INTRODUCTION INTO THE ENGLISH SCHOOL AND THE CURRENT REALITY RELATED RESEARCH TOPICS

© Lin Ren, Doctor Candidate, Center for Global Politics, Free University Berlin E-Mail: linren@zedat.fu-berlin.de

This paper declares the basic claims and divisions of the English School. It introduced the basic concepts, such as international system, international society and world society. Debates within the English School members addressed and reflected some very important phenomena in the global politics. Through exploring these topics, the English School could consolidate its status as an alternative approach except for the American dominated IR (International Relations) main streams. Therefore, this paper has both academic and social significance.

Keywords: *Via Media; Pluralist Methodology; Order; Justice; Anti-Globalization*

0.1 Introduction to the Emergence of the English school

The English School is not only the IR (International Relations) theoretical school that is from "England". The English School devotes to construct a non-American cluster of the macro-IR theory. The scholars within the English School camp are not only those who come from England, while they are from the worldwide but bearing the similar spirit. It is true that the former English School scholars are imitate English professors and students. The background of the current 3rd generation of the English School, however, becomes more diversified. What the English School stands for currently is more an academic spirit and thinking pattern than a national theory for England. This academic spirit of doing the international relations study is well exemplified by Wight's "3R tradition" discourses, which has broken the convention of holding a single theoretical perspective.
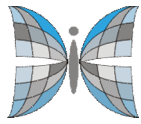
The birth of the English School was in January 1959, when The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics was established with the great effort of Herbert Butterfield (Butterfield, 1950), who believed in the Christian spirit and used the original-sin and providence to explain the event emerging in international relations. In his book, *Christianity and History*, he referred to the Hobbies unsafe dilemma among nations, and offered the solution using the religious thinking pattern that institutions could help to decrease sin; hence the tendency towards war could be reduced.

Martin Wight was the student of Butterfield College. He was famous for his "3R" conversation that has become the basis of the whole English School. He suggested in year 1957 that there were three traditions within the IR field: Realism, Rationalism and Revolutionism. Realism perceived the world with the concept of power and system, which was represented by Morgenthau and Waltz. It was rooted in the Hobbies' classical thought of the world. Revolutionism held its' root in the Kant's notion and looked at the world through a non-governmental perspective. The "world society" was a good example of Kant's thought that applied into the International Relations studies. Where the English School stood was the domain of Rationalism, which was also named as Grotiusism. The English School chose this mid-path between pure Realism and Revolutionism. It observed the world with a sociologic world view. It believed in the destination of the "world society" was the ideal cooperation pattern for the world. The English School, however, has not only restrained itself within the domain of rationalism. On the contrary, what it has contributed to the IR field is its plural standing points (*via media*). It swings around the central axis of Rationalism deviating to one end of Realism and then to another (Revolutionism). So it is easy to detect the English School that bears the characteristics of both Realism and Revolutionism. The distance towards Realism and Revolutionism divides the English School itself into two camps. In the following section, I am going to modify these points in details and will give more evidences.

Bull is an Australian scholar, whose teacher is Wight. He was the first one to raise the concept of the international system and the international society, which shaped the main body of the early English School theories. His thoughts were well-summarized in his book *The Anarchical Society: A study of Order in World Politics* that was published in year 1977. He was also famous for his pluralism standpoint.

There are more scholars who belong to the 2nd and 3rd generations of the English School, such as Barry Buzan, who is the most "passive"

English School member. The IR students find it is interesting that he felt so hesitate to be catalogued into the English School and why he refused to be grouped into the constructivism sub-camp within the English School. He basically based his thoughts on Waltz's structural idea and also believed in constructivism.

Hence, the English School has broken the tradition of limiting within only one theoretical approach like what Realism and Revolutionism have done. It has broadened the single theoretical focus. Even though the English School fluctuates from Realism and Revolutionism, it holds Rationalism as its central axis. This methodology-pluralism has shorted the distance between theoretical explanation and the world reality. Yet it also has lessened the explanatory power of the English School, since theory should be simple and abstract. The multi-methodology is one of the major traits of the English school.

