

Pluralism, solidarism and the emergence of world society in English School theory.

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Abstract

This paper argues that the debate between pluralism and solidarism in English School theory has been cast in such a way as to hand the progressive cause to solidarism, taking for granted that moves towards the emergence of world society further a solidarist normative agenda. The paper suggests this is because of assumptions about the nature and location of such changes within English School theory. However, an alternative understanding of change, as emerging from tensions arising within the pluralist understanding of international society, has been overlooked. This enables a challenge to be raised to the assumption that world society must be solidarist, producing an initial defence of a potentially ethically desirable pluralist form of world society.

Introduction

This is a paper about conceptions of change in English School theory and, in particular, about the putative change from an international society of states to a world society of individuals. As such, it speaks to one of the most general issues in English School theory, arguably in any theory of international relations, how does change occur? It also, though, focuses upon one particular way that change towards world society is being considered: the normative desirability of this change, and the normative agenda assumed to be inherent within it. The paper develops an argument that solidarism may not be inherent in world society and that a pluralist world society is potentially ethically desirable.

This introduction lays some groundwork for this discussion, looking at how both world society and change have been understood in the English School, and makes some initial claims about the way English School debates have tended to assume that solidarism is

'hard-wired' into world society. The paper then looks in more detail at the account of change from international to world society, before turning to pluralism in an effort to argue for its overlooked significance for the development of world society and its potentially ethically desirable contribution.

Contemporary English School theorists are responding to challenges to state-centricity in the conduct and theorisation of international relations via a new interest in the underdeveloped idea of world society.¹ A part of this underdevelopment is definitional imprecision. One searches vainly for a clear, generally accepted definition such as those provided by Bull for an international system and an international society.² Advancing such a definition is not the principal purpose of this paper, but offering a brief and reasonably precise definition will hopefully assist the argument I want to develop. Thus, world society is associated with a political system in which states are not the predominant actors, although this does not mean they disappear; where political activity is principally focused upon individuals, rather than institutionalised collectives; and where normative progress is understood in universal terms. These characteristics sum up key features of the idea of world society in a way that highlights its distinctiveness from an international society. Methodologically speaking, Richard Little has persuasively argued for adopting a different methodological approach to studying world society, via critical theory, and for the positive benefits of methodological pluralism.³ This further contributes to the distinctiveness of world society, pointing to the significance of the putative transformation.

The challenge presented by the globalisation debates and the inadequacies of past English School efforts to deal with notions of interdependence and globalisation, exemplified by Hedley Bull's distrustful dismissal, have made redressing this underdevelopment necessary.⁴ However, in addition to recognising a need, English School theorists have also seen an opportunity to reinvigorate a 'solidarist' or cosmopolitan normative agenda. This opportunity and agenda spring from one of the best known tensions within English School

theory – the pluralist vs. solidarist debate – and the way in which the development of the theory has associated pluralism with international society and solidarism with world society. Thus Martin Wight's 'three traditions' of a Hobbesian 'international system', a Grotian 'international society' and Kantian 'world society' have generated an expectation that issues of ethical diversity in international relations are best mediated within an international society.⁵ Hedley Bull's work reinforced this by emphasising the need for order in conditions of both ethical diversity and political anarchy, and the consequent danger of pursuing cosmopolitan or universal ethical ideals in such circumstances.⁶

João Almeida has argued that this picture is somewhat too simple. Instead, the realist/rationalist/revolutionist framework, developed through the work of the British Committee, was significantly driven by a desire to differentiate what we now know as English School theory from Realism.⁷ The historical emphasis of such work, challenging the Realist and neo-Realist argument for international relations as a pre-social condition or state of nature, argues Almeida, clearly makes such a distinction. More importantly here, though, it established an understanding of the international system that enables a clearer appreciation of the role that solidarist values and practices have played and do play in international politics. Almeida argues that, 'the most valuable legacy of the British Committee lies in the possibility ... to treat questions of power without falling into the realist position, and to study the impact of solidarism and humanitarianism on international society without linking it to a structural transformation towards a post-Westphalian political system.'⁸ This reinforces the English School's recognition of the continuous interplay of elements of realism, rationalism and revolutionism by highlighting how a solidarism most strongly associated with world society plays an important role in international society, too. However, it underplays the significance of the development of world society and doesn't discuss the role for pluralism within world society, something this paper aims to address.

