Hard revisionism: Turkish military interventions in Syria and Iraq

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A mons pares, el meu avi, mes germanes i la baldufa.

Així tenir-vos sempre ben aprop.

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1. Introduction

This research sets out to gain an understanding on the specific nature and ways to identify revisionism. The questions have been posed for it seems to be highly relevant, given the number of publications regarding the crisis of the International Liberal Order or the contestation of the Rule-Based Order. In this manner, the research tries to find out what exactly does order entail and how states challenge it. This is done together with a further application of the theory on the case of Turkish unilateral military interventions in both Syria and Iraq.

In this manner, the question posed is framed within two great debates, being one the mentioned debate on the specific character of international order and thus on how to discern revisionism among state behaviours. The other, would be the debates around the evolution of Turkish foreign policy since the advent of AKP in 2002, and how has this experienced an evolution in the resort from soft to hard power.

To answer the question, the research adopts a qualitative methodology, based on a literature review on both debates. In this manner, the research opens with the theoretical discussion on revisionism, status-quo, international order, and norms, in order to eventually adopt a comprehensive approach encompassing them. Having done that, the research presents the case in a descriptive fashion, in order to latter on critically analyse it with the framework developed. Finally, the research ends with a presentation of the results, and the limits and further possibilities of research.

2. Theoretical Framework

a. Formal revisionism and the debates on status-quo.

Revisionism refers to the dissatisfaction with the status-quo, and a consequent desire to change it. In this manner, states would be either classified as “status-quo states”, satisfied and with desire to preserve the current state of things, or “revisionist states”, dissatisfied and seeking a change of the status-quo (Ward, 2017: 11, 12). Nevertheless, this classification is almost entirely dependent on the definition of “status-quo” (Kustermans et al., 2023: 2). Thus, the sample of revisionist states will greatly vary according to, for example, whether polarity or social norms is understood by it.

The following is a presentation of different approaches to status-quo, and hence, to revisionism, in order to contextualize and argue the position adopted in this research.

i. Status quo as polarity: classical realism.

Status-quo can firstly be defined as interstate power distribution, in other words, the polarity of the international system. This has been the understanding of revisionism taken by the realist approaches to international relations, from authors like Carr or Schumann to Kissinger or Schweller (Turner and Nymalm, 2019: 412). Morgenthau, for example, identifies revisionism with the desire to "acquire more power" beyond a state's own borders and seek "a favourable change in power status" (Morgenthau, 1948: 21). Thus, revisionism implies the desire to alter the distribution of resources and capabilities, for example territory or economic power.

Even though some contemporary authors adopt to different extents this notion of revisionism (Behravesh, 2018; Groitl, 2023; Davidson, 2006; Mukherjee, 2022: 8; Ward, 2017; Cooley et al., 2019), others, like Chan et al. (2021) reject this approximation, arguing that all states seek to improve their relative position in the interstate hierarchy, in terms of status and power (2021: 17, 57). They add, furthermore, how increases in power can happen passively or how this does not correspond necessarily to a more aggressive and violent behavior, typically associated with revisionism (Chan et al., 2021: 15-16).

A notion of revisionism and status-quo based on those terms would seem to blur the conceptual clarity needed to identificates such behaviours in the international system. This, in turn, pushes the debate about the definition of status quo beyond distribution of capabilities, resorting to the incorporation of notions of norms and institutions, not the definition.

ii. Status quo beyond polarity: Power Transition and Hegemonic Stability Theory.

There are approaches to realism incorporating norms and institutions into the notion of status quo, such as structural realism, Power Transition Theory or Gilpin's Hegemonic Stability Theory (Chan et al., 2021: 17; Turner and Nylman, 2019: 413; Ward, 2017). These, however, understand norms as instruments great powers device and use to advance and reach their interests (Knudsen and Navari, 2022: 33; Mearsheimer, 2019: 9). In Barnett and Duval words (2005: 51), norms would be the "rules and procedures"

that powerful states would push to “guide steer and constrain the actions (or nonactions) and conditions of existence of others”. Order, thus, is a social arrangement that favours certain interests, reflecting the relative powers of its members (Gilpin, 2010: 9).

A necessary consequence of this notion is that satisfaction with the international order is structurally determined, the hegemon being satisfied-status-quo, and the increasingly powerful (“rising”) state unsated-revisionist. Thus, changes in power distribution will bring revisions of order, “as rising powers seek to impose their own rules” (Mukherjee, 2022: 45).

