Overview

A note on some recent writings on international relations and organizations[1]

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Broadly speaking, books which come naturally under the rubric of 'International relations and organizations' are concerned with certain basic questions which recur in the academic discipline of international relations (IR): how is the world structured and institutionalized, and how do the institutions work? How do the units of the world come to be what they are? What are the dominant patterns of behaviour they exhibit, and what is the quality of life they enjoy? How has the world come to be structured in this way? Where ought the world to be going? How are we to answer such a question? And are there signs that it is going in that or any other way?

One set of writers in IR who have concentrated their attention on some of these basic questions, and produced a relatively well thought out set of answers, with family resemblances among them, are those who have come to be known as the 'English school'. It would not be very sensible to be categorical about who is inside, outside, of this school. I was reminded of this when reading a draft version of Tim Dunne's just published book on the English school, *Inventing international society: a history of the English school* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

Still, it makes sense, in my view at least, to talk of close family resemblances among the following writers: C. A. W. Manning, Hedley Bull, F. S. Northedge, Alan James, Martin Wight, Adam Watson, and R. J. Vincent. These authors are predominantly mid-1970s and mid-1980s writers, and predate by a decade the rise of 'critical theoretical' perspectives within IR. Ten years is a long time in a still relatively young discipline.[2]

[1] In inviting me to join the Book Reviews advisory panel and head the 'International relations and organizations' section of reviews, *International Affairs* advised me that my primary role would be, from time to time, to write a literature survey, 'combining a broad look at the current state of research in the particular field with a selective summary highlighting the most important works available and forthcoming'. This note is my response to the request. The space allocated has forced me to be very selective, and the time available has made my selection somewhat arbitrary.

[2] A good history of IR is found in Brian C. Schmidt, *The political discourse of anarchy: a disciplinary history of international relations* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

It is noteworthy therefore that there is a resurgence of interest, in the late 1990s, in the English school perspective, one which draws attention to the society of sovereign states as the institutional framework of the world, and ordered anarchy as the chief characteristic of the lives of states in this—so it is said—relatively benign and in any case hard to alter political framework of coexistence and cooperation.

I noted Dunne's work above as well as another book on the English school, *International society and the development of international relations theory* (London: Cassell, 1998), edited by Barbara Allen Roberson. Contributors to the latter volume include some unsurprising names: Adam Watson, James Mayall, Robert Jackson, Tim Dunne and Nicholas Wheeler, among others. The resurgence of interest in the English school is neither confined to these two works, nor necessarily to British authors. Across the Atlantic, there has recently appeared *Anarchy and order: the interplay of politics and law in international relations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997) by James C. Hsiung, who accommodates the English school views, particularly those of Bull.

Also influenced by Bull is John A. Hall's *International orders* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996). Hall's historical–sociological analysis is conducted in the light of six standard mechanisms of international order—balance-of-power realism, great power concerts, inter-liberal pacificism, economic interdependence, and hegemonic stability; and with respect to three historical epochs—the pre-Westphalian era, the rise of the European state system, and the Cold War period.

For the present and the immediate future, Hall favours a mix of realism and liberalism; and while favouring strong states, he also envisages a more 'solidarist' international society based on liberal values. He proclaims: 'any attempt to deal with the horrors that international relations can bring depends upon the possession and reaffirmation of the values of universal liberalism'.[3] In this connection, John Macmillan's *On liberal peace: democracy, war and the international order* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998) should be noted. This is one of the most important contributions to the fast-growing literature on liberalism and peace since 1983, when Michael Doyle first publicized his now famous thesis concerning the phenomenon of peace between liberal states.[4] Macmillan, however, argues that the academic and political attention must be redirected from this much discussed phenomenon towards a critical consideration of the connections between liberalism itself and pacificism. His detailed examination of the history of liberal ideas in theory and practice is reminiscent of the painstaking way in which Wight had conducted his study of international theory.

It is an unfortunate fact about the English school that the more structurally and legally minded members, such as Manning and James, are/were not very

[3] John A. Hall, *International orders* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), p. 197.

[4] Doyle's most recent treatment of this subject is found in his *Ways of war and peace: realism, liberalism, and socialism* (New York: Norton, 1997), to be touched on later.

interested in the historical dimension of international society, and that two leading figures, Wight and Bull, who were interested in world history, died young. This has meant that the question of transformation has not been given as much attention as it deserves.