0.2 The Debate between Behaviorism and Traditionalism: The Background of the Birth of the English School

Ever since the 1950s till the 1960th, the heated debate between scientific Behaviorism and Traditionalism has stimulated the birth of the English School. The first Great debate in the IR field originated from the differential ontologies that Realism and Idealism hold, while the second one was rooted at epistemological difference.

The Second Great Debate between Traditionalism and Scientism was around the epistemological differences between traditionalism and Scientism. The basic controversy was whether the methodology of natural science is applicable to the International Relations Studies.

The aim of social science is partially about resolving the basic philosophical as well as methodological puzzles, for example through which way people can get to know the reality, the how to understand the statements we have formulated and make sure the results we arrive at are correct. Traditionalists and other scholars came up with their own solutions which bear some contrasting different characteristics. In one sense, the 2nd great debate on the IR methodology is the debate between the purposes and approaches of the social research, namely whether the social scientific work should aim at "explanation" or "understanding". The behaviorist prefers explain the social reality by causalities as what natural scientists are doing, while traditionalist does not think the IR theory is sufficient enough to offer "explanations" to the social reality, because only with scientific exploitation leaves the normative behavior in the social

reality unexplained. As a result, "understanding" the social reality is also important.

The Behaviorism prefers the scientific approach that is similar to the natural science. The assumption of this approach is that the researcher is objective and excluded from the observing object, which means the attitude of researcher will not affect the result of a certain event. It is the typical scientific positivist argument.

Behaviorism concerns with giving a causal explanation to the world. It follows the research pattern of natural science: to begin with, the researcher should transfer the abstract concept into empirical and observable variables. This process is called operationalization. Then, the researchers prefer collecting recurring evidences (large-N) rather than doing a single case study. It applies the precise techniques to gather enough amounts of data, which reflect a certain pattern. The most representative promoters of Behaviorism are Morton Kaplan, Karl Deutsch and David Singer. They brought mathematic, computer science and statistics into the International relations studies, which made the higher quality of data management possible.

Traditionalism, however, has detected the disadvantage of the pure behaviorism-oriented research model when it is brought to the social science, given that positivism has a fatal flaw that it cannot answer the normative questions in the international relations. (Jackson, 2000) Traditionalism, on the contrary, has responded to the basic trouble by deviating social science from natural science. In the social science field, the traditionalist assumes that the objective facts and subjective values are sticking to each other tightly and cannot be detached. The hermeneutic method has originated from the human's commitment of exploring the meaning of the social events. Social facts and values cannot be distinguished. The researcher's value preference influences the conclusion that is drawn from the research of objective phenomena. Another point of traditionalism, which confuses a lot of IR students, is the "mutual construction effects" between the actor and structure. This is the main argument of social constructivism. I will later analysis it this point in detail.

Compared with Behaviorism's positivism approach, Traditionalism prefers the humanity and historical path, which focuses on understanding and interpreting instead of explaining.

The English School attaches itself more onto the Traditionalism approaches. Its contribution is also based on modifying Positivism

since some international events might not be fully explained with the causal logics like in nature science, so that people could only try to "understand" the international events through a dozen of other perspectives, such as law, history and philosophy. Bull has suggested that if people try to bind the study of international relations within the strict framework and standard of science, then it needs to process the research from a logical or philosophical depiction and rigorous empirical test. (Wight, 1966) The English school has tried to fulfill the "vacuum" left by the extreme scientific Behaviorism without going completely against the scientific approach. Bull suggested that the Dichotomy of scientific and classical approaches excludes other characteristics to be concerned. (Bull, 1966) The main point of the English School is the methodology pluralism and the co-existing of the international system, international society and world society. These points have made great contribution to the IR studies, while it has also triggered a lot of controversies. In Section 1 and 2, I will give further information on this topic. The international system, the international society and the world society hold different methodological grounds, while the English School has tried to combine the whole three in order to make the international relations in the world more "understandable", which definitely implies that it will be characterized by the "methodology-pluralism".