However, empirically speaking this assertion would seem to lack necessary backing. In the elaboration of an analysis of all wars since 1648, Ned Lebow (2010: 18) already observed the inexistence of any systemic subversion described according to PPT/HST parameters. Beyond that, there are quite few cases of peaceful power transitions, such as that between Britain and the US in 1815, Germany regarding Russia, France and Britain, China over Japan, Russia, and Germany which did not suppose "in the eyes of most analysts” a “basic change in the then-existing international order” (Chan et al., 2021: 11, 14).

Thirdly, authors like Birdsall (2016), Hurd (2007) or McKeown (2019), or the mentioned Chan et al. (2021), present cases of hegemon challenge and violation of the norms that, according to PPT or HST would serve its interest, such as US violation and blockade of ICJ resolution about the mining of Nicaraguan ports or US efforts to challenge the arguably fundamental international norms on pre-emptive attacks and torture. Together with post-Cold War US, further examples of hegemon dissatisfaction with order could also be found in “Habsburg Spain, France under Louis XIV and Napoleon” or “Wilhelminian and Nazi Germany” (Ned Lebow, 2010: 124). These cases, thus, naturally pose problems to the foundation of such causal relationship between structural position and revisionism.

Conceptually, it would still be left unclear why a rising state would want to alter an international order that has precisely facilitated its own rise (Chan et al., 2021: 10; Pisciotta, 2023; Mukherjee 2022). In the same manner, it struggles to acknowledge the reasons why should a hegemon still support an international order that is undermining its preponderance and facilitating the rise of others.

iii. Status-quo as social order: the English School and Constructivism.

Member of the English School (Dunne, 1998), Bull defends the international order as the "pattern of activity that sustains" or the "disposition of discrepant parts that is good or fittest for" the fundamental ends of states, if they are to form a society[1] (1995: 4, 8). Among these ends, Bull presents the preservation of the state system and society, the limitation of violence (state monopoly of violence and limitations to rightful use, resort and conducting of violence), or the stabilization of possession (mutual recognition of sovereignty/ acceptance of other's spheres of jurisdiction) (1995: 18-19).

The actual arrangers of state behaviours are international rules and institutions. These are, respectively, the prescriptions and the actual behaviours ("habits and practices") that direct discrepant state behaviours towards the realization of such fundamental common goals and thus procuring order.

Although with some distance, a similar approach is taken by the Constructivism, which understands international norms as "standards of appropriate behavior" contingent to a "given identity" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Birdsall, 2016; Raymond, 2021). International order is thus to be understood here as a formal or informal arrangement based on such norms and institutions (aggregations of norms (March and Olsen (1998)), essentially regulating, guiding, and governing international relations (Chan et al., 2021: 77).

The point of contact would be the, first, the essential role prescriptions regulating state behavior have within order, and second, the contingency these have with a given set of values: for Bull, this set is given by the goals of international society, for Finnemore and Sikkink, identity. Nevertheless, this gap is bridged by Buzan and Lawson (2018: 10), who directly link the societal goals to a "shared identity". Being both streams dealing with prescriptions, further on the research they will be referred to as simply "norms", for the sake of simplicity.

[1] Bull classifies international relations as a system and/or as a society. System entails the mere regularity of contact and the reciprocal impact of decision between states. Complementarily, society implies the further self-conception or common sense of boundedness "by a common set of rules" (Bull, 1998: 13).

b. Towards a substantive definition of revisionism: international order

i. Norms and institutions

Bull further breaks down norms between the "constitutional normative principle", the "rules of coexistence" and "rules of cooperation". These are respectively the norms establishing normative political organization and prescriptions to realize the primary goals and secondary goals (Bull, 1995: 65, 67). "Rules of coexistence" prescribe the refrain from violence and the preservation for state jurisdiction (Bull, 1995: 66-67). In this manner, they regulate, on the one hand, the legitimacy of objectives and the actual conduct of violence, and, on the other, they prescribe respect for other states' sovereignty, non-interference, and sovereign equality (Bull, 1995: 67)[2]. Both these two sets of rules of coexistence find an equivalent in Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998: 891) "regulative" norms, insofar as they set out to "order and constrain behavior".

If rules represent the prescriptions aimed at the attainment of social goals, institutions are the actual behaviours, "habits and practices", directed towards the realization of such goals (Bull, 1998: 71). Prominently, these are the balance of power, international law, the diplomatic mechanisms, the managerial system of great powers and war. Buzan and Lawson (2018: 10) account for these as the primary institutions of international society, which would be complemented in turn by the secondary institutions: concrete intergovernmental arrangement regulating state behavior such as the United Nations, the World Bank, or the Nuclear Non-Proliferation regimes (2018: 10).

