as its own sphere of influence.<sup>99</sup> For example, Russia had been disappointed over what it considered as the OSCE’s excessive involvement and interference in conflicts within and among former Soviet states.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, Russia had consistently resisted the expansion of NATO’s influence in the PSRIS and sought to prevent it from taking part in peacekeeping activities in the region.<sup>101</sup> Russia’s original plan was to develop the CIS into a regional secondary institution that could compete with other regional secondary institutions such as the CSCE/OSCE and NATO in the area of peacekeeping. This hope, however, had been dashed by the end of the 1990s because of the diverging political interests among its members.<sup>102</sup>

### The CSTO as a product of competitive secondary institutionalisation

This section examines how Russia, intent on pursuing great power status, has employed and combined the strategies of competitive secondary institutionalisation and recognition-building to develop the CSTO as an alternative regional secondary institution that Russia can utilise for behaviourally and discursively reshaping some of the key reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping, as they are understood and practised in the PSRIS.

As mentioned in the preceding section, it was increasingly clear by the end of the 1990s that the CIS would not serve as a secondary institution in which to develop regional norms regarding peacekeeping.<sup>103</sup> Put differently, Russia had largely failed to change the ‘preference structures’ of CIS member states in a way conducive to reshaping how some of the key reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping were understood and practised in the PSRIS.<sup>104</sup> In response to this impasse, Russia set out to develop the CSTO as a new and alternative secondary institution with the ability to carry out multilateral peacekeeping activities. In theoretical terms, the development of the CSTO can be viewed as a product of Russia’s strategy of competitive secondary institutionalisation; it is competitively institutionalised in the sense that it is designed to take over from the CIS the role of multilateralising and thus collectively legitimising Russian peacekeeping, which is in fact a form of behavioural and discursive contestation of peacekeeping underpinned by its regional revisionism. Russia also expects the CSTO to play the central role in developing regional peacekeeping norms by influencing its member states’ interests and preferences.

<sup>96</sup> Kellett, ‘Soviet and Russian peacekeeping’, pp. 8–9; Switalski and Tersman, ‘The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe’, pp. 177–8.

<sup>97</sup> Lynch, ‘Post-imperial peacekeeping’.

<sup>98</sup> Lynch, ‘Post-imperial peacekeeping’.

<sup>99</sup> Alexander A. Pikayev, ‘The Russian domestic debate on policy toward the “near abroad”’, in Jonson and Archer (eds), *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, pp. 51–66 (p. 66).

<sup>100</sup> Wolfgang Zellner, ‘Russia and the OSCE: From high hopes to disillusionment’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 18:3 (2005), pp. 389–402 (pp. 396–8).

<sup>101</sup> Allison, ‘Peacekeeping in the Soviet successor states’; Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, pp. 124–5.

<sup>102</sup> See Paul Kubicek, ‘The Commonwealth of Independent States: An example of failed regionalism?’, *Review of International Studies*, 35:S1 (2009), pp. 237–56.

<sup>103</sup> Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 133.

<sup>104</sup> Navari, ‘Modelling the relations of fundamental institutions and international organizations’, p. 68.



The CSTO has its genesis in the Collective Security Treaty (CST), which was concluded in 1992. Its purpose was to maintain unity and promote cooperation among former Soviet republics in the realm of regional security, but, in reality, it had little significance on that score during much of the 1990s. However, to develop a secondary institution that could compete against Western-led secondary institutions for regional influence in the PSRIS, and also to address the threats of terrorism in the region, Russia began to push for further institutionalisation of the CST, and the CSTO came into being in 2002, with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan as its original members.<sup>105</sup>

Since then, the CSTO has held joint military drills, developed its Collective Rapid Reaction Force, and facilitated multilateral cooperation in the issue areas of narcotics control, counterterrorism, etc.<sup>106</sup> The CSTO has political functions as well. To start with, Russia has used the CSTO for the maintenance of its status as a great power.<sup>107</sup> This is in line with Russia's great power multilateralism. Moreover, the CSTO provides its member states with the protection of their domestic political regimes, which has been one of their key concerns since the coloured revolutions in the PSRIS.<sup>108</sup> This is what Allison calls 'protective integration'.<sup>109</sup> In short, the CSTO assists Russia in its efforts to hold its place as a great power in the PSRIS and to bolster its own and its allies' regime security.

