Solicited Article

English School Special Section

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Abstract

This is a series of solicited articles requested by the editors of Vol. 51, emerging from a roundtable discussion held at the 2022 International Studies Association Convention. Each short contribution seeks to demonstrate the newest research of the English School of International Relations. These contributions tackle key questions including: the decline of liberal hegemony, the rise of China, the divide between soldaristic and pluralistic ethics, the engagement of the English School with Area Studies, theoretical approaches to grounding English School research and an investigation of the English School's intellectual legacy.

Keywords

English School, International Relations Theory, Global IR

Section spéciale École anglaise

Résumé

Voici une série d'articles sollicités par les éditeurs du volume 51, qui ont émergés d'une table ronde tenue lors de l'édition2022 de la Convention de l'Association d'études internationales (International Studies Association Convention). Chaque brève contribution cherche à démontrer les dernières recherches de l'École anglaise des relations internationales. Ces contributions abordent des questions essentielles, dont : le déclin de l'hégémonie libérale ; l'essor de la Chine ; la fracture entre les éthiques solidaristes et pluralistes ; l'engagement de l'École anglaise dans les études régionales ; les approches théoriques d'ancrage de la recherche de l'École anglaise ; et une enquête et évaluation de l'héritage intellectuel de l'École anglaise.

Mots-clés

École anglaise, théorie des relations internationales, RI mondiales

Sección especial de la escuela inglesa

Resumen

Esta contribución consiste en una serie de artículos solicitados por los editores del vol. 51, a raíz de una mesa redonda celebrada en la Convención de la Asociación de Estudios Internacionales de 2022. Los diferentes aportes tratan de reflejar las investigaciones más recientes de la escuela inglesa de relaciones internacionales. Estas contribuciones abordan cuestiones clave como el declive de la hegemonía liberal, el ascenso de China, la división entre la ética solidaria y la pluralista, el involucramiento de la escuela inglesa con los estudios de área, los enfoques teóricos para fundamentar la investigación de la escuela inglesa y una investigación y evaluación del legado intelectual de la escuela inglesa.

Palabras clave

escuela inglesa, teoría de las relaciones internacionales, relaciones internacionales globales

Editors Introduction to the English School Special Section

–Jack Basu-Mellish

The English School shares many traditions with Millennium. Starting with one of our first editors Barry Buzan (Vol. 1) who remains a major contributor to the English School's approach. Much like Millennium itself, The English School's early tradition was influenced by the intellectual life at the London School of Economics where its first contributors were largely based. It has since become a more diverse, global network of thinkers who share certain notions of the international, much as the journal's contributors and readership have grown into a diverse but overlapping intellectual community. This special section seeks to bring the newest ideas of the English School to our readership and consists of six short articles which give a taste of the intellectual debate ongoing within the school.

The special section emerged from a roundtable convened at the 2022 International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Convention held in Nashville, Tennessee and was expanded to include wider contributions from the field. The topic of the roundtable explored the value of the English School's pluralist normative outlook in a time of increasing multi-polarity in the international system. The discussion moved on during the roundtable to the 'old masters' of the English School, and how much our analysis should be based on the work of the founders such as Manning, Bull and Wight, or if the school had reached a period of maturity that has allowed it to generate new ideas independent from the 'classic texts' particularly by engaging with other modes of research. Each of the six pieces presented in this special section addresses one or both of these questions. This introduction outlines the contributions that are to follow in the special section.

The End of the Liberal World Order

The days of the hegemonic US led 'liberal' international order that has predominated since 1990 appear to be numbered. In its place is a rising multi-polar international order that seeks to challenge American hegemony of the international system. The retreat of this existing order seems apparent to all corners of international relations. Our first two contributions question how the English School regards this pressing issue. To judge how concerned about the supposed crack-up of the liberal world order we should be, it is important first to contextualize the recent history of post-Cold War Liberal International Society. It is in this context that we are presented with our first piece by Cornelia Navari which analyses the historical development of the 'liberal international order', complicating the traditional story of the expansion of liberal norms from 'the west to the rest'. The article instead argues that the global liberal turn begins not in 1990, but in 1988, with the Manilla declaration from a group of 'newly restored democracies'. This would be built on by the new post-communist, Eastern European nation states that emerged immediately following the end of the Cold War. Cornelia Navari also shows the degree to which this supposed unified liberal order was contested even in its heartlands, particularly the French opposition to the Invasion of Iraq in 2003 and argues that the dominance of post-1990s liberalism was less about the West's deep liberal roots as it was about the populations of post-communist and post-autocratic states desiring a model for governance following the end of one-party rule.

Our second article by Yongjin Zhang addresses the other side of the supposed decline of the liberal world order – the rise of China. In this piece Zhang outlines the alternative vision China projects internationally. Far from presenting a future of inevitable conflict, Zhang shows how China's vision for international society is more than compatible with the West's own vision despite their radically different governmental structures. The piece asks what challenges international society would need to surmount in order to contain both visions of the future world order. This international society would need to be one of pluralistic values, which in the words of the article provides an 'inclusive vision [that] fosters the preservation and cultivation of political and cultural differences and distinctness that are the legacies of human history'.

A New English School Ethics? The Rise of Positive Pluralism

The English School's normative commitments is a unique element of its approach to International Relations. Our third article analyses how the body of normative commitments arrived at by the school are often presented as a middle way between Solidarist and Pluralist ethical positions. Hussein Banai argues that rather than the English School's norms being a compromise between Solidarist and Pluralist perspectives, both perspectives are engaged in a 'constant conversation with each other, [but] they nonetheless stem from quite distinct sets of assumptions about the sources of morality in international and world societies, respectively'. Banai argues that one of the strengths of the English schools, normative claims are that this middle ground between the solidarists and pluralists represents an 'epistemic space' that gives the possibility for 'value pluralism' to be expressed.

The English School and Global IR

The fourth piece of this special section by Filippo Costa Buranelli and Carolina Zaccato provides arguments for the English School's need to increase its engagement with area studies (AS). The English School's 'classical approach' has been interdisciplinary from its founding, and it has much to gain from a sustained engagement with AS. Costa Buranelli and Zaccato argues that the English School's approach to the development of international society, (that it is co-constitutive between structure and agent), is a highly convincing way to think about the development of regional international societies. A closer engagement with AS allows for a more grounded understanding of regional histories that are essential for the English School to properly describe international society, both regionally and globally. Engagement with AS can help the English School better understand the connection between the local and the global, and the growing body of work on regional international societies as well as historic international societies have significantly expanded the lens of the contemporary English School beyond the particular Anglosphere outlook of the first generation of theorists.

Our fifth piece by Simon F. Taeuber displays the interdisciplinary nature of English School thought while directly asking *how* we should go about researching Regional international societies. Taeuber uses the idea of Wittgensteinian language games as a way of thinking about our research of regional international societies. Taeuber argues for the abandonment of expanding lists of primary institutions and instead argues we should

be constantly reflecting on what the subjects of English School research really mean when they talk about broad concepts such as sovereignty or self-determination. Only then can we have a grounded understanding of the subject of our study, rather than an abstracted notion of institutions in theory. This piece provides an excellent insight into the developing ideas of the English School approach to research and theorizing.

Our final article returns us back to the other question that was raised at the original round-table, what to do with the 'old masters' of the English School and their ideas regarding international society? Our final article by Charlotta Friedner Parrat and Thomas Bottelier situates the thoughts of the first generation of the English School and of 'international society' itself in its historical context. It places the concept of international society as part of a tradition of the late nineteenth and early 20th century thought predominant in the English-speaking world of that period, which viewed the practices of states as being part of a society of norms. Friedner Parrat and Bottelier provides a fascinating intellectual history of the English school and engages in the debates about the nature of international society. Is international society a real and going concern that can be objectively studied? An idea in the mind of statespeople? Or an idea in the minds of those studying the international, a set of ideal types applied from the outside? Understanding the historical legacy of thought that any theoretical tradition is a part of is essential to continue to reflectively engage with the ideas it advocates.

Concluding Remarks

The English School had expanded from a small group centred around the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics and the London School of Economics to a diffused network of global scholars who share ideas of international society. It remains a vibrant methodological approach that provides a serious alternative to the two big Realist and Liberal camps. It has always been a methodologically heterogeneous school, characterized by an 'approach' rather than a singular method. Its debates range from the ontological (what constitutes international society) to the normative and it is able to straddle the gap between critical and problem solving modes of thought. Its historically grounded approach is interested in how things came about, but it also has normative claims about how states should act to promote the continuation of international society.

This selection of short articles are a series of brief looks into the ongoing debates within the English School. What is the English School approach to the end of the Liberal World Order? What should a future English School normative position look like? How should the English School research regional international societies and engage with its own intellectual tradition?

As new orders arise in our globalized world, the English School has the opportunity to be a theoretical approach for a new expansion of IR research. By recognizing the diversity of histories, meanings and normative positions of those states that collaborate in international society, the English School is able to provide a theoretical tradition that encompasses a new Global IR space. It can be a school that finds value in the plurality of traditions that make up international society and supports a normative framework of peace and cooperation across ideological difference for the

long-term health of the system as a whole. The English School thus has the possibility to be a theoretical tradition for a new generation of Globalized IR scholarship, despite its particularly English roots.

The English School, Diplomatic Practice and the Erosion of the Liberal World Order

–Cornelia Navari

When the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics was being formed, in 1956, the Cold War had taken shape and liberal opinion was still in shock at the collapse of the liberal dream represented by the failure of the League of Nations to maintain peace or to find any formula for peaceful change. To those of a pragmatic or realist persuasion, it seemed that liberals had been complicit in the League's failure, in their determined pursuit of disarmament. In the circumstances, the Committee was led to theorizing sources of order that were precisely not liberal, at least as that had been understood by the framers of the League: So, no disarmament, no diffusion of power and only a limited functional role for international organization. Instead it elaborated the package of balance of power, great power management, rules of war and international law, all of which were to be mediated by a set of diplomatic practices oriented towards stability. In doing so, they were mimicking to a degree the structures of the Cold War itself, where power balanced power and an attentive diplomacy, it was hoped, might keep the balance.

This tendency in theorizing has a long history, back to Ranke and Dahlmann and given an English dressing by Herbert Butterfield, in the idea of a 'Whig tradition' that enjoined 'cooperation with history'. Charles Manning gave it a linguistic turn in the understanding of international law as a set of linguistic practices, and applied it to the elucidation of diplomacy as a set of coded messages that communicated intention among a cohort of authorized agents. Accordingly, he insisted that the central focus of IR should be the study of state relations as revealed in diplomatic practice. But its clearest expression in both goal and method was that enjoined by Maurice Keens-Soper in an essay entitled 'The Practice of a States-System' that appeared in the first volume produced by the International Political Theory group at the London School of Economics.[1] The undertaking to determine what he called the 'framework of European foreign affairs' should be:

> . . . one of imaginative reconstruction in obedience to the evidence rather than of contingent ascription, of examining not whether it makes more sense for us to assume that a framework of some form existed but in what terms, if any, a framework was considered to exist *by those directly engaged.* [Author emphasis]

Seventy years on, the liberal world order seems again to be on the point of collapse or so it is claimed, and it seems prescient to ask what such a method can contribute to the understanding of that order – as a framework 'considered to exist by those directly

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1. M. Donelan, *The Reason of States* (Crows Nest: George Allen & Unwin, 1976).

engaged', and what such a method has to say about its putative collapse. Doing so throws as much light on the problems (or otherwise) of liberal orders as on the diagnostic prescience of the English School.

The Practices of a Liberal World Order

The origin of liberalism in diplomatic practice is often ascribed to the mid Victorian movement to humanize warfare. Not so, however, for the diplomatic humanizers. They expressed themselves in terms of civilization, not in terms of liberalism. Humanizing war was a product of the higher civilization, as Tsar Alexander affirmed in calling his fellow civilizers to St Petersburg in 1868 to renounce the use of explosive projectiles. Another popular ascription is Woodrow Wilson's address to Congress in 1916 laying out America's war aims, but 'liberal' was not the term used to characterize them. At the time it was 'progressive', still echoing the civilizational motif. Certainly, the Versailles treaty was not considered a liberal peace, by its signatories as well as its detractors. What at the end of the First World War began to be self-styled as 'liberal'; that is, defined by people who self-identified as liberals, were the first 26 articles of the Versailles Treaty, which constituted a sort of covenant of the League of Nations.[2]

What was liberal in the 26 articles varied according to different ideas of liberalism, but the direction in which the members of the League chose to move was *collective security*, initially via a legal and juridical formula. This was the Geneva Protocol, enjoining member states to bring their disputes to the Permanent Court of International Justice for a ruling that they would have to accept or face sanctions. Arnold Toynbee called it 'as comprehensive and as inexorable to the transgressor as the Athanasian creed'. But it failed, and was replaced by the Locarno agreements, settling the border between France and Germany, about which liberal opinion was less than enthusiastic. Disarmament, not a pale imitation of collective security, remained the desired liberal end-state for well into the 1930s. Accordingly, the apogee of liberalism for liberals during the interwar period was the 1928 Kellog-Briand pact renouncing war as an instrument of policy.

The liberalism forged by America at Bretton Woods was another sort of liberalism. Based on liberal ideas of free trade, it was in fact a minimal order of slowly opening national markets to multilateral trade, just achieved (more or less) in time to receive Japan, the 41st signatory to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), in 1963. (Sixty-two states signed up to the results of the Kennedy Round in 1967.) So far as the famous European 'liberal peace' is concerned (the war-free years between the Nuremberg tribunals and the Yugoslav wars), they were bought by the confinement of central and eastern Europe behind the iron curtain, the containment of Germany within the Atlantic Alliance, and the 'balance of terror' or the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, little of which could qualify as liberal and which were not understood as such by liberals, who deplored both the bloc system and the onset of Reagan's 'second cold war'.

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2. See Raymond Fosdick, 'The League of Nations as an Instrument of Liberalism' *The Atlantic* 126, no. 4 (1920): 553–63.

The actually existing liberalism of a putative global order emerged only in the last decade of the 20th century, and the conditions for it were provided not by liberals and not by the West, but by Gorbachev's announcement in 1987 of glasnost and perestroika – 'openness' and 'reconstruction', what might be termed 'Soviet liberalism'. It opened the door to two trends in diplomatic practice – universalizing democracy and humanitarian intervention, initially limited to Europe.

Europe's Liberal Moment

United States President George H. Bush led off the liberal move in 1989 by linking aid to economic and political liberalization, as conditions for economic growth. (George W. made the linkage a legal condition in 2007.) President Yeltsin went much further: after agreeing with his cohorts to collapse the Soviet Union, he introduced the idea of a plurality of political parties, open elections, a free market economy and de-ideologization. But it is doubtful whether the latter entailed a commitment to liberal ideals. It would seem that, after abandoning the central role of the CPSU, Yeltsin was rather bereft of any other ideas. This freed the former satellites to choose their orientations, and the European Union adopted 'liberal principles' as a condition for receiving new states, in October 1991, as the Paris Doctrine explained, since liberal democracy was the constitutional basis of the Union. The 1995 NATO Study on Enlargement defined 'liberal principles' more closely, requiring a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy, settled borders and a fair treatment of minority populations, as basic conditions for peaceful relations among alliance partners.

The criteria for being a democracy were not laid out in any of these pronouncements and were interpreted quite loosely. Eight former Soviet satellites entered the EU as fledgling democracies in 2004 with rather haphazard 'to do' lists and no system of accountability. The Baltic countries gained NATO membership while their Russian speaking inhabitants were being systematically denied citizenship rights.

Democracy as a *global* phenomenon was not the product of the West and not the product of a Great Power consensus. It was initiated in June 1988 by thirteen states all of whom characterized themselves as 'newly restored democracies', among them Spain, Greece and Portugal, Argentina and Brazil. They had met at Manila under the auspices of the Philippines and the inspiration of Raul Manglapus, the first foreign secretary of Manilla's first convincingly democratic elections, in what was clearly an effort to provide a collective support for their new and fragile liberal experiments.[3] Following the US linking of aid to political liberalization, and undoubtedly in respect of it, states from the emerging Global South began claiming democratic credentials[4] and requested to join on the grounds that they either were or were in the process of transitioning to democracy. Eighty states were present at the first International Conference of New or Restored

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3. See Manila Declaration 1988.
4. See United States Agency for International Development, Democracy, Human Rights and Governance What We Do, at www.usaid.gov/democracy. Retrieved 17 May 2023

Democracies that met at Bucharest in 1997, now served by the UN Development Program under the rubric of 'democracy development'.

There was even less rush to determine the character of global democracy. It was not until 2000, at Warsaw, with the founding of a 'Community of Democracies', a self-standing international organization (now with the European states, the United States, and Russia as members), that the 'core practices and principles of democracy' were defined. The Warsaw Declaration listed the standard political rights, and 108 participants agreed to 'strengthen the institutions and processes of democracy', named as the independence of the judiciary and periodic elections including 'respect for their results'. (The major non-participants were Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states – with the notable exception of Qatar); in Asia, Myanmar, Vietnam, China and North Korea; in Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Two years later, 123 states would commit to the Seoul Action Plan, naming the goal as *representative democracy* and listing as its 'essential elements':

Respect for human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – including freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of religion and conscience; access to and free exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law; the holding of periodic free and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage moni-tored by independent election authorities; freedom of association including the right to form independent political parties; separation of powers, especially an independent judi-ciary; constitutional subordination of all state institutions, including the military, to the legally constituted civilian authority.

The motives were mixed, but the intention was clear: democracy was given a definitive shape allowing for a wide-spread consensus on a political form, but with multiple reference points and no end in sight. There was no timetable for the processes involved and no procedure for reporting either progress or derogations. Countries that wanted their liberal bona fides attested were referred to the procedures established by the Human Rights Commission, which involved self-reporting.

With so many states claiming democratic credentials, the question of which were real democracies became urgent, not least to qualify for American aid packages – the US AID agency had to work hard to present Morocco's monarchy as transitioning to democracy.[5] The Commission of Human Rights took the initiative in its resolution CHR 2000/47. The operative paragraph is 1(d) (ii), which centres on the right to vote, and demands 'a free and fair process . . . open to multiple parties'. This defining moment in the international legal definition of democracy was achieved by 45 votes to 0 with eight abstentions (Bhutan, China, Cuba, Pakistan, Qatar, Congo Brazzaville, Ruanda and Sudan), and it set off a rush in international election monitoring.

Humanitarian intervention had a slower and more problematic start. The initiator this time was the UN Security Council that had mandated some liberal and democratic activ-ism in relation to Cambodia in 1991 and had resorted to force on humanitarian grounds

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5. ARD, *Democracy and Governance Assessment of Morocco* (Washington: US Agency for International Development, 2003).

on a number of occasions through the 1990s, causing increasing unease in the General Assembly, primarily regarding Great Power activism and threats to sovereignty. In his Millennium Report (2000) to the UN General Assembly, Secretary-General Kofi Annan challenged the international community to address the dilemmas posed by intervention and sovereignty. Canada, on the grounds of being a 'middle power' with no colonial baggage, responded by initiating the independent International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which began formulating the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (ICISS 2001). It was immediately challenged, and from within the liberal heartland itself.

