

# PIRATES, JUSTICE AND GLOBAL ORDER



## IN THE ANIME 'ONE PIECE'

"Remove justice, and what are kingdoms  
but gangs of criminals on a large scale?  
(St. Augustine City of God, Book 4, Ch. 4).

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The manga/anime (Japanese cartoon) titled ONE PIECE telling the story of the pirate Monkey D. Luffy and his crew is one of the most successful Japanese cultural products of all time. The first volume of One Piece was published in 1997 and it has been published weekly ever since. It has sold over 430.000.000 million copies worldwide (70.000.000 outside Japan) and it has set already years ago the world record for "The most copies published for the same comic book series, by a single author."<sup>1</sup> Although One Piece is the most successful Japanese manga series there are many others -like Dragon Ball or Full Metal Alchemist<sup>2</sup>- with fans around the World, making Japanese manga not only a successful export product, but many believe also a source of Japanese soft power (Bouissou 2006). This in the case of One Piece is especially true for East Asia, with many young readers in the region being inspired by the manga to turn their interest towards Japan (Hirai et al. 2014).

Although such products of popular culture are produced mainly for entertainment purposes, we should not dismiss the reflections they make about the social and the political world, as it is recognized that they do not only depict, but also construct identities, shape security narratives and form our world, explaining why scholars increasingly turned their attention to their study (Weldes and Rowley 2015). Some go even as far as to claim that: "*the ongoing and phenomenal growth in the production and circulation of popular culture makes world politics what it currently is*" (Grayson, Davies and Philpott 2009: 157). This focus on popular culture, however, predominantly turns towards products of Western media, particularly the Anglo-American world. But if the study of popular culture is taken serious, Grayson, Davies and Philpott argue, social sciences including IR studies should pay

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/daily-briefs/2017-10-16/one-piece-manga-has-430-million-copies-in-print-worldwide/.122794>

<sup>2</sup> Popularity differs by region. One Piece is said to have been initially very unsuccessful in the US because of the way it has been altered and modified for the US audience, making many of its plots strange or outright ridiculous.

equal attention to cultural products across the globe (Grayson, Davies and Philpott 2009: 159.)

Although cultural products are rooted in given cultural contexts, they contribute to global narratives, especially in the case of such products as One Piece, which has been translated to numerous languages and read all around the World. Thus, although in many ways cultural products carry characteristics of their origins, great pieces of art overcome cultural boundaries by talking to audiences beyond the cultural sphere in which they originate. Also, frequently, it is not trivial if a cultural product could be easily identified as Japanese or American in the sense that they are produced with a global market in mind (Hollywood movies); they take their inspiration and make references more broadly (with the author of One Piece, for example, naming many characters of the story after (in)famous European pirates)<sup>3</sup>; and link audiences and narratives beyond cultural boundaries contributing to the creation of a globally shared popular culture

Along these lines this paper argues that even though One Piece is a *shonen* manga aimed at entertaining teenagers (although the teenagers started reading the series in 1997 are adults by now reading the manga together with their children), it deserves our attention not only for its enormous popularity, but also because it contains reflections on highly important political dilemmas and asks its reader to take a critical perspective on global order and question taken for granted truths about how the world hangs together. The point here is that in a sense One Piece could be read as a popular representation of the type of critical attitude that Nicholas Wheeler (1996), R.J. Vincent (1986), John Williams (2006) or Ken Booth (2007) call our attention to in the IR academic literature. While these IR authors ask questions about our taken for granted truths and the ethical foundations of the state system and sovereignty based global order, in One Piece the protagonist Monkey D. Luffy seeks to uncover the truth about the events of the void century and how the rule of the World Government has been created; both in its own way asking questions about injustices and seeking to mend them, which allows for an allegoric reading of the manga/anime.

Picking pirates as the heroes of the anime particularly invites for such a reading, as the pirate has always been seen not only as a criminal, but was frequently idealized as a freedom fighter challenging states and established power hierarchies. This symbolic role was present not only in fiction, but as Policante argues ***“the pirate was represented as a systemic enemy of the entire international system of states centred in Europe”***: a challenge to the foundations upon which global order relied on since the colonial era with the pirate representing the denial of the emerging neo-liberal capitals market economy. Thus, pirates are in a sense the embodiment of an uncompromising attitude to challenge the state system - which position is not so far from that of the critical scholar challenging taken for granted truths seeking to see things from a different perspective.

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<sup>3</sup> Yukari Fujimoto argues that One Piece is popular in the West without „employing the magic stroke of orientalism (Fujimoto 2014: 174.)”