To sum up, the English School was the output of the 2nd great debate within the IR domain and made a certain contribution to the International Relations Studies due to its special perspective compared with the American dominated and single approach oriented IR studies. Just as Bull has pointed out that the destination of the English School is "to warm the coals of an older tradition of historical and political reflection during the long, dark winter of the "social scientific" ascendancy."(Bull, 2000; Linklater, 2000)

1.0 International System, International Society and World Society

In this part, I am going to summarize the main claim of the English School. I start with the three basic concepts and the relationship among them: **international system, international society and world society**. The pluralist-methodology offers the English School an innovative pathway to observe the international relations in three different perspectives. The scholars of this school do not think the three go against each other. Barry Buzan, who refused to consider himself as one member of the English School, however, has maintained this point. The English School stands at the middle ground (*via media*) of Realism and Idealism.

The international system, a typical Realism and Neorealism term, has been the traditional analysis level of international relations studies that was dominated by American Camp. But the English School has raised some new points that distinguish from Realism and Neorealism, for example they hold different ideas about the formation of the international system, anarchy and hegemony.

Wight has argued the international system "is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions to cause them to behave – at least in some measure – as parts of a whole" (Wight:1977: 9–10). When the contact capability is low, the international convention of trade and other norm is not strong enough to bond nations.

The pre-assumption of the existence of the international system is that anarchy is the main character of the international system. The existence of anarchy, however, does not prohibit the emergence of the international society. Peace, order and justice have been frequently mentioned, while the English School has distinguished itself from utopians by emphasizing the ineradicable conflict in the international system.

Security dilemma also exists within the English School camp's argument. Given that nations hold different cultural backgrounds, the international system could also struggle with chaos once the contact frequencies amount. Waltz considered this kind of system to be "underdeveloped system", in which the "struggle of individual units to survive automatically leads to the balance of power and the reproduction of the anarchic structures of the system."(Waltz, 1979) What could bring order to this kind of international system? The member of the English School argued that a hegemonic stability is possible at the structural level. The English School member believed that "the great powers can be 'great responsibles' which do not place their own interests before the task of strengthening international order"(Linklater,2005:88). Therefore, "international society can survive in the absence of a balance of power"(Linklater,2005:88), while a dominating power could co-exist and guarantee the order in the international society. This claim is beyond the realist discourse.

The English School not only focuses on the structure, but also emphasizes the "process" factor. Under the "undeveloped system" that is full of anarchy, "it is possible that one unit might gain control of the system, temporarily transforming anarchy into a hierarchical structure, until internal weakening and disintegration allow the reemergence of international anarchic relations(China, Pesia, Rome)."(Buzan, 1993) The English School addresses this point

through the "process" study instead of only applying the structural casual analysis as Morgenthau, Kohane, Nye and other scholars did. The hegemony spreads the common rules, regulations and institutions, which function as what Bull named as the "diplomatic culture" of the system, which could socialize, cultivate and civilize the international society.

Bull and Watson's definition of the international society unfolds the fact that the English School explores the normative aspect of international relations, which is overlooked by the former scientific positivism. The normative element covers language, common sense and some cultural factors. The community sense generates from the regular contact among people/countries, while the political communities (states) create the international. Just as Bull and Watson have defined, the society has been "established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations and recognize their common interest in maintaining these arrangements."(Bull and Watson, 1984: 1) Bull summarized the central assumption as "of the solidarity, or potential solidarity, of the states comprising international society, with respect to the enforcement of the law". (Bull, 1966: 52) Wight thinks that the basis of international society lays both in the recognition of similarities between political units and in a general sense of common humanity.(Wight,1966)

What is the relationship between the last term "world society" and the other two? Before answering this question, I think it is necessary to declare that there are different camps within the English School because scholars who hold different theoretical basements bear various opinions. In the next part, I am going to give the two main divisions of the English School: Pluralism and Solidarism. However, I need to distinguish Bull from Buzan, who hold diverse idea towards the relationship between world society and international society.