Furthermore, norms shape the sphere of legitimacy. They define what is "desirable, proper or appropriate", being this precisely only knowable by reference to norms (Schuman (1995) quoted in Reus-Smit, 2014: 345 and Barnett, 2021: 6; Ward, 2017: 13; Finnemore, 2009: 61). Thus, they regulate the "acquiescence or support" a conduct is to enjoy, having the capacity to make power exercise "cheaper and more effective" (Finnemore, 2009: 63).

In conclusion, a social approach to international order defines this as the aggregation of the intersubjective understandings of what constitute legitimate action, regulating what sort of actions propitiate confrontation or compliance. Order "regards how rules,

[2] Today, this would have been nuanced by the norm of humanitarian interventions (Knudsen and Navari, 2022: 19).

institutions, law, and norms produce and maintain patterns of relating and acting" (Barnett, 2021: 4).

ii. Codification or secondary institutions.

Some of the aforementioned norms (rules of coexistence, regulative and evaluative norms, etc) have already been codified by secondary institutions. In this manner, Bull's rules of coexistence can be found in the Article 2 of the UN Charter, stating that the basis of the organization is sovereign equality.

Furthermore, an account of rules directed towards the refrain from use of violence and the legitimate resort to it and its legitimate objective, can be found in the Charter in Article 2 (4), prescribing the refrainment of the threat or use of force against territorial integrity. Nevertheless, this would be sanctionable according to article 51, establishing the right to "necessary" and "proportionate" self-defence, or, according to article 42 of the Charter by the actual sanction of the UNSC. A further manifestation of these rules can be UNGA Decision 3314 (1974), which strives towards a definition of the crime of aggression, defining illicit use of violence.

iii. Relation between norms and behavior.

Another author discussion normative order is Kelsen (1979), whose ideas can bring further clarification to the nature and functions of international order.

The first remark he makes is that a normative order is different from a natural one, to the extent that this latter's purpose is to describe reality (Kelsen, 1979: 116). In this manner, objects of the natural order simply do act following natural rules, being impossible that they do not. If this was not the case and violation occurred, that would imply the automatic invalidation of the order (Kelsen, 1979: 117).

Conversely, a normative order is made up of precepts or prescriptions. In this manner, they do not express what (necessarily) happens (what is), but what should happen (Kelsen, 1979: 117). As Bobbio states, the objective of norms is not to describe, but to make-make (regulate behavior) (Bobbio, 1993: 60). The main consequence of this is that violation of norms does not necessarily compromise its validity (Kelsen, 1979: 117). Thus, validity is to a extend detached from efficacy (realization of the norm in the conduct (Bobbio, 1993: 35)): "validity does not depend directly on a correspondent reality" (Kelsen, 1979: 117).

Nevertheless, norms are not completely detached from behavior. Indeed, Kelsen argues that norms can only be valid insofar as there is a minimal correspondence between their content and the actual behavior of people – “a certain efficacy is condition sine qua non for validity” (1979: 121). Conversely, these is a maximum too, for a normative order must accommodate at the same time the possibility of a contradiction between actual behaviours and the norm (1979: 123). In this manner, norms would not be able to “be identified just with observable behavior, nor can they merely be equated with normative beliefs” (Bicchieri et al., 2023). They would occupy a space somewhat in the middle.

Thus, an essential the function of order is to prescribe, and to a minimal extend describe. Furthermore, its essence is that it can be violated, and its validity is not affected by it. Nevertheless, there is a maximum to this, beyond which violation starts undermining the validity of order.

In international relations theory, the same approaches are present in authors such as Raymond (2021: 31, 32), Krasner (1999: 56) and Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 892). It could also be applied to the English School approach in the sense that institutions, as the actual practices that work towards the realization of an end, could be said to express the efficacy of order. In the other sense, being norms such prescriptions, express the validity of order, enduring even in the face of repeated transgression.

c. Revisionism.