Challenges to state-centrism via the emergence of conditions creating a meaningful universal human community sharing growing numbers of common concerns, practices and institutions enable solidarism's universal ethical agenda to flourish. One early example of this is provided by John Vincent's argument for a 'basic rights' approach.⁹ More recently, ideas coming out of the globalisation literature, such as 'supra-territoriality' and 'globality' that transcend the sovereign states-system and establish trans-national forces, communities and ideals are also indicative of this sort of transformation.¹⁰ Critiques of static notions of territoriality and ideas about new sorts of spaces in which politics can take place and where new sorts of communities can develop reinforce this sense that world society, and with it a solidarist normative agenda, is arriving.¹¹

The significance of this change is potentially enormous, but raises the issue of what constitutes change in English School theory. Whilst there is little specific discussion of this question in key English School texts, Bull's account of the emergence of an international system offers us guidance for recognising change from an international society to a world society. Equally, we also need to remember that English School theory holds that elements of world society, as of international system and international society, are always present in international politics. Change is therefore a process, rather than being switch-like, and we need to look for growing evidence that alternative structural principles and normative visions are generating effects that cannot be contained within or co-opted by established, dominant practices and conceptualisations. Thus, parallel to the way that an international system emerges when states develop interactions significant enough that they have to take one another into account, change towards world society is occurring when established mechanisms and institutions of international society have to take into account processes, institutions and normative critiques rooted in global practices and conceptualisations. Importantly, this taking into account cannot occur through containment or co-option, but only via developing established institutions and practices, or introducing new ones, that

challenge the underpinning structural conceptualisation of an international society. Notions like 'globality', 'supra-territoriality' and cosmopolitan ethics do this, because they propose mechanisms, institutions, processes and ideals that are incompatible with the structural conceptualisation of an international society taking as its basic assumption '... the existence of *states* ... each of which possesses and asserts sovereignty in relation to a portion of the earth's surface and a particular segment of the human population.'¹²

Exploring this account of change offers alternative normative conclusions about the nature of world society. By looking at the understanding of change supporting the idea that globalisation is bringing about a world society, and thus emphasising a solidarist normative agenda, the paper hopes to show that a pluralist world society is also a plausible and potentially desirable outcome. This is because of an overlooked, but important, source of change in international politics that lies within the way that international society manages ethical diversity.

David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah have made a strong case that the question of ethical diversity played a central role in the establishment of the sovereign states-system as an international society. Their main focus is the relationship of diversity to territory, and the territorialisation of diversity through the ideal of the sovereign nation-state. By this they mean that the profundity of the questions raised by, initially religious, diversity were ultimately unresolved at Westphalia. Instead, the problem of competing notions of divine truth, of the good life and of the moral standing of individuals of different faiths was enclosed or corralled within territorial borders. It would be a 'domestic' matter how such issues were dealt with, and that others ought to abstain from involving themselves in such debates. Although the form of both ethical diversity and the debates about it have changed over the intervening three and half centuries or so, this basic principle has endured. Blaney and Inayatullah describe this as 'the Westphalian deferral' of the diversity question.¹³ They argue that international society has never resolved the problem of how to live together in

conditions of diversity and that the territorialisation of diversity was merely a way of putting to one side an intractable problem. The tractability of the issue may well not have improved, but the ability of international society to continue to operate as a successful deferring mechanism is in great doubt. Challenges to and debates over the ethical status of territorial borders as the boundaries of community are one good example of this strain.¹⁴

Ethical diversity is central here because it raises the hardest questions for the English School, and others in IR, to attempt to answer. I take lack of agreement over the nature of the good life and the status of human beings, or even the possibility of such agreement, to be at the core of the idea of ethical diversity. For pluralists, like Bull, Jackson and Mayall, the absence, or even impossibility, of such agreement is central to their conservative defence of international society as normatively desirable, in line with the Westphalian deferral. On the other hand, solidarists, such as Vincent, Wheeler and Linklater, argue that the emergence of limited, universal ethical consensus is possible, desirable and even present on some questions, such as the moral outrage of genocide.¹⁵ The issue of ethical diversity, whether at the level of empirical debate or philosophical dispute, underpins the significance of the other forms of diversity in international relations, because it is through this debate that these forms acquire ethical force. Racial diversity, for example takes on such great international political significance only in the presence of racist notions about the unequal ethical status of different races; diversity of political form matters so much because of the idea of political systems as mechanisms for living the good life.