But why is the general image about pirates is important when reading One Piece? Narrative studies emphasize that stories never stand in themselves and are not produced in a vacuum, but tie into already existing deeply rooted narratives. This means that they acquire their meaning intertextually, tying into narratives that they further reinforce and reiterate. This has the corollary that certain tropes have their already established status in popular imagination that constrain the way their tropes could be recirculated. Alexander Spencer (2014) in his article on terrorism and piracy pointed out, for example, that given that in Western popular imagination pirates are seen not only as criminals, but also as popular heroes, discursive attempts to link up narratives of piracy with 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorism were unsuccessful at least in Germany.<sup>4</sup> With kids happily getting dressed as pirates at parties and many imagining to become pirates when they grow up (Land referring to the Guardian 2013) the image of the pirate was incompatible with the image of the terrorist.

At the same time, it was also the already established image of the pirate that allowed it to travel with ease to the virtual world. Namely, although the pirate is violating the law, he does this in a liminal position as frequently s/he does so because the law itself is seen to be unjust and the pirate by its acts is seen to reinstate order in a morally desired manner. In the case of internet piracy this comes to the fore as many believe that internet piracy is a struggle against actors in superior power position with internet piracy standing in the way of the enclosure of the information commons,<sup>5</sup> with hacker culture struggling to evade the capacities of the state to overstretch its control in governing societies (Beyer and Mckelvey 2015: 849).

This means that One Piece also links up with an intertextual milieu, which is already sediment with meanings where Luffy's struggles can be read not only as a romantic adventure, but a story linking up with popular narratives calling to resist power and to raise questions concerning political order.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, while on the one hand popular culture can be the vehicle to carry and promote agendas of authorities - like the Pentagon influencing what to get into movies (Robb 2004)- popular culture is also a possible vehicle of resistance. This does not need to be resistance in the sense of pinpointing particular injustices or the specific corruptness of authorities or regimes, but can mean a call for a generally critical attitude towards power, demanding the audience not to take for granted how the world is (not to accept established power structures that benefit some at the expense of others), but to seek if their were conceivable alternatives. The contention of this article is that One Piece reinforces and calls for such a critical attitude. Yet, it also does more by highlighting crucial dilemmas of politics and IR, for example by raising questions about the relationship between order and

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<sup>4</sup> (even though similar attempts in the case of money laundering or weapons of mass destruction succeeded in Germany). In the US after 9/11 Bush linked up piracy with terrorism and was used to justify targeted killings or torture (Policante 2015: 199).

<sup>5</sup> For Neocleous there is little difference between the Somali and the internet pirate (2015:30)

<sup>6</sup> Yukari Fujimoto points this out as the difference between „Naruto” (another very popular Japan manga) and One Piece arguing that what makes One Piece special is that it is about overthrowing established order. (Fujimoto 2014: 175).

justice, resonating the intriguing question that Bull asked: *“Can justice in world politics, in various senses, be achieved only by jeopardizing international order?”* (Bull 97).” Making this claim I do not argue that One Piece should be considered as a work of the English School, but that in a popular manner it raises important question about Global Order for its readers with a sensitivity that often is missing from Hollywood blockbusters, by overcoming the Manichean dualism of good and bad. (Although there are debates concerning the role of tales depicting the polarized struggle of pure good and evil for children’s evolving morality (Heisig 1977: 105), simplistic representations of antagonisms in popular culture arguably offer a very naïve template for understanding the human condition by suggesting that the World may be easily divided into good and bad and enemies and friends). The aim of this article is therefore to show, first, the narrative context in which the figure of the pirate is the embodiment of challenges to authority trying to overcome injustices, and second to show, how One Piece does this in a sophisticated manner, with Luffy not only fighting corrupt officers, but seeking to uncover the roots of injustices - i.e. the basis on which the rule of order of the World Government is based.

In a nutshell One Piece is about the story of the pirate Monkey D. Luffy fighting the World Government on his voyage to the island of Raftel where he hopes to find the treasure called One Piece. Luffy is a typical swashbuckler hero fighting to become the king of pirates, fighting injustices and willingly making sacrifices to save his friends and the weak in need of protection. In many ways the story could be compared to Star Wars as similarly the young hero not only needs to train himself to improve his superhuman abilities to face his opponents, but he also meets on his journey his family’s members, with his grandfather being a legendary admiral of the marines.

What makes the story more than a mere treasure hunt for a box filled with gold and diamonds is that it is suggested that whoever reaches One Piece acquires the knowledge about how the existing world order has been established and the World Government has created its rule over the World. That is, what One Piece refers to as treasure should not be taken in a literal sense, but in the abstract - offering the knowledge on the basis of which existing order can be overturned.