Of particular importance is that Russia has made significant efforts to provide this alternative regional secondary institution with the capability to carry out multilateral peacekeeping activities. In October 2007, the CSTO member states signed the Agreement on the Peacekeeping Activities of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.<sup>110</sup> It was agreed therein to create the CSTO Collective Peacekeeping Forces (CPF). The agreement also stipulated in Article 5 that CPF should abide by the reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping, including consent, impartiality, and limited use of force, and it did not envisage that CPF would engage in peace enforcement.<sup>111</sup> Another important feature of the agreement was that it provided in Articles 3, 4, and 7 that CPF were allowed to undertake peacekeeping operations not only within its area of responsibility but also outside of it, providing that a decision or mandate of the UNSC was given.<sup>112</sup> This was later confirmed by the then-CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha in 2011 when CPF was eventually formed on the basis of the agreement.<sup>113</sup> What this suggests is that the CSTO is competitively institutionalised not only in the sense mentioned above, but also in the sense that

<sup>105</sup>Stina Torjesen, 'Russia as a military great power: The uses of the CSTO and the SCO in Central Asia', in Rowe and Torjesen (eds), *The Multilateral Dimension in Russian Foreign Policy*, pp. 181–92 (pp. 183–6).

<sup>106</sup>Renz, *Russia's Military Revival*, pp. 44–5.

<sup>107</sup>Elena Kropatcheva, 'Russia and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation: Multilateral policy or unilateral ambitions?', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68:9 (2016), pp. 1526–52 (p. 1530).

<sup>108</sup>Roy Allison, 'Virtual regionalism, regime structures and regime security in Central Asia', *Central Asian Survey*, 27:2 (2008), pp. 185–202.

<sup>109</sup>Roy Allison, 'Protective integration and security policy coordination: Comparing the SCO and CSTO', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 11:3 (2018), pp. 297–338.

<sup>110</sup>UN, 'Agreement on the peacekeeping activities of the Collective Security Treaty Organization', *United Nations Treaty Series*, 2632 (2009), pp. 29–50.

<sup>111</sup>See Yulia Nikitina, 'Security cooperation in the post-Soviet area within the Collective Security Treaty Organization', *ISPI Analysis*, no. 152 (January 2013), available at: [https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/publicazioni/analysis\\_152\\_2013.pdf](https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/publicazioni/analysis_152_2013.pdf).

<sup>112</sup>See Igor Davidzon, *Regional Security Governance in Post-Soviet Eurasia: The History and Effectiveness of the Collective Security Treaty Organization* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), pp. 82–3.

<sup>113</sup>Allison, *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*, p. 146; Alexander Nikitin, 'The Russian Federation', in Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams (eds), *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges, and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Contributions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 158–79 (p. 178). In October 2012, CPF's first annual exercise, named Unbreakable Brotherhood, was held in Kazakhstan. On Unbreakable Brotherhood, see Marcel de Haas, 'War games of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Drills on the move!', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 29:3 (2016), pp. 378–406.

it is designed to compete with other regional secondary institutions such as NATO in the area of global peacekeeping.