The significance of change, and especially of change from a politics of international society to a politics of world society, is therefore immense. Understanding that change, exploring the mechanisms through which it is occurring and engaging in normative debate about the sort of future that may lie ahead of us is one of the most important and stimulating challenges facing international relations. The English School is well placed to make a contribution to this debate.

International society, world society and change

The classic account of an international society within the English School remains Bull's *The Anarchical Society*. One of the most interesting things about the book is that despite Bull's rejection of the existence of any significant elements of world society at the time he was writing, he nevertheless devotes the final section of the book to a consideration of alternative structural arrangements of international relations.¹⁶ Bull's account of non-Westphalian forms carries with it an air of detached interest.¹⁷ These forms are interesting, but the impression is that Bull has no expectation of their coming to pass in any likely future or even that their supposed superiority to the existing international society was well grounded. He concludes his assessment of the critiques of international society on the basis of its supposed failure to generate peace and security, economic and social justice, and environmental sustainability by arguing that such goals are not necessarily precluded by the states-system.¹⁸ The dangers of aiming for something 'better' and ending up with something worse clearly concerned Bull.¹⁹ A global politics in a world society is thus rejected as being inappropriate due to the absence of any significant trends generating empirical facts to sustain world society and the debatable nature of claims that it would produce more effective and normatively superior approaches to significant political challenges. The occurrence of change is basically dismissed.

Bull's analysis unavoidably carries with it the imprint of its 1970s origins. However, his basic claims have endured in English School writing that has been sceptical about the possibility of transcending international society. The most comprehensive contemporary restatement of Bull's argument comes in Robert Jackson's *The Global Covenant*.²⁰ He too defends the importance of the state and anarchical society in similar terms. World society is something of which we need to be suspicious because of the risks that its pursuit may create for the painfully built-up and relatively fragile structures of order that exist amongst states. The weakening of the non-intervention principle in pursuit of cosmopolitan normative goals,

such as the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy, risks conflict with states where such ideas are not accepted, or possibly even recognised and fully understood. The conservative needs of order should be placed above the pursuit of justice should that pursuit conflict with the core tenets of international society.²¹

Bull and Jackson's 'classical pluralism' ignores globalisation to an unjustifiable extent. For example, it takes territoriality as being a static notion focused on the bordered, sovereign space, within which power and authority are monopolised and centralised hierarchically, and beyond which power and authority are lacking in authoritative, institutional form.²² The problems of certain states, even those that have 'failed', are 'domestic' matters. They are none of the concern of the wider international community of states, let alone a global humanitarian community, unless assistance is requested.²³ Diversity is subsumed within this territorialisation of politics and identity, manifested in the national characters, ethical schemas and normative goals of the states.²⁴ The conservative interpretation of colonial self-determination seemingly settled the identity issue in international society by corralling diversity within territorial borders,²⁵ a strategy that has been prominent in international society since its inception in early modern Europe.²⁶

Change at the level of structural principles – territorial sovereignty and non-intervention – and of normative orientation – maintaining relatively stable and predictable patterns of inter-state relations – is neither present to any great extent or desirable. Change at the level of how international society works does occur, though. Great powers rise and fall, wars are fought and the balance of power moves. Bull's other institutions of international society – international law and diplomacy – also undergo development. Indeed, specific states may also come and go. World society, though, remains stymied. Highly durable notions of territoriality engendering anarchy combined with the condition of diversity make the transition to a world where a universal human community can flourish extremely unlikely. Factors seen by advocates of globalisation as bringing such change about

are rejected as possessing no genuinely transformative potential. Indeed, it is striking that the index to Jackson's book contains no entries for 'globalisation', 'global economy', 'international economy', 'economics' or any similar terms that attempt to capture the spirit of notions such as Scholte's identification of non-territorial political space. Some sort of global revolution would seem likely to be the only way in which international society will be overturned, and then at the cost of massive disorder and destruction.²⁷