In the story the world is united under the rule of the World Government, with some co-opted pirates enjoying a high level of freedom, creating a hierarchical system of peoples and islands. One of the central questions of the story is how the rule of the World Government came about. As we gradually learn there has been a void century (空白の100年) 800-900 years before, of which little is known. After the void century, however, the rule of the World Government was established and took control of the entire world (with the World Government making all efforts to keep the history of the void century secret). Order in the World is maintained by the Marines, keeping the peace and fighting pirates. Some of the pirates are just ordinary gangsters, some are co-opted agents of the World

government, but there are some, like Luffy, fighting for higher order principles than mere wealth and treasure.

What makes Luffy special even among the positive heroes of the story is his uncompromising belief in freedom - his own freedom and the freedom of others -and his willingness to make unselfish sacrifices for his friends and others without a second thought. While initially Luffy is only trying to avoid contacting Marines to achieve his dream to become the King of Pirates (I will briefly discuss what he means by this), gradually he must realize that confrontation with the marines is unavoidable. One of the most memorable moments of the story is when Luffy realizes that he needs to fight the World Government and at a very captivating scene he declares war on the World Government by ordering one of his crew members to fire and lite fire to its flag (Figure 1.).



FIGURE 1. Luffy's crew declares war on the World Government

At this moment it becomes clear that Luffy's aim is to topple the rule of the World Government. Thus, his aim is not simply to defeat corrupt individuals and to fight injustices he meets on his voyage, but to uncover the history of the void century - the history that the World Government tries to conceal and keep secret - and thereby to reveal the basis upon which the rule of the World Government is built upon.

The article is structured in the following way. First, I discuss the dual image of the pirate that sees that pirate on the one hand as the enemy of humanity, but on the other hand the symbol of a free individual challenging authority living outside the constraints of territorially defined political space - the narrative into which the story of One Piece ties into. Second, I discuss the way perennial dilemmas of IR -such as the tensions between justice and order- are reflected upon by the story; with members of the marines taking distinct positions on this dilemma, some believing in absolute justice (絶対的正義), while others rather refusing to obey their orders.

Finally, I must make two important caveats. First, whether I am only reading these problems into the story. William Shatner, the actor playing the role of Captain Kirk in Star Trek pointed out once, following numerous analysis about the story of Star Trek and how it reflects political problems that there is much more read into the story than was intended,

as its authors created it only for entertainment (Weldes 1999: 121.). While this may be so, it clearly reflects the problem that the creation of meaning does not depend exclusively on the author, but meaning is created in an interplay between the author, the audience and the intertextual milieu into which the story ties into (Weldes and Rowley 2015: 20). In other words, discourses are beyond not only individual discourse participants (Spencer 2014: 305), but also authors. This does not mean that the reading I am offering here is the one correct reading, far from it, as meaning always depends on the eye of the beholder. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to argue that by uncovering the intertextual milieu into which a story ties into we may get closer to why and how it resonates at least with some of the audience. Second, in such an analysis it is only possible to grasp one aspect of a story which by now has reached close to 900 episodes and if one wanted to watch the anime version - with each episode being close to 25 minutes adding up to 225 hours - would take over 10 full days of his or her time. Finally writing this article raised the dilemma that probably most IR scholars are not familiar with One Piece, so along the analysis I had to offer a very condensed summary of the story.

## II. THE DUAL IMAGE OF THE PIRATE

The image of the pirate has a dual face. On the one hand the pirate has the image of the merciless sea robber cruelly attacking its victims while on the other hand in popular imagination the pirate is also the symbol of the free man, living according its own rules challenging authority. This duality is confirmed by history as there were times when pirates were hired to work in the service of states, just a bit later again to be identified again as the arch-enemies of global order and the enemies of mankind. Attaching this symbolic significance to the pirate in negating order, however, was rooted not simply in the disruption pirates could cause to trade relations, but also to the fact that there were times when pirates created their communities on egalitarian principles and were driven more by a desire for liberty than by an attraction to wealth (Lang 2013: 173).

Already in the antic times pirates were despised. Imperial Roman Law saw them as '*Hostis Humani Generis*'- enemies of all humanity - while Grotius believed that they deserve universal hatred (Pattison 2013: 3). This had the corollary that pirates were not considered fellow combatants, but quasi terrorists who deserved no recognition (Neocleous 2015:30). In modernity frequently this narrative about the pirate was invoked discussing terrorists - resonating Agamben's homo sacer- meaning someone against whom all is admissible without moral constraints, who does not deserve the protection of the laws of war (Thorup 2010: 169).