### *Cooperating with the UN to build global recognition for the CSTO*

Russia has employed the strategy of *recognition-building* to present the CSTO as a legitimate actor in regional and potentially global peacekeeping. In particular, Russia has persistently sought to build cooperative ties between this regional secondary institution and the UN, hoping that this will help to gain wider acceptance of the former's activities in the PSRIS. Russia has achieved some progress in this regard. For example, the CSTO was granted observer status by the UNGA in December 2004.<sup>114</sup> In March 2010, a resolution titled 'Cooperation between the United Nations and the Collective Security Treaty Organization' was adopted at the UNGA which '*note[d]* the importance of strengthening dialogue, cooperation and coordination between' these two secondary institutions.<sup>115</sup>

To promote and legitimise the idea of CSTO peacekeeping, Russia has also tried to use the UNSC to build global recognition for this regional secondary institution. At the initiative of Vitaly Churkin, then president of the UNSC, the UNSC meeting held on 28 October 2016 addressed the agenda item titled 'Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security: Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Commonwealth of Independent States'.<sup>116</sup> At the meeting, Churkin stated as follows:

The United Nations and CSTO have a major mutual interest in enhancing their practical cooperation, particularly in areas such as peacekeeping and combating organized crime and terrorism. We believe it is important to continue working on developing CSTO peacekeeping capacity with the goal of sending contingents to United Nations peacekeeping missions in the near future.<sup>117</sup>

However, Russia's efforts to win the UN's blessing faced opposition from delegates from Western and other like-minded countries. For example, the Japanese delegate remarked that 'the founding declarations on the charters of these organizations enunciate their adherence to the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations', insinuating that these organisations had fallen short in this regard.<sup>118</sup> The Japanese delegate went on to argue that the OSCE was 'a significant and more inclusive platform for building mutual trust and confidence in the region'.<sup>119</sup> The Ukrainian delegate criticised the CSTO and CIS as 'pretending that there [was] no ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, no occupation of Crimea, no de facto occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia', and stated that the Ukrainian government did 'not see any added value in deepening interactions between these organizations and the United Nations on the basis of Chapter VIII of the [UN] Charter'.<sup>120</sup> The US delegate remarked that regional organisations were 'no longer truly regional' when they were dominated by 'one or two States' which 'set the agenda and determine the positions of the entire group', and then criticised the CIS and CSTO as having failed 'to defend, or even advocate for, the principle of territorial integrity'.<sup>121</sup> Finally, the UK delegate emphasised that cooperation between the UN and regional organisations must be developed in accordance with Chapter

<sup>114</sup>UN Doc A/RES/59/50, 2 December 2004.

<sup>115</sup>UN Doc A/RES/64/256, 2 March 2010, emphasis in original.

<sup>116</sup>UN Doc S/2016/867, 14 October 2016.

<sup>117</sup>UN Doc S/PV.7796, 28 October 2016, p. 23.

<sup>118</sup>S/PV.7796, p. 10.

<sup>119</sup>S/PV.7796, p. 11.

<sup>120</sup>S/PV.7796, p. 19.

<sup>121</sup>S/PV.7796, p. 20.

VIII of the Charter and other relevant rules and principles, arguing that the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the EU could support Central Asian countries in tackling their regional problems.<sup>122</sup>

Similar exchanges unfolded at the UNGA. On 25 July 2019, it adopted Resolution 73/331 which ‘Note[d] with appreciation the significant practical contribution and efforts of the Collective Security Treaty Organization to strengthen its peacekeeping capacities and the system of regional security and stability’ and ‘Encourage[d] both organizations [i.e. the UN and the CSTO] to continue to examine possible ways to further strengthen their interaction in the area of peacekeeping.’<sup>123</sup> In the debate, however, the delegate of Ukraine criticised the CSTO for ‘becom[ing] one of the Russian Federation’s visible forays down the path of regional hegemony and a vehicle for gaining influence among its neighbours’ and stated that ‘Ukraine cannot support the provisions of the resolution related to the peacekeeping capabilities of the CSTO.’<sup>124</sup> The Georgian delegate was equally critical, stating that ‘the CSTO contributes to Russia’s aggressive policy towards its neighbours. Accordingly, my delegation cannot support a resolution recognizing CSTO’s peacekeeping capabilities.’<sup>125</sup> These remarks can be interpreted as a counter to Russia’s strategy of recognition-building.