This research adopts thus an understanding of revisionism as the as the desire to alter the international order, defined by its fundamental norms and institutions (Chan et al., 2021: 17, 18; McKeown, 2019; Legro, 2005; Groitl, 2023: 59). In turn, norms and institutions are defined as the prescriptions and behaviours which manifest the intersubjective understandings of legitimate action, including norms shaping legitimate state sovereignty and use of violence. These, furthermore, can be found codified within articles of the UN Charter and other sources of international public law. Nevertheless, in order to operationalize further revisionism, it would result profitable to analyse more in detail in what consists of.

i. Revisionism as violation

Revisionism can be identified, firstly, by analyzing the relative compliance with the norms of the international order of a state, such as the as its restrain from interfering in another state's domestic affairs, mutual recognition of the legitimacy of ruling regimes

and states respective traditional sphere of influence, rights of self-defense, peaceful settlement of international disputes and the use of force as the last resort (Chan et al. 2021: 79). The transgression of these legitimate "means" and "ends" of the international order can point to a revisionist behavior (Kustermans et al., 2023). Chan et al. (2021: 79) label this as revisionism towards the norm-based international order.

In a similar vein, revisionism can be identified in the transgression of secondary institutions (thus being for Chan et al. (2021: 79) revisionism of the institution-based international order). This can be observed in the observance of international treaty obligations, besides a state membership and participation to international organizations.

ii. Revisionism as legitimating discourse

Nevertheless, revisionism has been defined as the dissatisfaction and desire to alter the norms of international order. In this manner, not all violations happen with this intentions, nor does mere transgression amount to a challenge to a norm. Bull poses how states may violate norms and "go out of its way to demonstrate that it still considers itself bound by the rule" or might struggle to deny that any violation has taken place (1995: 132), which by virtue of appealing to it, contribute to a norm endurance.

On top of that, norms have been defined as to have two qualities and functions: on the one hand efficacy and validity, on the other, descriptive and prescriptive functions. Thus, a violation of a norm only mound to a challenge to the efficacy of a norm, and thus its ability to fulfil a descriptive function. Nevertheless, half of the story would be missing, and as Kelsen and Krasner argue, norms have the capacity to endure in spite of inefficacy.

Bull states that norms can further be compromised by a "failure to accept the validity or binding quality of the obligation" "by a reasoned appeal to different and conflicting principles" (Bull, 1995: 133). In this manner, beyond violation, revisionism must present a "legitimating discourse", altering "the prescriptive status of the norm", and have the "express purpose to bring about [normative] structural change" (McKeown, 2019: 11; Kustermans et al., 2023: 6).

Revisionism thus implies the utilization of a legitimating discourse of an action, more concretely, a violation, which necessarily alters the sphere of what is legitimate (illicit becoming licit, and the other way around). Expressing order what is legitimate, the struggle to alter the latter, necessarily implies the desire to alter the former. In other

words, the undertaking of a transgressive/illicit act regarding a fundamental norm (non-intervention, refrain from use of violence, etc), and the failing to acknowledge this as illicit, furthermore trying to legitimize it as licit, even though a recurrent tactic of states, amounts to revisionism.

iii. Causes of revisionism

Lastly, concerns regarding status prompt revisionism (Chan et al., 2021: 38, 50; Ward, 2017: 33). It would be motivated by a "sense of receiving a less share of resources and benefits than what would correspond them" or by "permanently obstructed status demands" within the "social hierarchy", expressed as both "membership and rank". In the same manner, Mukherjee (2022) blames status inconsistency, but attributes it to the international institutions characteristics (openness and fairness).

Davidson (2006: 20-35) conversely points to domestic pressures (externally oriented group domestic domination), international pressures (security concerns) and international ("balanced of allied resolve") opportunities.

Finally, Chan et al. (2021) makes the conceptual distinction between hard and soft revisionism. The former deals with the resort to military or coercive force to advance changes in the international normative structure, by means of conquest or subversion (military sponsoring to destabilize). This is different from softer approaches to revision, such as institutional reform, exit or obstruction (2021:117).

In order to analyse a case of revisionism, then, it would be necessary to observe a violation of international order and an accompanying legitimating discourse altering the sphere of what is legitimate. The existence of both might sufficiently point to the intention to change the normative structure of order.

3. The case of Turkish military interventions in Syria and Iraq.

a. From soft to hard power

Having established international order and its revision in those terms, in would seem enriching to nurture the debate with an exemplifying case. In this manner, some authors have referred to a revisionist behaviour by Turkey (Bekić, 2021; Tsakaris, 2021; Tizarras, 2022). They attribute Turkish revisionism to the abandonment of Ahmet Davutoglu's Turkish foreign policy strategies after 2013-2016.

Under concepts such as “Strategic Depth” (Stratejik derinlik) and “Zero Problems with Neighbours” (Komşularla Sıfır Problem) principle (Tziarras, 2022: 2; Yeşiltaş and Balcı, 2011), Turkey pushed in the 2000s to actively engage “with all the regions where it [Turkey] belongs” (Almuedo, 2011: 7; also Kınacıoğlu, 2022: 263, 264; Ali, 2023: 56) via soft power mechanisms and diplomatic and economic engagement (Toygür et al., 2022; Neset et al., 2021)[3].