This attitude to piracy although widespread, was frequently tainted by ambiguity as the borderline between legitimate commerce and actual piracy was blurred, and for example the Phoenicians practiced both with great skills (Johnson 2008: 366). This relationship, however, became the most ambiguous during the early era of colonization. To challenge

the hegemony of the Spanish empire rulers relied on the service of pirates. Thus, during the 16th century piracy was not only tolerated, but was sponsored by the British, the French and the Dutch, with authorized pirates (privateering), fighting Spanish ships with the consent or the tacit sponsorship of states (Amirell and Müller 2014). *Letters of marque* distinguished them from ordinary pirates as once they returned to their home countries they were pardoned for the deeds they did on the sea. British Sea Dogs - Drake, Morgan or Raleigh - were given special permits to plunder and in fact they were in a way the forerunners of British imperial might of later days (Policante 2013: 61). This was an era of ambiguity, thus although Morgan was order to be arrested after Spain and Britain concluded the Treaty of Madrid in 1670 to end atrocities, once taken back to England was not only celebrated as a hero but was actually knighted for his deeds (Earle 2013: 95-96). Privateers - pirates fighting by commission from states - were thus not merely at the borderline of order, but were the instruments to change the status quo to create a new order undermining Spain's power and starting the new era of colonization.

But it was not merely colonization. This was the era when plunder and economic relations were closely intertwined. The flow of gold played a crucial role in the monetization of western economies and was crucial for creating the basis for the development of industrial capitalism (Land 2007: 171). The toleration and sponsorship of piracy ended once European powers firmly established their rule over global trade. After this the activity of pirates was not only not tolerated anymore, but piracy was recriminalized and by the 18<sup>th</sup> century pirates again became outcasts (Policante 2013: 73). This recriminalization was partly about the disruption and insecurity pirates could cause to trade (Pattison 2013: 4), as Polanyi pointed it out succinctly.

*“Trade had become linked with peace. In the past the organization of trade had been military and warlike; it was an adjunct of the pirate, the rover the armed caravan, the hunter and trapper, the sword-bearing merchant...now all this was forgotten. Trade was now dependent on the international monetary system which could not function in a general war (Polanyi 2001: 16)”*

But this also had a strong symbolic component as the pirate was rediscovered as the embodiment of rejecting “norms of the Universal Christian community, the international community of civilized states (Policante 2013: 105).” standing not only for liberty of the individual pirate, but being a symbolic challenge to the international order of sovereign states and neo-liberal market economy in general.

Parallel to this, however, the narrative about the pirate also filled in popular imagination as the symbol of a freedom seeking revolutionary. The book, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates* was published in Britain, in 1724 and contained biographies of contemporary pirates and gave a significant push to romantic pirate stories about the swashbuckler image of pirates as freedom loving men living outside the jurisdiction and rules of states.

This romantic description of the pirate was probably frequently misleading, nevertheless it was not without historical foundation. In the 18th century, during the golden age of piracy, pirates created numerous autonomous and radically democratic social organizations

offering the realization of a social order that was challenging that of the dominant order of the era. As Land argues piracy in this light can be seen as a revolutionary force, a forbearer of both digital piracy and also anti-capitalist movements. That is piracy became a symbol and represented a „*proto-anarchist ideology of autonomy, equality and community that the pirates of the golden age pioneered and which are still articulated today under the banner of the Jolly Roger* (Land 2007: 170).” This was reinforced as many British emigres of the English Civil War joined pirates bringing their revolutionary ideals (Land 2007: 172), and as Markus Rediker noted, frequently the objective - or the main driving force behind joining pirates - was not wealth and plunder, but living a ‘life of liberty’. (Rediker 2004: 37).

One should be mistaken to read too much into the actual fraternity and equality realized by these communities as the historical accuracy of these narratives is questionable as available source are very limited on which research can rely. But the point here is not historical accuracy, but the popular image in which the pirate became a Robin Hood like bandit of the sea. Hobsbawm has argued that ‘*the bandit is not only a man, but a symbol*’ (Hobsbawm quoted in Kuhn 2010: 125), as public opinion does not regard them as mere criminals, but also symbols of freedom and a challenge to state authority.

As Land points out this image is crucial today - he refers to groups protesting at G8 meetings -as a reminder that alternative forms of self-organization are possible and that the established rules of order can be challenged (Land 2013: 189). In many ways the message here is like the message that can be read into Polanyi’s work suggesting that there is not one unique way to conceive political and economic order. That is, the capitalist order and the market were created, so one should be aware of their contingency (Dale interview 2017). The point here is not to challenge capitalism or market economy specifically, but to maintain a critical attitude and to look at all social configurations with a critical eye, to seek their origins, to identify their malfunctions and to challenge them if needed.