One writer, who is thoroughly conversant with the works of the English school, especially those of Bull and Wight, but whose long-standing intellectual concern has been the issue of transformation, is Andrew Linklater, and I shall later turn to his third major work, *The transformation of political community* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998). Before then, I wish to consider certain other recent works, which also challenge, supplement or supersede the achievements of the English school.

Constructivism

According to John G. Ruggie, whose essays on international institutionalization over the past 25 years have been edited for republication in his *Constructing world polity*, 'social constructivism', a much-used label in the current IR literature, concerns itself with 'the nature, origins, and functioning of social facts, and what if any specific methodological requirements their study may entail'.[5] 'Social facts' are defined as 'those facts that are produced by virtue of all the relevant actors agreeing that they exist', such as 'Valentine's Day'.[6] According to this definition, Manning—a leading figure, in my view, of the English school—is one of the earliest social constructivists in the IR profession, his own favourite example of social construction being not 'Valentine's Day', but 'Christmas'.[7]

For Manning, international society, international law, conventional international morality, and sovereign states are all inter-subjective mental constructs, sustained by what he called the 'socially prevalent social theory'. One of the foundational aims of IR as an academic discipline, according to him, was to present and scrutinize this fact. Bull attempts in *The anarchical society* to identify the rules and institutions of international society is an extension of this foundational effort, even though, in Bull's theory, 'international society' is no longer an inter-subjective mental construct, but an externally defined ideal-type in the light of which the analysts can try to make sense of what goes on in the arena of world politics.[8]

So what do contemporary social constructivists promise or produce that goes beyond the contributions Manning and others have already made? Ruggie's introduction to the aforementioned collection of his essays is instructive. According to him, constructivists hold that '[a]t the level of the international

[5] J. G. Ruggie, *Constructing the world polity* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 13.
[6] Ibid., p. 12.
[7] See C. A. W. Manning, *The nature of international society*, reissue (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1975).
[8] See Hidemi Suganami, 'The structure of institutionalism: an anatomy of British mainstream international relations', *International Relations* 7: 5, May 1983, pp. 2363–81.

polity...[t]here can be no mutually comprehensible conduct of international relations...without mutually recognized constitutive rules, resting on collective intentionality'.[9] This is not new, viewed from the British side—it is precisely the point that Manning insisted on as against the rising tide of American behaviouralism in the 1960s.[10]

However, even with respect to the constitution of the international polity, some noteworthy works are emerging. Kurt Burch's *'Property' and the making of the international system* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998) is one. This is a book of 'conceptual history' written from a constructivist standpoint. Burch considers the emergence of the modern international system in terms of the concepts of property and property rights. His argument is that the development of 'property' is a crucial aspect of contemporary claims about the modern state sovereignty, international law, state conflict, global political economy, and the world system as a whole.

As for the level of individual actors, according to Ruggie, 'constructivism seeks...to problematize the identities and interests of states, to show that and how they are socially constructed'.[11] 'Social constructivists...argue and have shown that even identities are generated in part by international interaction'.[12] A good example of this is *Russia and the idea of Europe: a study in identity and international relations* (London: Routledge, 1996) by Iver B. Neumann—a historical work by a Russianist, also steeped in the English school tradition as well as in recent developments in IR theory. Other noteworthy examples include *Identity, interest and action: a cultural explanation of Sweden's intervention in the Thirty Years' War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) by Erik Ringmar, who introduces the idea of narrative identity; and Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, eds, *State sovereignty as social construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), which contains a number of interesting essays.

I should add that David Campbell's earlier pathbreaking work, *Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) will appear revised in 1998 from the University of Minnesota Press. Though Campbell separates himself from social constructivists, he is in any case one of the first IR scholars radically to problematize states' identities and interests. For him, it is not the case that a state exists first *and then* goes on to perform its foreign policy; rather it is in the continual act of delineating itself from things presented as 'foreign'—outside as well as inside itself—that a state's identity is constituted.

[9] Ruggie, *Constructing world polity*, p. 33.
[10] See Manning, *The nature of international society*.
[11] Ruggie, *Constructing world polity*, p. 33.
[12] Ibid., p. 33.

