

Ukraine as international democracy dispute: bringing a Boltanskian approach to Russian-Western relations*Abstract*

Following from the well-established practice turn in IR, this paper applies the insights of Luc Boltanski's 'pragmatic sociology of critique' to normative disputes in international politics. It contends that Boltanski's focus on the centrality of dispute and justification to constructions of social order is a fruitful way of analysing international conflict and co-operation. I apply Boltanski's argument that reality is a fragile social construction maintained by dominant actors' semantic control of *what is* (e.g. legitimate or just) but open to critique by critical actors. The case used is Russian-Western disputes over events in Ukraine during the 2004 Orange Revolution and 2014 Maidan Revolution, analysed as a process of contestation of a liberal-democratic international order/reality. I focus specifically on disputes over what constitutes legitimate democratic behaviour, promoted as one of the would-be cornerstones of contemporary European order. Concerned primarily with disputes in the semantic sphere, the paper draws on primary sources including speeches and statements by Russian and Western officials.

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