From Rivalry to Friendship: The European State Systems and the Cultures of Anarchy

The Neorealist explanation to the formation of the European community after the Second World War is that Western European powers made a rational choice to join their forces and balance against the Soviet Union to maximise their security.[1] Indeed, for Neorealists the European international system has remained the same ever since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia and for them, the structure of the international system forces states to act in their self-interest to ensure their survival at all times. This essay will contest the Neorealist view by analysing modern European state systems and arguing that the formation of the European community between 1945 to 1958 was an epoch of transformation in the international system.

By combining Alexander Wendt's "three cultures of anarchy"[2] and the English School primary institutions[3], this essay will argue that the unprecedented devastation and destruction of the Second World War reformed the European state system so effectively that war as a tool of diplomacy became obsolete, the principles of sovereignty changed as European states pooled their sovereignty and established supranational institutions, and finally that the nature of the international system witnessed a normative change so crucial that the relations between Western European states were grounded on friendship rather than rivalry. The state systems under comparison are labelled the Bismarck System of 1871-1890 and the interwar period system of 1919-1939.

First, the paper will determine the theoretical framework by introducing Wendt's three cultures of anarchy and the systemic sectors of analysis: sovereignty, war, diplomacy, international law and economics. Second, it will evaluate the three European state systems through the sectors of analysis. Third, it will critically evaluate Sebastian Rosato's Neorealist systemic analysis of the formation of the European community and contemplate on the methodology of analysing state systems. Finally, it will conclude by arguing that the changes in these sectors and the transformation in the structure of the system caused by those changes, demonstrate a fundamental break with past forms of state systems in Europe which is not possible to depict with Neorealist methodology.

Theoretical Foundations

Wendt's key claim in his three cultures of anarchy is that anarchy (i.e. the absence of centralised authority) can have at least three kinds of structures at the system level.[4] These structures are the Hobbesian culture based on enmity, Lockean culture based on rivalry, and Kantian culture based on friendship. For each culture, Wendt lays out the implications for a state's foreign policy behaviour.[5] In the Hobbesian culture, there is a "kill or be killed" mentality, no cooperation and a predisposition to accumulate relative military power.[6] In the Lockean culture, states respect each other's sovereignty but acknowledge that war is a possibility, which causes states to balance power in order to restrain war, and thus relative military power is still important.[7] In the Kantian culture, a pluralistic security community arises, the rule of non-violence prevails and disputes will be settled without even a threat to war. This pluralistic security community is not the same as an alliance, as alliances are temporary, but friendship persists indefinitely.[8] In short, war becomes obsolete between the members of the Kantian culture.

In order to demonstrate the shifts in the culture structure introduced above, this essay has to establish the sectors of state system analysis.[9] It analyses European state systems with a pluralistic approach by examining international

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institutions[10] sovereignty, war, diplomacy, international law and also, the economic sector, which is commonly forgotten in state system analyses.[11] First, by analysing how sovereignty and war are perceived by states in different systems we can trace the structural culture of the system. Second, the analysis of diplomacy and international law shows us qualitative changes in the interaction between states. Third, by focusing on the economic sector, we can find patterns of behaviour that further demonstrate a certain structural culture. Due to the space available, this essay will not analyse the changes in the ideological sector, although it would further demonstrate the changes in the international system such as the gradual development of nationalism from the late 19th century to the Second World War and how it stopped as transnational relations overcame ruinous nationalism when the formation of the European community began.[12]

Sovereignty and War

The Bismarck system, as in a broader sense, the whole 19th century system was an "oligarchy of great powers"[13]. European great powers respected each other's sovereignty and sought to maintain stability via conferences and consulted with each other in important foreign policy decisions. The system in Wendt's terminology was a Lockean one, with inter-state relations based on rivalry. In a Lockean culture of anarchy, although states respect each other's sovereignty, they see war as a possibility and take actions to restrain war by balancing and forming alliances. In the Bismarck system from 1871 to 1890, war *was* a legitimate tool of foreign policy and Bismarck's alliance system in that period demonstrates that he sought to restrain war by establishing balancing coalitions. For example, the Dual Alliance of 1879 with Austria-Hungary was motivated by the desire to increase security vis-à-vis Russia and the interest to isolate France and also to keep Austria away from coalitions against Germany.[14] The respect of sovereignty and balancing coalitions helped to keep the system peaceful although the rivalries especially between France and Germany were evident after the Franco-Prussian War of 1871-72. However, this was not the case in the interwar period.