Liberal Internationalism in Dispute

In 1988 and 1990 French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner aided by French jurist Mario Bettati, had begun promoting key resolutions at the UN emphasizing a right of intervention, but only as part of a SC-endorsed effort (Resolutions A/RES/43/131 and A/RES/45/100 on Humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disaster and similar emergency situations), arguing that the SC was the authorized agency with regard to threats to the peace. This was against the emerging ICISS view that intervention was a duty in peace as well as war and one that the SC should not monopolize. (Gareth Evans, co-chair of the ICISS, admitted that France had been deliberately excluded from the Commission; in response France argued that R2P was a political move to exclude the French from the human rights arena and, more particularly, an attempt to diminish France's own legacy – France was the penholder at the UN SC for the situations in Burundi, CAR. Cote d'Ivoire, the DRC, Lebanon, Mali and to a certain extent, Syria and Bosnia and Herzegovina).[6] Often described as a difference in modalities, or as an attempt to defend the prerogatives of a Great Power, the quarrel actually went to the heart of liberalism, as to whether it was representative or democratic, and whether by rule of law or rule by the stronger.

The issue came to a head on 20 January 2003, when the now French minister of Foreign Affairs, Dominique de Villepin, speaking on behalf of France as a permanent member of the SC with rights to determine threats to the peace, announced that: 'We consider military invasion in Iraq to be the worst decision'. Presenting itself as the leader of the international community against unilateral action by the United States, France mobilized the SC against any international legitimation of a use of force outside its competence. The United States and Britain responded with a 'coalition of the willing'; that is, states prepared to act outside of the strictures of the UN Charter (nominally 48 countries but only three of which contributed troops to the invasion force – the United Kingdom, Australia and Poland, alongside the United States). The four proceeded to take action against Iraq without a

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6. T.B. Knudsen, 'European Approaches to Humanitarian Intervention: From Just War to Assistance – and Back Again?', in *European Approaches to Crisis Management*, ed. K. Jorgensen (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 171–99.

mandate, citing various human rights derogations, failure to comply with disarmament obligations and harbouring and enabling the Al-Qaida terrorist group. The international community split, with the majority backing the French position.

The split widened on 17th March 2011, when the German Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Peter Wittig lifted his hand to signal Germany's abstention on SC Resolution 1973 that authorized member-states to establish and enforce a no-fly zone over Libya and to use 'all necessary measures' to prevent attacks on civilians (which turned into a bombing campaign by the forces of NATO against military installations and civilian infra-structure). In critical debates in the Bundestag during the previous autumn and winter of 2010, Germany had defined itself as a 'civilian power', and it joined China, Russia, India and Brazil (the 'BRIC' countries) in abstaining on the resolution.[7]

Formed at Yekaterinburg in 2008 on the grounds of a required alternative voice in structuring the global order,[8] the BRICS had given only a qualified acceptance to the NATO-led military intervention in Libya in 2011, limiting it to purposes of civilian protection only, and opposed completely its ensuing goal of assisting rebels and pursuing regime change.[9] In November, Brazil issued its R2P corollary, 'Responsibility while Protecting',[10] positing that force should only be used as a last resort and calling for the strict political and chronological sequencing of R2P's 'three pillars'.[11] Ramish Thakur, a member of the ICISS, announced that 'there is no humanitarian crisis so grave that an outside military intervention cannot make it worse'.

China posed the principled objection to democratic interventionism. Beginning in 1991, the UN had organized and run an election in Cambodia, set up its own radio station and jail and claimed *responsibilty* for promoting and safeguarding human rights at the national level. China at once pushed to participate in the peace-keeping force, its first ever contribution, and determined the election mandate by insisting that the Khmer Rouge take part in all negotiations on democratic reconstruction. It insisted, further, that all peacekeeping missions have the support of the host government, and it sought to and succeeded in gaining the backing of regional organizations (The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the case of Cambodia and East Timor). It abstained on resolutions containing the phrase 'all necessary means', with the exception of the intervention in Somalia, where there was no government. It moved the discussion of legitimate polities away from 'rogue states' or illiberal states to the idea of a diversity (or plurality) of states.

 7. K. Oppermann, 'National Role Conceptions, Domestic Constraints and the New 'Normalcy' in German Foreign Policy: the Eurozone Crisis, Libya and Beyond', *German Politics* 21, no. 4 (2012): 502–19.
 8. Yekaterinburg. Available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2009/06/217963.shtml. Last accessed June 16, 2008.
 9. See the debates in UN Security Council, 66th session, 6528th meeting, S/PV.6528, Official Record, 7–10.
10. Letter from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General, United Nations, A/66/151–S/2011/701, 9 November 2011.
11. The responsibility of each State to protect its populations (pillar I); the responsibility of the international community to assist States in protecting their populations (pillar II); and the responsibility of the international community to protect when a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations (pillar III).

In all these initiatives, it adhered to a strict interpretation of the legal enactments underpinning R2P and insisted on the sovereign rights of states against any notion that the sovereign rights of governments were conditional on performance. (China's Ambassador Liu Zhenmin in a SC debate on 4 December 2006, would warn that the 2005 Outcome Document was 'a very cautious representation of the responsibility to protect . . . it is not appropriate to expand, willfully to interpret or even abuse this concept'.) It reframed the debate on R2P in terms of previous understandings of sovereignty; that is, of protection of state sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference, and 'sought to uphold the consistency between previous and current interpretations of sovereignty.[12]

At the High Level Plenary meeting to authorize the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome, members of the South cohort would present a number of qualifications to, and conditions for, the enactment of human rights goals, primarily that any action on human rights should stay firmly within the compass of the United Nations, on the grounds that unilateral action by the 'West' 'weakened the capacity of the United Nations to contribute and support States in the promotion and protection of human rights' (Columbia). Singapore expressed the East Asian view on human rights, which was 'empowering our peoples with economic, social as well as political and civil rights'. Cuba referred to 'concepts such as the responsibility to protect and human security' that 'run the risk of being invoked in the future as a pretext for aggression against our countries', the latter to full applause.[13]

Kofi Annan, then Secretary General, sided with the Global South. In March 2005, his *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, he ordered the threats to human rights as, first, poverty and global inequalities, second, armed conflicts and only third as 'democracy deficits', the latter ascribed to 'weak institutions' rather than deliberate derogations from international norms. He put together a tri-lateral High Level panel made up of persons from the SC's permanent members, the BRICS, and the recently institutionalized Global South[14] and charged them with preparing a report on the compass of R2P to be presented to the summit conference.

Leading the panel was the prominent French international lawyer, Robert Badinter who had formulated the international legal response to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (and later Yugoslavia) and who had designed the treatment of the successor republics.[15] Their report stayed firmly within the compass (and limitations) of the Charter and existing

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12. C. Jones, *China's Challenge to Liberal Norms, The Durability of International Order* (Macmillan, 2018).
13. Addresses on the occasion of the High-level Plenary Meeting United Nations A/60/PV.8 General Assembly Sixtieth session 8th plenary meeting, Friday, 16 September 2005
14. João Baena Soares (Brazil), Gro Brundtland (Norway), Mary Chinery Hesse (Ghana), Gareth Evans ch(Australia), David Hannay (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Enrique Iglesias (Uruguay), Amre Moussa (Egypt), Satish Nambiar (India), Sadako Ogata (Japan), Yevgeny Primakov (Russian Federation), Qian Qiqian (China), Salim Salim (United Republic of Tanzania), Nafis Sadik (Pakistan) and Brent Scowcroft (United States of America).
15. C. Navari, 'Territoriality, Self-determination and Crimea after Badinter'. *International Affairs* 90, no. 6 (2014): 1299–319.

international law, reaffirming the role of the SC in identifying threats to the peace. It distinguished between a 'right to intervene' and the 'responsibility to protect', in effect denying any 'right' of intervention, and they limited the responsibility of the international community to 'encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability'. It put aside derogations of human rights as the signal for intervention and instead widened the concept of 'threats to the peace' to include 'genocidal acts and other atrocities', which it justified by reference to the recently agreed Convention on the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide[16] and more generally by reference to international humanitarian law. Originally, R2P had been constructed on a *human rights* foundation – the notion that a state had the responsibility to protect the human rights of its citizens. It reflected the Canadian and liberal origins of the idea, whose promoters continue to refer to humanitarian intervention as a norm connected to human rights and who continue to speak of R2P as addressing 'the gravest violations of human rights'.[17] But the General Assembly, in accepting the report, limited R2P to the already existent international crimes – genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – all belonging to the fabric of humanitarian law, effectively removing intervention from the domain of rights and from derogations of rights.

The Secretary-General's 2009 Report, *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*, emphasized the limitations: 'The responsibility to protect applies, until Member States decide otherwise, *only to the four specified crimes and violations*: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity'. The operationalizing of the concept has focused on the use of heavy weaponry – in essence instruments of war, against a domestic population, or in the case of internal rebellions and civil wars, against an unarmed population.

On the democracy front, substantive progress failed to materialize from within the Community of Democracies, largely because, with the entry of the Western democracies, it was regarded as a Western instrument, and its numbers dwindled. Instead the countries of the Global South turned to regional organizations to protect their rights. The Organization of American States, which had amended its Charter in 1985 to proclaim a promotion of democracy as one of its 'essential purposes', reaffirmed it by a Declaration of Democracy in 1993 and took action in 2002 to restore democracy in Haiti into its own hands. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (which had entered into force in 1986) was supplemented in 1998 by the creation of a court; and the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000), Article 4H, formulated a right of humanitarian intervention in regional affairs on grounds similar to (and a year previous to) those of the ICISS. In Asia, An ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (the 'ASEAN Declaration') was adopted on 18 November 2012 in Phnom Penh (Cambodia). (The EU

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16. Defining 'acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group' including (a) killing, (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm (c) inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction.

17. J. Welsh, Statement on the Responsibility to Protect Thematic Panel Convened by the President of the General Assembly. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/responsibility-to-protect/Doc.6_2016-02-26-PGA%20Event%20RtoP%20at%20Ten%20Welsh.pdf. Last accessed February 26, 2016.

had declared the European Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2000, which codified all rights enjoyed by EU citizens.)

All the declarations enshrined rights but the rights were differently defined, reflecting different political agendas and obviating any internationally agreed standard. The main human rights norm enshrined in the African Charter was the right of a person elected to office to 'fill out the term of his office'. In the EU, the focus is the rights-bearing citizen. (The EU Charter lists all the personal, civic, political, economic and social rights that are protected via EU legislation, making the EU a rights protector alongside and some would say in competition with the member governments.) The ASEAN declaration of human rights delivers mainly social and economic rights and bows to the rights of *nations*: its seventh article states that 'the realization of human rights must be considered in the regional and national context' and Article 8 states that human rights might be limited to preserve 'national security' or 'public morality'. It has led some human rights groups to deny that the ASEAN declaration is a human rights document at all.

. . . in Obedience to the Evidence

The liberal international order that took shape with the collapse of the Soviet Union spread its roots in the Euro-Atlantic world, but this had less to do with the West's 'embedded liberalism' than the insecurities of its formerly socialist neighbours. The ex-communist European states escaping from the Soviet bloc turned out to have no appetite for neutrality, much less 'finlandization', and they were prepared to accept the burdens of the *aquis communitaire* in return for a Western political home. The Europe of the EU welcomed them in, and in the process discovered its *raison d'etre* as a liberal-democratizing agency, a heady identity that carried it through the divisions over Iraq, the Libyan debacle and the forced reconstruction of its debtor members through the economic recession of 2008. Today it struggles with how much of its liberalism it can keep in place while maintaining a solidarist posture in the face of a rogue Russia and the economic gigantism of China.[18]

In the rest of the world, liberalism did not have such deep roots, and where it was connected with derogations of sovereignty and the use of force on grounds of derogations of rights, it was emphatically rejected. Where it was most effectively received, and where it indeed strengthened democracy, was primarily in the Global South where fragile governments regularly faced coups and illegal seizures of power. The rights accorded were to *democratically elected governments*, which strengthened democratic processes but also shored up governments and promoted regular transitions of power. Ironically, liberalism-as-rights was called in by the Global South to underpin *states*.

So far as an ethical order representing all mankind is concerned, the liberal dream was replaced by the humanitarian ethic, an ethic rooted in natural law and open to interpretation. But this was not due to failures of liberal doctrine (excepting perhaps its

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18. T. Diez, 'Power Transition as a Threat to Normative Power Europe', in *Power Transition in the Anarchical Society*, eds. T.B. Knudsen and C. Navari (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 153–78.

imperializing tendencies). Nor even with the universality of natural law (though perhaps its pliability). It was accomplished by state agency with other ends in view.

That the fracturing of the liberal world order was not generally foreseen by the IR disciplines deserves a little consideration. So far as liberals are concerned, it was due less to liberal 'idealism' than with liberal attitudes to the state. Liberal internationalism has been determinedly anti-statist, which has led it to focus its attention almost entirely on non-state actors, missing much of the action. The post-colonial movement scarcely helped: its obsession with the West and the post-colonial legacy blinds it to chinks in the Western armour and underrates post-colonial autonomy – that a post-colonial state is capable of determining its interests *as a state* does not fit with the post-colonial mind set. For the same reason, Realists should have done better, particularly classical realists who have read their Machiavelli, but 'classical' realism has dispensed with calculations of advantage much less 'the national interest'. We can tick off rational choice theory, which focuses on *homo economicus*, and feminism, for which the state signals paternalism writ large. It seems today that only political journalists, a few structural Realists and the English School can conjure up Russia, India and America as agents with goals. Among them, it is the English School's attention to both the end goals of historically unique states and their agency within a constructed international order of organizations, practices and rules that makes it particularly well-suited to understanding particular moments in IRs.

China and the Next Liberal World Order

–Yongjin Zhang

This short essay sets out to argue, from an explicit English School perspective, that China's rise has demonstrated the resilience and abiding nature of pluralist international society. It considers critically whether and how two contending pluralist visions of the next world order, one American (a world safe for democracy) and one Chinese (a community of shared future for humanity) can be accommodated in a collective quest for an ethically sensible, morally defensible and politically and economically viable world order in an anarchical society of states that is no longer solely dominated by the West both materially and ideationally. It articulates an alternative vision of the next world order, an equally pluralistic one of liberal persuasion, which aims at constructing a world safe for diversity and prosperity. This is, however, not a call to re-centre IRs on great powers or to reinstate *realpolitik* in world politics in the construction of a new world order. This reassertion of the virtues of pluralism serves rather as a plea for a critical move towards a new *raison de système* guided by the humanity's pursuit of ecological solidarity and planetary solidarism.

China and Order Transition

The arrival of China as an unrepentant authoritarian great power in the global political economy second only to the United States is now generally accepted. The global power shift that this arrival has triggered and its implications for the future of liberal international order have been widely and richly debated. What is lamentably missing in these debates as well as in the dominant narratives of the well-told stories of the rise of China

is a careful consideration of one particular aspect of what I consider as an anomalous path China has trodden to power. Not only has China risen 'under the aegis of the American power and through integration with the liberal economic order sustained by the United States',[19] as is well acknowledged, but, perhaps more importantly, China has also risen in a historical period of liberal hubris when 'American liberal hegemonic order spread outward and seemed to offer the world a universal logic for global politics'.[20] This is a world order that is not necessarily hospitable to authoritarian China's rise in geopolitical, ideational and normative terms at both regional and global levels.

It is largely forgotten now that at the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was widely expected to follow the Communist Party of the Soviet Union into the dustbin of history as Communism perished in Europe 'with a whimper'.[21] The Chinese state, often believed to be on the verge of collapse, was decidedly treated as a pariah in the emerging unipolar world and liberal order. China was otherwise a poor country at the margin of a globalizing economy. According to World Bank statistics, China's GDP per capita in 1992 was $366 (all values in USD), which was comparable to Kenya ($324) and Zambia ($376), but considerably lower than that of Ghana ($499) and was only one-seventh that of Brazil ($2,596). The size of the Chinese economy ($426.9 billion) was only 11% of the Japanese economy ($3,909 billion) and 6.55% of the American economy ($6,520 billion).[22] Yet, it is this pariah state under the rule of the CCP that re-launched its economic reform and opening in 1992, symbolically by Deng Xiaoping Southern China tour in January and February. China's single-minded and relentless pursuit of economic growth and development thereafter sees the Chinese economy overtaking France in 2005, Great Britain in 2006, Germany in 2007 and Japan in 2010. 'Never before has so much wealth been created by so many people in so short a time', as Roderick MacFarquhar[23] proclaimed. In less than two decades, China grew into the second largest economy and became an integral part of the global capitalist economic order.

These two decades happen to be what John Mearsheimer[24] calls 'liberal's golden years'. 1989 is without any doubt the *annus mirabilis* for liberals with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the eventual demise of Communism in Eastern Europe. The most compelling expression of liberal hubris following the end of the Cold War is not, however, egregious claims made by Francis Fukuyama[25] in celebrating 'an unabashed victory of

19. Ashley Tellis, 'US-China Relations in a Realist World', in *The Tangled Titans: The United States and China*, ed. D. Shambaugh (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 74–95.
20. G. John Ikenberry, 'The End of Liberal International Order?', *International Affairs*, 94 no. 1 (2018): 7–23.
21. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Has Democracy a Future? *Foreign Affairs* (1997). Available at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1997-09-01/has-democracy-future Last accessed 8 March 2022.
22. All these statistics are from https://www.datacommons.org/.
23. Roderick MacFarquhar, Remarks at *Reframing China Policy: The Carnegie Debates*. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/cds_macfarquhar.pdf. Last accessed October 5, 2006.
24. John Mearsheimer, 'Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order', *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 7–50.
25. Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest* 16 (1989): 3–4.

economic and political liberalism' and 'the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'. It is rather the resurrection of historically discredited Enlightenment expectations of a universal civilization, which finds a contemporary incarnation in claims of an inexorable historical march towards liberalism as the apex of human progress on which all history will eventually converge. This discursively prepares the ground for and is constitutive of what John Gray[26] calls 'a "hubristic" and dangerous project of deploying the power of the state to promote a universal civilization'. Liberal interventionism justified by the so-called Blair doctrine and liberating wars for regime change and democracy promotion founds its expression in the Iraqi war, the Libyan debacle and America's war in Afghanistan, 'the longest war in American history'.[27] They perhaps best exemplify how liberal internationalists leveraged America's historically unparalleled political, economic and military power to promote liberal universalism and to universalize democracy, 'taking the agenda of the Enlightenment into the twenty-first century'.[28]

Any residue of liberal hubris would finally evaporate with the inexorable rise of China as an unmistakably authoritarian great power. China's relentless pursuit of modernity and its unprecedented economic prosperity have not, however, brought about democratization. Successes in economic development has not led to democratic change in China. The People's Republic of China remains a party-state and the CCP continues to monopolize political power. The Chinese political system remains starkly authoritarian with little protection of political and civil rights. Put it differently, China has refused to follow the liberal script to democratize. 'The liberal bet on China did not work out,' Ikenberry[29] admitted grudgingly. The American policies of engagement with China have failed, Campbell and Ratner[30] lamented, because they are based on the false premise that 'U.S. power and hegemony could readily mould China to the United States' liking', and because 'the liberal order has failed to lure or bind China as powerfully as expected'. This America's China reckoning effectively turns liberal hubris into liberal anxieties about rising China as a nemesis of the liberal international order and the strategic rival of America's own creation.[31]

26. John Gray, 'Two Liberalisms of Fear', *The Hedgehog Review* 12, Spring (2000). 9–23 https://hedgehogreview.com/issues/democracy/articles/two-liberalisms-of-fear.

