

Book Review

International Society: The English School

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The book, *International Society: The English School*, published in 2020 by Springer, is part of book series covering *Trends in European IR Theory*. This book, edited by Cornelia Navari, is an assortment of nine well-researched and well-debated chapters referencing the traditions of the English School. The mission before is to reconstruct the diverse theoretical traditions in International Relations (IR) and delineate the European intellectual contributions in it. In the first introductory chapter the editor argues that IR traditions—encompassing Liberalism, Realism, the English School itself, International Political Economy, International Political Theory, Feminism, and the post-positivist approaches of constructivism and critical theory—are not merely historical relics but living paradigms that evolved in Europe in various times and conjunctures, and now provide essential tools for understanding contemporary global dynamics. To elucidate this, the book collaborates with numerous intellectuals and scholars, who focus on key themes in global governance by resurrecting historical narratives, giving due attention to the contributions of pivotal theorists, thereby offering students, researchers, and practitioners a comprehensive understanding of the discipline.

Following the introduction, Chapter 2 delves into the contributions of C.A.W. Manning to the field of International Relations (IR). Although often overshadowed by contemporaries such as E.H. Carr and Hedley Bull, Manning's meta-theoretical insights have had a lasting impact. This chapter highlights his innovative perspective, which asserts that sovereignty and international law, as the cornerstone of international society, are inextricably linked. Manning's socio-linguistic analysis of sovereignty diverges from rigid, state-centric theories, emphasizing instead the significance of norms and shared meanings is discussed. The usefulness of Manning's framework in anticipating many tenets of constructivist theory, particularly the interplay among action, identity, and the institutional rules governing state interactions is elaborated. This multifaceted understanding of Manning, underscoring the importance of consensus and legitimacy in their formation and enforcement of international norm, carries profound implications for contemporary global governance.

In Chapter 3, Andrew Hurrell examines Hedley Bull's conceptualization of order within international society. Bull defines social order as a collective of states that recognize shared interests, values, and rules, despite operating within an anarchical system. This definition provides a critical lens through which to view the inherent fragility and limitations of international governance. Author attempt to capture Bull's thoughts on legitimacy, authority, and social interactions among states offers valuable insights into how states justify their actions within the international society. Hurrell's subsequent analysis accentuates the enduring relevance of Bull's work to contemporary theory, particularly in addressing the dialectical tensions among power, norms, and governance in an increasingly globalized world.

Daniel M. Green, in Chapter 4, critically examines the historical development of international society beyond the Eurocentric perspective. The chapter point attention to the dynamic nature of evolving rules and norms, as a result a significant shift from Eurocentric expansionist model to one that actively incorporates hybridization and co-production took form. This evolution, according to Green, is driven by the agency and interactions of non-Western states like China. By contesting the established norms China significantly redefined them. Highlighting this interactive process reflects a dynamic view of international system where power relations are not unidirectional, but constantly evolving through complex, multi-directional exchanges.

Chapter 5, by Tonny Brems Knudsen, examines the evolution and consolidation of the English School during the 1980s. The chapter explores various critiques and defenses of the English School, especially detailing the contrasting perspectives of Roy E. Jones, who, in 1981, called for its dissolution, and Barry Buzan, who, in his 1993 article, recognized English school's sound status. According to the author Jones, adopting a behaviorist approach, primarily critiqued School's reliance on historical focus, normative frameworks, and concepts such as international society which lacked empirical rigor, statistical analysis, and quantifiable models. Jones critique underscores the urgency for the English School to reassess its foundations in response to evolving international norms. Additionally, the chapter elaborates the concepts of pluralism and solidarism within the English School's framework of International Society. Pluralism asserts the primacy of state sovereignty and non-intervention, emphasizing the coexistence of diverse states with distinct cultural and political values. It suggests that international order is maintained through mutual respect for sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs, prioritizing stability over ethical imperatives. Conversely, solidarism advocates for a more interventionist approach, positing that universal moral standards—such as human rights—transcend state boundaries. This conception argues that the international community has a collective responsibility to uphold these standards, even at the expense of state sovereignty. Both perspectives inform nuanced understanding of global governance and humanitarian intervention, particularly in the post-Cold War context. The tensions between these two perspectives reflect broader philosophical opinions on the role of ethics in international relations.

Chapter 6, by Laust Schouenborg, begins by highlighting how English School theory was at odds with American mainstream realism. However, during the 1990s and 2000s Barry Buzan made significant efforts to bridge the understanding of international society between these two perspectives. Notwithstanding, he faced serious resistance from both sides. Buzan's engagement with the pluralist-solidarist debate reveals a fundamental acknowledgment of the complexities inherent in international relations. In his attempts to address the tensions between theoretical perspectives his commitment to structural realism persisted, and his methodological pluralism laid the groundwork for a broader understanding of international society that encompasses regional dynamics and seeks inclusive dialogue.

William Bain examined the controversy surrounding pluralism and solidarism within the English School in Chapter 7, using the Syrian civil war as a case study. The chapter explored the divergent interpretations of state sovereignty and intervention by the pluralist and solidarisms, emphasizing the moral and ethical dilemmas the international actors faced during the Syrian crisis. The Syrian war case study demonstrates the real time struggles within international society, where the question of prioritizing state sovereignty over collective human welfare impacted decisions. Bain's analysis unveils the persistent need for more nuanced approaches that could help in effectively balancing order and justice at the international level.

Chapter 8, by Yannis A. Stivachtis, discusses the evolution of regionalism within the English School. Early scholars, particularly Hedley Bull, regarded regional integration as largely irrelevant and even detrimental to global social integration, thereby sidelining regional dynamics

and viewing them as secondary to interactions at the global level. This viewpoint reflected a systematic disregard for the complexities and significant interactions inherent at regional levels. Barry Buzan posited that regions are not merely peripheral but actively shape both regional and global orders. Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) provided a framework for understanding the unique inter-state dynamics that emerge within regions empirically. Overall, the chapter convincingly emphasizes the significance of the regional level and the role of local interpretations in shaping international legal and political discourse.

In Chapter 9, Cornelia Navari discusses the interplay between institutions and organizations particularly through the lens of English School. The institutions shape the context within which organizations operate. The early proponents of the English School, despite recognizing the existence of organizations like the United Nations, downplayed the significance of organizations, preferring traditional practices like alliances and diplomacy as the core institutions of international society. They argued that true order in international relations depended on more fundamental institutions that predated these bodies. Later, the theoretical contributions of Robert Keohane, Alexander Wendt, and Barry Buzan facilitated a more integrated view of these components within the broader landscape of international relations.

Overall, this book provides a comprehensive and insightful examination of the theoretical foundations of European IR in general, and the English School in particular. The most distinctive feature of the book is that while highlighting the contributions of the English School it elucidates the in-depth debates on various IR themes. This approach enables the reader not just to appreciate the School's contributions but also develop an in-depth understanding of the debates by various leading scholars. Furthermore, it clearly distinguishes European views from American realism, which holds analytical value for researchers, strategists, and policymakers.

REFERENCES

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