Whilst reluctant to recognise the power of potential global transformations and sceptical about a normative agenda championing them, both Bull and Jackson are committed to leaving some room, no matter how marginal, open to these ideas. The acceptance of Wight's tripartite schema for international relations theory includes the constant presence of the revolutionist, world society tradition.²⁸ Whilst Bull and Jackson, joined perhaps by James Mayall and Alan James,²⁹ may stand at the far end of the continuum of English School theory in their rejection of world society as a significant empirical fact, plausible normative agenda or powerful transformatory dynamic, they have to accept its immanent potential.³⁰

Other theorists have seen far greater room for this immanent potential to gain purchase in international relations. This alternative response offers far more scope for engaging with change and offers a mechanism for exploring world society both as putative reality and as ethically desirable development. What we might call 'constructivist solidarism' also possesses deep roots in the English School tradition.

The significance of a cosmopolitan world society, inspired by Wight's reading of Kant, is stressed in this sort of work. One interface between world society and international society that has helped to drive forward solidarist ideas in English School thinking is the issue of humanitarian intervention. The solidarism inherent in the idea of humanitarianism has reinvigorated interest in a solidarist ethical agenda for English School theory.³¹

Humanitarian intervention connects to debates about the sources of change that may lead towards world society because of the way that it raises the political significance of a universal human community. For solidarists, such a community is based on claims that certain values and ideals, or rights and duties, either are or ought to be shared globally. Ian Clark has emphasised how the end of the Cold War reinforced liberal aspects of the legitimacy of international society, including notions of human rights and democracy, offering empirical support to what Bull, during the 1970s and 1980s, saw as purely normative propositions.³² Vincent's notion of 'basic rights' has also seen empirical development over the last two decades or so via growing legal and political support.³³ These have contributed to potential transformations in international rules and practices, such as humanitarian intervention, that, Clark suggests, are at odds with the pluralist ethos of the states-system as it developed during the rise, and especially the fall, of the European colonial empires.³⁴ Humanitarian intervention is thus a practice and proposition that fulfils the criteria of change discussed above, and the controversy that it attracts is in part due to the difficulty of co-opting it into the existing model of an international society.³⁵

Humanitarian intervention also connects to debates about emerging global forces.³⁶ This is most notable in the case of the media and its role in raising the profile of such issues and providing the images and stories that have been used by national and trans-national pressure groups to press governments to respond.³⁷ Thus global information and elements of a nascent global civil society are also involved in this effort to respond to not just appalling human suffering but also to taking English School theory in a more solidarist direction.

A responsiveness to global ethical issues like humanitarian intervention and a willingness to engage with emerging global forms and forces, whether via ideas like global civil society or global commercial media operations, highlights one element of change. A second lies in the efforts to reformulate English School methodology in an explicitly

constructivist way, bringing English School theory into the social theoretic project, utilising the insights available within this broad framework in a number of ways.³⁸

Most importantly for constructivist solidarism is the stress upon the power of ideas and dialogue to fashion and re-fashion the understanding and appearance of international relations. English School theory has always stressed that international relations is made, rather than being given, and that ideas are an important part of this.³⁹ However, constructivist solidarism latches on to the critical and transformative potential in this insight. Rather than regarding ideas as durable, productive of incremental change and constrained by certain basic, essentially material, facts about the world, they become more easily mutable. Constructivist solidarists revitalise the agenda for change through their re-interpretation of the English School and their efforts to comprehend the opportunities for solidarism and to build them into a persuasive normative agenda that takes the possibility of world society, or at least elements of world society, seriously.

The pluralist-solidarist stalemate thus seems to be broken, and in favour of solidarism. Constructivist solidarists are able to appeal to a powerful social theoretical tradition that maintains, and rejuvenates, the praxeological elements of the English School. Their approach enables theoretical and academic insight into key global issues like humanitarian intervention, whilst retaining policy relevance, and it delivers a plausible and progressive normative agenda.⁴⁰ Its sensitivity to the globalisation debate, via its recognition of the role of the media and a nascent global civil society, are further benefits. Andrew Linklater has made the most of these through the utilisation of Habermasian critical theory as a way to place international and world society ideas within an agenda that is powerfully cosmopolitan in its ethical perspective, but that manages to retain considerable room for diversity.⁴¹

There are discordant voices about the direction of recent developments in international politics, pointing to the potential for oppression and coercion. Ian Clark's

concerns about humanitarian intervention being part of a re-legitimation of Western dominance offers one such interpretation.⁴² Tim Dunne offers an alternative reason for caution via worries about the prospect of hyperpower unilateralism threatening an international society that relies for its existence upon the commitment of the leading states of the day to shared understandings of the common good and certain basic institutions. The anti-hegemonial character of international society is threatened by an enforced hierarchy rooted in a unilateralist conception of interest appealing to a Hobbesian model of international politics.⁴³ In such a climate, humanitarianism, as an example of cosmopolitan moral sentiment, risks becoming the hypocritical rhetorical window-dressing that Realists and other cynics have typically dismissed it as.