After the turmoil of the First World War, the victors sought to punish Germany. However, under the influence of Wilsonian idealism, they also tried to establish a new European system based on liberal ideals by disregarding balance of power politics.[15] France and Great Britain humiliated Germany and unreasonably violated its sovereignty with the Versailles Treaty of 1919. Germany lost 27,000 square miles of territory, 7 million inhabitants, 13.5% of its economic potential, and had to pay massive reparations to the victors according to Article 231 of the Treaty.[16] This system was at an ideational level a Kantian one but in practice a Lockean one. By observing the establishment of the League of Nations and the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928 one could argue that the states were at least trying to end war with a pluralistic security community. However, by digging deep enough in the dynamics of the system especially in the 1930s it is visible that there was no structural change in sight. It was based on Lockean rivalry as Nazi Germany began their rearmament and nibbling its Eastern neighbours.[17] War was still an element of the European state system, and it was not until the end of the Second World War that marked a turning point.

In the post-war European system of 1945-1958, there was an unprecedented transformation in how states viewed sovereignty and war. France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg decided to pool their sovereignty and establish the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 (ECSC), which also meant that France and Germany finally set aside their animosities originating from 1871. If there ever was "Westphalian"[18] sovereignty, this was surely the end of it. The founding of the ECSC and later European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 represent a considerable normative turn in the European state system. There was a shift from a Lockean system of rivalry to a Kantian system of friendship. War was no longer seen as an option between these European powers as they deliberately pooled the production of the "raw materials" of war[19] and established strong transnational links via commerce, political cooperation and supranational institutions so that war became obsolete.[20]

Diplomacy and International Law

The second sector of analysis inspects the characteristics of diplomacy and the nature of international law in the European state systems. Again, the Bismarck system is characterised by concepts such as realpolitik[21] and

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oligarchy of great powers[22], which created stability in the system as great powers sought to stabilise the Continent with alliances and international conferences based on conservative consensus. The European powers emphasised legitimacy and treaty rights as the foundation of the international order.[23] This legitimacy and obedience to law manifested in the London Protocol 1871, which reasserted the notion that international treaties could not be altered without the approval of all the signatory powers and in the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 where European empires divided Africa.[24] However, international treaties were sometimes arbitrary, and even Bismarck held that treaties only had value as long as they aligned with the real interests of the signatories.[25] Overall, the system follows the logic of Lockean rivalry in this case as well. States act according to their self-interest, limiting conflicts from occurring by self-restraint and alliances.[26] There was no common interest in anything.

Woodrow Wilson's "new diplomacy"[27] after the First World War sought to alter the international system from realpolitik to idealism via the League of Nations and treaties such as the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The problem was that the League and other initiatives had no enforcement mechanisms nor did the participants have political will to truly commit to them.[28] The logic of rivalry was still present in the state system. Furthermore, during the interwar period, international law had no legitimacy. As Hitler came to power in 1933, he violated the Versailles Treaty by rearming Germany and infringed the Locarno pact by remilitarising the Rhineland.[29] To make matters worse, the appeasement diplomacy of Britain and France further hampered the legitimacy of the system, and Nazi Germany began to nibble Central and Eastern Europe one by one.[30]

The post-war system witnessed the foundation of many supranational institutions, such as the Council of Europe (1949), European Coal and Steel Community (1952), Western European Union (1954), European Economic Community (1957) and European Atomic Energy Community (1957).[31] After the Second World War, Western European powers had willingness to commit to the rules and customs of the institutions and respect international law, which was not the case in the previous systems.[32] Furthermore, whenever disputes arose, they were settled "within the confines" of the supranational institutions.[33] The logic of rivalry was replaced by the logic of friendship.