This approach was progressively abandoned with the Arab Spring (2011-2013) and Winter (post-2013). In the Arab Spring, Turkey ended up openly calling for government removal in Egypt and Libya and directly intervened in Libya supporting NATO intervention. The resort to military power was exacerbated after 2013, year marked by al-Sisi coup in Egypt, which toppled Muslim Brotherhoods democratic Morsi’s government. At the same time, civil wars unleashed in Libya, Yemen and Iraq, to which later on Syria was added.

This new situation, provoked the subsequent replacement of the “mediator-integrator” role by the “assertive quest for “autonomy”, accompanied by military interventionism and coercive diplomacy” (Kutlay and Önış, 2021: 1085; Altunışık, 2020: 5), adopting a more security, militarized and unilateral approach, giving rise to what Uzgel (2023: 157) describe as the “Forward Defence” doctrine, with the conviction that “turkey should confront its enemies in cross-border areas”. This was accompanied, among others, by the establishment of military bases abroad, such as in Qatar (Altunışık and Martin, 2023: 12), the military support to Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh War (Neset et al., 2021), the isolationism in Eastern mediterranean, in front of a coalition of Greece, France, Egypt and Greek Cypriots or the rapprochement to Russia (Altunışık and Martin, 2023: 89; Tziarras, 2022).

b. Case study: Forward defence in Syria and Iraq

Within this context resort hard power in Turkish foreign policy, Turkey launched a series of military interventions in northern Syria and Iraq between 2018 and 2022, resulting in the seizure of territory in Syria, so-called “safe zones”, and the

[3]Among others, some examples of this would be how Turkey supported the Annan Plan for Cyprus reunification, successfully lobbied for the election of a Turkish secretary to the ICO, mediated between Israel and Syria, opened a consulate in Erbil, started accession negotiations with the EU, and brokered free trade and visa agreements with Syria (Hale, 2012; Altunışık and Martin, 2023; Kutlay and Öniş, 2021; Uzgel, 2023; Toygür et al., 2022).

establishment of permanent military bases in northern Iraq (Tziarras, 2022: 81; Aran and Kutlay, 2024: 7).

In Syria, actions were incentivized by systemic opportunities, with the relative rollback of the US from the Middle East since 2011 (Aran and Kutlay, 2024), and systemic pressures, such as the rapid advances of the Kurdish Peoples Protection Units (YPG) and Syrian Democratic Forces during the Syrian Civil war, together with security concerns given terrorist attacks between 2013 and 2016 in Turkey (Tziarras, 2022: 81: Aran and Kutlay, 2024: 6).

Thus, Turkey launched operations in Syria were launched under the pretext of national protection from terrorist threats, which included Islamist groups, such as Al-Qaida, ISIS, and Al Nusrah Front, and the YPG and SDF, which were indiscriminately targeted as branches of the PKK (Kowalczewska and Łubiński, 2022; Tziarras, 2022: 82). Through these, Turkey achieved to seize, control, and administer great chunks of Syrian territory (Al-Bab, Afrin Idlib regions, plus the are compromised between Ras Al-Ayn and Tel- Abyad (Adar et al., 2021), frustrating further ambitions of Kurdish in northern Syria.

Table 1. Turkish military interventions and presence in Syria (2016-2020).

Operation	Date	Objective	Effect
Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) (1)	August 2016-March 2017.	Ensure of border security, neutralization of ISIS and PYD/YPG terrorists, support the Free Syrian Army, and ensure the return of refugees.	Seizure of area of 2 015 to 2 225 square kilometres between Azaz and Jarablus, establishment of military bases in al-Bab and Azaz
Operation Olive Branch (OOB) (2)	January 2018-March 2018.	Securing of Turkeys border, ensure safe return of displaced Syrians and “prevent PYD/YPG infiltrations into Turkey via the Amanos Mountains.	Seizure of 2 000 square kilometres area, extending the controlled are of Jarablus-Azaz further to the west, effectively sealing Turkish border.
Operation Peace Spring (OPS) (3)	October 2019-November 2019	Establishment of a 30 kilometre long “safe zone” in which Syrian refugees can be resettled and push	Area taken between Ras al-Ayn and Tel Abyad in norther-eastern Syria.