27. Joe Biden, Remarks by President Biden in Address to a Joint Session of Congress (2021). Available at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/29/remarks-by-president-biden-in-address-to-a-joint-session-of-congress/ Last accessed 28 March 2022.

28. Andrew Hurrell, 'Power Transitions, Global Justice, and the Virtues of Pluralism', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 27 no. 2 (2013): 202.

29. G. John Ikenberry et al, 'A Rival of America's Making? The Debate Over Washington's China Strategy', *Foreign Affairs* 101, no. 2 (2022). 172–188. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-02-11/china-strategy-rival-americas-making

30. Kurt Campbell and Ely Ratner, 'The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectations', *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 2 (2018): 61–2.

31. David Lake, Lisa Martin and Thomas Risse, 'Challenges to the Liberal Order: Reflections on *International Organization*', *International Organization* 75, no. 2 (2021): 225–7; G. John Ikenberry et al, 'A Rival of America's Making? The Debate Over Washington's China Strategy', *Foreign Affairs* 101, no. 2 (2022): 172–188.

The global power shift is therefore marked by an increasingly strong and prosperous China, which boasts a different political and value system and a distinctive form of capitalism, the combination of which has not been seen before in world history, and with which the West will have to learn to live in a world with the diminishing American and democratic hegemony. How this global power shift has affected the negotiations for normative and institutional changes in the emerging world order beyond the US-China contest for hegemony and supremacy has been long noted by the English School scholars. Jennifer Welsh[32] notes that the changing global balance of power 'is pushing international society away from its moment of assertive liberalism and back towards the pluralism with which Vincent was so familiar'. Andrew Hurrell[33] also claims that there is 'discomforting' pluralist pushback that takes the emerging world order 'in a broadly Westphalian direction' and that the power shift 'affects the question of which parts of the liberal agenda should be prioritized'. Such pushbacks are indicators that the historical period was coming to an end when the power of the liberal Greater West sets the agenda for the debate on institutional change and normative framing of the emerging world order. They are precursors of the reassertion of pluralist international society.

Put it more bluntly, the arrival of China as an unrepentant authoritarian great power, arguably with its own purpose and project, challenges the claim that liberalism is the 'default setting' of contemporary international society moving towards cosmopolitan solidarism. Claims of a new era of great power strategic competition and of an emerging multipolar international system, which sounds 'a death knell for the liberal international order'[34], only confirm, perhaps unwittingly but certainly more crudely, the resilience of pluralist international society.

The fracturing of the prevailing liberal order (see Navari's article above in this forum) can be explained by the resurgence of hostile, illiberal and putatively revisionist powers such as China and Russia, but only partially. This fracturing of liberal order bears testimony to the resilience of pluralist international society also because this order has been under multiple assaults from within. The Capitol attack on 6 January 2021 and the Brexit best exemplify 'growing nationalist-populist opposition to the LIO [liberal international order] from within core states'[35], The liberal world order is collapsing', Ikenberry[36] deplores, 'because its leading patrons, starting with the United States, have given up on it'. The White House[37] candidly admits that 'democracies across the globe, including our own, are increasingly under siege. Free societies have been challenged from within by corruption, inequality, polarization, populism, and illiberal threats to the rule of law'. These external and internal challenges combined have precipitated triple crises for the

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32. Jennifer Welsh, 'A Normative Case for Pluralism: Reassessing Vincent's Views on Humanitarian Intervention', *International Affairs* 87; no. 5 (2011): 1203.

33. Andrew Hurrell, 'Power Transitions, Global Justice, and the Virtues of Pluralism', *Ethics & International Affairs* 27, no. 2 (2013): 193–202.

34. John Mearsheimer, 'Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order', *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019): 42.

35. Lake, Martin and Risse, 'Challenges to the Liberal Order', 238.

36. G. John Ikenberry, 'The Next Liberal Order', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August (2020): 133.

37. White House, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, DC: White House, 2021). https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf.

liberal international order, namely, crisis of leadership, crisis of democracy and crisis of multilateralism.[38]

A World (Un)safe for Democracy?

At a time when 'the old Western-led liberal order looks more troubled today than at any time since the 1930s'[39] and when 'the supremacy of democracy is more imperilled than at any time in generations',[40] constructing a world order safe for democracy is politically and strategically imperative for the United States. The articulation of this new American vision of a world safe for democracy in the third decade of the 21st century is, however, widely different from the one envisaged and practised by liberal internationalism in the first two decades of the 21st century. It is much more conservative and defensive in nature. As a lead advocate of liberal internationalism, John Ikenberry[41] offered a rare contrition when he acknowledged that 'Under the auspices of the liberal international order, the United States has intervened too much, regulated too little, and delivered less than it promised'. This new vision of a world safe for democracy has to be therefore 'a more cautious vision . . . more focused on the necessity of building collective capacities and institutions to protect modern societies from themselves, from each other, and from the violent storms of modernity'.[42] In the similar vein, Lind and Wohlforth[43] call for abandoning a profoundly revisionist post-Cold War liberal order led by the United States. 'The best response [to the crisis of the liberal order]', in their words, 'is to make the liberal order more conservative. Instead of expanding it to new places and new domains, the United States and its partners should consolidate the gains the order has reaped'.

This conservative tone resonates in the political articulation, too. For President Biden, democracies are now locked in a must-win historical battle with autocracies in the 21st century. At his first press conference as the President, Biden[44] clearly stated that 'I predict to you your children or grandchildren are going to be doing their doctoral thesis on the issue of who succeeded, autocracy or democracy, because that is what is at stake' and that 'We have got to prove democracy works'. Winning the future for America in this global

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38. Trine Flockhart, 'Is This the End? Resilience, Ontological Security, and the Crisis of the Liberal International Order', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 41, no. 2 (2020): 215–40.

39. G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order* (London: Yale University Press, 2020), 3.

40. Hal Brands, 'The Emerging Biden Doctrine: Democracy, Autocracy, and the Defining Clash of Our Time', *Foreign Affairs* (2021). https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-06-29/emerging-biden-doctrine

41. Ikenberry, 'The Next Liberal Order', 135.

42. Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy*, 12.

43. Jennifer Lind and William Wohlforth, 'The Future of the Liberal Order Is Conservative: A Strategy to Save the System'. *Foreign Affairs* March/April (2019): 70–80. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-02-12/future-liberal-order-conservative

44. Joe Biden, Remarks by President Biden in Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 2021. Available at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/29/remarks-by-president-biden-in-address-to-a-joint-session-of-congress/

contest between democracy and autocracy entails first and foremost, however, 'rebuilding the nation and revitalizing our democracy'.

This vision of the next liberal international order, though conservative and defensive, is also decidedly exclusive. President Biden's Summit of Democracy convened in December 2021 exemplifies the pretension that an exclusive alliance of democracies can come together to define what is a legitimate and viable world order. In the binary vision of a global contest between democracy and autocracy, a world safe for democracy, as is articulated, is likely to be built on the insecurity of those outside the charmed circle of self-identified liberal democracies, particularly those great powers that are deemed to be autocratic, revisionist, and hostile to the United States. Such binary vision may legitimize counter initiatives of autocratic powers, which aim at making the world safe for autocracy in ways that make the world unsafe for democracy. As Robert Manning and Mathew Burrows[45] argue, 'While advocates of a democratic order seek to avoid a new Cold War, it is difficult to see how their binary democracy or authoritarianism division of the world could avoid a bifurcated, conflict-prone future'. More fundamentally, it is highly questionable whether the world order constructed on this vision is sufficiently common in accommodating ethical, cultural, value and ideological diversity of the world that we are living in and moving towards. It is unclear how the values and interests of an inclusive society of states can be defended and advanced in such an order, given the age-old democratic-autocratic divide remains strong and looks durable in international society.

Perhaps not surprisingly, China has contested this vision of the next liberal international order. This is most notably through promoting the idea of 'a community of shared future for humanity'. As a vision for the future world order, this idea embodies, as Beijing claims,

> the ideas of building an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity. It answers the major question of how the international community should face a period of turbulence and change that is characterized by increased fragmentation in response to salient risks and challenges.[46]

Beijing's 2019 White Paper *China and the World in the New Era* boasts of providing 'Chinese wisdom and strength for solving world problems'. Looking at it more closely, the proposition amounts to a restatement, or rather, an updated refinement, of the idea of 'a harmonious world', which stakes out a basic pluralist position in a rapidly changing power-political context of the multi-civilizational world wherein contemporary international society resides. It calls not for the convergence but for the reconciliation of different co-existing civilizations in search for a common world order. In this reading, it is a competing normative proposition vis-à-vis the liberal internationalist one whereby a society of

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45. Robert Manning and Mathew Burrows, The Problem with Biden's Democracy Agenda, 2021. Available at: https://warontherocks.com/2021/07/the-problem-with-bidens-democracy-agenda/ Last accessed 16 March 2022.
46. Xinhua, Commentary: Why President Xi strongly advocates building community with shared future, 2020. Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/22/c_139388123.htm Last accessed 1 March 2022

states with ethical, ideological, political and cultural diversity can hang together politically and socially in pursuit of a good life both nationally and internationally.

This contending Chinese vision is quickly dismissed by American scholars and pundits. Nadège Rolland[47] sees it as 'an attempt to pre-empt and resist the transformative effects of liberalism and to make the world safer for its authoritarian model', with a view to 'weakening and displacing the American hegemon and ultimately replacing its related values of liberalism and democracy with the CCP's own version of hegemony'. Rush Doshi[48] likewise reads Beijing's promotion of an 'amorphous' concept of a community of shared future for humanity as an integral part of China's emerging global strategy to displace the American order with 'a new, hierarchical, authoritarian conception of international order' and 'a kind of "partial hegemony"'. Poring over related Chinese discourse, he concludes that 'Ultimately, the concept appears to be a stand-in for global Chinese hierarchical order that secures deference to Beijing's prerogatives through a mix of coercion, consensual tools like public goods, and rightful legitimacy'.[49] John Ikenberry[50] is convinced that America's hegemonic rival has offered a vision of world order antagonistic to the American vision, i.e. a world safe for autocracy, which means a world unsafe for democracy.

These two contending visions of the next world order at play, American and Chinese, are however not so antagonistic as is claimed by Ikenberry. They are actually underlined by a shared understanding, that is, the future world order will be deeply pluralist in nature. 'We're in a contest, not with China per se', President Biden states, but 'with autocrats, autocratic governments around the world, as to whether or not democracies can compete with them in a rapidly changing 21st century'.[51] This is an open acknowledgement that the pluralist order now prevails. No matter whether the 21st century will be marked by the continued dominance of the democratic West or will it become the age of autocrats, the next world order will be invariably pluralistic.

Pluralist World Order and Planetary Solidarism

Is it possible then to articulate an idea of world order that can accommodate these two contending pluralist visions in a collective quest for an ethically sensible, morally defensible and politically and economically viable world order in an anarchical society of states that is no longer solely dominated by the West both materially and ideationally? Is it possible, to put it more crudely, to construct a world order that is safe for both

47. Nadège Rolland, *China's Vision for a New World Order*. NBR Special Report No. 83. (Seattle, Washington: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2020), 6.
48. Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).
49. Ibid., 279–80.
50. G. John Ikenberry et al, 'A Rival of America's Making? The Debate Over Washington's China Strategy'. *Foreign Affairs* 101, no. 2 (2022): 172–188. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-02-11/china-strategy-rival-americas-making
51. Reuters, Biden: Democratic nations in a race to compete with autocratic governments, 2021. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-democratic-nations-race-compete-with-autocratic-governments-2021-06-13/. Last accessed 20 March 2022.

democracy and autocracy? These are difficult questions that defy simple answers. This is particularly so given the intensifying antagonism between China and the United States in the putative global contest between democracy and autocracy with conflicting claims of legitimacy and with the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Constructing a viable next world order must take into consideration a myriad of complex global realities, old and new. First, the primary and perpetual challenge that confronts any quest for the next world order continues to be 'how divergent historic experiences and values can be shaped into a common order'.[52] It must address the question of how divergent cultures and conflicting claims of legitimacy and purpose of power can be translated into a common system in a world of 'the diffusion of cultural authority and legitimacy to more civilizations'.[53] Second, this putative order must be inclusive, and the claim of its ownership must be global. That is to say that not only the West and the global north, but also by the rest, the post-colonial states and the Global South as well as non-state and civil society actors around the world can all claim ownership, particularly in terms of global rules making. This calls for a world order whose governance is far more participatory, inclusive, equal, deliberative and effective than the existing one. Third, it is the imperative of great power consensus and their ability in providing 'general direction' to the evolution of world order.[54] The rise of China as a great power equals second only to the United States with a different political system and a set of diverse values has undoubtedly complicated the negotiations to reach limited and delicate great power consensus for future normative direction of emerging world order in the current historical period of power shift.

What may this shared pluralist vision of the future world order like, then?

At the height of the Cold War in 1963 and reflecting on the Cuban missile crisis and the profound differences between the United States and the former Soviet Union, President John F. Kennedy offered a vision of a common order, which captures well the liberal pluralist logic. In his words,

> If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.[55]

Sixty years on, this Kennedyesque vision for a common order that underscores our common humanity remains both inspirational and practical. In the 21st century, 'a world safe for diversity and prosperity' can be articulated as a vision shared by China and the United

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52. Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*. (UK: Allen Lane, 2014), 10.

53. Barry Buzan, 'China's Rise in the English School Perspective'. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 18, no. 3 (2018): 454.

54. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. (London: Macmillan, 1977).

55. John F. Kennedy, *Commencement Address at American University* (Washington DC: American University, 1963). https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/american-university-19630610

States for constructing the next world order in an inherently pluralist world. This is, however, more of a vision of the imperative than a blueprint for the presently possible.

This liberal pluralist vision can be defended on several grounds. First, it is morally defensible and justifiable, because its inclusive vision fosters the preservation and cultivation of political and cultural differences and distinctness that are the legacies of human history, and because it is conducive for advancing global justice in an imperfect world, particularly the agenda of domestic and international distributive justice worldwide, thus promoting human well-being and human flourishing. Second, it is politically viable, for it helps to achieve the 'co-evolution' of Chinese and American power despite their profound differences, which 'means that both countries pursue their domestic imperatives, cooperating where possible, and adjust their relations to minimize conflict'.[56] It also enables the United States and China to pursue their vital national interests. For the United States, it is to 'keep Americans safe, prosperous, and free'[57] and for the Chinese, it is to strive for the national rejuvenation.

Third, philosophically, it is compatible with an array of liberal traditions ranging from liberal pluralism to liberalism of fear,[58] and to liberalism of danger and insecurity, 'a bleaker face of liberalism'.[59] It is also compatible with the Chinese philosophical tradition of Great Harmony. Fourth, it is institutionally practical because it calls for reimagining, repurposing and reinvigorating existing international institutions, not their replacement or rejection. China has clearly embraced the view that the United Nations 'best represents global international society in formal organizational terms'[60] and has been a strong defender of the UN Charter-based order. For liberal internationalists, not only the Westphalian order and the liberal international order have co-constituted one another over time with 'partially overlapping sets of norms and practices',[61] but the persistence of Westphalian institutions also 'provides a lasting foundation on which distinctively liberal and democratic institutions can be erected and defended in the words of Ikenberry'.[62]

Finally, it is ethically sensible and normatively compelling, given the imperatives of dealing with a wide range of global challenges and shared threats, the hydra-headed problems of the 21st century such as the impending global calamity caused by climate change and the devastation of biodiversity. Echoing Kennedy's wisdom of our inhabited planet as the most basic common link of humanity, Anne-Marie Slaughter[63] argues with conviction that

56.   Henry Kissinger, *On China* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 526.
57.   White House, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, 6.
58.   Gray, 'Two Liberalisms of Fear' , 9–23.
59.   Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy*, 12.
60.   Robert H. Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 341.
61.   Lake, Martin and Risse, 'Challenges to the Liberal Order', 225–7.
62.   Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy*, 283.
63.   Anne-Marie Slaughter, 'It's Time to Get Honest About the Biden Doctrine', *New York Times*, 12 November 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/opinion/biden-foreign-policy.html.

the great-power games, as deadly as they have been and could still be, must give way to planetary politics, in which human beings matter more than nationalities. Competition itself is fine and natural, but it needs to be competition to achieve a goal that benefits us all.

She continues,

What difference does it make whether the United States 'beats China' if our cities are underwater, the Gulf Stream stops warming northern Europe and the United States, and hundreds of millions of climate refugees are on the move? If we destroy the biodiversity on the planet? If millions more people die from serial pandemics? If people the world over do not have the means to flourish and care for one another?

This forebodes not only a world unsafe for democracy, but also a tragic and disastrous shared future of humanity. This foreboding raises uncomfortable questions for those who regard the global contest between democracy and autocracy as the defining feature of the next liberal world order.

As is argued recently in this journal, 'the dominant intellectual and institutional architecture of international society fails both to see the Anthropocene as the reality and threat that it is, and fails to address its ecological, moral, and industrial challenges in any way adequately'.[64] The reassertion of the virtues of pluralism, as it is contended here, is therefore not a call to re-centre IRs on great powers or to reinstate realpolitik in world politics. It serves rather as a plea for a critical move towards a new *raison de système* guided by humanity's pursuit of ecological solidarity and planetary solidarism.

Rethinking 'Middle-Ground Ethics' in the English School

–Hussein Banai

Introduction

In a much-cited article published in *Millennium* in 1981, the late Robert W. Cox famously made a distinction between two types of theory: 'problem-solving' and 'critical'.[65] In contrast to the former, which 'takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action', the latter, he argued, 'stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about'.[66] In distinguishing between these two types of theory, Cox's main objective was to make room for 'emancipatory' visions that consciously sought to transform the 'social totality' of international politics (à la historical materialism).[67] Indeed, varying iterations of this normative preference have

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64. Anthony Burke, et al., 'Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR', *Millennium* 44, no. 3 (2016): 522.
65. Robert W. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981): 126–55.
66. Ibid., 128–9.
67. For Cox 'Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose', and therefore even problem-solving approaches advance certain power-laden perspectives, values, and interests. Ibid. 128. Emphasis in the original.

been advanced in a host of 'reflectivist' and post-positivist works since.[68] But Cox's framing is especially interesting in thinking about the English School's empirical and normative approaches to the triad of international society, international system and world society, respectively. For not only has the English School's melding of capacious onto-logical, epistemological and methodological orientations falsified the claim of an imper-meable border between different perspectives, it also stands as a demonstration of the *necessity* of hybridization and eclecticism across disciplinary boundaries.[69] The English School contains elements of both problem-solving and critical theories – and much besides – within its repertoire.

Yet, despite – or because of – these strengths a crucial aspect of Cox's preferred criti-cal mode has thus far eluded normative English School theorizing. Briefly put, there are no purposive standards akin to, for instance, Marxian emancipatory norms generated through 'immanent critique', on the basis of which to either evaluate the moral quality of historical orders or construct ideal types for contemporary/future orders. This is not to say, however, that the English School is altogether devoid of ethical considerations. As Molly Cochran has pointed out, normative debates within the school over minimalist and maximalist conceptions of international justice, or between pluralist and solidarist accounts of the spatial-temporal boundaries of shared values in international and world society, have yielded a 'middle-ground ethics' determined 'to find a working balance between ideas of the good and the actualities of real-world politics'.[70] All the same, as Cochran acknowledges elsewhere, the English School has yet to generate a coherent 'seeking of quasi-foundations for a notion of the good, with either a maximalist or mini-malist character or a defense for shuttling in between'.[71] In the same vein, William Bain charges that

> The English School has built a thriving trade on describing particular norms as well as their emergence and decline; but . . . it is largely unable to account for the reasons why any particular norm should be regarded as being obligatory.[72]

In short, there is much normative work to be done to build on the existing middle-ground ethics of the English School, and especially to offer a clear set of principles for

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68. For overviews, see Emanuel Adler, 'Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates', in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Beth A. Simmons and Thomas Risse (London: Sage Publications, 2002); and Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism & Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

69. See Cornelia Navari, ed., *Theorising International Society: English School Methods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

70. Molly Cochran, 'Charting the Ethics of the English School: What "Good" is There in a Middle-Ground Ethics?' *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2009): 204.