Economics

The states' behaviour in the economic sector of analysis further demonstrate the shift from a Lockean culture to a Kantian one. The Bismarck system was an era of economic protectionism and accelerating imperial competition.[34] Rivalry over resources and markets in Africa raised antagonisms when European empires sought to grow their power against one another.[35] On some occasions, the economic competition of the imperial powers appears to be more like the 17th century mercantilist system than a capitalist one.[36] These issues further demonstrate that the European system was based on rivalry and self-interest, which was also the case in the interwar period. As John Maynard Keynes lamented: "the Treaty [of Paris 1919] includes no provisions for the economic rehabilitation of Europe, – nothing to make the defeated Central Empires into good neighbors… nor does it promote in any way a compact of economic solidarity amongst the Allies themselves."[37] This lack of economic peace further escalated into economic crises and the Great Depression, which facilitated the rise of extremist political movements,[38] and perpetuated the inter-state animosities and rivalries in the European state system, finally leading to the Second World War.

After the Second World War, the international economics of Western Europe witnessed a massive break with the past. The "big six" pooled the production of coal and steel and integrated their economies tightly in order to raise Western Europe from poverty and make it economically more powerful.[39] Before, states had only looked after their own self-interest but now it was in their self-interest to pursue a common interest by integrating their economies. This of course did not mean that they did it for altruistic reasons. The new bipolar world system forced to some extent Western Europe to integrate for the sake of survival. However, these neorealist explanations are not enough in demonstrating the European systemic change.

On Systemic Analyses

The neorealist argument for European integration is that it was only about security as Western European states

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sought to balance against a common threat and one another.[40] However, the problem with this argument, as put forward by Sebastian Rosato[41], is that its theoretical framework constrains it from analysing deeper macro-level changes in the European system. Rosato builds his argument by demonstrating relative military capabilities, disregarding any possible structural changes and multicausal explanations for integration such as superseding nationalism, building a lasting peace, the need to provide economic welfare to citizens and adapt to changes in the global economy, to name a few.[42]

It needs to be emphasised that systemic analyses are inherently simplified, and this account of European state systems is far from an all-encompassing evaluation. This is also why Rosato should not receive too much criticism. However, with monocausal security-based explanations as Rosato's, a systemic analysis is not going to be satisfying. A good systemic analysis needs to use a pluralistic approach and analyse a system from as many angles as possible and seek to find explanations from multiple causes, not only from security. This is where the primary institutions or 'sectors of analysis' of the English School offer a better alternative for neorealism. Furthermore, a good analysis does not take the structure of system for granted, but rather tries to find whether the structural dynamics (i.e. anarchy), has changed in the process. A systemic analysis needs to be simple and Rosato should be given recognition for that. However, in its monocausality it oversimplifies the international system and the process of integration too much.[43]

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the formation of the European community after the Second World War clearly represents a break with past forms of state systems of Europe. Old rivalries were set aside, principles of sovereignty changed, supranational institutions were formed, war as a tool of European inter-state diplomacy was abolished, and the pursuit of common interest became part of the national interest. It was a shift from a Lockean culture of anarchy to a Kantian one, from a system of rivalry to a system of friendship. The fundamental changes in sovereignty and war norms, diplomacy and international law, and in the economic sphere demonstrate this shift. This pluralistic approach succeeds in finding an alternative solution to the neorealist monocausal explanation that European state system has stayed the same since the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. But what are prospects of the European state system formed after the Second World War? War is to remain out of the toolkit of European diplomacy, but sovereignty norms are facing a crisis. Britain's exit from the European Union and the broader Continental rise of populism demonstrate this. However, it is safe to assume that the logic of the European state system (i.e. friendship) is not going anywhere any time soon. Strong institutional diplomacy, international law, norms, and economics will keep the state system stable.