The renewal of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh in the ensuing year was viewed as ‘a missed opportunity’ to put CSTO peacekeeping into practice.<sup>126</sup> It was unlikely, however, that Russia would abandon the strategies of competitive secondary institutionalisation and recognition-building aimed at developing the CSTO as a legitimate peacekeeping actor. George Barros, for example, warned against the possibility that Russia might refer to its peacekeeping activities in Nagorno-Karabakh to justify the CSTO’s involvement in future UN peacekeeping operations, advising that ‘Western leaders should pressure the UN not to recognize the CSTO as a legitimate peacekeeping force.’<sup>127</sup>

As expected, Russia continues its efforts to develop this regional secondary institution as a peacekeeping actor. On 2 December 2020, the CSTO’s Collective Security Council agreed on legal changes in preparation for future CSTO participation in UN peacekeeping operations and declared that ‘the CSTO will continue the line on deepening cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies in areas of mutual interest, including the practical involvement of the CSTO collective peacekeeping forces in UN peacekeeping operations.’<sup>128</sup> Although it was unclear when CSTO peacekeeping would be put into practice, preparations were well underway for a future ‘peacekeeping’ operation.

## The CSTO’s intervention in Kazakhstan

This section looks at the CSTO’s intervention in Kazakhstan in January 2022 to examine how Russia has in practice used this newly created and competitively institutionalised regional secondary institution in an attempt to behaviourally and discursively reshape some of the key reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping in the PSRIS. As discussed below, the CSTO’s intervention mirrors the ‘broader trends in Russian foreign policy thinking and behaviour’,<sup>129</sup> including great power thinking, regional revisionism, and great power multilateralism, and can

<sup>122</sup>S/PV.7796, p. 21.

<sup>123</sup>UN Doc A/RES/73/331, 25 July 2019, p. 3, emphasis in original.

<sup>124</sup>UN Doc A/73/PV.101, 25 July 2019, p. 14.

<sup>125</sup>A/73/PV.101, p. 15.

<sup>126</sup>Janko Šćepanović, ‘Was the Nagorno-Karabakh deal a missed opportunity for the CSTO?’, *The Diplomat* (14 November 2020), available at: {<https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/was-the-nagorno-karabakh-deal-a-missed-opportunity-for-the-csto/>}.

<sup>127</sup>George Barros, ‘Putin’s “peacekeepers” will support Russian wars’, available at: {<http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/CSTO%20November%20Update.pdf>}.

<sup>128</sup>CSTO, ‘The CSTO Collective Security Council adopted the Declaration and Statement on the formation of a just and sustainable world order’, available at: {[https://en.odkb-csto.org/news/news\\_odkb/sovet-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-prinyal-deklaratsiyu-i-zayavlenie-o-formirovanii-spravedlivogo-/](https://en.odkb-csto.org/news/news_odkb/sovet-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-odkb-prinyal-deklaratsiyu-i-zayavlenie-o-formirovanii-spravedlivogo-/)}; CSTO, ‘Declaration of the Collective Security Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization’, available at: {[https://en.odkb-csto.org/news/news\\_odkb/deklaratsiya-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-organizatsii-dogovora-o-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-prin/](https://en.odkb-csto.org/news/news_odkb/deklaratsiya-soveta-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-organizatsii-dogovora-o-kollektivnoy-bezopasnosti-prin/)}.

<sup>129</sup>I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this phrase.

in effect be considered as a case of so-called Russian peacekeeping. This case also provides another example showing how Russia employs the strategy of recognition-building in practice.