Retreat of the state

Even though Manning accepted that the state is a social construct, he was utterly dogmatic in his assertion that states 'are not constituted for the purpose of withering away'.[13] As can be anticipated from the fact that a dominant political theoretical influence on the English school was Vattel, there is nothing in their writings to indicate that sovereign states are dysfunctional, not here to stay, or already diminishing in importance. And it is here that there has been a serious challenge from those who think otherwise. *The retreat of the state: the diffusion of power in the global economy* by Susan Strange is the most trenchant. The power of non-state actors has been her main concern ever since the mid-1970s, when the English school writers were busy confirming the contemporary relevance of national sovereignty.[14]

According to Strange, the authority of the governments of all states, large and small, has weakened as a result of technological and financial change and the accelerated integration of national economies into one single global market economy. At the same time, Strange observes, authority in society and over economic transactions is exercised increasingly by non-state agents, and this has come to be freely acknowledged by those who are subject to it. But this process, according to her, has created a vacuum at the heart of international political economy not adequately filled by inter-governmental institutions or by a hegemonic power exercising leadership in the common interest.

What we now have, says Strange, is 'a ramshackle assembly of conflicting sources of authority'.[15] Our loyalty is sometimes with the government of a state, but other times with a firm, or with a social movement operating across territorial frontiers, sometimes with a family or a generation, sometimes with fellow members of an occupation or a profession. In a world of multiple, diffused authority, she concludes, 'our individual consciences are our only guide'.[16]

But what she calls 'our individual consciences' cannot be fixed items like our individual genetic makeup; they are constructed and reconstructed through social interaction and reflection. This directs us to a new avenue of enquiry—how might our 'individual consciences' be formed so that they can approximate to a 'con-science' as opposed to arbitrary wills?

Another book which considers the contemporary relevance of the state is Ian Clark's *Globalization and fragmentation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), which contains a rich historical overview of twentieth-century inter-

[13] Manning, 'The legal framework in a world of change', in Brian Porter, ed., *The Aberystwyth papers: international politics 1919–1969* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 310.
[14] See Hedley Bull, *The anarchical society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); Alan James, 'Contemporary relevance of national sovereignty', in Michael Leifer, ed., *Constraints and adjustments in British foreign policy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1972).
[15] Susan Strange, *The retreat of the state: the diffusion of power in the global ecnomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 199.
[16] Ibid., p. 199.

national relations. This is also one of the increasing number of works which refer to 'globalization' in the title, some of which Clark examines. For Clark, however, globalization is not a process with its own inexorable logic. In his view, 'it is hyperbolic to think that there will be a sudden collapse of the state in the face of the new international circumstances and the corrosive effects of economic globalization'.[17] Globalization has often been an effect of state policies, and it is, he thinks, reversible. He concludes:

> Precisely how the balance between globalization and fragmentation will be adjusted depends on the new role that states are able to forge for themselves, and how successfully they manage to mediate between increasingly potent international pressures [or forces of globalization] and the heightened levels of domestic discontent [or forces of fragmentation].[18]

In a manner that parallels Strange's concluding remark noted earlier, this, too, opens a new avenue of enquiry—how should states (and other actors) work out the correct balance between the demands of globalization and fragmentation, universalism and particularism? Such questions are within the realm of international theory, to which, from the English school, Wight and Bull are the main contributors.

International theory

One of the long-lasting contributions of the English school is the attention it has drawn to classical political theory as a guide to discussing the present and future of IR. The most famous here is Wight's comparative study of 'realism', 'rationalism', and 'revolutionism'. In the United States, there recently appeared Michael W. Doyle's *Ways of war and peace*, noted earlier, which is similar in conception to Wight's work.

In this very large but lucidly written volume, Doyle urges us to look again at some classical theorists (e.g., Thucydides, Rousseau, Locke, Marx) whom he divides into 'realists', 'liberals', and 'socialists'. No single school has all the answers to today's fundamental international issues, Doyle maintains, but we do have the theoretical tools to meet contemporary challenges. Affinities with Wight's work are startling. However, the two writers' categories are not identical—Doyle explicitly rejects Wight's '3Rs' as tendentious and historically unworkable. Further, compared with Wight's work, aimed primarily at identifying patterns of thought,[19] Doyle's is directed more towards making sense of international phenomena in the light of the three schools' theoretical contentions. Still, Doyle's work is one significant illustration of the trend towards

[17] Ian Clark, *Globalization and fragmentation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 195.
[18] Ibid., p. 202.
[19] See Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter, eds, *International theory: the three traditions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991).

Anglo-American convergence in the recent IR literature; much attention drawn towards constructivism, noted earlier, is another.