The existence of a continuum from Linklater to Jackson, as part of a broad English School tradition, is perhaps not immediately obvious.⁴⁴ Their shared characterisation of relations between states as being framed by rules, norms and principles of behaviour that grant it both pattern and a shared interest in order recognised as a common good is one area of common ground. However, the immanent potential for change from international society to world society that Jackson acknowledges, if resists, and that Linklater revels in and promotes offers a more important connection. I want to suggest that another significant link may lie in a shared, and problematic, understanding of how the change from international to world society occurs. The English School, whether in classical pluralist or constructivist solidarist guise, sees pressures towards world society as lying primarily outside of the core institutions of the international society of sovereign states, as Bull defined them.⁴⁵ The centrality of diplomacy, international law, the balance of power, war and the Great Powers to our understanding of international relations is being challenged in a manner unprecedented in the history of the Westphalian system.

Diversity, change and world society

It seems implausible to attempt to argue that the economic and technological transformations that receive the majority of attention in the debates about globalisation are unimportant. These possess a logic and momentum that is substantially outside of the institutions of international society. They are affecting the conduct of social, political and economic affairs, the ways we think about them, and our ideas about how the world ought to be. They are changing international politics, in the sense of change used in this paper, and they are doing it in ways that are exogenous to the institutions of international society that have generally served to prevent and contain such developments.

There is, of course, a symbiosis between a globalising economic and technological system and the sovereign states-system because of the way that the states-system generates necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for large-scale, long-distance, trans-national economic activity.⁴⁶ The ability of international society to generate order amongst states is of prime importance here, but the operation of institutions of international society, like diplomacy and international law, are generating new organisations, practices and normative propositions that are novel, in Westphalian terms. These threaten the underpinning structural conceptualisations of international society and appeal to a structural logic that lies outside of international society, justifying the idea of their being 'exogenous'.

Organisations such as the World Trade Organisation and the International Criminal Court, although requiring inter-state order and being created by states through diplomatic negotiation, represent incorporation into international society of a global logic that is exogenous to these structural conceptualisations. In particular, notions of universal crimes and criminal accountability on the one hand and of a global capitalist system on the other have not been co-opted into the logic of international society. That opposition to the ICC has made such great play of the potential challenge it represents to state sovereignty is indicative of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of seeing the ICC as just another international

legal body, like the ICJ. Anti-WTO protests, although hugely diverse in nature, have emphasised sovereignty and the idea of the WTO as relocating authority in an institution that operates on the basis of a different structural conceptualisation – that of capital and markets.

Thus it is the underpinning structural conceptualisations of these elements of world society that explains their novelty and significance. The idea that globalisation is creating wholly new political locations is indicative of this, but is not as important on its own as is sometimes claimed. Scholte's distinction, for example, between territoriality – the social geography of traditional international relations – and supraterritoriality – the social relations of an ongoing globalisation – is symptomatic. He chooses his examples carefully for his rhetorical questions about how we would define the territorial location of aspects of globalisation. It is indeed impossible to pinpoint, in terms of a GPS reference, Special Drawing Rights, the Rushdie affair, Elle magazine and karaoke.⁴⁷ We might ask similar questions of international society, the balance of power, international law, great power, international order and diplomacy and get the same kinds of answers. The referent objects of such institutions, practices, goals and conventions might be, primarily, sovereign states, but the institutions, practices, goals and conventions themselves cannot be said to be enshrined in a specific territorial location. Thus Scholte's portrayal of globality via supraterritoriality relies for its plausibility on a view of territorial international relations that assumes the international system is just an empty space within which states inter-, or possibly co-, act.⁴⁸ The significance of Scholte's examples lies less in their location and more in the challenges they symbolise to the structure of international society and the impossibility of co-opting them into or controlling them through the institutions of international society.