71. Molly Cochran, 'Normative Theory in the English School', in *Guide to the English School in International Studies*, eds. Cornelia Navari and Daniel M. Green (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), 186.

72. William Bain, 'One Order, Two Laws: Recovering the "Normative" in English School Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 33, no. 4 (2007): 558. More on Bain's proposed 'theory of obligation' below.

evaluating the moral legitimacy of social structures and political actions undergirding international and world orders.

The following short intervention is divided into two parts. The first part attempts a brief reframing of the ethical basis of the two dominant normative frameworks – pluralism and solidarism – within which issues related to order and justice (central to English School theorizing) are considered. The primary aim of this section is to demonstrate that although these ethical orientations are in constant conversation with each other, they nonetheless stem from quite distinct sets of assumptions about the sources of morality in international and world societies, respectively.[73] Understanding the tensions between these assumptions illuminates the reasons behind the reticence of the English School towards any grand ethical theories or principles. The second part offers a possible solution to overcoming these tensions by arguing for a re-conception of English School's normative frameworks as not merely representative of a 'middle-ground ethics' but rather as an overlapping set of *comprehensive ethical commitments* – e.g. about coexistence, fairness, universal rights, etc. – in productive dialogue with each other. Indeed, the *manner* in which these exchanges are conducted, it is further argued, is what sets apart English School theorizing from its counterparts in IRs. This approach is itself reflective of a deeper implicit commitment to principles of 'value pluralism', which insist on the possibility of multiple pathways to 'the good' or ideal society. The piece concludes with general reflections on value pluralism as a possible comprehensive ethical framework for normative theorizing within the English School.

Ethical Bases of Pluralism and Solidarism

The differences in normative commitments between pluralist and solidarist English School theorists stem from their respective interpretations of the underlying social character of international politics.[74] Pluralist conceptions proceed from three interrelated

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73. Considering the word limits for this forum contribution, I will set aside discussion of the quite variegated and fascinating intellectual genealogies and dialectics between active members of the ES from its inception with the British Committee for International Politics to today. For comprehensive overviews, see Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998); Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Chapters 1–3; Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Chapters 1–3; Cornelia Navari and Daniel M. Green, eds., *Guide to the English School in International Studies* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013); Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

74. For an excellent intellectual history of the pluralist-solidarist debate (with an emphasis on Hedley Bull's framing of it), see William Bain, 'The Pluralist-Solidarist Debate in the English School', in *International Studies Encyclopedia*, ed. Robert A. Denemark (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) pp.159–169. Also, see João Marques de Almeida, 'Hedley Bull, "Embedded Cosmopolitanism", and the Pluralist-Solidarist Debate', in *The Anarchical Society in a Globalized World*, eds. Richard Little and John Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave), 51–72.

assumptions: (1) that international politics are driven by an irreducible multiplicity of beliefs, interests, identities, capabilities and goals that may simultaneously complement and clash with each other; (2) that the state is the most coherent geographical unit into which this multiplicity is politically organized; and (3) that the limits to the moral claims and material interests of states are determined by their political standing and social interactions with each other in international society. These assumptions especially inform pluralist theorizing on the relative priority of state sovereignty (over universal human rights), material capabilities (over ideas and values) and positive international law (over natural law) in international society. At the descriptive level, pluralist assumptions do indeed offer an interpretation of world politics that is very similar to classical realism's account of an anarchic international system that is composed of clashing national interests and tenuously regulated by contingent balances of power. But whereas realism's parsimonious descriptions leave little room for normative thinking about the possibility for shared frameworks for cooperation beyond the dictates of differential capabilities, English School pluralists envision international society as a place where shared understandings on rules of conduct based on 'common interests and common values' could indeed moderate the blunt force of *raison d'état*.[75] Barry Buzan puts it succinctly: 'Whereas the basic principle of realism is *survival*, that of pluralism is *coexistence*'.[76]

Pluralism's normative framework, then, is derived from the understanding that social interaction at the international level is made possible by – and limited to – a modus vivendi dynamic between unequal, culturally differentiated, but also formally sovereign states. In practice, this means the observance of a set of 'procedural' and 'prudential' principles pertaining to the recognition of sovereignty, the mediation of disputes through diplomacy, and an obligation to obey agreed-upon norms and laws in international society. Together, these principles as Robert Jackson has argued, 'disclose the endeavour to recognize and respect the reality of different local experiments in political living in different parts of the world. They represent the quest for unity in diversity'.[77] This normative 'quest' may be circumscribed by the 'situational ethics' of statecraft, but precisely because it prizes coexistence over zero-sum calculations it leaves room for progressive change in international society. Evidence for this, pluralists note, can be found in the founding charter of the United Nations, the gradual unraveling of formal colonialism, the increase in the number of international treaties and conventions, the expansion of the scope and substance of human rights and international legal regimes, the uneven but steady trajectory of economic development and greater regional integration in the post-war period, among other examples. Progress born out of coexistence may be slow, uneven, tenuous, but to pluralists it is a testament to what is morally permissible under the conditions of irreducible diversity.

75. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 13.

76. Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations*, 90. Emphasis in the original.

77. Robert Jackson, *The Global Conduct: Human Conduct in a World of States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22. Jackson refers to his own pluralist conception of international society as 'the global covenant', which signifies 'a world of dialogue between separate but recognized political others'. Ibid., 16.

Turning to solidarism, the assumptions that underlie its normative frameworks as regards international and world societies can also be summarized in three interrelated groupings: (1) that respect for human rights is foundational to the legitimacy of international society; (2) that although the moral status of human beings is prior to that of the political communities to which they belong, the interests of these are not mutually exclusive and (3) that some political units and social arrangements constructed by human beings are more instrumental than others in safeguarding or advancing human dignity in international and world societies. It is clear from these assumptions that solidarism is informed by a cosmopolitan ethic that, at a minimum, places the recognition of the equal dignity of human beings at the centre of its theoretical concerns.[78] This ethical foundation is, alas, often caricatured in the mainstream literature in both IR and political theory as a Eurocentric liberal-instrumentalist project that aims to reduce divergent ways of life into an abstract universal identity (based on a shared rationality). But what sets apart the cosmopolitan ethics undergirding solidarism from liberal-universalist normative frameworks is their transferability to different domains of human activity, be they at the level of local community, the state, international institutions or supranational organizations. In other words, while the substantive aim of cosmopolitan norms – i.e. equal respect for human dignity – is the same everywhere, the justifications for their pursuit will vary from place to place. As such, cosmopolitan norms are evident in everyday interactions and practices among individuals both within and across state boundaries.[79]

Now, as regards the boundaries of solidarist theorizing in the English School, Buzan has argued that it is important to distinguish between two types of solidarism: 'state-centric solidarism (states sharing norms and institutions that take them beyond a logic of coexistence) and cosmopolitan solidarism (based on the idea that there are universal rights vested in people)'.[80] Indeed, distinguishing between these forms provides not only a helpful empirical basis for assessing the contours of unity and division in international society, but also the possibility of continual normative reckoning with ethical shortcomings in

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78. For comprehensive examinations of this particular reading of cosmopolitanism that eschew Eurocentrism, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in A World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); Farah Godrej, *Cosmopolitan Political Thought: Method, Practice, Discipline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble but Flawed Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

79. I call this mode of human interaction, which is contingent in its content from place to place but is nevertheless universally in evidence, 'everyday cosmopolitanism'. As I argue elsewhere, this mode of human relations and the cosmopolitan ethic that underlies it is a far more ethically compelling basis for human rights than liberal-universalist justifications that insist on a rational consensus based on shared experiences in Western societies. See, Hussein Banai, 'Everyday Cosmopolitanism', in *Human Rights at the Intersections: Transformation Through Local, Global, and Cosmopolitan Challenges*, eds. Anthony Tirado Chase, Pardis Mahdavi, Hussein Banai and Sofia Gruskin (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023) 57–67.

80. Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations*, 115.

world society and beyond (on a planetary scale).[81] But Buzan's division of solidarism in this manner also presents an awkward dilemma: what if the ends of cooperation and convergence between states run counter to the ends of cosmopolitan ethics in world society? What if, for instance, the logic of coexistence is superseded through shared authoritarian practices and cooperation around repressive tactics?[82] Such trends would seem to run counter to the foundational assumptions of solidarism that accord moral priority to human dignity. The same problem exists with Bull's conception of solidarism as 'solidarity, or potential solidarity, of the states comprising international society, with respect to the enforcement of the law'.[83] This conception could certainly be empirically illuminating, but the same knowledge could be gleaned through a pluralist examination of the thinness or thickness of the terms on which coexistence plays out.[84] Buzan points to the European Union as the example of 'a thick solidarist society' that speaks to the analytical utility of state-centric solidarism (and which it certainly does)[85]; but it's important to note that the EU's founding principles are explicit about their fealty to cosmopolitan ethics, as reflected in the Copenhagen Criteria requiring member states to demonstrate effective functioning of democratic institutions and a fairly robust institutionalization of human rights principles.[86] The centrality of cosmopolitan norms to state-based solidarism, of course, does not invalidate Buzan's useful distinction; it merely confirms that the ethical basis of solidarism at any level is tethered to a particular set of assumptions about the moral priority of human dignity in international politics.

As the preceding brief overview demonstrates, when considered from the standpoint of the ethical assumptions that inform their respective normative frameworks, the so-called 'pluralist-solidarist debate' is less a debate than an open, reflective conversation.

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81. For instance, see works on environmental stewardship by Robert Falkner, 'Global Environmentalism and the Greening of International Society', *International Affairs* 83, no. 3 (2012): 503–22; Andrew Hurrell and Sandeep Sengupta, 'Emerging Powers, North-South Relations and Global Climate Politics', *International Affairs* 88, no. 3 (2012): 463–84; and Eero Palmujoki, 'Fragmentation and Diversification of Climate Change Governance in International Society', *International Relations* 27, no. 2 (2013): 180–201.

82. As evidenced by the global rise in state censorship and surveillance, or convergence of illiberal practices by populist regimes.

83. Hedley Bull, 'The Grotian Conception of International Society', in *Diplomatic Investigations*, eds. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 52.

84. Pluralists such as Jackson and Alan James certainly agree that the coexistence framework allows for this. See, Jackson, 'Pluralism in International Political Theory', *Review of International Studies* 18, no. 3 (1992): 271–81; and Alan James, 'The Equality of States: Contemporary Manifestations of an Ancient Doctrine', *Review of International Studies* 18, no. 4 (1992): 377–91.

85. Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations*, 130.

86. European Commission, 'Accession Criteria', European Council in Copenhagen, 1993. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/glossary/accession-criteria_en Last accessed 6 July 2023

More accurately, it is a capacious exchange of views about two different kinds of ethical commitments that exist alongside, and sometimes in combination or tension with, each other. Solidarist inquiries and arguments are concerned primarily with the extent to which convergence of values and interests in both international and world society could cultivate modes of social interaction that preserve and deepen a sense of equal respect for human dignity. Pluralist reflections do not ignore these concerns, but they are primarily interested in the terms of coexistence (i.e. whether they are based on shared interests, values and institutions, or simply at the mercy of structural forces such as the balance of power) between states, which they regard as most consequential to the well-being of humankind in world society.

How these ethical commitments reveal themselves in the works of English School thinkers is by no means tidy, consistent, or necessarily discernible.[87] For example, while Bull was more interested in the sources of (dis)order in a pluralist society of states, he also maintained that – in the context of historical injustices committed by Western powers against 'Third World' states – considerations of justice in international society were in fact derivative of the moral priority of individual rights over state prerogatives.[88] Also, as Nicholas Wheeler and Timothy Dunne have noted, 'Despite his doubts about the capacity of states to act as agents of solidarism, Bull was increasingly concerned that without justice there could be no lasting order'.[89] A different case in point with a similar trajectory from pluralist dispositions to solidarist leanings is R.J. Vincent's endorsement of basic human security and subsistence, which he regarded as commensurate with the pluralist ethical perspective on states as the best guarantors of cultural traditions and diverse ways of life.[90] Many other such examples of dual, hybrid, or parallel ethical commitments to pluralist and solidarist normative frameworks can be found in the works of English School thinkers. From the perspective of normative theory, however, a key question is whether these varied engagements add up to a coherent 'middle-ground ethics' or are instead merely representative of an evenhanded approach to comprehensively different ethical commitments.

From 'Middle-Ground Ethics' to Value Pluralism?

As an intellectual framework concerned with the contingent sources of order and justice in international politics, the English School has drawn on the ethical orientations undergirding pluralist and solidarist arguments where appropriate. But it also maintains a keen interest in how these ethical principles generate normative perspectives that may both

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87. For an excellent demonstration of the quite variegated terrain of thought on these commitments, see Cochran, 'Normative Theory in the English School', 185–203.
88. Hedley Bull, *Justice in International Relations* (Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo, 1984), 11–13.
89. Nicholas J. Wheeler and Timothy Dunne, 'Hedley Bull's Pluralism of the Intellect and Solidarism of the Will', *International Affairs* 72, no. 1 (1996), 100.
90. R. J. Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

complement and diverge from each other. In either case, it is important to note, the ethical assumptions informing empirical and normative investigations are quite strikingly distinct. Pluralist assumptions about the society of states as the most consequential site for mitigating violence or cultivating peace amount to a fairly distinct and comprehensive (in terms of the obligations they generate for diplomacy and international law, at the very least) set of ethical commitments. Similarly, solidarist emphasis on the moral priority of equal human dignity is a comprehensive ethical doctrine that can be acknowledged, but never superseded, by pluralist considerations (as the cases of Bull and Vincent above testify). And yet, in considerations of the normative arguments of the English School, these perspectives are often represented differently, with pluralism mainly as a stand-in for ethics in the world as it is (the real) and solidarism as an ethically demanding framework for how the world ought to be (the ideal).[91]

Consequently, normative theorizing in the English School is characterized as a 'middle-ground' between these two competing frameworks. Commenting on the contours of normative theory in the English School, Buzan notes that

> The English School is about finding a working balance between how power and interest, as well as standards of justice and responsibility, operate in international society, how the ideal and the real meet up, and how the normative and the empirical are intertwined.[92]

As noted earlier in the introduction, Cochran describes the middle-ground approach also as a 'working balance between ideas of the good and the actualities of real-world politics'.[93] 'Middle-ground arguments', she elaborates elsewhere,

> are less concerned to stake out ground and more interested in leaving moral possibility open, shuttling back and forth between ideas of the good and the realities of political interests and power as and when particular contexts of international interaction require.[94]

It is indeed accurate that English School theorists have sought to establish a 'working balance' between competing ethical demands of pluralist and solidarist frameworks – but this is not because one is about the 'real world' and the other about idealized constructions. They both represent ethical considerations generated by our knowledge and experience of the real world – with its irreducible diversity at both the state and individual levels – as a framework for change and action. The 'working balance' or 'middle-ground', therefore, is representative of an *epistemic space* for how the comprehensive ethical

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91. These inconsistencies are also pointed out and substantively reflected on by Matthew S. Weinert, 'Reforming the Pluralist-Solidarist Debate', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40, no. 1 (2011): 21–41.

92. Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations*, 86.

93. Cochran, 'Charting the Ethics of the English School: What "Good" is There in a Middle-Ground Ethics?', 204.

94. Cochran, 'Normative Theory in the English School', 186.

principles of pluralist and solidarist frameworks are understood, challenged, revised, justified or invalidated in specific, real-world contexts.[95]

Perhaps the major strength of the English School lies in its intellectual nurturing of this epistemic space despite such ostensibly different comprehensive moral perspectives informing its eclectic normative dispositions. But the consistency with which these intellectual habits are cultivated point to another unique ethical disposition uniformly in evidence across English School scholarship. It is akin to the ethical framework of 'value pluralism', expounded upon and endorsed by Isaiah Berlin, whose historical approach to the development of political thought was certainly influential to first- and second-generation thinkers in the English School. In his famous lecture 'On the Pursuit of the Ideal', Berlin made a distinction between pluralism as fact and as moral value. While the former merely testified to the empirical reality of multiplicity of human backgrounds, diversity of thoughts and beliefs in human society, and the inevitable friction and clash between different ways of life, the latter concept signified the moral doctrine that the sources of the good in life can be many. Berlin contrasted this moral view with that of 'monism', which in the manner of rigid ideologies of the interwar and postwar periods, or orthodox religious beliefs, insisted on singular sources of salvation or the good life.[96] Notably for Berlin, value pluralism brought coherence to and illuminated two distinct but interrelated aspects of being human: (1) that what gave human dignity its moral character was precisely the fact that we each have a unique essence that itself is but a bundle of clashing thoughts and values; and (2) that the inevitable clash of values both within us and between human beings rendered their existence tragic.

Thinking about value pluralism in relation to the English School's normative frameworks, it is clear that the first aspect of Berlin's observation about irreducible diversity generating moral value has been a standard, if implied, feature of most normative theorizing from the early days of the British Committee on International Politics to today. On the tragic aspect of value pluralism, however, English School theorists have been less consistent. While pluralists have certainly internalized this moral outcome more than solidarists, a perfunctory review of the literature would reveal that thinkers in both cohorts regard this tragic dimension as a by-product of hitherto unaddressed 'tensions' between their perspectives. Space limitations in this forum only allow for a preview of these considerations (which shall be explored in greater depth in the future), but suffice it to say that these stark, discernibly familiar patterns of normative dispositions among

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95. For a representative sample of works in this epistemic space, see Alex J. Bellamy, ed., *International Society and It's Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ian Clark, *The Vulnerable in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); James Mayall, *Nationalism in International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
96. Isaiah Berlin, 'On the Pursuit of the Ideal', *The New York Review of Books*, 17 March 1988.

both pluralist and solidarist English School theorists point to a more comprehensive ethical framework than just their shared middle-ground space.

Why the English School Needs to Engage With Area Studies

–Filippo Costa Buranelli and Carolina Zaccato

Introduction

The discipline and the profession of IR are undergoing a profound transformation, aimed at becoming more inclusive, more diverse and more global. This is valid in respect to both what is studied and who studies it.[97] It has been long argued that the English School of International Relations (ES) is ideally placed within the panorama of IR theory for being a *via media*, a synthetizer, and a compromise between the realist and the liberal traditions. At the same time, the ES has also been in a privileged position with respect to working as a *trait d'union* between IR and other cognate disciplines, such as History and Anthropology, by virtue of its classical, humanistic approach and its philosophical predisposition to interpretivism and co-constitution.[98] In light of this, recent contributions have argued that the ES is well placed to furthering the advancement of Global IR.[99] One specific way in which we believe the ES can further work towards improving on the Global IR agenda is its engagement with AS, and this synergy is what we will elaborate on in this contribution.