The term world society reflects a Kantian understanding of the world. The normative factors supply the English School with more connection with constructivism. Buzan has bridged the English School with constructivism by clarifying that constructivism is not a theory but a methodological establishment to detect IR phenomenon. Constructivism offers a methodological perspective to study the social structure, given that the international system is also socially structured. His theoretical idea has strongly been influenced by the Constructivism so far as Tim Dunne has been.

Bull, however, puts more weight on "potential conflict between international law and the international society of sovereign states".

(Bull, 1983) In Bull's world, countries are more realistic. Conflicts exist in the international society and the principle of justice may be violated by countries: "The League of Nations chose not to defend Abyssinia from Italian aggression because Britain and France needed Italy to balance the power of Nazi Germany". (Linklater, 2005: 93) His contribution is that he raised the academic attention of the international society, which rests on common norms, rules, and identities among nations. He does not go so sticky to Constructivism as the 3rd generation of English scholars, such as Buzan and Tim. Moreover, in the methodology pluralism case, Bull still bases his argument mainly on the Realism affinities. Hence, he has not discussed a lot of the very idea of global society, which focuses on the individual based norms, rules, regulations and common identity in the world domain. In other words, his main analysis level is still state and anarchy is the trait of the international society. He treated the clashing ideas, norms, and cultures as the source of conflicts, especially between the Western and Eastern countries. Buzan expressed many times in his papers or presentations that "Bull's failure to explore common identity goes some way toward explaining the poorly developed and unsatisfactory relationship in his work between international society (and international order and international political system) and world society (and world order and world political system)". (Buzan, 1993) I do not want to go so far as Buzan to criticize Bull's unawareness of the importance of the world society. His basic argument can hold water in the early age. It is true that Bull has not supported so much the co-existence of the world common identity and state belonging senses, but he did worry about the serious relations between them. This worry could be legalized and justified in his times.

Buzan based his argument on Constructivism. He argued that identities are not exclusive towards each others. He borrowed the postmodern view to prove that people could hold several identities. Hence, the creation of world society based on a "world identity" besides national identity that people have already had is possible.

Buzan justified his argument by resorting to the public support from the society, which is required to tackle with the world wide issue. Shared cultural backgrounds, values and other empirical factors among the public make the resolution of world issue easier. Hence, Buzan drew his conclusion that the international society cannot develop without the support of the development of the world society. More empirical and cultural factors' status has been raised gradually by Buzan compared with Bull.

2 the Continued Pluralism-Solidarism Debate within the English School

2.1 Introduction into the Start of the Debate

The English School is split into two main wings. Hedley Bull has catalogued them into Pluralism and Solidarism. To begin with, I have to point out that Pluralism in contrast with Solidarism here is different from the methodological Pluralism, which we have discussed in the introduction and section one, while they share some similarities. The former one is from the methodological perspective, while the latter one is distinguished due to the different assumption of ontologies.

In the last section, when we go through the main content of the English school (international system, international society and world society), the different camp within the English School have already demonstrated their distinction in depicting the relationships between the three main concepts. It seems that this debate has divided the English school. The English school, however, has gained from this debate and made it more and more compatible with the American dominated IR main stream.

After the Cold war, the traditional Realism is not sufficient enough to answer the newly emerging phenomena. The great debate between the legitimacy of sovereignty and humanitarian intervention has accompanied the trend of interventionism phenomena after the end of World War II. This trend has appeared in the Solidarism and Pluralism debates. Hence, the debate between Solidarism and Pluralism enriches the academic resource of the English School and makes it a theory group that catches up with the currencies and trends of world development.

The debate between Pluralism and Solidarism has originated from the international law area. In 1940s, Konius N. Wihelmhauff and Hose Lauterpacht established the basic pluralism argument. They initiative the argument with the starting point of the international law: A nation is the fundamental actor in the world, and what guarantees the stability of a world is the fundamental principle of sovereignty. So sovereignty is sacred and cannot be violated with the excuse of humanitarian intervention. The divergence between Pluralism and Solidarism is the classical discrepancy between the natural law and the subjective law. The questions, such as whether a single human or the nations should be the subject of international law and which one should enjoy the higher privilege lay at the core of the debate.