Although in pirate stories the image of freedom loving hero is strong, arguably pirate heroes are mostly only proto-revolutionaries. Romantic pirate heroes may fight not only for gold and may help those in need, nevertheless they are rarely true revolutionaries. What makes One Piece in a way unique is that as the story evolves we realize that Luffy and his crew are not merely freedom loving heroes freely sailing the seven seas, but gradually become revolutionaries challenging existing order. But even doing this they are not Robin Hood like characters. They are not only fighting a bad king with the aim of replacing him with a good one- fighting injustices committed by corrupt individuals- but they seek to challenge the foundations upon which order is based upon - and injustices under the rule of the World Government are rooted in.

It is this that makes the allegory strong with critical writers of the English school calling to talk truth to power and to realize that there are systemic problems with international society and order based on sovereign states. While the sovereign states system may provide a nice box to keep the eggs of states relatively safe, it can do little to stop eggs to rot within.

As the story of One Piece evolves it is not only the reader that learns what their voyage is about, but Luffy also needs to realize what are they up to. At the start Luffy is just a naïve



young boy seeking adventure wishing to become the Pirate King - whatever that means. Yet, on his way Luffy matures and it becomes clear - for him and also to the reader - that their voyage to Raftel is a voyage to uncover what happened during the void century and how the World Government was founded. This becomes clear once Nico Robin joins the crew, who is the last surviving archaeologist from the island of Ohara where archaeologists worked on discovering the past and happenings of the void century.

The World Government is ready to do all that is necessary to guard the events of the void century secret and fearing if revealed would destabilise its rule. Why, we do not know, nevertheless it becomes clear that no price is too expensive to keep the events of the void century secret (at least for some of the commanders of the marines and the World Government) and they are willing even to destroy the island of Ohara to prevent its archaeologists to discover the past. So the Marines initiate what in the story is called a *buster call* - an attack that can destroy complete islands (see Figure 2.).



FIGURE 2. The destruction of Ohara

The only survivor after the buster call to Ohara is the young Nico Robin who many years later as a young woman joins Luffy's crew and it is actually to free Robin from the prison of the marines that forces Luffy to declare War on the World Government.

The destruction of the island, however, divides the marines and it is at this point that offers the best opportunity to grasp the depth of the anime and the way One Piece reflects on the question of justice and order. Namely, the marines are not just a group of nasty guys in uniform, but they all have - at least the characters we get to know better - their own private understanding of justice and order, meaning that certain measures they find unacceptable and are willing even to violate their orders not realizing them.

### III. ORDER VS. JUSTICE - AND ITS DILEMMAS

The marines are the superior military force in One Piece with the task to maintain order in the World. Their slogan is: 君臨する正義- meaning that *Justice should rule* or in the English translation in the anime *Justice over all*. Justice is therefore the core point of orientation for the actions of the Marines; the source of justification of all their deeds. The centrality

of the concept is highlighted both by this slogan/motto being placed on the wall behind the table of the Fleet Admiral, but it is also the term justice “正義” written on the back of the white gown every high-ranking Marine officer wears (Figure 3.).



FIGURE 3. The Fleet Admiral of the marines with the Marine's motto



Marine officers with the word justice on the back of their gowns

But what justice means, and how does it relate to order? For some of the marines actions by the marines are justice per se, while others take a more nuanced understanding of the meaning of justice. It is by offering a multitude of interpretations of what justice can stand for that the story One Piece gets to an important dilemma of IR, both on the level of general order, but also on the level of individual men of authority.

Hedley Bull begins his lecture: *Order vs. Justice in International Society* (2008 (1971)) suggesting that international society -and he explicitly refers to the United Nation- from its creation leaned towards emphasizing order and peace over justice (Bull 2008: 97). The hierarchy between these two, he follows, clearly indicates that there can be a tension between them and that there can be moments when vexing choice may need to be made between the two. Putting it differently, there may be moments when concessions on justice may be the price of order and peace.” ***Can justice in world politics, in various senses, be achieved only by jeopardizing international order?*** (Bull 2008: 97).” - he asks contemplating if these may be in conflict and if they do which should take precedence (Bull 2008: 84)

The dilemma raised here comes regularly to the fore for scholars of IR and especially those working on the English School asking questions over the ethical foundations of international society. John Williams raises the dilemma at one place from the cosmopolitan perspective concerning borders and the sovereign states system, summarizing the cosmopolitan challenge over the Westphalian system in a nutshell, saying:

*“it might be summarised by the claim that the price that is paid for the order that international society is said to generate is far too high. In particular, re-orientating our ethical compass in order to recognise that it is*

*human beings that are the site of moral agency, and not sovereign states, reinforces the idea that international society has become a 'global gangster' – the operatives of a kind of global protection racket for states that see huge numbers of human beings forced to lead lives characterised by poverty, disease, malnutrition, political repression, torture, warfare and a host of other privations (Williams 2006: 63)”*