Minimising the impact of change on the territorial system of international society has been one response to the ongoing economic, social, political and normative challenge of

globalisation. If, as Bull argued, the preservation of the states-system is the principal goal of international society, then this is perhaps hardly surprising.⁴⁹ This should not blind us to an immanent source of change within the institutions of international society – the deferred problem of diversity. The conservatism of the pluralist stance can thus be explained in terms of resistance to this change. However, we can also see that this need not be the only response. The international society – world society link, the way in which international society contains elements of supraterritoriality, as well as providing the permissive conditions for the more familiar aspects of globalisation, highlights the way in which change is immanent. Indeed, a non-territorial world society may be better equipped to deal with diversity because it does not place such a great emphasis, or at least it need not, on corralling diversity into bordered territory. It is important to recognise, though, that the pressures operating here do not spring solely, or even necessarily principally, from the exogenous forces of globalisation.⁵⁰

State actors within international society have tended to respond to the pressures on the Westphalian deferral in ways that are consistent with the conservative portrayal of the pluralist strand of English School thinking.⁵¹ One of pluralism's strengths is that it provides a persuasive and insightful analytical account of the political process. However, the normative agenda proposed by a constructivist solidarism makes critical assessment of these responses essential. A pluralist international society does not *have* to be hidebound by diplomatic custom and practice, and a territorialised understanding of identity and diversity.⁵² It often is, but there is immanent potential for other responses. By engaging more fully with social theory the English School can move away from an almost axiomatic stress on continuity and repetition to explore change and alternatives. Ivor Neumann makes a persuasive case for this kind of approach to studying diplomacy and it could apply with equal force to territorial borders.⁵³ There is an opportunity to utilise the global space immanent in international society in ways that nevertheless respond to classical pluralism's uncertainties about

solidarism, including the sense that diversity may actually be positively desirable as well as practically unavoidable.⁵⁴

A pluralist world society?

The growing pressures that diversity is generating within international society are contributing to the emergence of world society, representing a source of change that is endogenous to the institutions of international society. This goes much further than creating a permissive environment for other forms of globalisation, particularly a global economy and developing global information networks.

World society need not be cosmopolitan. A progressive world society agenda can be found within the pluralist strand of international society if it can be de-territorialised, at least in part. The 'in part' matters, though. 'Globality' is unlikely to ever exist alone, as Scholte acknowledges.⁵⁵ Also, a pluralist agenda must retain, and indeed strengthen, its commitment to the desirability of a plurality of ethical systems, worldviews and understandings. This is not just a feature of the way the world is, it ought to be recognised as a desirable feature and that political arrangements and institutions should be moulded by the need to respect and protect diversity. A territorially differentiated global polity is one part of this, but pluralist English School thinking needs to accept that it is only one part of it and not retain an overly territorialised conception of diversity.

A scaling back, then, and critique of the reification of territoriality in pluralist English School writings is necessary. One way of doing this is to put the horse back in front of the cart and recognise that diversity is the key issue here and not territory. It is not that territorialisation engenders diversity or has in some sense become prior to it. Instead, diversity has been corralled into a territorial form in the case of international relations and as part of the means for dealing with the special problems and circumstances that come with a constitution of international relations as an anarchically organised and territorialised

social activity. Diversity is not a product of the states-system, but a fundamental feature of the human condition.⁵⁶

But there are versions of diversity that are increasingly pressing against this territorialised form of it – groups, identities, constituencies and interests that cannot take a territorial form that makes them at least candidate members of international society. Women, indigenous peoples, Diaspora's, religions, trades-unionists, environmentalists and many others are often cited as elements of the emerging global civil society that is the counterpart, and potential counterbalance, to the globalisation of capitalist market economies.⁵⁷ They are not territorial in the way that states are and yet they are obviously signifiers of diversity, and also of the potential clashes of interests, values and world-views that have been previously contained within international society.

For solidarists like Linklater, these groups contribute to the emerging debate about global ethics and are potential participants in the dialogues, debates and discussions that, under the right conditions, have the potential to generate a genuinely global dialogic ethic.⁵⁸ This diversity can be accommodated in world society and it is indeed the emergence of globality that brings with it the possibility of such an accommodation.