The unrest in Kazakhstan in January 2022 provided Russia with a major opportunity to put CSTO peacekeeping into action. Protests caused by public discontent due to rising fuel prices and growing inequality in the country developed into major riots and clashes between protesters and government security forces. In response to a request from Kazakh president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the CSTO sent its peacekeeping troops to Kazakhstan in defence of key governmental and military facilities.<sup>130</sup> The CSTO peacekeeping operation was deployed only temporarily and was withdrawn from the country on 19 January 2022.<sup>131</sup> A senior Kazakh foreign ministry official claimed that the CSTO peacekeepers ‘allowed us to free up a considerable part of Kazakhstan’s forces and resources for the immediate conduct of the counter-terrorist operation.’<sup>132</sup> Despite this claim, however, the Kazakh government has offered little evidence that terrorists were involved in the protests, and some analysts have pointed to the political wrangling and rivalry between current president Tokayev and former president Nursultan Nazarbayev as an underlying cause of the so-called Bloody January.<sup>133</sup>

On the face of it, the CSTO’s intervention in Kazakhstan differed from Russian peacekeeping operations in the 1990s in some respects. As Vladimir Socor points out, the CSTO mission’s central objective was to ‘restore public order’, and the mission swiftly withdrew from the country once the internal unrest was quelled, thereby avoiding ‘Russia’s dismal habit of turning peacekeeping into *de facto* occupation.’<sup>134</sup> The task assigned to the CSTO was in accordance with what Allison calls the CSTO’s ‘protective integration function’, and the intervention did not result in the *freezing* of the conflict.<sup>135</sup>

Despite this, however, the CSTO’s intervention in Kazakhstan showed some fundamental similarities to Russian peacekeeping in the 1990s. To begin with, Russia’s concern for its own great power status was among the key motivations for this military intervention.<sup>136</sup> At play here was Russia’s great power thinking. Secondly, the CSTO’s behaviour in this incident departed from and challenged some of the reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping. CSTO peacekeepers were dispatched at the Kazakh government’s request and hence with its consent. However, the CSTO did not seek the consent of the protesters. From the start, the CSTO ruled out the possibility of resolving the situation through dialogue between the Kazakh government and the protesters.<sup>137</sup> This one-sided support for Tokayev’s government represented a *behavioural* challenge to two reproducing practices of the primary institution of peacekeeping: consent and impartiality.

<sup>130</sup>BBC, ‘Kazakhstan: Why are there riots and why are Russian troops there?’, available at: {<https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-59894266>}.

<sup>131</sup>Radio Free Europe, ‘Russia-led military alliance completes withdrawal from Kazakhstan’, available at: {<https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-csto-troops-withdrawal-security/31661294.html>}.

<sup>132</sup>*The Astana Times*, ‘CSTO peacekeepers complete their mission, withdraw from Kazakhstan’, available at: {<https://astanatimes.com/2022/01/csto-peacekeepers-complete-their-mission-withdraw-from-kazakhstan/>}.

<sup>133</sup>Victoria Hudson, ‘The impact of Russian soft power in *Kazakhstan*: Creating an enabling environment for cooperation between Nur-Sultan and Moscow’, *Journal of Political Power*, 15:3 (2022), pp. 469–94 (pp. 484–5); Bruce Pannier, ‘How the intervention in Kazakhstan revitalized the Russian-led CSTO’, available at: {<https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/03/how-the-intervention-in-kazakhstan-revitalized-the-russian-led-csto/>}.

<sup>134</sup>Vladimir Socor, ‘Russian-led mission in Kazakhstan unveils new peacekeeping model (Part One)’, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (19 January 2022), available at: {<https://jamestown.org/program/russian-led-mission-in-kazakhstan-unveils-new-peacekeeping-model-part-one/>}; Vladimir Socor, ‘Russian-led mission in Kazakhstan unveils new peacekeeping model (Part Two)’, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (21 January 2022), available at: {<https://jamestown.org/program/russian-led-mission-in-kazakhstan-unveils-new-peacekeeping-model-part-two/>}.