Seeing sovereign states as ‘guardian angels’ argues Booth is nothing but pure English School romanticism overlooking the fact that the international is a relatively peaceful terrain compared to the domestic world of states, with more individuals being threatened by their own state than enemies from the outside (Booth 2007:204). International society in this critic, borrowing Vincent’s metaphor, is an egg-box that might be very useful if and when it can preserve peace between eggs - representing states - by providing each with its safe compartment keeping its shell from being broken (Vincent 1986: 123), but what if the eggs are rotting from within. The question here is whether international society could be shifted towards more solidarist commitments, without risking order to collapse, that is, could the rotten eggs be dealt with by intervention for realizing justice (for example, by introducing the notion of R2P and redefining sovereignty), without dangers of breaking the box and undermining order?<sup>7</sup>

The dilemma is an intriguing one. Thus, although the order created by the Westphalian system of sovereign states and their borders may not be perfect, nevertheless it provides a framework and shared norms and practices in which international conduct to take place. As Jackson puts it succinctly: “[international order] *It may not be just. It may not be equitable. But it has the enormous practical advantage of being determinate*” (Jackson 2000: p.333)”.

One Piece is obviously not a scholarly work, thus the language and the framing through which it raises these dilemmas are not so elaborately put, nevertheless in its own way One Piece offers a popular representation of these dilemmas by the different attitudes high ranking officers of the marines take in their acts for preserving order and making compromises on justice.

The way One Piece introduces this dilemma is through different approaches individual high-ranking officials of the marines take towards this dilemma, with each high-ranking marine having its own personality not simply just being order following automatons. In fact, one of the elements of the story that creates its richness is that characters of One Piece are not one dimensional, standing for either good or bad, but are complex characters avoiding the excessive Manichean depictions and simplistic characters that are so typical in numerous Hollywood blockbusters. Characters of One Piece are complex and continuously evolve, sometimes shifting from right to wrong. One reason for the story to drag on so long is that all main characters are introduced, with separate episodes discussing their pasts and motivations - offering us a glimpse at their childhood to understand how and why they

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<sup>7</sup> See on Bull and pluralist and solidarist views on justice and order: Wheeler and Dunne (1996).

chose evil over the good - which brings even the vilest characters closer to do reader. This does not make them necessarily likable, but understandable and not one dimensional (Also, the reader never knows if a character would change sides, or do something unexpected in positioning him/herself between the forces at play).

In a narticle published in the *Japan Times* a father tells a story about his 5 years old bilingual daughter watching the *Lion King* (American version and not the original Japanese copied by Disney) making the candid and diagnostic comment: “American bad guys are always bad [but] Japanese bad guys are only sometimes bad (Kosaka 2010).” In the article that follows Kosaka discusses that Japanese culture tends to see also the shadows and appreciate them, seeing also that frequently things are not black or white, but of shades.<sup>8</sup>

When the World Government gives the order to attack the archaeologists and to bomb the island of Ohara with a *buster-call* several high-ranking admirals express their resistance and even revolt to this order. One of them is Saul, a vice-admiral saying that: “*carrying out the operation in the name of law is tyranny* (Vice-Admiral Saul in One Piece)”, to which the top-leader(admiral) of the marines replies that Saul should not question his orders, but simply do as he is told (Figure 4):



FIGURE 4. - Carrying out this operation in the name of the law is pure tyranny.  
- Are you doubting the government?  
- Be quiet and do as you are told!

As the story unfolds we learn that Saul rather leaves the marines and violates orders that he finds unacceptable (and at the island of Ohara is even sacrificing himself to save the young Nico Robin to escape the buster call of the marines). Here one could argue that the main question raised about the question of justice throughout the story is whether an officer should follow its orders at all costs, or at times there are higher order values to follow. Yet the fact that we learn that all main characters are autonomous individuals - following their beliefs - suggests that the main question for officers is not whether there is a tension between their ideals and orders, but if what is the proper way to realize justice. (although the two are interrelated, one is more about the question of following unjust

<sup>8</sup> See Buruma's observations on Japanese comics: "Typically, though, evil is no more absolute in these comics than it is in ancient Japanese mythology. Even the blackest characters can be redeemed by demonstrations of remorse and sincerity (Buruma 2015)".

orders, while the other is more about the question what is the legitimate price one is willing to pay to realize order - -and even to be unjust at times).

The most radical is Akainu, for whom the dilemma hardly exist at all, as a hard-core legal positivist for him justice is identical with order and realizing the law, whatever that takes. Justice for him is identical with preserving the status quo, preserving the authority of the Marines as these are the cornerstones of order. Of the numerous places where his way of thinking is expressed perhaps the clearest is when he orders a ship of citizens from Ohara to be destroyed to avoid any chances of refugee archaeologists to flee Ohara among the passengers and to pass over the knowledge they have learnt about the void century (Figure 5.)