This piece is divided into three parts. First, we provide a brief overview of the relationship between AS and IR. Second, we elaborate on how more dialogue between AS and the ES, specifically in its research on regional international societies, can constitute a mutually beneficial enterprise, focusing on six aspects: (1) the refinement of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, as well as greater reflection on the researcher's positionality towards their object of study; (2) the study of specific forms of world society that may contribute to local orders through indigenous practices and norms; (3) the dynamics of co-constitution between the local and the global; (4) a deeper understanding of the impact of informality on and within the international society; (5) the uncovering and analysis of regional cosmologies or 'visions of order' and (6) the elaboration of a better theorization of the state within the ES. Third and lastly, we conclude by emphasizing the necessity for more engagement with AS to make the ES (and IR) more inclusive, more accurate, and more in tune with the Global IR agenda.

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97. Filippo Costa Buranelli and Simon F. Taeuber, 'The English School and Global IR – A Research Agenda', *All Azimuth* 11, no. 1 (2022): 87–105.

98. Cornelia Navari, *Theorising International Society – English School Methods* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009); Jackson, *The Global Covenant*, 2003, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

99. Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds - A New Agenda for International Studies', *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647–59; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives On and Beyond Asia* (Taylor & Francis, 2009) London; Filippo Costa Buranelli and Simon F. Taeuber, 'The English School and Global IR – A Research Agenda', *All Azimuth* 11, no. 1 (2022): 87–105.

The Interrelations (or Lack of Thereof) Between IRs and AS – An Overview

As has been argued, the origins of AS as a discipline are intrinsically located within the racialized, geopolitical understanding of theory and foreign policy of the Cold War years, which not by chance coincided with the (beginning of the) dissolution of major Western empires.[100] Even before then, AS started placing roots in the European scientific community through the studies of geographies, societies, traditions and behaviours of the populations subjugated (or to be subjugated) by the imperial metropoles. At the end of World War II, Hans Morgenthau claimed that 'Area Studies, both historically and analytically, form a part of that field of knowledge which is called international relations'.[101] Nonetheless, often seen as a mere 'basket of data', or a testing ground, from which to attain to get pieces of evidence to validate grand theorizing, AS has for long remained the underdog at the bottom of disciplinary, epistemic and intellectual hierarchy between itself and IR. The contingency, specificity and idiography of 'areas'[102] has for several decades clashed with the reassuring formalism and predictability of much of IR theory, scientific in its outlook and universal, nomothetic in its scope. In this vein, Hurrell argues that IR was first conceived as a holistic, synthesizing field of enquiry, studying phenomena at the international/global level, therefore its 'hostility' towards AS.[103]

But how to best define AS? Here, it is interesting that already 70 years ago there were debates on this issue. As mentioned in a special issue of the *International Social Science Bulletin*, sponsored by the UNESCO, focusing on AS:

> The exact meaning of the term 'area study', as used by American research workers, is still a little uncertain. It may be applied to any study of a particular area, at least if it is concerned with some branch of the social sciences, or it may have a much more specific meaning, an area study being a comprehensive study of a given region from several different points of view, with the object of determining its role in international life.[104]

Also interesting is that the state-of-the-art research on AS and IR does not usually provide clear-cut definitions of AS.[105] Hence, in this contribution, we adopt a minimal definition of 'area studies', borrowed from the Cambridge Dictionary, where the term is defined as 'the

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100. Katarzyna Kaczmarska and Stefanie Ortmann, 'IR Theory and Area Studies: A Plea for Displaced Knowledge about International Politics', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 24, no. 4 (2021): 820–47.

101. H. Morgenthau, 'Area Studies and the study of International Relations', *International Social Science Bulletin* 4, no. 4 (1952): 647–648, 647.

102. The term 'area' is in itself problematic. How an 'area' is designated and what it includes is always subject to political and normative considerations, which may be more or less conscious but nonetheless present.

103. A. Hurrell, 'Why International Relations and Area Studies Need Each Other', *St Antony's International Review* 16, no. 1 (2020): 191–6.

104. UNESCO, *International Social Science Bulletin 4*, no. 4 (1952): 633. 'Area Studies'. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000059694.

105. P. Köllner, R. Sil and A. Ahram, 'Comparative Area Studies: What It Is, what It Can Do', in *Comparative Area Studies: Methodological Rationales and Cross-Regional Applications*, eds., A. Ahram, P. Köllner and R. Sil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3–26.

study of the history, politics, economics, and cultures of various areas of the world or of a particular area of the world', thus stressing its *interdisciplinary* and *sub-global* character.[106]

While in recent years there has been renewed engagement between AS and IR scholars,[107] AS scholars continue being reproached of 'horizontal ignorance', promoting and defending exceptionalisms and descriptivism as well as leaving little room for generalizability beyond the particular case under study to which researchers devote their entire life. Reversely, the main limitation of IR allegedly consists of 'vertical ignorance', failing to shed light on 'real societies and the conduct of historically situated human agents',[108] conveying a superficial knowledge of cases, relying on weak cultural and language skills and implicitly or even explicitly using hegemonic worldviews as a yardstick for comparison, whereas ethnographic immersion would ensure thick and context-bound accounts. Within the canons of mainstream IR, research has been generally driven by the quest for regularities transcending spatio-temporal confines, to be explained across a universe of cases. On the contrary, AS have traditionally valued the mastering of primary sources and the endeavour 'to decipher the subjective understanding actors attach to their practices and discourses within their immediate contexts'.[109] Interdisciplinarity, therefore, remains more of a buzzword and a lighting banner for funding and publication projects as opposed to a reflexive, meaningful category of intellectual and methodological effort to combine contributions and insights from different domains. There is little cross-fertilization between AS and IR, with different authors writing for different audiences in distinct academic outlets.[110] If suspicion and perceived incompatibility continue to exist between AS and IR, impacting on knowledge production, professionalization, research funding allocation and on 'scientific' validity, then how and why can the ES work in synergy with AS? Below we offer some tentative arguments, which while not exhaustive may spur further research and dialogue on the matter at hand.

106.   https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/area-studies

107.   M. Tessler, J. Natchwey and A. Dressel, eds., *Area Studies and Social Science: Strategies for Understanding Middle East Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); M. Valbjørn, 'Toward a 'Mesopotamian turn': Disciplinarity and the study of the international relations of the Middle East'. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 14, no. 1 (2004): 47–75; A. Teti, 'Bridging the Gap: IR, Middle East Studies and the Disciplinary Politics of the Area studies Controversy', *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2007): 117–45; Stephen Aris, 'International vs. Area? The disciplinary-politics of knowledge exchange between IR and Area Studies'. *International Theory* 13 (2021): 451–482.

108.   Association of Asian Studies (AAS), 'The Future of Asian Studies', *Viewpoints* 2, no. 1–9 (1997): 2.

109.   Patrick Köllner, Rudra Sil and Ariel Ahram, eds., 'Comparative Area Studies: What It Is, what It Can Do', in *Comparative Area Studies: Methodological Rationales and Cross-Regional Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3–26, 4.

110.   Louise Fawcett, ed., 'Introduction', in *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–16.

What can AS Bring to the ES?

In this piece, we contend that the English School would greatly benefit from a deeper engagement with AS, and we provide six preliminary reasons why this engagement is not only mutually beneficial but, more importantly, needed. Furthermore, we also argue that the English School is the most suitable approach to bridge AS with the broader discipline of IRs, and that this rapprochement would serve to make the latter a more inclusive and accurate field. While other theoretical approaches to IR would also benefit from engaging more meaningfully with AS, and while they may share some of the traits with the ES (for example, Constructivism also advocates the co-constitution between agents and the system they constitute), we believe that the ES is particularly well suited to act as a bridge between the discipline of IR and AS.

To begin with, the English School is a holistic approach that not only favours interdisciplinarity, but that it is *built upon* it. In this sense, we are advocating for a return to the 'classical approach' to the study of international politics, integrating elements from International Law, History, Political Philosophy, Sociology and Anthropology into the analysis of global – and regional – orders.[111] This makes the ES an adequate partner to AS, a field that is interdisciplinary by definition, as it engages with the *history*, *politics*, *economics and cultures* of different areas of the world. Furthermore, the ES is based upon the assumption that agents and structure are co-constitutive; this is to say, that any given order is the result of inter-subjective interactions between different groups of people who are, in turn, affected by the practices, norms, rules and institutions of the order they are part of, and that they create, sustain and modify, through their practices and discourses. In this sense, the ES makes room for contingency, being therefore an adequate framework for the study not only of international *order* but also of *change*.

Briefly put, the English School can be seen as a *via media* approach, that is, 'a sum of compromises' between agent- and structure-centric approaches, between liberal and realist assumptions, between order and change and now also between the local/regional and the global, as well as being ontologically and methodologically pluralistic.[112] This character is precisely what makes the ES the most suitable framework to prompt the greater, and deeper, engagement between AS and IR that we advocate for in this piece.

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111. Mark Bevir and Ian Hall, 'The English School and the Classical Approach: Between Modernism and Interpretivism', *Journal of International Political Theory* 16, no. 2 (2020): 153–70.
112. Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment*, 1 edition (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

One may argue that the springboard for the synergy between the ES and AS is the recent 'regional turn' in IR and especially ES scholarship.[113] In fact, this turn is not really a turn, but rather a natural and more sophisticated development from the early research produced by members of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, especially Martin Wight, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, who studied discrete 'systems of states' and the 'expansion of international society' into other systems as well as 'the evolution of international society' from a series of separate societies to a uniform, global one. Yet, even if back then these research projects were indeed innovative and pioneering, for the main focus of analysis used to be on the systemic, global international order due to the profound transformations that the Cold War was ushering in in those decades, these sub-global agendas suffered from a series of setbacks. First, they were conducted with little regard for local sources and local meanings, and using the European system as the measuring bar. Second, and consequently, they resulted in a heavy transhistorianism, whereby present-day concepts and theories were applied on distant pasts and distant worlds, without much critical engagement with whether modern concepts and theories were truly applicable or sensible in those very contexts. Conversely, the contemporary regional turn within the ES is more concerned with synchronous regional orders, this is, with how different sub-global international orders constitute a global international society.[114]

However, the contemporary regional agenda of the ES is also characterized by an overall analytical, structural approach, where 'markers' of the existence of specific social facts are identified and researched using a predetermined set of concepts and theoretical tools, without questioning their meaning, applicability and legitimacy in different

113. See for example Mohammed Ayoob, 'From Regional System to Regional Society: Exploring Key Variables in the Construction of Regional Order', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 53, no. 3 (1999): 247–60; Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez, eds., *International Society and the Middle East: English School Theory at the Regional Level*, 2009 edition (Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Barry Buzan and Yongjin Zhang, eds., *Contesting International Society in East Asia* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Filippo Costa Buranelli, 'The English School and Regional International Societies: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections', in *Regions in International Society* (Brno, Czech Republic: MUNI Press, 2014); Filippo Costa Buranelli, '"Do You Know What I Mean?" "Not Exactly": English School, Global International Society and the Polysemy of Institutions', *Global Discourse* 5, no. 3 (2015): 499–514; Yannis Stivachtis, 'Interrogating Regional International Societies, Questioning the Global International Society', *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought* 5, no. 3 (2015) 327–340; Linda Quayle, *Southeast Asia and the English School of International Relations – A Region-Theory Dialogue* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Kilian Spandler, *Regional Organizations in International Society: ASEAN, the EU and the Politics of Normative Arguing* (Springer International Publishing, 2018).
114. Barry Buzan and Laust Schouenborg, *Global International Society: A New Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

regional contexts.[115] Therefore, despite recent calls for more engagement between AS and the ES, we want to elaborate on how exactly this synergy is viable, welcome and, more importantly, needed.[116]

To fully appreciate how AS can contribute to the refinement of the ES, the starting point is a consideration of the fact that the ES takes as its basic proposition that order is a product of *co-constitution* between agents and structure. This is to say, normative and institutional structures are the product of inter-subjective interactions between people, who both affect and are affected by the norms, rules and institutions they themselves create through practices and discourses. Consequently, the ES does not necessarily assign ontological priority to either structure or agency, but instead considers them both as inter-operating in a single framework.[117] Thus, if we consider that human agency is deeply intertwined with the structures that constitute the order(s) we study, then the histories, values, meanings and local conditions present in a given order matter crucially for the development and sustainment of that very order. In other words, however obvious this may sound, social facts (and order is one of them) are not detached from the context they originate from. Therefore, we claim that an overly analytical, structural reading of international societies runs the risk of obliterating the co-constitutive, iterative relation between orders and their local contexts.

Thus, if contextual meanings and practices matter, then AS becomes the necessary partner to study the formation and development of order in different parts of the world. More specifically, there are several ways in which we believe that AS and ES can work together to provide scholars and analysts with more fine-grained, complex and meaningful depictions and understandings of regional orders, privileging *both* structural *and* agentic dynamics, while remaining faithful to the interpretivist goal of offering Geertzian 'thick descriptions' of social contexts.[118]

Firstly, AS can serve to prompt ES scholars *to both specify and refine their ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions*, by critically engaging in discussions such as what is 'a society?', and how can it be 'observed' and 'appraised', particularly so in those contexts where specific understandings of 'the good life' might differ from those of the researcher. Closely related to this latter point is the question of whether the researcher is (or can/should become) part of the context they study, or if they are forever condemned to being an outsider of the society they try to appraise. In other

115. Filippo Costa Buranelli, 'Global International Society, Regional International Societies and Regional International Organizations: A Dataset of Primary Institutions', in *International Organisations in the Anarchical Society*, eds. Tonny Brems Knudsen and Cornelia Navari (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 233–63.

116. Filippo Costa Buranelli, 'The Heartland of IR Theory? Central Asia as an "International Society" Between Realism and Liberalism', in *Theorizing Central Asian Politics: The State, Ideology and Power*, eds. Rico Isaacs and Alessandro Frigerio, International Political Theory (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 237–61; Hurrell, 'Why International Relations and Area Studies Need Each Other', 191–196.

117. Cornelia Navari, 'Agents versus Structures in English School Theory: Is Co-Constitution the Answer?', *Journal of International Political Theory* 16, no. 2 (2020): 249–67.

118. Clifford Geertz, ed., 'Thick Description: Toward an interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 3–32.

words, a greater engagement with AS would allow ES scholars to be more self-aware and reflexive on their own positionality towards their research topic, and of their stance on the mind-world monism/dualism debate.[119] With it, AS would also bring to the forefront of ES studies the epistemic and normative consequences of adopting a particular research strategy, which would, in turn, bring to the fore of discussion, if not straightforwardly challenge, the Western/Euro-centric character of some deep-seated ES assumptions.

Secondly, AS can be particularly useful *to study specific forms of world society which may contribute to local orders through indigenous practices and norms*. Order, coexistence, reciprocity and predictability may not necessarily be ensured exclusively by states and governments, but in fact may be underpinned by indigenous, community-driven (as opposed to state-enforced) mechanisms and practices, the legitimacy of which resides in mutual understandings rooted in shared history and philosophies, such as council of elders, joint festivals and religious events. With respect to specific institutions, and taking the example of the market economy, recent research in Central Asia has highlighted how a counter-institutionalization of direct, personal, kin-based economy in bazaars is working in parallel with state capitalism,[120] with important repercussions on how 'development' is localized.[121] This move would, in turn, grant more saliency and agency to the element of world society, which has been, up to date, quite neglected in the ES triad, and would also expand the nascent research on institutions of (regional) world societies,[122] thus making the conceptual and analytical boundaries between international and world society more porous. Furthermore, it would serve to acknowledge local dynamics of socialization and endorsement of practices and norms, but also of creation, innovation, challenge and resistance.

Thirdly, AS can serve to *uncover the dynamics of co-constitution between the local and the global*. In other words, not only can AS aid the researcher to better understand how regional/local orders are socialized into (and challenge) global practices and norms, but also to trace how these local orders can impact and modify their global counterpart. In this sense, a greater engagement by the ES – and by IR writ large – with AS would serve to undermine some of the deep-rooted assumptions built into the language of the global and the local where '"the global" carries with it a reference to some motor or energy that drives history forward and gives it its logic, its principle of expansion, and its trajectory' while 'the local' is seen as 'secondary, reactive, and nonoriginal', and read as resisting the global but not being in itself a source of historical movement. Instead, an alternative approach would deny the global its singular logic and 'insist on the contingent nature of global phenomena, exploring the ways in which their global reach has been achieved only through constant interaction with [local] groups, relations, and social

119.   Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations : Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2010).

120.   Regine A. Spector, *Order at the Bazaar: Power and Trade in Central Asia*, Electronic book (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

121.   Aikokul Arzieva, 'Understanding Normative Implications of Development as Perceived and Experienced by People in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan: Conflicting Value Systems' (PhD dissertation, Graduate Institute Geneva, 2020).

122.   Barry Buzan, 'Revisiting World Society', *International Politics* 55 (2018): 1–16.

forces that helped constitute them'.[123] Latin America offers a few telling examples of this co-constitutive dynamic between the regional and the global, particularly so in the domain of international law. One example is the regional defence of the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs of states, forged against the European and American legal stances that foreign powers retained the right to military intervention and occupation to force a country to honour its debts, as well as retaining legal jurisdiction over their citizens living on foreign soil.[124] This regional understanding of non-intervention was first formally institutionalized in the regional Montevideo Convention (1933), and later diffused into the global international society via its incorporation in the Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, which bans the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any given country.[125] Another key Latin American innovation in the realm of international law is the doctrine of *uti possidetis juris*, by which the previous imperial administrative boundaries were turned into international borders to manage relations between the newly independent Latin American states and prevent that the emergence of unclaimed territories (*terra nullius*) sparked conflicts and new colonization attempts. This legal principle was later applied to administrate the demise of the European empires in Africa and Asia, becoming a cornerstone of the decolonization process, as well as being used for the political reorganization of the Eurasian territories following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.[126] These examples prompt us to enquiry about the role that states from outside the 'core' of the global international society play in bringing upon substantive changes to global norms, practices and institutions. Currently, the dynamics of rulemaking of the so-called Third World and their broader impact upon the global international society remain largely under-theorized.[127] Instead, regions such as Latin America are usually depicted as 'rule taker' actors.[128] Nonetheless, a closer, and deeper, engagement with regional developments, particularly by resorting

123. Tim Mitchell, 'Deterritorialization and the Crisis of Social Science', in *Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World*, eds. A. Mirsepassi, A. Nasu and F. Weaver (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 148–70, 170.

124. Juan Pablo Scarfi, 'Denaturalizing the Monroe Doctrine: The Rise of Latin American Legal Anti-Imperialism in the Face of the Modern US and Hemispheric Redefinition of the Monroe Doctrine', *Leiden Journal of International Law* 33, no. 3 (2020): 1–15.

125. United Nations. *United Nations Charter*, 1945. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text. Last accessed 6 May 2022.

126. Jorge Domínguez, *Boundary Disputes in Latin America* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2003); Álvaro Mendez and Mariano Turzi, eds., 'Latin America: Both Agent and Patient', in *The Political Economy of China-Latin America Relations: The AIIB Membership* (2020), 51–67. New York. Publisher: Palgrave Pivot.

127. Amitav Acharya, 'Norm Subsidiarity and Regional Orders: Sovereignty, Regionalism, and Rule-Making in the Third World', *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2011): 95–123.