Solidarism stresses cosmopolitan and universe norms. It considers a single human being as the elementary unit. Of course, I know that the English School, especially the 3rd generation scholars, would respond to challenges in terms of the healthy "world society". But, we cannot ignore the question that how far away we are now from the realization of the world society with the shared standard or norms, such as the human rights protection.

2.2 The Differentiation between Pluralism and Solidarism

In the perception of Pluralism, the world is ethically based. Every nation is different from each other and should gain respect from the outsider. This is the typical norm in the post-Westphalia world system. It plays very important role in keeping the world stability as Bull has suggested. Bull justified this argument by referring to "order". Bull reinforced the necessity of a "world order" that is based on the diversity of ethical. Given that anarchy could trigger the Hobbesian fear and repeated arms races, this poses a potential threat to the stability of the international system. Then the system is in an urgent need of "order". Wight and Butterfield also can be grouped into the Pluralism camp. Given that Butterfield, Wight and Bull are affiliated with Hobbesian Realism, their argument reflects the emphasis on the "order" in the international system. They have also embarked the academic attention and research interest of the relationship between justice and order.

Solidarism has originated from Tim Dunne and Emile Durkheim's social Solidarism theory. They applied the sociological perspective to IR. They compared nation to be one organ of the human society, which served the interest of social members. Social Solidarism spots the importance of a single human being and highlights justice, which is the root of Solidarism argument within the English School.

According to the Pluralism camp, international law is not "law" that has the same binding force as national laws. It is merely based on the common sense without mandatory and practical power. Moreover, the core spirit of international law is "natural law", while its implementer is the countries, which triggers the inner conflicts as well. "Natural law" aims to protect the basic right of human beings instead of the nations, namely the justice. Countries should decide between order and justice. Due to the clasp between the two, Bull has suggested the division between the pluralist and the solidarist international society. (Bull, 1966)

Butterfield, Wight and Bull put more weight on the principle of sovereignty, which means the subject of international law is nation

instead of a single human being.(Bull, 1983) Pluralism sticks to the principle that countries should respect each other's sovereignty while intervention is not acceptable. In the reality, international law supports the existence of international society, while it is not the guarantee of order, since international law falls short of enforcement. The structural order comes from the balance of power among nations and the norms that are cultivated in this process. To be simplified, maintaining the structural order and keeping the stability of the "international society" lies at the core of the study of Butterfield, Wight and Bull. Butterfield, Wight and Bull disagreed with implicating intervention due to human rights' issues beyond national borders because they have been afraid that the implementer has (nation who carry out the intervention) negative intention. This doubt comes from the Realism thinking and rational calculation that affects the nations' decision making. This brings us back to the Hobbesian's assumption that the human being is evil by nature.

I tend to summarize the debate between Pluralism and Solidarism as the dispute between order and justice. In the international level, order and justice cannot unify together in the real world according to Pluralism, while it is possible through the Solidarism camp's view that prefers to study the "process" of IR (the Pluralism prefers the "structure"). Solidarism observes the process how a world could transfer to an international society with justice, while Pluralism addresses how countries arrive at order in anarchy. As Bull has assumed, "expectations of greater solidarity were seriously 'premature'". (Bull 1977:73; Linklater, 2005: 93)

If Pluralism looks at the Realist-reality, Solidarism is based on constructing the possible cosmopolitanism future. It goes even further to the highly unified norms, institutions and regulations than the "international society" has reached. Even though, the process of exploring to natural law that based on justice can cultivate the formulation of the international society towards further world society as Solidarism suggests, it left one question unsolved: Which comes first: Order or justice? Solidarism avoids answering this question and turn to another one that "process" towards common norms and identity of people is possible, which escapes from responding to whether or not can we apply the justice principle to the countries, which are more sensitive to intervention from the outsiders.

2.3 the Related Research Topics

The debate within the English School serves as a force that inspired thought of underexploited research topics. These topics bear not only theoretical importance, but also empirical importance. The purpose of identifying explicit research topics is to push the further development of the English School. The clearer and more empirical accessible these research topics are, the more they merit further theoretical exploration. This process also assistants the English School to develop its own robust theoretical formulation, which could combat the main stream IR theories.