<sup>135</sup>Allison, ‘Protective integration’, p. 299; Alexander Cooley, ‘Kazakhstan called for assistance. Why did Russia dispatch troops so quickly?’, *The Washington Post* (9 January 2022), available at: {<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/01/09/kazakhstan-called-assistance-why-did-russia-dispatch-troops-so-quickly/>}.

<sup>136</sup>Hudson, ‘The impact of Russian soft power in *Kazakhstan*’, p. 484.

<sup>137</sup>Anna Borshchetskaya, ‘War for peace: How Moscow expands its clout under the guise of “peacekeeping operations”’, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (24 January 2022), available at: {<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/war-peace-how-moscow-expands-its-clout-under-guise-peacekeeping-operations>}.

As discussed further below, these deviations were not accidental but deliberate; they were reflective of Russia's regional revisionism aimed at creating regional norms unique to the PSRIS. Thirdly, this intervention was similar to Russian peacekeeping operations in the 1990s, in that Russia sought to embellish its behavioural contestation with 'a veneer of multilateral legitimacy' by acting through a regional secondary institution.<sup>138</sup> Instead of intervening on its own, Russia chose to act through the CSTO in hope of collectively legitimising its military intervention as a multilateral peacekeeping operation. However, the multilaterality of the operation was highly questionable in light of Russia's dominant role in the CSTO. As was the case with the CIS, Russia's great power multilateralism runs through this regional secondary institution. In view of these similarities, the CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan can, in effect, be seen as a case of Russian peacekeeping.

It is also worth noting that Russia later sought to utilise this regional secondary institution as a forum in which to frame its intervention in Kazakhstan as a success, thereby mounting a *discursive* contestation and reshaping of peacekeeping. On 16 May 2022, the leaders of the CSTO members gathered to celebrate the CSTO's 20th anniversary (as well as the CST's 30th anniversary). In the meeting, Putin hailed the CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan as a 'successful peacekeeping operation' showing 'the maturity of our Organization and its real ability to adequately confront acute challenges and threats', and the meeting was concluded with a signing of two documents, one of which was titled 'On awarding decorations of the CSTO Collective Security Organization to participants of the CSTO peacekeeping operation in the Republic of Kazakhstan'.<sup>139</sup> This move was intended to *ex post facto* legitimise the CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan, which in fact had flouted some of the key reproducing practices of peacekeeping, as a model for future peacekeeping in the PSRIS and, in this respect, constituted a discursive challenge to some of the key reproducing practices of peacekeeping. In short, seizing upon the opportunity provided by Kazakhstan's Bloody January, Russia used the CSTO to behaviourally and discursively contest and reshape the primary institution of peacekeeping, as it was understood and practised in the PSRIS.

Faced with criticism over the CSTO's intervention, Russia yet again resorted to the strategy of recognition-building. Russia used its presidency of the UNSC to organise an open debate on 16 February 2022 to discuss UN–CSTO cooperation.<sup>140</sup> Russia's intention was clear: to justify the CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan as an instance of 'peacekeeping'. Having declared the CSTO's willingness and readiness to participate in UN peacekeeping operations, the CSTO Secretary-General Stanislav Zas went on to state that 'the professionalism of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the CSTO was confirmed during the recent peacekeeping operation in Kazakhstan. ... the operation was fully in line with the political and international legal principles of the United Nations'.<sup>141</sup> Following Zas's statement, Sergey Vershinin, Russian deputy foreign minister, added that 'the first positive CSTO peacekeeping experience was garnered during the January events in Kazakhstan. ... The operation was carried out on a sound international legal basis and in a transparent and predictable manner'.<sup>142</sup> Russia evidently attempted to use this debate to create an image of the CSTO as a legitimate peacekeeping actor. This is yet another example of the strategy of recognition-building.