FIGURE 5. The first image shows that following Akainu's orders a ship with survivors of Ohara is destroyed by the Marines. The character on the left is Aokiji (Kuzan), talking to Vice Admiral Saul (in the left bottom corner).

Akainu's actions are not accepted even by his fellow marines unanimously. His later challenger to the post of Fleet-Admiral Aokiji (also called Kuzan) says despising Akainu's actions saying: "*That fool...I wasn't going to overdo it like that idiot!* (Vice-Admiral Akainu)". Thus, he takes a very different attitude to what it takes to realize justice. At one place he reflects on his understanding of justice being contingent, saying that: "Justice is largely a subjective concept (Vice-Admiral Akainu)". While this can be read sceptically - as another character suggests that justice is decided by the winners,<sup>9</sup> it can also be read in a way suggesting that the individual always needs to weigh the consequences of decisions and as an Admiral not all orders should be followed through blindly. While order is important, a balance must be made between order and justice, as the latter is not absolute in the sense that there is a substantive component to be considered.

<sup>9</sup> Doflaming saying: - *Whoever wins this war becomes justice!*



Another extreme character is Onigumos in a sense going even further than Akainu in his understanding of the means through which order to be realized. He states that fear is a major tool through which the Marines should rule and should discourage any resistance or challenge on part of the pirates against prevailing order. As he puts it: ***“carve the power of justice, and the fear of it, into the pirates’ hearts! (Vice-Admiral Onigumos)”*** (Figure 6.)



FIGURE 6. - The Navy’s victory must be absolute!

But not all admirals and vice-admirals of the navy are like this. Probably the character to offer the most critical stance of the ruling regime is Fujitora. He is a peculiar member of the marines. He is a blind man who has blinded himself seeing all the sufferings and dreadful things in the world surrounding him. An unlikely past for an admiral, who nevertheless possesses incredible powers.

It is in his case that we can most clearly see dilemmas of justice versus order coming to the fore. We meet him at Dresrosa, which is ruled by Doflamingo. Doflamingo is a pirate, but one of the pirates entrusted by the government to act freely and on the World Government’s behalf. Thus, Doflamingo is the recognized sovereign of the island,<sup>10</sup> which he rules as a tyrant causing enormous suffering to its people, which gradually becomes clear for Fujitora. But what should Fujitora do? The World Government and the Marines recognizes Doflamingo. Can he turn against him?<sup>11</sup> And what should he do with Luffy? Should he pursue and try to arrest Luffy even though it becomes clear for Fujitora that Luffy fights to overthrow Dofalingo’s rule? The dilemma is to act according to the established rules of order, or to side with a pirate (revolutionary) who fights for justice and

<sup>10</sup> Doflamingo is one of the seven pirate leaders operating with the consent of the World Government, not unlike pirates of the 16th Century. There exists a system of the Shichibukai (七武海) of 7 pirates entrusted by the World Government to rule certain parts of the World on the behalf of the World Government.

<sup>11</sup> Fujitora is filled with anger towards the World Government for entrusting pirates like Doflamingo to rule parts of the World hearing the complaints and suffering of people under Doflamingo’s rule. He asks with anger if the World Government pretends to be a God? - Here probably he is also referring to the fact that as Doflamino is still recognized as a Shichibukai he cannot legally move against him, but also that moving now would not make good of the 10 years of suffering that the „justice” of the Marines caused for the citizens of Dresrosa.

the people. Here the problem is very close to the problems Bull and other authors of the English school discuss.

Fujitora's solution is to pursue Luffy, but only half-heartedly and when ordered even fight him to capture him. At the end, however, he not only decides to let Luffy escape, but even helps him by destroying a fleet of Doflamingo's allies arriving to revenge Doflamingo's fall.

Probably the most exemplary moment where Fujitora's attitude to authority, justice and power is revealed is his discussion over the phone with Fleet Admiral Akainu. Akainu scolds him because after Doflamingo's fall Fujitora apologized to the returning old King of the island - Riku Dold III - for the failure of the Marines to save his people and to have allowed Doflamingo's dictatorial rule. Akainu believes that by apologizing Fujitora has dishonoured the Navy. To this Fujitora replies: "If we lose credibility just by admitting fault we didn't have any at the first place!" (FIGURE 7.)



FIGURE 7. - It is a matter of credibility and dignity of the Navy HQ  
- Your selfish action dishonoured the face of justice!  
- If we lose credibility by admitting fault, we did not have any at the first place!

Following this conversation Fujitora retires from active office - he says he goes for a trip - although we still see him in uniform discussing with a fellow Marine, Smoker, the mistakes that the marines have made.

