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Decentering Universalism: An Autopoietic–Deconstructive Inquiry into Undecidability and Performative Power in Global Normative Orders

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Abstract

This paper examines the self-referential nature of international norm-production through a Gödelian perspective, arguing that inherent paradoxes and undecidability undermine the perceived coherence and universal applicability of international legal systems. Building on mathematical logic, autopoietic systems theory, and deconstruction, we reveal how international law, in its pursuit of foundational validity, defaults to circular justifications and internal contradictions. Case studies of *jus cogens*, self-defence, sovereign equality, and non-intervention, alongside ICJ and regional court jurisprudence, empirically demonstrate that

international law's apparent objectivity is often stabilized by performative practice, interpretive closure, and the disguised exercise of power. This research proposes a post-Gödelian understanding that embraces incompleteness, shifting focus to dynamic norm-production sustained by political will and ethical imperatives.

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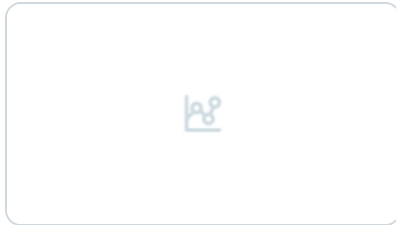
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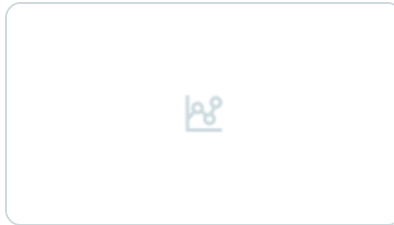
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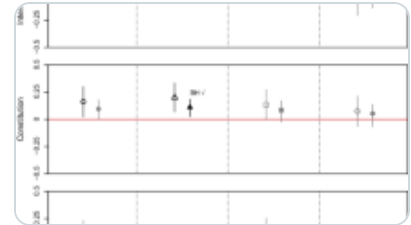
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Data Availability

No datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

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Contributions

Rawnak Miraj Ul Azam was solely responsible for every aspect of this research and manuscript. He originated the research idea, identifying a gap in international law scholarship concerning its foundational paradoxes and formulating the core research question and hypothesis on its self-referential nature. Rawnak developed the interdisciplinary approach, drawing from international legal theory, mathematical logic, systems theory, deconstruction, and the philosophy of language. He single-handedly

designed and executed the doctrinal methodology, which involved selecting, sourcing, and analyzing primary legal materials such as UN treaties and ICJ cases. Rawnak critically examined these texts, applying his interdisciplinary framework to extract key findings. He exclusively wrote the entire manuscript, from the initial draft to the final version, and meticulously handled all editing, proofreading, and revisions to ensure academic rigor and adherence to scholarly standards. Additionally, he managed all submission-related documentation. Rawnak Miraj Ul Azam takes full responsibility for the intellectual content, analytical rigor, and accuracy of the manuscript, having independently performed all tasks.

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Ethics declarations

Conflict of interest

The author declares that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research presented in this paper. All views expressed are solely those of the author.

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