It remains to be seen whether Russia's attempts to bring about changes in the primary institution of peacekeeping in the PSRIS will succeed. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there have been developments that have cast doubt on the future of the CSTO. The Unbreakable Brotherhood for the year 2022, which had been scheduled to take place in Kyrgyzstan in October, was cancelled by

<sup>138</sup> Borshchevskaya, 'War for peace.'

<sup>139</sup> CSTO, 'On May 16, in Moscow, the CSTO member states leaders met to mark the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Collective Security Treaty and the 20th anniversary of the CSTO', available at: {[https://en.odkb-csto.org/news/news\\_odkb/v-moskve-16-maya-proydet-vstrecha-glav-gosudarstv-chlenov-odkb-posvyashchennaya-30-letiyu-podpisaniya/#loaded](https://en.odkb-csto.org/news/news_odkb/v-moskve-16-maya-proydet-vstrecha-glav-gosudarstv-chlenov-odkb-posvyashchennaya-30-letiyu-podpisaniya/#loaded)}.

<sup>140</sup> UN Doc S/PV.8967, 16 February 2022.

<sup>141</sup> S/PV.8967, p. 5.

<sup>142</sup> S/PV.8967, p. 6.



the Kyrgyz government in the wake of its border clashes with Tajikistan in September.<sup>143</sup> On top of that, Armenia and Kazakhstan have reportedly shown some signs of distancing themselves from the CSTO.<sup>144</sup> These episodes point to a divergence of interests and preferences among the CSTO's member states, and this may well stand in the way of Russia's efforts to reshape norms governing peacekeeping in the PSRIS.

Despite this uncertainty, however, the case of Russia's peacekeeping policy illustrates the utility of the ES framework developed in this article in analysing how states employ the strategies of competitive secondary institutionalisation and recognition-building in order to contest and reshape primary institutions in their respective RISs.

## Conclusions

This article has developed the ES analytical framework which emphasises the role of states' agency in institutional change in international society. The framework sheds light on some of the key strategies which states employ to bring about primary institutional changes in international society. First, states can contest primary institutions on their own, but they can also, and often do, act through secondary institutions in order to multilateralise and collectively legitimise attempts to reshape primary institutions through behavioural and/or discursive contestation. Second, states can use regional secondary institutions to bring about primary institutional changes at the level of RISs, while pursuing the strategy of recognition-building aimed at seeking global recognition for regional secondary institutions by, for example, developing a cooperative relationship with the UN. Third, in these processes, states can either have recourse to existing secondary institutions or pursue the strategy of competitive secondary institutionalisation aimed at creating new and alternative secondary institutions.

This article used this framework to analyse Russia's peacekeeping policy in the PSRIS, but it can also be applied to other cases where states seek to contest and reshape primary institutions through secondary institutions. The framework, for instance, enables us to interpret the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as products of the strategy of competitive secondary institutionalisation employed by China and to discuss whether and how these secondary institutions impact on primary institutions such as 'trade' and 'development'.<sup>145</sup> Such research would further advance our understanding of how the interactions among states, primary institutions, and secondary institutions produce change in international society.

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<sup>143</sup>Catherine Putz, 'Kyrgyzstan cancels CSTO "Indestructible Brotherhood" military exercises', *The Diplomat* (11 October 2022), available at: {<https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/kyrgyzstan-cancels-csto-indestructible-brotherhood-military-exercises/>}.

<sup>144</sup>Chris Rickleton, 'Russia's unhappy club: The CSTO', *Radio Free Europe* (12 October 2022), available at: {<https://www.rferl.org/amp/russia-club-csto-ukraine-military-alliance/32079498.html>}; Janko Šćepanović, 'Can Russia still be a dependable "sheriff" for Eurasia?', *The Diplomat* (30 September 2022), available at: {<https://thediplomat.com/2022/09/can-russia-still-be-a-dependable-sheriff-for-eurasia/>}.

<sup>145</sup>Buzan, *From International to World Society?*, p. 183; Buzan, *Introduction to the English School*, p. 154.