		YPG east of the Euphrates.	
Operation Spring Shield (OSS) (4)	February 2020-March 2020	Protect civilians in Idlib and counter Syrian regime aggression.	Control of a strip along the Turkish border.

Sources: Çevik, 2022; Kowalczewska and Łubiński, 2022; Ferah and Tunca, 2022; Tziarras, 2022.

Around 2016, and especially after 2019, Turkey also changed its policy regarding northern Iraq. Up until then, since 1980, this had been characterized by “cross-border counterinsurgency” operations against PKK of sporadic and limited character, which enjoyed relative consent from the Iraqi government (Ayad and Khalil, 2023: 217; Çevik, 2022: 2; Tziarras, 2022: 86). Nevertheless, this changed with the establishment of Bashiqa military base north of Mosul in 2015, and the launching of a series of “long-term widescale attacks”, which can be understood as part of a sole operation, only interrupted by winter conditions (Çevik, 2022: 3). These series of military operations in northern Iraq, 10 in total and all under the main name of Claw (Pençe), had accomplished by 2022 the established of permanent military presence in northern Iraq, “establishing a long-lasting area control” which is supported by a larger chain of military bases and “smaller forward-operations" (Çevik, 2022: 3). These operations were mainly conducted in Iraqi Kurdistan’s mountainous chains, such as Qandil, Sinjar or the one around Metina, or mountains such as Halkurd or Gara. ISWN Middle East Conflict Map (can be found within Adar et al., 2021) points to the existence of 6 military posts, while others point to the establishment of military bases in Duhok and Erbil regions (Okuducu, 2024), such as the Bashiqa military base (Tziarras, 2022: 88; Adar et al., 2021).

Table 2. Military interventions in Iraq

Name	Date	Region
Claw-1	May 2019	Halkurd
Claw-2	July 2019	Halkurd
Claw-3	August 2019	Sinat-Haftanin
Claw-Eagle	June 2020	Sinjar, Karacak, Qandil, Zap, Avasin-Basyan, Halkurd.
Claw-Tiger	June 2020	Sinjar, Karacak, Qandil,

		Zap, Avasin-Basyan, Halkurd.
Claw-Eagle 2	February 2021	Gara
Claw-Lightning	April 2021	Metina, Avasin-Basyan
Claw-Thunder	April 2021	Metina. Avasin-Basyan
Claw-Lock	April 2022	Metina, Zap, Avasin-Basyan
Claw-Sword	November 2022	Qandil, Asos and Halkurd (together with Syrian Ayn al-Arab, Tal Rifaat, Jazira and Derik).

Sources: Özer, 2022; Ozerkan, 2022; AFP, 2022.

4. Case analysis and results

This section analyses the extent to which these military operations can suppose a revision of fundamental norms of coexistence, namely, through a violation of norms and institutions and a desire to alter the relations between behavior and legitimacy. To do that, the relation of these actions and the international order will be analysed.

a. Turkish military interventions and the violation of norms and institutions.

Because of their nature (extraterritorial unilateral invasions of another state territory), Turkish military operations in Syria and Iraq are behaviours that fall within the object of international norms and institutions, such as Bull's fundamental rules of coexistence.

In this manner, firstly, it should be evaluated the extent to which these actions transgress norms regulating the legitimate objectives of violence and the legitimate conduction of it (proportional and necessary) (Bull, 1995: 66).

These rules have been covered by different secondary institutions. In this manner, in the very second article of the UN Charter, it is established that state ought-to not resort to the use of force. Thus, the use of violence amounts to an illicit behavior. Nevertheless, on Chapter VII the UN expresses the two conditions in order to be sanctionable. The first, in articles 39, 41 and 42, is the entitlement of the UNSC to the right to launch specific military interventions, under which states can be relatively authorized to use force (O'Connell, 2019: 179).

The second, in article 51, granting states the right to temporary self-defense. This is followed by further ancillary rules, such as that this is permissible only until UNSC has

taken measures, that the existence of an armed attack is conditio sine qua non (O'Connell et al., 2019: 182, 195) and, furthermore, that this armed attack cannot be any, but of enough significance as to counter-attack on the territory of another State, as measured by its scale and effects (O'Connell et al., 2019: 195, 196). Lastly, a state may resort to the use of force answering an explicit invitation by another state to join a "collective self-defense" (O'Connell et al., 2019: 202). This implies that, "without consent, military activities on the territory of another State will violate the principle of non-intervention or the prohibition on the use of force" (O'Connell et al., 2019: 202). At the same time, if a state uses its armed forces in another in a manner inconsistent to a previous agreement, would amount to a crime of aggression (Ayad and Khalil, 2023: 221).

i. Prescriptions regarding legitimate use of force

Turkish military interventions in Syria and Iraq were legitimated as acts of self-defence in front of what Turkey considered a threat to their security, mainly from terrorist actors. Moreover, for the case of Syria, the UNSC approved a series of resolutions granting mandates to use force against terrorist actors in Syria and Iraq, such as UNSC resolution 2249 (2015).