128. See for example Lazlo Bruszt and Gerald McDermott, 'Integrating Rule Takers: Transnational Integration Regimes Shaping Institutional Change in Emerging Market Democracies', *Review of International Political Economy* 19, no. 5 (2012): 742–78; Jean Grugel, Pia Riggirozzi and Ben Thirkell-White, 'Beyond the Washington Consensus? Asia and Latin America in search of more autonomous development', *International Affairs* 84, no. 3 (2008): 499–517; Robert Keohane, 'Between Vision and Reality: Variables', in *Latin America in the New International System*, eds., Joseph Tulchin and Robert Espach (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001) 207–214.

to the context-specific and locally situated knowledge that can be produced through AS, can shed light on regions as 'rule makers' and rule innovators, therefore retracing how 'global' norms became globalized, and acknowledging the different regional 'imprints' that they carry.

Fourthly, and closely related to the two preceding points, a closer rapport between AS and the ES would serve *to facilitate a deeper understanding of the impact of informality on and within international society.* On this, it could be argued that informality is already very much present in the ES literature, given that the primary institutions of the society of states are informal, as opposed to the more formalized secondary institutions (i.e. international organizations). However, what we mean by informality here is that, through AS, researchers can become acquainted with the locality of meanings, rituals and normative compounds that inform and sustain specific practices of international politics, and hence with the performative and telic aspects of certain primary institutions. For example, if one thinks of Central Asian or ASEAN diplomacy, the literature has often portrayed them as talk-shops and empty words, and the same can be said about Latin American regionalism, which has been characterized as 'declaratory' at best[129] and 'inconsequential'[130] at worst. We claim that this is a consequence of adopting a Western analytical prism, which prioritizes formal, tangible 'outputs' and 'goals' as the measuring bar of 'successful' multilateralism. However, if local norms and meanings are brought back into the picture (e.g. seniority, consensus, deference, collectivism, super-presidentialism), the researcher may appreciate how different, yet nonetheless valid, conceptions of order and social life are at play in these.[131] These conceptions may not rely on formalized and visible outcomes but are nonetheless understood and practiced by the majority of the social compact. The same is valid at the world society level. As noted above, a closer dialogue with AS can help ES-driven researchers appreciate the role of non-state actors in fostering processes of order-making through practices that are informal in character (e.g. meetings of village elders, or shared games and competitions), precisely where the state is either unable or unwilling to engage. Quite tellingly, some of the best work on border areas and peace-making in Central Asia does not come from IR but from Anthropology, History and Political Geography.[132] In sum, AS would allow the ES a deeper level of understanding of how order is maintained and reproduced, by elevating

129. Nicole Jenne and Francisco Urdinez, 'Of words and deeds: Latin American declaratory regionalism, 1994-2014', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 30, nos. 2–3 (2017): 195–215; Nicole Jenne and Luis Schenoni, 'Latin American Declaratory Regionalism: An Analysis of Presidential Discourse (1994-2014)', *European University Institute Working Papers*, RSCAS 2015/53, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Global Governance Programme-177 (2015), 1–16.

130. Andrés Malamud, 'Latin American Regionalism and EU-Studies', *Journal of European Integration* 32, no. 6 (2010): 637–57, 643.

131. Filippo Costa Buranelli, 'Informality and International Order – A Conceptual Approach' (ISA Annual General Meeting, San Francisco, CA, USA, 2018).

132. Madeleine Reeves, ed., *Movement, Power and Place in Central Asia and Beyond: Contested Trajectories*, 1 edition (London: Routledge, 2012); Nick Megoran, *Nationalism in Central Asia: A Biography of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Boundary* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017).

the agency of regional actors, making room for non-state actors, bringing informality back into the picture, enhancing the emic (as opposed to the etic) character of the analysis and, as a result of this, sharpening the interpretivist endeavour of the researcher.

Fifthly, by engaging with how values, traditions, histories and notions of 'the good' vary across societies and cultures, the ES can advance its understanding of social orders not only by focusing on which norms and institutions are practised and endorsed in a given region, but also, and especially, by *uncovering the deep-rooted assumptions that sustain a specific practice or a specific interpretation of a certain institution in that area*. Ultimately, this would uncover not just 'orders' but 'visions of order' (or 'meta-orders'), with the potential of fostering future research on comparative *cosmologies*.[133] In turn, this move would incorporate elements of authentic 'theory-building' from below (Taeuber in this forum), in line with Wilson's call for a 'grounded' theorization of the ES.[134] In order to achieve this, ES scholars would need to engage in meaningful research collaboration with colleagues from the disciplines of Anthropology, Sociology, History and (political) Philosophy with expertise in the area(s) studied, so as to fully grasp the origins and salience of indigenous codes of conduct and behaviours that impact on 'universal' understandings of norms and institutions. In other words, we argue that if world order is indeed entering a phase of 'embedded pluralism' then an engagement with the sources of its embeddedness, i.e. its desirability, has unavoidably to rest on the support of AS research.[135] Crucially, embedded pluralism does not mean the erasure of social and economic globalization, but it still means that spaces for alternatives, resistance and subsidiarity will become more prominent and legitimate (Friedner Parrat and Bottelier in this forum). A look not just at regional orders, but at their cosmologies, understood as their fundamental normative and ethical components rooted in indigenous values, practices and histories becomes fundamental to grasp the significance of current changes in international society and its alternative possibilities.

Sixthly, and lastly, AS can provide the ES with the tools to *elaborate a better theorization of 'the state'*, a key aspect that is still missing from this theoretical approach. In current ES research, the state is often seen as an exogenous product brought from 'Europe' to the rest of the world. If this was previously read as a form of 'expansion' of international society,[136] recent scholarship has reassessed the 'expansion' story through the prisms of colonization, Eurocentrism and globalization.[137] Yet, we find that there is still a

133. Filippo Costa Buranelli, *Comparative Cosmology: An English School approach to comparative regionalism*, paper presented at ISA Nashville 2022.
134. Peter Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School: The Case for a Grounded Theory of International Institutions', *International Studies Review* 14, no. 4 (2012): 567–90.
135. Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 58, Issue 4, 647–659 (2014). Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
136. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, *The Expansion of International Society* (Clarendon Press, 1984).
137. Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit, eds., *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

disconnection between the role that the state plays in the theorization of international society and the theorization of the state itself in ES research, which does not take into sufficient account the ways in which different postcolonial state-formation trajectories have affected the localization and the interpretation of the institutions of international society.[138] Both the 'hardware' (e.g. borders, administrations, cadres, resources) and the 'software' (political legitimacy, histories of struggle and independence, cultural priors) do matter when the global and the local meet. As has been aptly noted, assuming linearity in socialization, and that all states have the same capacity to accommodate the binding power of institutions (let alone to accept a single meaning of them), hides and perpetuates hierarchical and exclusionary dynamics, often with important repercussions on policy-making as well.[139]

Conclusions: AS, ES, and Global IR

In this forum contribution, we argued that the ES needs to engage with AS for six different reasons, which were justified above. Crucially, all these six reasons do not come from nowhere but are very much in line with what re-aligning the ES with a classical approach would entail, resting on its in-built methodological pluralism, analytical holism and interdisciplinarity. In this respect, the ES and AS are natural partners, especially when it comes to the regional level of analysis.

Most importantly, we stress the 'need' to favour this rapprochement due to the current changes in IR, as a discipline and as a professional field. Bringing together the ES and AS would not deny the existence of 'the global' as a level of analysis but would allow researchers to think of 'the global' 'from somewhere'. The presence of the global does not mean the absence of the local. Rather, recognizing this means to accept that the global is not transcendental but becomes compresent with local dynamics, leading to meso-theorization.

Doing this, the reader should mind, is not easy. Bridging AS and the ES (and IR writ large) entails rolling up one's sleeves by learning languages, reading other literatures, engaging in fieldwork activities and, when necessary, consulting archives to situate the 'area' material within the broader 'IR' theorizing, making it more refined, meaningful and authentic. A link between AS and ES would also favour dialogue, synergy and partnership with scholars from different, yet compatible, fields and with collaborators from all over the world. This would foster epistemic justice and inclusivity, and level up the field by acknowledging its diversity and complexity.

138.   Robert Yates, 'The English School and Postcolonial State Agency: Social Roles and Order Management in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific', *International Theory* (2020) Vol 13, Issue 1: 1–29.

139.   Charlotte Epstein, ed., *Against International Relations Norms: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 1st edition (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).

The English School, Grounded Theory, and Wittgenstein: Developing a Grounded Framework for Studying the Institutions of International Societies

–Simon F. Taeuber

Introduction

In this contribution, I make the case for setting aside the various lists of institutions when studying (regional) international societies and to ground the enquiries in the thoughts and ideas of statespersons and experts of and from the respective contexts. This builds on Wilson's and Terradas' critiques of especially the New Institutionalist turn within the English School (ES). Within the first part, I revisit these critiques and discuss how recent developments in the ES have only partially addressed these critiques and continue to reproduce the crucial issues further. In the second part, I contextualize the notion of grounding ES research with current efforts within IR as a discipline to globalize the same and argue that a way forward is the setting-aside of lists of institutions during data construction and analysis. Doing so enables researchers to 'hold the space' for thoughts and ideas of and from the respective (regional) context to emerge and be understood. Moreover, I make the case for employing a Wittgensteinian approach to studying meaning in the (use of) language of statespersons and experts and to analyse the *language games* and respective *forms of life*. In the third and last part, I outline how the grounding of an ES approach in the sense of constructivist Grounded Theory (GT) – drawing on Wittgenstein, metaphors, framings and *ideographs* – can be done. Further, I highlight the usefulness of thinking of such a grounded approach as experimenting with different concepts, theories and methods in the sense of a *bricolage*. In sum, setting aside lists of institutions as scholarly preconceptions allows for new insights and understandings regarding institutions of (regional) international societies to emerge and for the ES to become an ally to globalizing IR as a discipline, moving beyond and arguable Western-centric bias in thought.

Reflecting on Recent Developments in ES Research on Institutions of International Societies

For the English School (ES)[140] as international society approach the very concept of *international society* is commonly referenced as

> a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, [forming] a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and share in the working of common institutions.[141]

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140. I refer to the scholarship or scholarly community working within the international society approach as 'the ES' – see also Charlotta Friedner Parrat, Kilian Spandler and Joanne Yao, 'The English School as a Theory and a Scholarly Community', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 33, no. 4 (2020): 483–86, on the ES as a community.
141. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 13.

These common interests, values, sets of rules and institutions – as the normative fabrics of international societies – are at the heart of ES research. The original set of institutions includes the Balance of Power, International Law, Diplomacy, War and Great Power Management.[142] It has since been extended in an ongoing debate to also include the notions of Sovereignty, Nationalism, Human Equality and the Market.[143] Since then, further additions have been suggested, for example, Environmental Stewardship,[144] International Sanctions[145] and – within the regional international society of Central Asia specifically – Authoritarianism.[146] Among ES scholars, not everyone agrees on the number of institutions, on keeping or extending a classical list, or alternatively a Buzanian one. The diversity in opinion regarding *which* institutions international societies are based on and also their definition, nature and function was apparent to all participating in the recent workshop on conceptual discussions among ES scholars hosted by the ISA English School section.[147] This demonstrates the prevailing relevance of Wilson's critique of ES research into the institutions of international society and the potential his call for grounding such research has – especially also in the context of globalizing IR, holding the space for non-Western conceptions, and a possible contribution that the international society approach

142. Ibid., 13.
143. Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, Revised Edition (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978); Alan James, *Sovereign Statehood: The Basis of International Society* (Allen & Unwin London, 1986); James Mayall, *World Politics: Progress and Its Limits* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Kalevi J. Holsti, 'The Institutions of International Politics: Continuity, Change, and Transformation', in *Annual Meeting of International Studies Association, New Orleans*, 2002; Jackson, *The Global Covenant*; Laust Schouenborg, 'A New Institutionalism? The English School as International Sociological Theory', International Relations 25, no. 1 (2011): 26–44.
144. Robert Falkner and Barry Buzan, 'The Emergence of Environmental Stewardship as a Primary Institution of Global International Society', *European Journal of International Relations* 25, no. 1 (2019): 131–55.
145. Peter Wilson and Joanne Yao, 'International Sanctions as a Primary Institution of International Society', in *International Organization in the Anarchical Society: The Institutional Structure of World Order*, eds. Tonny Brems Knudsen and Cornelia Navari, Palgrave Studies in International Relations (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 127–48.
146. Filippo Costa Buranelli, 'Authoritarianism as an Institution? The Case of Central Asia', *International Studies Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2020): 1005–16. I see Authoritarianism as an institution – both of Central Asia and beyond – as an unsettled debate. My point being that Authoritarianism, like Democracy, arguably serves as a prism through which statespersons of and in a specific context or region understand and interpret the institutions of that regional international society.
147. Workshop titled 'Norms, Rules, Institutions, Practices: How does it all hang together?' chaired by Cornelia Navari and Thomas Diez, hosted by the English School Section of the ISA, March 2022.

can offer here.[148] Wilson blended the underlying questions of these (conceptual) debates in his article on empirically grounding ES research in the thoughts and ideas of practitioners, i.e. to design ES research projects with the help of the methodological guidelines of GT in its latest, constructivist, evolutions. He echoes the critique that, e.g. Bellamy et al.[149] brought forward and attributes the root of such critique in 'the failure to ground institutions empirically'.[150] His main target of criticism is the 'outsider theorising' that he sees with some of the classical authors of the ES (e.g. Bull and Wight), but especially with the New Institutionalist scholars (e.g. Buzan, Clark, Schouenborg). The argued-for consequence of taking such an outsider perspective is a disconnect between ES research and the objects and subjects of study, i.e. institutions and statespersons. Similar outsider-insider critique has been brought forward by Terradas who set out to uncover in-depth the anthropological roots of Bull's seminal book *Anarchical Society*.[151] The point both Wilson and Terradas are making is that a recollection on what classical ES used to term the 'study of diplomatics' is what can allow enquiries regarding the institutions of international societies to descend the ladder of abstraction and provide a clearer perspective on a) what institutions there are in the thoughts, ideas and minds of practitioners, and possibly b) how they form and influence.

A reflection on recent developments within the ES shows that this critique has partially been addressed. For example, the *regional turn* of the ES does so by way of delimitation and focusing on specific contexts when theorizing institutions and international societies on regional levels.[152] And while this marks progress regarding the critique, the respective enquiries are not grounded in the thoughts and ideas of statespersons in the sense of (constructivist) GT. This becomes apparent also when looking at the dataset of (primary) institutions in different regional IGOs and regional contexts compiled by Buzan and Sunay and analysed in-depth by Costa Buranelli.[153] That is to say, the point of

148. Peter Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School: The Case for a Grounded Theory of International Institutions', *International Studies Review* 14, no. 4 (2012): 567–90; Filippo Costa Buranelli and Simon F. Taeuber, 'The English School and Global IR – a Research Agenda', *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 11, no. 1 (2022): 87–105.

149. Alex J. Bellamy, ed., *International Society and Its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

150. Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School: The Case for a Grounded Theory of International Institutions', 568.

151. Nicolás Terradas, 'The Quest for Order in Anarchical Societies: Anthropological Investigations', *International Studies Review* 22, no. 1 (2020): 98–121.

152. See, e.g. Laust Schouenborg, *The Scandinavian International Society: Primary Institutions and Binding Forces, 1815-2010* (London; New York: Routledge, 2012); Aleš Karmazin et al., *Regions in International Society. The English School at the Sub-Global Level* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2014).

153. Barry Buzan and Altin Naz Sunay, 'English School Primary Institutions and International Organizations, Study of IGO Charters', 2007; Filippo Costa Buranelli, 'Global International Society, Regional International Societies and Regional International Organizations: A Dataset of Primary Institutions', in *International Organization in the Anarchical Society: The Institutional Structure of World Order*, eds. Tonny Brems Knudsen and Cornelia Navari, Palgrave Studies in International Relations (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 233–63.

departure for the enquiry is an ES list of institutions that has been, in part, theorized, and the enquiry studies the respective founding documents from such a perspective. It is what I term the *discursive turn* of the ES that goes further in terms of grounding institutional research by embracing empirical material closer to the thoughts, ideas and self-conceptions of statespersons.[154] Here, the enquiries combine documents or declarations with the discourse of statesperson in the sense of, e.g. statements on their part. Yet again, a close look at the respective works shows that despite working extensively with discourse, these projects – and I explicitly include my own work – still are not fully grounded in their approach to empirical material and thus do not solve the issue Wilson raises. They also differ from the anthropological elements pointed towards by Terradas in his reading of Bull's original texts. What does that mean? I argue that these works do bring outsider perspectives to the respective analyses of discourse and thereby deploy a preconceived (theoretical-conceptual) filter to the empirical material in the form of different lists or selections of ex ante theorized institutions of international society stemming from the New Institutionalist turn within the ES. With respect to the institutions of the international societies under investigation, the respective starting points are the lists of institutions mentioned earlier, meaning that these enquiries are to an extent deductive or 'confirmatory' in their approach to studying institutions. This does not allow for the full unfolding of the thoughts, ideas and self-conceptions on the part of statespersons. In other words, the outcome as to *which* institutions are employed is predetermined by *how* the respective research designs are set up and the international society approach is employed. It should be noted that it is arguably not the goal in these contributions to solve this issue, however, they reproduce it through their respective approaches.

The point here is to express that it is possible and necessary to go further and *ground* enquiries in the thoughts and ideas of statespersons. Doing so also offers a pathway out of abstract definitional debates towards, in the words of Wilson, 'an "insider" understanding of what those professionally or otherwise intimately involved in IR conceive to be the role, importance, value, and potential for progressive change of institutions'.[155] Such a shift in approach and point of departure – to arrive at 'a more empirically grounded list of international institutions'[156] – I find especially relevant in the context of growing efforts to globalize IR as a discipline and thinking of how the ES can be an ally to such efforts.

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154. Filippo Costa Buranelli, '"Do You Know What I Mean?" "Not Exactly": English School, Global International Society and the Polysemy of Institutions', *Global Discourse* 5, no. 3 (2015): 499–514; Kilian Spandler, *Regional Organizations in International Society: ASEAN, the EU and the Politics of Normative Arguing* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019); Simon F. Taeuber, 'Reconstructing the Silk Road: Norm Contestation in Sino-European Relations in Times of the Belt and Road Initiative', *Journal of Rising Powers and Global Governance* 1, no. 1 (2020): 31–65; Laust Schouenborg and Simon F. Taeuber, 'A Quantitative Approach to Studying Hierarchies of Primary Institutions in International Society: The Case of United Nations General Assembly Disarmament Resolutions, 1989–1998', *Cooperation and Conflict* 56, no. 2 (2020): 224–41.
155. Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School: The Case for a Grounded Theory of International Institutions', 586.
156. Wilson, 580.