Human Rights Intervention

The international society runs with the shared norms, institutions and regulations. The question is how far countries can accept these norms, institutions and the international law. The international law falls short of enforcement amid the tense between sovereignty and intervention. Does the international law legitimate the humanitarian intervention? Buzan raised three related questions on this topic in more details:

"How legitimate is intervention within the global rules and norms: that is the lowest common denominator of international society?

How legitimate is intervention within the rules and norms of a given subglobal/regional international society such as EU or the Arab League?

How legitimate is intervention across the boundary between distinctive subglobal/ regional international societies: for example, from the West into Africa?" (Buzan, 2001: 486-487)

The majority of the countries have accepted the norm of sovereignty and non-intervention in the post Westphalia international society. The tense between sovereignty and the principle of civilization (human rights) has mirrored the tense between Pluralism and Solidarism empirically. The recent history has witnessed the humanitarian intervention to Rwanda and other African countries. Does this mean the tense has been released? Does this mean the principle of sovereignty is not as significant as before? What would the English School explain these phenomenon? This research topic invites abundant academic resources for the English School.

Anti-Globalization

If the international society is about shared norms, the distinction between Pluralism and Solidarism is the scope of the international society. The latter believes the scope of the international society is wider, for example, their definition of sovereignty is more flexible. Therefore, the norm of the Western could expand to the sub-civilized regions. Yet, "Bull was concerned that Western arrogance and complacency about human rights might damage the delicate framework of international society". (Linklater, 2005: 95) This is only one example that there might be conflicting cultures and norm among diverse civilizations.

Furthermore, the countries that once have suffered from imperialism feel afraid that globalization might be another new form of imperialism. The history did not arrive at the happy end as Fukuyama has suggested. On the contrary, the English School has suggested that in the process of the norm expansion, the dominator countries, namely the West, would confront the revolt against them. Since, the weaker norm receiver, for example the Third World countries are cautious of the disguised form of aggression and colonialism. The minorities, such as the Islamic world has shown similar trepidation towards the trend of globalization. These minorities' revolting emotion towards globalization has accumulated unstable factors which pose a threat to the world order.

Conclusion

To sum up, Pluralism wants to answer the question of "what the world is like", just as realism and neo- Liberal Institutionalism have done, while Solidarism wants to figure out "what the world should be like" just as Wendt has done. Wendt's Social Constructivism is more a methodological creation from the social constructivist perception than an IR theoretical innovation, which is different from the Solidarism division of the English School. "What the world should like" is more than a methodological trial. It explores how to answer the IR problems accompanied by the expansion of globalization. Its trial reflects that the IR theories adapt towards the new world reality. All in all, the English School devotes to recover and explore the unexploited academic resources due to the shifting world reality.

Reference

BUTTERFIELD H, (1950) *Christianity and history*, London G Bell (1949)

JACKSON R H (2000) *The global covenant: human conduct in a world of states*, Oxford University Press, USA

WIGHT M, (1966) Why is there no International Theory. *1995*, 15-35.

BULL H, (1966) International theory: the case for a classical approach. *World Politics: A Quarterly Journal of International Relations*, 361-377.

WIGHT M, (1977) *Systems of states*, Leicester Univ Pr.

KENNETH W, (1979) Theory of International Politics. *Reading, Addison Wesley*.

LINKLATER A, (2005) The English School. *Theories of international relations*, 84-110.

BUZAN B, (1993) From international system to international society: structural realism and regime theory meet the English school. *International Organization,* 47, 327-352.

BULL H & WATSON A, (1984) *The expansion of international society*, Oxford University Press, USA, 1-9.

BULL H, (1966) Society and anarchy in international relations. *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Relations*, 35-50.

WIGHT M, (1966) Western values in international relations. *Diplomatic investigations: Essays in the theory of international politics*, 89-131.

BULL H, (1984) *Justice in international relations*, University of Waterloo Waterloo, Ontario.

BUZAN B, (1993) *From international system to international society: structural realism and regime theory meet the English school. International Organization,* 47, 327-352.