This line of characters of the marines all show different understandings of the price to pay for preserving the status quo and maintaining order. Clearly none of them offers such an elaborate discussion of its dilemmas as academics would do, nevertheless in a very accessible way the manga/anime presents it to millions of young (and not so young) readers.

This topic picked here, is just one of the many through which One Piece reflects of important social issues, from the problem of racism, immigration or the situation of the LGBT community. Still, it is the theme of justice and World Order and justice that is always present and recurring, offering the backbone of the story with hundreds of characters, most of them offering their own understanding of justice, order, chivalry or betrayal. Luffy among them is special for being pure, honest a truly ideal romantic hero occasionally of extreme nativity, in a sense offering a contrast to all other characters.

Luffy's aim is to become the pirate king, which as he explains does not mean ruling over anybody, but being free, not being subordinate to anyone (FIGURE 8.).



FIGURE 8. - Can you conquer such a terrifying sea? – Luffy is asked.  
- I don't want to conquer anything!  
- It is just that the person with the most freedom on the sea is the Pirate King!

What this actually mean, not as an ideal, but as a reality -i.e. what this pure freedom is in practice, we need to wait to find out once Luffy would reach the end of his voyage, which at the present pace of the manga may take several more years, if not a full decade to come.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this article I focused on one of the most successful animes/mangas of all time and argued that although on the surface it is merely a romantic pirate adventure for teenagers, in reality it reflects on important questions of politics and IR. The protagonist of the story Monkey D. Luffy sets the example of a hero setting on a voyage to follow his dream to become the pirate king. It turns out, however, that his voyage is not simply a treasure hunt with helping those in need, he meets on the way - as any proper romantic hero according to the trope of the bandit/pirate should do - but a search for knowing how the World Government was created and what its power relies on. At this stage it becomes clear that Luffy is not a Robin Hood type hero who merely seeks to depose of a corrupt king, but seeks to uncover the deeper source of injustices, in fact he becomes a revolutionary seeking to realize a new world without the oppression of the World Government (where the path, however calls not only for power, but also knowledge, seeking the secrets of the void century).

In studying products of popular culture IR scholars are on the opinion that products of popular culture are not just tales and stories, but that they constitute the world we live by construct identities and shaping narratives through which we grasp and interpret the World around. Furthermore, scholars focusing on narratives argue that narratives and meanings are not created independently, but intertextually, with new pieces tying into already existing deeply rooted narratives. They may alter these narratives, even perhaps negate them, but never arrive in a vacuum.



In the case of One Piece, I have pointed out that the story ties up with the embedded popular imaginary attached to the pirate, seeing the pirate as a freedom loving individual escaping the encroaching of state power, frequently being a proto-revolutionary, the systemic enemy of the system of states. As Land emphasized the image of the pirate offered symbolic figures of: “politically dissident, revolutionary figures and popular accounts of their utopian communities offered a biting tool for the political critic and satirist with a desire to attack the hypocrisy and corruption of Church and State (Land 2007: 180).”

Having situated the story in the narrative space about piracy in which the pirate has a dual image -being both a merciless exploiter, but also symbol of freedom and liberty- I’ve pointed out two aspects of Luffy’s story in which it speaks to IR (there are others, from immigration to racial prejudices, but these two are the main ones).

First, I’ve argued that the story can be read as a call for a critical attitude and openness to realize the injustices on which a given order relies and to be ready to seek for alternatives, as alternatives always exist. Putting it differently, I have suggested, that the story can be read as a popular version of English School scholars calling our attention to ethical dilemmas of international society and its imperfections. As the World Government in the story has not always existed, similarly neither states nor a particular understanding of market-forces or the economy should be taken for granted, and one should not be complacent and overlook the injustices it creates.

Second, I’ve pointed out that it brings to the fore questions about the tension between order and justice, an issue that raises intriguing dilemmas for IR and for scholars of the English School asking the price of order in international society paid in terms of making concessions to justice. While the anime One Piece in no way reaches the sophistication of academic discourses - hence I am not claiming that the manga One Piece should be considered as part of works of the English School - it offers a popular representation of such dilemmas with various high-ranking officers of the navy each taking a different understanding how to resolve tensions between order and justice. By pointing this out I have also highlighted the complexity of the characters of One Piece, that they are not being one dimensional, either good or bad, but show many shades.

Being the most popular manga of all time One Piece has many more years to go and unless its popularity would suddenly drop, it would keep on reaching millions of readers in Japan, in East Asia and also in the West, setting for its readers as an example Monkey D. Luffy and his crewmembers teaming up with Luffy, each uncompromisingly pursuing its own dream and all together seeking the Island of Raftel to learn about the void century and how the rule of World Government was created, which secret is so precious for the World Government to be ready to destroy whole islands to keep it concealed.

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