Global IR and the ES – Returning to the Study of Diplomatics to Hold the Space for Non-Western Thoughts and Ideas

Grounding institutional research in the thoughts and ideas of statespersons not only allows for addressing the critiques introduced earlier but also enables for the ES to contribute to the diversification of perspectives and thought within IR as a discipline. In other words, it allows addressing an inherent bias, an arguably Western-centric bias, in many perspectives and theories that have been developing since IR as a discipline started taking shape – arguably also ES research. The debate here hinges on the reproduction of a global hegemonic structure within IR as a discipline. Acharya and Buzan refer to this as the 'Westphalian straightjacket'[157] and argue that such a dominance of Western IR results in 'an under-emphasis on the many possibilities for how international systems and societies could (and have) been constructed'.[158] If one accepts this assessment, the emerging issue is twofold. For one, that IR theories are 'rooted in a very specific history'[159] and that the same arguably applies to the ES tradition. Thus, going beyond Western-centric theorizing and thought and giving space to voices and ideas from all contexts seems a logical solution. The foundation for the same has arguably been laid, not just in constructivist and norm research but also within the latest developments of the ES tradition. One might want to point to Tully's idea of 'strange multiplicity' as an acknowledgement of the many different ways in which order manifests in societies and among humans.[160] Moreover, the works considering the importance of cultural diversity concerning patterns of order make clear that the Western bias within IR is being addressed.[161]

Within the ES, an acknowledgement of the diversity of manifestations and patterns of order has been visible since the *regional turn* began mapping said diversity in terms of institutional differences in regions globally.[162] However, these contributions are still subject to Wilson's thorough critique as outlined earlier. Similarly, the

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157. Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, 'Why Is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? An Introduction', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (2007): 293.

158. Ibid., 293.

159. Ibid., 293–94.

160. James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity*, The John Robert Seeley Lectures (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

161. Christian Reus-Smit, 'Cultural Diversity and International Order', *International Organization* 71, no. 4 (2017): 851–85; Christian Reus-Smit, *On Cultural Diversity: International Theory in a World of Difference*, 1st editon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Andrew Hurrell, 'Cultural Diversity within Global International Society', in *Culture and Order in World Politics*, eds. Andrew Phillips and Christian Reus-Smit, LSE International Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 115–36.

162. Andrew Hurrell, 'One World? Many Worlds? The Place of Regions in the Study of International Society', *International Affairs* 83, no. 1 (2007): 127–46; Federico Merke, 'The Primary Institutions of the Latin American Regional Interstate Society', *IDEAS Latin America Programme, LSE*, 27 January 2011, 33; Yannis A. Stivachtis, 'Interrogating Regional International Societies, Questioning the Global International Society', *Global Discourse* 5, no. 3 (2015): 327–40; Costa Buranelli, 'Global International Society, Regional International Societies and Regional International Organizations' 233–63.

discursive turn of the ES remains subject to both Wilson's critique and the second part of the issue raised above. In diversifying the geographical and ideational scopes under investigation, these studies often 'apply' theory to global and regional contexts despite research aiming at not being confirmatory. In other words, the thought we employ to study specific (regional) contexts is applied as preconceptions of the social world from outside the context under investigation. Or differently, that the sets of institutions theorized based on Western-centric socio-historical approaches are brought to a different socio-cultural context or different *forms of life*. These differences, in Wittgensteinian terms, in the respective *forms of life* are to be understood from the point of cultural and not cognitive relativism.[163] The latter would mean that 'individuals belonging to one conceptual community will be unable to grasp at all what it is like to be a member of another community',[164] whereas I follow Tonner in understanding Wittgenstein in cultural relativist terms, i.e. 'that there are differences between different cultures or in the history of one particular culture with regards to social, moral and religious values and practices'.[165]

And while the discursive turn of the ES arguably still follows the New Institutionalist pathway in that sense, one central contribution I see is its attention to Wittgensteinian thought and the concept of polysemous institutions in the sense of a multiplicity of meanings in discourse.[166] Here, the employment of 'meaning is usage' to studying patterns of order follows similar developments in constructivist norm research such as Wiener's *Theory of Contestation* and adoption of Wittgenstein's considerations regarding speech and meaning as 'meaning-in-use'.[167] This relates closely to Fierke's work on Wittgensteinian *language games* and *forms of life* among statespersons.[168] I find these

163. For *forms of life* generally and in IR, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1st edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1953); Karin M. Fierke, 'Wittgenstein and International Relations Theory', in *International Relations Theory and Philosophy: Interpretive Dialogues*, eds. Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrands (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 83–94.

164. Philip Tonner, 'Wittgenstein on Forms of Life: A Short Introduction', *E-LOGOS* 24, no. 1 (2017): 15.

165. Ibid., 15.

166. See, e.g. Costa Buranelli, "Do You Know What I Mean?'; Francis A. Beer, 'Polysemy, Sovereignty, and Global Discourse: A Response to Filippo Costa-Buranelli', *Global Discourse* 5, no. 3 (2015): 515–17; Taeuber, 'Reconstructing the Silk Road' 31–65, regarding the polysemous nature of institutions.

167. Antje Wiener, 'Enacting Meaning-in-Use: Qualitative Research on Norms and International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009): 175–93; Antje Wiener, *A Theory of Contestation*, SpringerBriefs in Political Science (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2014); Antje Wiener, *Contestation and Constitution of Norms in Global International Relations*, 1st edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

168. Karin M. Fierke, 'Links across the Abyss: Language and Logic in International Relations', *International Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2002): 331–54; Karin M. Fierke, 'Breaking the Silence: Language and Method in International Relations', in *Language, Agency, and Politics in a Constructed World*, ed. François Debrix, International Relations in a Constructed World (Armonk, NY; London: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 66–86; Fierke, 'Wittgenstein and International Relations Theory', 83–94.

approaches are especially helpful when wanting to address Wilson's critique and the issue of globalizing IR, and the ES, when recalling that a grounding of institutional research means to 'return to studying diplomatics', and that the thoughts and ideas of statespersons are accessible through their discourse – their use of language.

The argument I am advancing here is that if the ES wants to continue to contribute to and be an ally for what has been forming as efforts to globalize IR as a discipline, then a grounded approach to studying institutions offers one way to hold the space for non-Western thought of and from (regional) international societies and respective institutions relevant in these contexts.[169] The first step is to acknowledge the 'multiplicistic' nature of both (regional) international societies and institutions – that there is context-specific multiplicity in the thoughts and ideas of statespersons as a kind of normative fabric of international societies.[170] The point then is to go beyond a conception of polysemous institutions and to follow one core principle of grounded research: reflecting on, and then setting aside, scholarly preconceptions. My argument explicitly is that the lists of institutions constitute such scholarly preconceptions and that to successfully ground research in the thoughts and ideas of statespersons – as normative fabrics of international societies – these lists ought to be set aside during a data construction and analysis stage of research. Setting aside the various sets of institutions serves the purpose of 'holding the space'[171] for thoughts and ideas to be analysed as an end rather than a means to find references to or interpretations of ex ante theorized institutions. At the same time, and for many reasons like, e.g. political jargon and education of political elites themselves, doing so does not invalidate these sets of institutions and findings into their polysemous interpretations for it is clear that a conception of, e.g. 'sovereignty' is likely to be observed in thoughts and ideas of statespersons of many contexts and different (regional) international societies. However, holding the space in such a way allows to look beyond what 'we' know – i.e. pre-globalized IR with a Western bias – and opens space for context-specific thoughts and ideas in the sense of Bull's common interests, values, sets of rules, institutions of *that* context to be recognized and acknowledged. The respective benefit of doing so is there when the interest is in studying regions – or areas, as [Costa Buranelli and Zaccato] suggest in this Forum. Moreover, it is such focus or delimitation in combination with the grounded approach focused on thoughts and ideas expressed in discourse, i.e. language, which brings forward the ES and international society approach as an ally to globalizing IR.

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169. See Costa Buranelli and Taeuber, 'The English School and Global IR – a Research Agenda', *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 11, no. 1 (2022): 87–105. for an in-depth discussion on different ways in which the ES as international society approach can be an ally to Global IR.

170. See also Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*; Antje Wiener, 'Multiplizität Als Alleinstellungsmerkmal: Rosenbergs Aufruf Zu Einer Gründungsdebatte Einer Neuen, Nachhaltigen IB-Theorie', *Zeitschrift Für Internationale Beziehungen* 26, no. 2 (2019): 142–53, for discussions on multiplicity.

171. Meant in the sense of 'presencing' and letting things emerge in (discursive) space actively held open and shielded, see, e.g. C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Learning from the Future as It Emerges* (Oakland, CA: Berrett Koehler Publishers, 2009); C. Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer, *Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-System to Eco-System Economies* (Oakland, CA: Berrett Koehler Publishers, 2013).

Grounding an Enquiry into Institutions of International Societies

The question then is how ES research regarding the normative fabrics of international societies ought to be grounded so that it addresses all – the critiques of Wilson and Terradas, and the challenge of becoming an ally to globalizing IR as a discipline?

In agreement with [Friedner Parrat and Bottelier] in this Forum, what follows is but one suggestion how to operationalize grounded ES institutional research and address the issues outlined earlier – i.e. opening up 'to engagement with previously marginalized voices and points of view'[172] and 'engaging with other and emerging streams of scholarship that it has only begun to engage, such as practice theory, global and post-colonial IR, feminism and queer theory'. In the context of a grounded ES research project, the goal would be to understand the thoughts and ideas of statespersons of and from a specific context through their discourse and use of language. That is to say, to understand which institutions emerge from this empirical material by way of (co-)constructing a grounded theory in that context. In other words, grounding the enquiry in empirical material of and from the region and analysing it for the meanings-in-use and language games, in an interpretive way, like the exchange between two well-known literary characters:

'Good Morning!' said Bilbo, and he meant it. [. . .] 'What do you mean?' [Gandalf] said. 'Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?' 'All of them at once', said Bilbo. 'And a very fine morning for a pipe of tobacco out of doors, into the bargain. [. . .]'[173]

In the above dialogue, an expression of two words – that was meant, as the narrator adds – is met with a clarifying question and a burst of possible interpretations or understandings of the same. The arguable intention behind such a response is an eagerness to understand *what* was meant, to understand the rules of the language game Bilbo, a hobbit, is engaged in related to the form of life of his context. At this first encounter, this form of life and the language games hobbits 'play' are not entirely known to Gandalf, yet he shows awareness of their existence and importance to engage in meaningful conversation. Thus, when studying normative fabrics of a specific context or (regional) international society, the crucial question to ask is 'what do you mean?' – and to ask this question towards the thoughts and ideas, accessible in discourse, of statespersons. This (re-iterative) questioning for meaning in the use of language is at the very methodological core of the proposed approach as it moves *language games* of a specific context, and the respective *forms of life*, to the centre of the enquiry. And it is this emphasis on interpreting the (intended) meaning in use that represents a stark departure from the New Institutionalists' outsider-perspective approach to conducting research into institutions of international societies. GT as a research approach has evolved since it was first proposed, and it is crucial to say that the approach I suggest to employ recent more

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172. See - Charlotta Friedner Parrat and Thomas Bottelier, 'The 'Old School': Removing Obstacles to Globalizing the English School?', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* – English School Special Section (2023) in this issue.

173. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*, 1st edition (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1937).

constructivist developments,[174] rather than the earlier forms of GT more focussed on objectivism in the sense of Glaser and Strauss.[175] In line with Charmaz, I see 'that neither data nor theories are discovered'[176] and perceive the role of a researcher as inseparable from the (co-)construction of both theory and data from a variety of sources. This in turn asks for strict reflection, I would say go as far as to say in writing, on our positionalities as scholars – how we are coming to the contexts we study, what our respective scholarly preconceptions are. The guidelines of GT include several steps or tasks to conducting research, yet these are not followed through with only once or in a linear fashion, but repeatedly or re-iteratively. The main research tasks or steps of GT are as follows: gathering rich data, coding; memo-writing; theoretical sampling, saturation and sorting; reconstructing theory – and writing the draft.[177] Putting these tasks in context with my argument about setting aside lists of institutions during data construction and analysis makes clear that this involves most of the research process and does require constant reflection on sensitizing concepts and scholarly preconceptions. First and foremost, it is crucial to distinguish empirical or data sources from data. The latter being what is constructed during the analysis, for example, the respective iterations of coding, theoretical sampling and theorizing, whereas the former refers to the empirical basis in various forms.[178] While all data in such a research project is constructed in the research process, empirical material can be either extant or elicited, i.e. co-constructed between participants and the researcher. Elicited sources are co-constructed as, e.g. semi-structured interviews and could also include writing prompts that invite participants to share their reflections and narratives on targeted questions relating to the respective research. Carefully preparing such writing prompts or guiding questions for interviews with special attention to keeping them pointed but neutral regarding concepts and preconceptions

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174. See, e.g. Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London ; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006); Jane Mills, Ann Bonner and Karen Francis, 'The Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5, no. 1 (2006): 25–35; Antony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz, eds., *Current Developments in Grounded Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 2019).

175. Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 4 (New Brunswick: Aldine, 1967).

176. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 10.

177. See Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006, for a detailed description of each of the steps or tasks. Wilson refers to these as 'stages', however, this terminology implies that one would move from one stage to the other and 'have to' go back in the process. As one of the core features of GT is the reiteration of these tasks and the construction of meaning or theory in such a 'genealogic' way, I diverge from this terminology to 'normalise' the non-linear characteristic of grounding research.

178. See Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006; Kathy Charmaz and Robert Thornberg, 'The Pursuit of Quality in Grounded Theory', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18, no. 2 (2020), 1–23; Nicola Bücker, 'Kodieren – aber wie? Varianten der Grounded-Theory-Methodologie und der qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse im Vergleich', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 21, no. 1 (2020): 1–30.

ensures staying true to a grounded approach. The analysis of these sources, i.e. the construction of data, then continues to follow GT guidelines and iterative coding, also known as initial and focussed coding.[179] It is aimed at uncovering the thoughts and ideas on the part of statespersons and experts. In that regard, the type of analysis deployed here is very much emphasizing 'the themes and issues'[180] that are being discussed within the discourse codified in empirical material. Such grounded analysis would not go as far as analysing grammar to uncover the different dimensions of meaning as 'an integration of saying (informing), doing (action) and being (identity)'.[181] Furthermore, in constructing data, I suggest employing elements of both cognitive linguistics and (political) framing analysis in the sense of Lakoff, Johnson and Wehling.[182] In that sense, frames and metaphors in political speech and writing are considered expressions of conviction and cognition – they reveal how statespersons think about a specific matter on a deeper level because frames and metaphors are selective and emphasize certain facets of a subjectively perceived 'factual situation' while blanking out others. A brief note to say that metaphors have found their way into some ES research already.[183] Analysing the respective empirical material with the help of metaphors and framing theory thus allows to code the thoughts and ideas and to shed light on the underlying values that political thought is rooted in. The memo-writing task then can also help to reflect on the cognitive and discursive consequences of the frames and metaphors at play in the language games that are being studied.

Besides metaphors, I find the notion of *ideographs* as 'an ordinary language term found in political discourse'[184] that have a shared context- and culture-specific meaning and that serve the social function of uniting and separating – defining insider-outsider

179.   Kathy Charmaz and Robert Thornberg, 'The Pursuit of Quality in Grounded Theory', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18, no. 2 (2020), 1–23

180.   James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*, 3rd ed (Milton Park, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 8.

181.   Ibid., 8.

182.   See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999); George Lakoff and Elisabeth Wehling, *The Little Blue Book: The Essential Guide to Thinking and Talking Democratic*, 1st Free Press Trade Paperback edition (New York: Free Press, 2012); George Lakoff and Elisabeth Wehling, *Auf leisen Sohlen ins Gehirn: politische Sprache und ihre heimliche Macht*, Vierte, um ein aktuelles Nachwort ergänzte Auflage, Kommunikation/Gesellschaft (Heidelberg: Carl-Auer Verlag, 2016); Elisabeth Wehling, 'Politics and Framing', in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Media*, eds. Colleen Cotter and Daniel Perrin, 1st edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 136–50.

183.   See Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations; Metaphors, Myths and Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Daniel Green, 'Improving upon "Expansion": Metaphors to Shape the English School's International History', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 33, no. 4 (2020): 474–76.

184.   Michael Calvin McGee, 'The "Ideograph": A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no. 1 (1980): 15.

status – useful for grounded ES research.[185] Identifying such *ideographs* during coding contributes to understanding the thoughts and ideas of those of and from the context under investigation, especially if one accepts McGee's suggestion that *ideographs* 'exist in real discourse, functioning clearly and evidently as agents of political consciousness'.[186]

The suggested approach revolves around (re-)iterative coding practice and engaging with statespersons and experts of and from the contexts that are at the heart of the respective research. On the one hand, this will inevitably bring researchers closer to said contexts – and out of their offices or 'armchairs'. On the other hand, this contributes to the notion of opening up the ES further which [Friedner Parrat and Bottelier] emphasize in this Forum. To that end, I find the idea of a *bricolage* in the sense of 'experimenting with combining theories, concepts, methods and data in unfamiliar ways to bring out relations that otherwise remain largely invisible'[187] very much helpful for further developing grounded ES research as it allows to move beyond a mere mixed-method approach in the interest of 'holding the space' for thoughts and ideas of a specific context to emerge and be understood.

Conclusion

Within this contribution, I set out to revisit and reflect on the critique of Wilson and Terradas regarding recent and current ES research into institutions of international societies. I argue that, especially also in the interest of contributing to Global IR, it is necessary to set aside lists of institutions when studying specific contexts such as, e.g. regional international societies. Doing so allows for 'holding the space' for thoughts and ideas of statespersons and experts of and from the context that is under investigation. This requires continuous reflecting on sensitizing concepts and scholarly preconception, making the 'setting aside' an active and conscious part of grounding ES research – also when conducting interviews and in that way co-constructing empirical material. Moreover, I suggest that it is vital to ask for the meaning-use in the discourse of statespersons and experts when grounding ES research in normative fabrics of international societies as their thoughts and ideas. Here, a Wittgensteinian approach to *language games* and differing *forms of life* is particularly useful in the data construction and analysis steps of research. Further, following the notion of experimenting with different concepts, theories and methods in the sense of a *bricolage*, I make the case for employing metaphor and framing theory and analysing the empirical material for *ideographs* that all three – metaphors, framings and *ideographs* – aid in gaining access and understanding the thoughts and ideas of statespersons and experts. Lastly, while the suggested approach for operationalizing grounded ES research regarding institutions is a stark turn away from

185. See McGee, 'The "Ideograph": A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology', for a detailed discussion of the concept and Li, 'The Ideograph of Territorial Sovereignty' as one example of its application.
186. McGee, 'The "Ideograph": A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology', 7. A critical consideration of McGee's definition is necessary for employment in grounded ES research, i.e. that an ideograph can also serve normative goals that are, within a specific context, legitimate.
187. Claudia Aradau, et al., eds., *Critical Security Methods. New Frameworks for Analysis*, The New International Relations Series (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 8.

recent contributions, it is also a turn towards a new, grounded way of conducting ES research that can expand our context-specific understanding of institutions and their roles, but also aid in making the ES a strong ally to globalizing IR as a discipline.

The 'Old School': Removing Obstacles to Globalizing the English School?

–Charlotta Friedner Parrat and Thomas Bottelier

The English School is 'old school', in two interrelated ways: firstly, in the sense of being predominantly male, White and Western in its theory,[188] and secondly, in its taken-for-granted and at times incoherent philosophical grounding. The ways to overcome the first limitation include paying attention to whose work is recognized in the academic venture, to be a little less reverent to the White and masculine canon and to open up to engagement with previously marginalized voices and points of view, as well as maintaining a firm connection to normative theory. To overcome the second limitation, its philosophy needs to be clarified and the interlinkages between its philosophical foundations and the exclusionary tendencies of its theory need to be exposed. Recently, Bevir and Hall have suggested privileging the interpretivist project of the English School, as opposed to a focus on international structures.[189] We suggest that such a framing is misleading, and does not contribute to opening the School up to wider dialogue and engagement with approaches such as the practice turn, feminist IR or Global IR, nor does it provide an adequate philosophical grounding.