Nevertheless, to the extent that the operations targeted Kurdish forces, these operations amount to a transgression of articles 2 and 51, since, firstly they lacked a justification and the provision of proofs regarding the reality and imminence of the threats or attacks from YPG or SDF, organizations which furthermore did not consider any of the Turkish territory as its target (Çevik, 2022: 2; Kowalczewska and Łubiński, 2022: 81).

Secondly, the Turkey avoided to make any reference to the existence of an "armed attack" in both its reports to the UNSC on Olive Branch and Peace Springs operations. In this manner, to wield the right of self-defence, Turkey should have provided proves of a large-scale dimension of the threat and the gravity of it (Kowalczewska and Łubiński 2022: 68)

Thirdly, the resulting effect of the operations was the consolidation of Turkish influence on the region, which was formerly controlled Kurdish territory, preventing the latter from exercising authority on a continuous stretch of territory (Kowalczewska and Łubiński 2022: 59).

Furthermore, behaviours targeting this group would hardly be legitimatized under the UNSC 2249 (2015) resolution, being a unilateral asseveration of Turkey that YPG represented a terrorist organization. Turkish military operations in northern Iraq were not communicated to the UNSC whatsoever, not complying with a condition for the exercise of the right to self-defence (Ayad and Khalil, 2023: 217).

On top of that, there existed no consent nor invitation neither in Syrian nor Iraqi military interventions, both governments repeatedly condemning the invasions as explicit violations of their sovereignty (Kowalczewska and Łubiński, 2023: 61; Ayad and Khalil, 2023: 217). Thus, the invasion of another state territory, even if the target is a non-state actor, should be considered a violation of fundamental norms regarding the legitimate use of violence in the absence of a state request.

ii. Prescriptions regarding state jurisdiction.

Turkish stance towards the norms directed towards the preservation of state jurisdiction (respect for sovereignty, non-interference, and sovereign equality) could already be classified as transgressive even before the launching of the operations, by virtue of the wide support it provided to the popular movements challenging the then regimes in Syria, Egypt and Libya, publicly calling for the ousting of their leaders. As covered, from 2011 onwards, Turkey pursued a policy of interference in MENA, participating in NATO's illicit military intervention in order to oust Gaddafi, stretching the mandate given by the UNSC, or directly fighting Syrian Army forces in Idlib in 2020. In this manner, 2016 Euphrates Shield operation was accompanied by an explicit statement of Erdogan implying one of its goals the removal of Assad (Kınacıoğlu, 2022: 268).

Regarding sovereign equality, Turkey established in 2016 a military base in Bashiqa, Iraq. When the Iraqi parliament and Prime Minister labelled it, together with the rest of Turkish forces in the territory, as a as "foreign occupying force" and argued that it amounted to a violation of Iraqi sovereignty, Erdogan answered explicitly discarding any kind of sovereign equality between the countries altogether (Tziarras, 2022: 87).

Beyond these, in Syrian occupied territory, Turkey has established its own administration and exerts control on virtually all aspects of social life there (education, health, currency, etc), what has brought some authors to describe it as "state-building attempts", "colonial practices", "creation of proto state structures" or establishment of "proxy state" (Çevik, 2022: 2; Tziarras, 2022: 83; Tsakaris, 2021: 143). This amounts to

a violation of Syrian sovereignty, retiring this latter's right to exert as ultimate authority within its territory.

b. Turkish legitimation discourse and the sphere of legitimacy

As covered previously on this research, nevertheless, the validation of the international order, insofar as normative order, is not dependant on its actual efficacy, since it points to what should be instead of what it is and thus is decoupled from actual behaviour. In this manner, a violation of the norms and institutions that constitute order do not necessarily amount to a change of it or even a challenge. A violation with such effects could only happen if it compromised that "minimal correspondence" between norms and behaviour that Kelsen formulated. Nevertheless, this is plainly impossible for a sole state to accomplish since the social sphere is all about collective action.