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Notes

[1] For a Neorealist narrative about the formation of the European community see Sebastian Rosato,*Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011).

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[2] Alexander Wendt, "three cultures of anarchy", in *Social Theory of International Politics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 246-308.

[3] See: Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014)

[4] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 246-247.

[5] Ibid., pp. 262, 281, 299-302.

[6] Ibid., p. 262.

[7] Ibid., pp. 281-284.

[8] Ibid., pp. 297-299.

[9] For an introduction to sectors of analysis in state system analysis see Barry Buzan & Richard Little*International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 72-77.

[10] These are often called the English School Primary Institutions. See Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 13.

[11] Buzan & Little, *International Systems in World History*, p. 79.

[12] Mark Gilbert, *European Integration: A Concise History* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), p. 2.

[13] Beatrice Heuser; "Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and Security: New World Orders in the Twentieth Century;" in *State Sovereignty: Change and Persistence in International Relations,* edited by Sohail H. Hashmi, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 83.

[14] Paul W. Schroeder; Alliances, 1815-1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management; in*Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); pp. 209-210.

[15] Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 218-245.

[16] Anthony Best, Jussi M. Hanhimäki, Joseph A. Maiolo and Kirsten E. Schulze,*International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2014), pp. 45-47.

[17] For the interwar arms race in Europe see: Joe Maiolo,*Cry Havoc: The Arms Race and the Second World War 1931-1941*, (London, UK: John Murray, 2011)

[18] See Stephen D. Krasner, Westphalia and All That, in Judith Goldstein & Robert O. Keohane eds., in*Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change,* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 235-264; Andreas Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth." *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (2001), pp. 251–287.

[19] Best et. al, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, pp. 557-560.

[20] Gilbert*, European Integration: A Concise History*, pp. 18-20; Gehler & Kaiser, "Transnationalism and Early European Integration: The Nouvelles Equipes Internationales and the Geneva Circle 1947-1957," *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 44, No. 3 (2001), pp. 773-798.

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[21] See Otto Pflanze, "Bismarck's 'Realpolitik'," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1958), pp. 492–514; Henry Kissinger, Two Revolutionaries: Napoleon III and Bismarck, in *Diplomacy*, pp. 103-136.

[22] Heuser; "Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and Security: New World Orders in the Twentieth Century," p. 83.

[23] F.R. Bridge & Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814-1914* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), p. 177.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 13.

[26] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 281, 284, 296.

[27] See Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, pp. 218-245; Best et. al, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, pp. 36-41.

[28] Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2014), p. 85.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., pp. 85-86.

[31] Best et. al, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, pp. 555-557.

[32] Peter Stirk, Integration and Disintegration before 1945, in *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 17.

[33] Gilbert, *European Integration: A Concise History*, p. 2.

[34] Bridge & Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814-1914*, pp. 227-228.

[35] Michael Rapport, *Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 350.

[36] Ibid., p. 349.

[37] John Maynard Keynes; *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York, N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and Howe; 1920); p. 226.

[38] Robert Boyce, World Depression, World War: Some Economic Origins of the Second World War; in Boyce and Robertson eds., *Paths to War: New Essays on the Origins of the Second World War,* (London, UK:Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), pp. 55-95.

[39] Best et. al, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, p. 558.

[40] Sebastian Rosato, *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 2.

[41] Sebastian Rosato, "Europe's Troubles: Power Politics and the State of the European Project," *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2011), pp. 45-86; Rosato, *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community.*

[42] Gilbert, *European Integration: A Concise History*, p. 2.

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[43] For a critique of Rosato's work see: Andrew Moravcsik, "Did Power Politics Cause European Integration? Realist Theory Meets Qualitative Methods," *Security Studies*, Vol. 22: No. 4 (2013), pp. 773-790.