In this article, we argue that singling out and doubling down only on the School's strand of an interpretivist history of ideas is not conducive to a more inclusive and less particularist study of the world. Instead, we contribute to a conversation about the interaction of English School theory and philosophy, clarifying the reconceptualizations and perspective shifts needed for its successful globalization. Our contribution is to historicize its central concept, international society, in order to show how our epistemic claims interact with the social world, thus opening a space for a globalization of the School; a project which is ongoing but still has a long way to go.[190]

'Old School' Philosophy

Those not working in the English School tradition often ask what it is that the English School theorizes. What is international society? Buzan has argued that there are at least

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188. Charlotta Friedner Parrat, Kilian Spandler and Joanne Yao, 'The English School as a Theory and a Scholarly Community', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 33, no. 4 (2020): 1–4; Filippo Costa Buranelli and Simon F. Taeuber, 'The English School and Global IR–A Research Agenda', *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 11, no. 1 (2022): 87–105.
189. Mark Bevir and Ian Hall, 'Interpreting the English School: History, Science and Philosophy', *Journal of International Political Theory* 16, no. 2 (2020): 120–32.
190. Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit, *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

three different ways to understand international society in the English School canon.[191] The first is as ideas in the minds of statespeople, a position that Buzan attributes to Manning. Early thinkers of international society approached it as a 'going concern',[192] which was taken to exist, if not in fact, then 'in effect'.[193] The second way of understanding international society is as ideas held by political thinkers; a position that Buzan attributes to Wight and his 'three traditions'.[194] This view also reflects international society as a 'going concern' but in the history of ideas rather than in practitioners' minds. This is also where the theorizing of the concept enters the picture. The third understanding of international society is as a set of concepts applied by external observers, or ideal-types if we wish.[195] Here, we are getting closer to a typical academic detachment from the objects of study, where we ask: what can we learn about the real world by thinking about it as a case of international society?

Recent contributions to the English School do not necessarily find all three of Buzan's understandings equally fruitful. Inquiring into English School philosophy, Bevir and Hall argue that the School ought to return to the study of agents and to seeing 'international society' as a contingent construct that *exists in the minds of actors and observers*, rather than some kind of structure. [. . .] It would not imply a complete turning away from the interest in institutions, but it would involve affirming the early English School's position that they are also contingent mental constructs, socially generated and sustained, reflecting *the beliefs of engaged agents* about their rules, usefulness and propriety.[196]

Upon closer inspection, Bevir and Hall engage primarily with the second understanding above, that is Wight's political-theoretical understanding. They take issue with a rather exaggerated version of the third (Buzan's) and overlook the first (Manning's) all but completely.[197] In this, Bevir and Hall's target is the idea of a naturalist version of the third understanding, namely that of international society as a (quasi-)material structure with essences and causal properties.[198]

They are not alone in targeting such a notion. Kaczmarska suggests that 'the idea of international society, which began as a theoretical concept, a way to approach and explain

191. Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12–15.
192. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, 'The Dangers of Interpretation: C.A.W. Manning and the "Going Concern" of International Society', *Journal of International Political Theory* 16, no. 2 (2020): 133–52; C. A. W. Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, 2nd edition (London: The MacMillan Press, 1962).
193. Manning, *The Nature of International Society* 14–17; Tanja E. Aalberts, 'Playing the Game of Sovereign States: Charles Manning's Constructivism Avant-La-Lettre', *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 2 (2010): 247–68.
194. Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (London: Leicester University Press, 1991).
195. Cf Edward Keene, 'International Society as an Ideal Type', in *Theorising International Society*, ed. Cornelia Navari (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 104–24.
196. Bevir and Hall, 'The English School and the Classical Approach', 164. Emphasis added.
197. Charlotta Friedner Parrat, 'Interpretivists in the English School: Aren't We All?', *Journal of International Political Theory*, forthcoming 2023.
198. Bevir and Hall, 'Interpreting the English School', 125–26.

international politics, came to be regarded as self-evident and became endowed with history and geographic presence.'[199] For her, this seems to be a normative problem as much as a theoretical issue, as the early English School (notably Manning) failed 'to acknowledge the potential multiplicity of representations of world politics, all of which could be informed by specific standpoints, ideologies, and differing objectives. [Manning's] question was never about whether "others" might see the world differently'.[200] Jackson similarly notes that Manning's defence of Apartheid could be understood as him 'perhaps deliberately' committing the 'category mistake of equating intellectual constructs with valuable social objects'.[201]

All of these critiques are directed at the analyst's (Buzan's third version) understanding of international society, but project it onto the first (Manning's) conception. We submit that this conflates two distinct interpretations of international society, and ignores the third. In order to get past this conflation, we suggest a detour into the political thinking of the era preceding the British Committee of the Theory of International Politics (BCTIP), the era in and against which Manning and Wight formed their thinking. What did practitioners and observers think about international society then?

'Old School' Internationalist Thought

The English School is the heir of an internationalism that was dominant in English-speaking political thought between roughly the 1870s and the 1940s. These years are commonly overlooked in English School theory.[202] That is a pity, because the School owes its central concept to this period. Long before the BCTIP made it the subject of their seminars, international society and semantic siblings like 'society', 'family' or 'community of states' or 'nations' were common ways of understanding IRs, especially among liberal internationalists. To them, as to later IR theorists, it conveyed the sense of an anarchy nevertheless marked by shared rules and values, pitched in the familiar terms of 'civilisation' earlier in the period, but increasingly, in the 20th century, also in those of 'humanity' or social progress.

Thus the British philosopher Henry Sidgwick wrote in 1891 that international affairs were characterized by 'a society of Nation-states under "International Law"'.[203] In a speech given at the Second Hague Convention (1907), the former French premier Léon Bourgeois argued that 'it is at The Hague that this society [of nations] has truly become aware of itself [*a pris véritablement conscience d'elle-même*]' because there, 'in both the legislation of war as that of peace, the rules of the organization and development of this

199.   Katarzyna Kaczmarska, 'Reification in IR: The Process and Consequences of Reifying the Idea of International Society', *International Studies Review* 21 (2019): 348.

200.   Ibid., 351–52.

201.   Jackson, 'The Dangers of Interpretation', 146.

202.   For a partial exceptions, see Cornelia Navari, *Internationalism and the State in the Twentieth Century* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

203.   Cited in Duncan Bell and Casper Sylvest, 'International Society in Victorian International Thought: T. H. Green, Herbert Spencer, and Henry Sidgwick', *Modern Intellectual History* 3, no. 2 (2006): 207–38, 229.

society are being elaborated' with the 'common consent of humanity'.[204] It bears noting that, in French as in other Romance languages, Bourgeois' vision of international society gave its name to the first universal international organization, the League or *Société des Nations*. A year after the League's foundation, the political economist John A. Hobson thought the idea that there was 'an incipient society of states or nations' was held by 'nearly everyone', though in 1924 the US-American Wilsonian Clark Eichelberger thought it was a 'new element' created by the need at Paris in 1919 to solve the 'social problems that concerned all states'.[205] It should not surprise, then, that the first course in IR offered at the London School of Economics, given by the leading liberal internationalist and Olympian athlete Philip Noel-Baker, included lectures on international society, which Manning expanded into the long-running first-year course on 'The Structure of International Society' when he took over from Noel-Baker in 1930.[206]

The League's gradual disintegration in the 1930s did not shatter international society thinking. Even those evincing an early 'realist' approach to IR, such as the German exile and jurist Schwarzenberger in a 1941 book titled *Power Politics*, argued that 'the study of international relations is the branch of sociology that is concerned with international society', which he differentiated from 'world society' and from 'international community'.[207] The call for an 'active international society' was the starting point for Mitrany's seminal statement of functionalism, while Morgenthau, expressing a common thought in the late 1940s, thought that the transformation of 'the existing society of sovereign nations into a world state' was 'indispensable' to world peace.[208] It was only from the 1950s that international society gradually disappeared from general usage and became a term of jargon associated with a particular community of scholars that, from the 1980s, began to be called the English School.[209]

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204. Léon Bourgeois, *Pour la société des nations* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1910), 76–7.
205. Hobson quoted in Bell and Sylvest, 'International Society', 208; Eichelberger in Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 175.
206. Lecture notes for International Relations course, 1928–1929 and 1929–1930, Files 3–4, Box 12, Section 8: Speeches and Broadcasts, 1914–1982, Papers of Philip Noel-Baker (NBKR 8/12/3-4), Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, UK; Peter Wilson, 'The Montague Burton Chair in International Relations at LSE and Its Occupants: A Brief History', *LSE Department of International Relations* (blog), 14 January 2021, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/internationalrelations/2021/01/14/the-montague-burton-chair-in-international-relations-at-lse-and-its-occupants-a-brief-history/.
207. Confusingly to the present-day reader, Schwarzenberger (drawing on Tönnies) meant by 'international community' something close to the later ES concept of 'world society', which, to him, conversely meant simply global international society. *Power Politics: A Study of International Society*, 2nd edition (London: Stevens & Sons, 1951), 8, 4–5 and *passim*. A similar phrase can be found on p. 25 of the first edition.
208. David Mitrany, 'The Functional Approach to World Organization', *International Affairs* 24, no. 3 (1948): 350–63; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The struggle for power and peace*, 1st edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948, 4th repr. 1950), 419.
209. As late as 1983, Terry Nardin could observe 'that the expression . . . has fallen out of favour' with few exceptions in the US, but not in Britain. *Law, Morality, and the Relations of States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1983), 27–8fn4.

This necessarily brief and sketchy conceptual history throws up two points for the English School today. The first concerns its historiography, and the other, its memory. It is of course entirely conventional to note that international society is an old notion, common among Victorians, which fell out of usage early in the 20th century, only to be preserved or revived by the English School. Yet, what the above makes clear is that the notion had not yet disappeared from the wider discipline by the time the BCTIP started working. It was not specific to them nor peculiarly English. We suggest, therefore, that the English School's signal contribution was not to preserve or revive but to *theorize* international society, which until then, like all of pre-1950s IR, had been unsystematic, atheoretical and more concerned with shaping actual IRs than with academic rigour.[210]

This backstory allows us to make better sense of the BCTIP within the wider context of IR in the 1950s. As Guilhot, McCourt and others have shown, 1950s IR witnessed a transnational drive to rationalize and formalize the field into a discipline under the sign of 'theory'. Private organizations with their own agendas, like the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations or the Council on Foreign Relations, shaped this drive, for example by putting together American and British Committees on the Theory of International Politics, which helped set the discipline's agenda, not just in their host countries, but across the English-speaking world and beyond.[211] Compared to its American counterpart, we have only a hazy idea of how such 'upstream' factors, to adapt Guilhot's phrase – funding, network and institution-building, disciplinary boundary drawing, and the genealogy of scholarly identities and modes of knowing – impacted intellectual labour in the British case, which has mostly been studied from the inside out.[212] Regardless, both cases have mostly been approached in isolation, that is within their immediate, national contexts. Their positions as nodes in wider, transnational and global networks of knowledge production remain poorly understood. This is important, because the English School grew out of these networks. This context, in sum, implies that there are limits to Bevir and Hall's call for more interpretivism in the English School. For what we observe is that the English School took an actor's category and made it an analytical one, just as it slipped out of general usage. Taking seriously international society as it existed in 'the beliefs of

210. The central point of Jan Stöckmann, *The Architects of International Relations: Building a Discipline, Designing the World, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

211. Nicolas Guilhot, "The French Connection": Éléments pour une histoire des relations internationales en France', Revue française de science politique 67, No. 1 (2017): 43–67; Guilhot, The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 1954 Conference on Theory (New York: Columbia UP, 2011); David M. McCourt, 'Revisiting the Council on Foreign Relations Study Group on International Theory, 1953–54: An Introduction to the Special Section', The International History Review 42, No. 3 (2020): 557–64, and the other essays in that special issue.

212. Nicolas Guilhot, '"The French Connection": Éléments pour une histoire des relations internationales en France', Revue française de science politique 67, No. 1 (2017): 43-67; Guilhot, The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 1954 Conference on Theory (New York: Columbia UP, 2011); David M. McCourt, 'Revisiting the Council on Foreign Relations Study Group on International Theory, 1953–54: An Introduction to the Special Section', The International History Review 42, No. 3 (2020): 557-64, and the other essays in that special issue.

engaged agents',[213] in other words, suggests that we must pay much more attention to the connections between practitioner's understandings and the analytical category than Bevir and Hall allow.

It is clear that memory has played a crucial role here as in the putting together of the English School, which is our second and more conceptual point. A particular memory of internationalism between 1870 and 1950 as naive (or pacifist) was central to Wight's foundational claim that there was 'no international theory' worth the name,[214] as well as Bull's depiction of it as 'idealist' or progressivist in the Aberystwyth papers,[215] as it was to the realist movement in the US. This memory allowed these theorists to present their work as a decisive break with the past, though, as we have seen, their work was deeply rooted in the international thought they ostensibly rejected. As Owens and Rietzler have recently pointed out with respect to the oblivion meted out to women's international thought before the 1980s by men such as Wight, the privileging of 'theory' played a crucial role in silencing several generations of internationalists and their concerns.[216] Such concerns included empire, race, democracy (especially the democratic control of foreign policy), women in international affairs and, ironically, contemporary history. In their place came, in theory's wake, elite perspectives, mainly those of statesmen, diplomats and other 'men of judgment' and 'classics' of political thought.

Theorizing international society, in other words, came at the expense of a broader conception of IRs concerned with the experiences of most of humanity. Confronting the role of memory in the building of English School theory means engaging with the place of gender, race, empire and visions of democratic politics in that body of thought. This, in turn, requires a different sort of interpretivism than the one suggested by Bevir and Hall, namely one that treats the history of ideas as only one among several understandings of international society, and which can thus overcome the inherent selection bias of that approach.

Globalizing the 'Old School'?

As shown in the previous section, we maintain that international society did *not* start as a theoretical concept. It was already widespread and in use among practitioners and observers before it was theorized. Contra Kaczmarska, the English School has not reified its central concept in the sense of studying its own image. Rather, as diplomatic practitioners thought about their own actions as taking place within international society, and let their concerns about that society influence their actions, they contributed to recreating it. When the scholars of the BCTIP started to theorize international society, it was by

213. Bevir and Hall, 'The English School and the Classical Approach', 164.
214. Martin Wight, 'Why Is There No International Theory?', *International Relations* 2, no. 1 (1960): 35–48.
215. Hedley Bull, 'The Theory of International Politics, 1919–1969', in *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics 1919-1969*, ed. Brian Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 33–6.
216. Patricia Owens and Katharina Rietzler, 'Introduction: Toward a History of Women's International Thought', in *Women's International Thought: A New History*, eds. Owens and Rietzler (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2021), 1–25, 9.

'translat[ing] into "Academese" what practitioners of international relations [. . .] already did and thought'.[217] The performative twist is that they built on something the effects of which they already observed, theorized it and taught it to generations of students (of whom many went into the Foreign Service or participated in public debate about these things), and thereby contributed to re-creating or maintaining the idea of international society. In this way, the connection between practitioners' and analysts' understandings of international society goes both ways.

Contra Bevir and Hall, meanwhile, international society was not treated as a naturalist structure in the same sense as a mountain which a hiker either has to climb or to find a way to round. It instead has effects to the extent that practitioners take it into account in their work, an extent that has arguably varied over time. To appreciate this, we again point to its performative qualities; that is, the idea that sticking a label to something may produce that very thing, in terms of looping-effects on the micro level, or as self-fulfilling prophecies on the macro level.[218]

At the same time, this does not negate Kaczmarska's or Bevir's and Hall's concern with treating Buzan's third understanding of international society as though it is taking up an existence of its own. This would move it from the intersubjective domain where participants and observers share, and contribute to recreating, international society, into an objective domain where international society exists regardless of what people think about it, and can have independent effects and even agency. They are right to point to this risk of committing a positivist fallacy,[219] but their concern might rather serve as a warning than as a description of a *fait accompli*.

More interesting is the normative risk of perpetuating an old and Eurocentric worldview which the performativity of the concept brings. Both Kaczmarska and Jackson point to ways to avoid that trap. One is obviously to admit that, in practice, international society is *one* of the ideas held and recreated by international society's practitioners, but not the only one. This opens up room for fruitful inquiry into how international society might clash or interact with other such ideas and as such facilitate the globalization of the School. Another way is to select what parts of the game are still important to play, and which parts should be discarded. 'Explaining how to play chess, or "sovereign states," or colonial-imperial racial hierarchy', as Jackson writes, 'can after all just as easily be treated as part of an argument for *not* playing any of those games'.[220]

217. Charlotta Friedner Parrat, 'Institutional Constraints and Institutional Tensions in the Reform of the UN Security Council', in *International Organization in the Anarchical Society*, eds. Tonny Brems Knudsen and Cornelia Navari (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 79–98.

218. Stefano Guzzini, 'The Concept of Power: A Constructivist Analysis', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 495–521; Jens Bartelson, *War in International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

219. For instance of trying to figure out 'how one would go about measuring [the English School's] core independent (causal) variable, "international society"', Dale Copeland, 'A Realist Critique of the English School', *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003): 427.

220. Jackson, 'The Dangers of Interpretation', 146.

This choosing, of playing the game or not, is however easier for academic observers than for practitioners. While academics can opt to study a concept in order to criticize it, or the performative effects it has, statespeople can only work with what they think they have. Although Bevir and Hall argue that statespeople are unconstrained by structures such as international society, which only appear as 'a kind of tradition into which individuals are initiated, not as some kind of structure in which they are held',[221] it is not clear why that tradition should not influence what possibilities agents think they have. Moreover, they could come to share that same understanding with their peers, for instance in the diplomatic community.

The fixed, objectivist structure against which Bevir and Hall caution is arguably a strawman, but if international society is understood as a concept with a memory, a history and performative effect on what is being studied, it can still be constraining and enabling for those who work within it. Navari suggests that

> understanding [English School] theory in terms of co-constitution, in which situated agents constantly react against, support or renovate the institutions within which they act, clarifies much of both the ES theory and the thrust of its empirical studies. [. . .] It also draws attention to the central dynamic that the ES theory proposes at the heart of international political processes: situated agents in organised settings pushing against rules.[222]

Importantly, therefore: the English School is not peddling a naturalist philosophy of science. It is interpretivist in the sense of being interested in what agents think that they are doing, and especially in how these self-understandings evolve over time. This does not exclude an interest in how these self-understandings are intersubjective and sometimes taken for granted, thereby constituting structures which agents experience as limiting (and enabling).[223] The agents pushing against those structures by creative interpretation and skilful manoeuvring introduce the dynamic element of the theory. Yet, it needs to reconsider who those agents are, and whom it systematically excludes.

In conclusion, the English School should aim to open up rather than to double down on the interpretivist history of ideas project as proposed by Bevir and Hall. We suggest a way to do that by approaching international society as a performative concept with a memory and a history, modified and reproduced by situated agents, both practitioners and scholars. All three understandings of international society are relevant for this ambition.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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221. Bevir and Hall, 'Interpreting the English School', 125.
222. Cornelia Navari, 'Agents versus Structures in English School Theory: Is Co-constitution the Answer?', *Journal of International Political Theory* 16, no. 2 (2020): 264.
223. Friedner Parrat, 'Interpretivists in the English School' 9–10.

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