Thus, beyond violation, this section inquires whether Turkey has struggled to challenge the validity of the international order, by struggling to produce a change in it, namely by legitimating its violations as non-transgressive or by introducing new understandings of a norm or new norms (McKeown, 2019: 11; Kustermans et al., 2023: 6). On both accounts, the resulting relationship between behaviours and values, the legitimate sphere, would be different from the international order's one.

In this manner, legitimating discourses of Turkey persistently fail to acknowledge these actions as violations of norms and indeed stretch their meaning to make previously illicit behaviours licit. In this manner, Turkey bestows itself with the right to determine the legitimacy of another states sovereignty (as in delegitimating discourses regarding Syria and Egypt, and the aforementioned statements regarding Iraq), which manifests a different understanding of what constitutes the legitimate actors in the international society different from norms regarding state jurisdiction.

On top of that, by virtue of its stretching of the right to self-defence, so as to legitimize pre-emptive unilateral invasions of territory and military interventions, Turkey presents a different understanding of legitimate resort and objective of violence within the current international order, which relies on the codifications mentioned on the previous section.

In conclusion, Turkey both fails to acknowledge its transgressions as violation, which could potentially indicate the existence of a conflicting understanding of the sphere of legitimacy. Nevertheless, this potential indication is support by the actual legitimating

discourses posed by the Turkish government, which virtually reshape both the spheres of legitimate actors in the international system, neither all states being equal nor respect for sovereignty being norm, and the resort, objectives and conducts of violence, including within it regime change as objective, the expendable character of the demonstration of a significant armed attack or the another state's consent to the operation (in a great turn Turkey even by-passing this by appealing directly to the "invitation of the people" (Kınacıoğlu (2022: 269)).

All of this points to the additional failure to accept the "validity or binding quality" of norms "by a reasoned appeal to different and conflicting principles" (Bull, 1995: 133). In this manner, beyond violation, Turkish actions in Syria and Iraq present a "legitimating discourse", which has the "express purpose to bring about [normative] structural change" (even though not being able to do so) (McKeown, 2019: 11; Kustermans et al., 2023: 6).

5. Conclusion

This research has set out to gain an understanding of what revisionism is in international politics and how can it be detected. This question seems of capital importance, given the concern around the changes of the international order in the coming years. The research discards approximations to revisionism which define it as the intention to alter power relations, for, on the one hand, it would result difficult to identify such behavior among all states, and, on the other, the examples of hegemonic revisionism, which breaks the identification of hegemon with status-quo.

Conversely, this research has adopted a theoretical standpoint defining revisionism as the dissatisfaction and desire to upend the fundamental norms and institutions, which are the constituting elements of order. This social understanding identifies revisionism with the violation of norms and institutions accompanied with legitimating discourses that present understandings of the legitimate sphere different from the one limited by international order.

Having done that, this theoretical approach has been applied to the case of Turkish military interventions in Syria and Iraq. Even though Turkey presents these as licit behaviours, it has been argued that they break fundamental norms of the international society. This is so because they way in which they have been conducted is different

from the way established by norms regarding legitimate resort to violence and state jurisdiction.

This revisionist attitude moreover can be understood in the general turn from soft power to hard power Turkey underwent from 2011 onwards, in which other authors detect too the rise of a revisionist behavior (Alaranta, 2022: 122; Tziarras, 2022; Bekić, 2021; Tsakiris, 2019). Beyond these operations, Turkey has resorted to military action or support, called for the removal of other regimes and delegitimized neighbouring elites, the EU itself (Aydın-Düzgit and Noutcheva, 2022; Aydın-Düzgit, 2023).

The research has been limited in a great extent to the definition the English School provides of international order. In this manner, the research would need to be updated with further debates on the actual constituting norms and institutions of today's international society, or the goals this might pursue.

On top of that, the results of the research point to further investigation on the challenge of the norms of coexistence in post-Cold War international order. In this manner, Turkish revisionism might but only be following a stream opened by US 2003 intervention in Iraq. Thus, comparative studies could be done with this and current Israeli legitimations on the war on Hamas, and how they alter the sphere of what is legitimate, as to include the murder of civilians within self-defence or the total disregard for proportionality.

For the insights provided by this research, it would be profitable too to generate a research within the same line, following the evolution of Turkish stance towards the international order, in order to further nurture the insights of revisionism.

In this manner, the paper concludes that the social approach to revisionism is useful to understand the stance states have towards international order and how this might evolve and change, and that Turkish military interventions provide a well example it. With current events in international politics, such as Israeli genocide, Russian war of conquest in Ukraine and a waning US, it is feasible that the debate on revisionism will only but grow with the coming years.

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