Wight's works—as well as Bull's—are also used, rather more extensively, by Andrew Linklater. The publication of his *The transformation of political community* is a significant event in the contemporary history of international thought. Bull has remarked that the importance of Grotius is to have shown, in the midst of the Thirty Years' War, the need for and the possibility of a rule-governed society of sovereigns/sovereign states.[20] The importance of Linklater, it will be said at some future point, is to have shown, as the Westphalian system came increasingly to be seen as inadequate, the need for and the possibility of the transformation of this system towards a more satisfactory institutional framework. Aptly, *Ethical foundations of the post-Westphalian era* is the subtitle of this ambitious, erudite, and powerful book. Like Grotius, Linklater is a great synthesizer, apparently so attached to 'discourse ethics' that he presents his position as an outcome of constructive dialogue between existing positions propounded by leading social and political theorists.

The argument of the book is in three parts: normative, sociological and praxeological. Starting from the view that communities are systems of inclusion and exclusion, and focusing on politics as resistance to unjust exclusion, Linklater argues for political communities that (i) 'would not attach deep moral significance to differences of class, ethnicity, gender, race and alien status'; (ii) would, however, 'display sensitivity to the variations of culture, gender and ethnicity'; and (iii) would also 'reduce material inequalities' within and across their boundaries.[21] Against the neo-realists, Linklater argues that this (normatively necessary) 'enlargement of the sphere in which human beings treat one another as equals'[22] is a historical–sociological possibility. Then comes 'praxeology', which is not preoccupied with issues of strategy and tactics, but reflects 'on the moral resources within existing social arrangements which political actors can harness for radical purposes'.[23] It is his judgement that globalization and fragmentation (at least partly) create unprecedented opportunities for approximating to the goal.

But, of course, such a process is not likely to take place everywhere at the same time. Linklater therefore suggests a multiple institutional framework, accommodating Bull's ideas and terminology, which, in turn, are an application of Wight's classification of international thought.[24] Western Europe at the centre may develop what Bull has called a neo-medieval setup, in which there would be significant transfers of power to subnational and supranational political authorities; a more 'solidarist' international society may surround this

[20] Bull, 'The importance of Grotius in the study of international relations', in *Hugo Grotius and international relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 71–2.
[21] Andrew Linklater, *The transformation of political community* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), p. 5.
[22] Ibid., p. 4.
[23] Ibid., p. 5.
[24] See Bull, *The anarchical society.*

core, while a majority of states may still remain committed to 'pluralist' principles of international society (and, I may perhaps add, some of their relationships may be more 'system-like' than 'society-like').

Although the central purpose of Linklater's book is to 'reaffirm the cosmopolitan critique of the sovereign states-system',[25] and he is a staunch critic of the principle of sovereignty conceived of as a principle of moral inclusion/exclusion, there is an interesting confirmation, in Linklater's institutional sketch, of the virtue of international society of sovereign states. To my mind, this institutional framework is capable of evolutionary transition; there is nothing in the concept of 'sovereignty' or 'international society' which prevents this. Just as much as it is capable of staying where it is (or even deteriorating into a mere 'system of states'), international society is also capable of being transformed into a more integrated form, if and where the conditions are there to support the move and actors are apprised of the options and skilled in the politics of reconstituting their political systems.

Concluding remarks

> Omar Khayyam, when he sang of 'this sorry scheme of things', did not thereby imply that he would have been happier without one... And we, too, like him, shall perceive that there already exists a scheme, a sorry one perhaps, but given, and a going concern... Yet, while perceiving it as given, we should not mistake its genesis. This scheme was not the work of Nature... It is artificial, man-developed—a 'socio-fact' in the jargon of some. What this generation can hope to affect is not so much the present inherited structure of the given scheme of things, man-created though it be; but, the manner in which the coming generation comes to read, re-interpret, and, in re-interpreting, to remould, the scheme.[26]

This was what Manning wrote, initially in 1962, to 'the inquiring generation'. Now, in his epilogue to the forthcoming second edition of *Writing security*, Campbell, who, incidentally, would reject Manning's legal positivistic stance on 'schemes', still concurs with him, when he (rightly) characterizes the function of academic writers as 'interpretive interventions' with political effects.[27] The 'coming generation' has come, has read, and is re-interpreting the scheme—in different ways. In so doing, its members are partaking in the interventionary process of remoulding the scheme.

[25] Linklater, *The transformation of political community*, p. 2.
[26] Manning, *The nature of international society*, pp. 8–9.
[27] I am grateful to David Campbell for showing me the relevant passage of his forthcoming volume.