However it is not obvious that world society necessarily has to take the cosmopolitan direction that Wight mapped out for it. If international society can continue to play the role of restraining the resort to force in world politics and establishing territorial spaces within which some forms of diversity can be secure and protected, then world society might also be divided in ways that protect other kinds of non-territorialisable identities. These divisions will not be territorial – there is no need to reproduce another deferral of the diversity issue in world politics – but divisions, some of them quite impenetrable to others, or at least portrayed as impenetrable, will emerge.

As political geographers like Newman and Paasi have stressed, borders, particularly Westphalian-style territorial borders, are constructed and re-constructed in the search for

control and power. These are two features of politics that, even in world society, will endure, suggesting that borders of some sort will endure with them.⁵⁹ Donnan and Wilson, from a more anthropological perspective, also point to the ubiquity of borders and division, suggesting that they will prove to be as inescapable, if not as territorial, in any likely human social and political constellation: 'Borders are ... meaning-making and meaning-carrying entities, parts of the cultural landscape...'⁶⁰ George Simmel has reversed the usual view of borders in international relations, 'The border is not a spatial fact with a sociological impact, but a sociological fact that shapes spatially.'⁶¹ This richer, social-political-cultural nexus that is tied up with borders shows a need for divisions and borders in human life that will continue. This is the case even in world society until such unlikely and distant time as a globally homogenous identity, culture and society has emerged and in such a way as to negate the issues of power and control. As Peter Mandaville argues in his survey of anthropological critiques of the territorial nation-state, political life exists across and between bordered states and in ways that challenge the territorialisation of politics, society and culture in fundamental ways.⁶²

World society, as an increasingly important element of the eternal triangle of English School understandings of the dynamics shaping the world, may be as amenable to a pluralist interpretation as a solidarist one. If borders are inescapable, diversity is taken to be a desirable aspect of human life and, in particular, that this diversity is not amenable to ultimate reconciliation, then world society may be the place in which that irreconcilability can nevertheless find constructive outlets.

The role of international society is thus re-focused on Bull's core elements of the restraint of violence, stability of possession, especially of territory, and generating respect for agreements among states. The first of these is especially important because of the conflictual potential that is present in diversity, especially radical diversity over the kind of fundamental ethical questions that international society has deferred for so long, such as

the moral status of persons and the nature of the good life. War is a poor answer to the problems posed by diversity and an established consensus that limits legitimate *casus belli* as far as possible is one of international society's principal achievements. Similarly, the role of international society in establishing specific expectations regarding the stability of territorial possession contributes to the agenda of restraining violence and also recognises the importance of the territory-identity nexus driven forward by nationalism in international society.⁶³

World society, though, can be the place where expressions of identity that are not state-based can find expression and even some form of institutionalisation. The attainment of cultural autonomy, for example, requires much more than some form of virtual epistemic community, of course, but the opportunity to establish new sites and places of communal politics is present. It is also true that much of the power in the relations between communities of identity remains in the hands of states, but the ability of regimes to control the flow of information, and increasingly even of people, is not limitless. Thus, whilst the institutions of international society have generally treated individuals as, for example, objects rather than subjects of international law, world society's re-conceptualisation of the nature of political space challenges the need to work through the state to achieve political significance. Operating outside, or beyond, the regulation of identity that the state represents massively increases the scope for expressions of difference to political effect. For example, the diasporic communities of the contenders in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s made significant contributions to the political and military efforts of those fellow community members who were physically present and fighting. This is one instance of the way that even communities with powerful ideological ties to specific pieces of land can nevertheless nurture and politicise a sense of identity and belonging among those who may never have set foot on the supposedly sacred soil of a fetishised motherland.

Alongside this kind of activity, there are increasingly important political processes and pressures that do not take a geographically specific form and that do not appeal to the kind of community, like a nation, that is territorialisable. As well as the traditional target of state policy, they also aim to influence the policies, practices and development of the kind of institutions, such as the WTO or ICC, that are indicative of the force of exogenous change on international society. States may have the final say in the negotiation and framing of these bodies, but once in operation considerable control passes into the hands of people like the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, who are charged with working on a global basis in pursuit of a global agenda symbolised by the phrase 'crimes against humanity'. Whilst the ICC and its INGO advocates and supporters point to a cosmopolitan world society, the Balkan, and other, diasporas point to a pluralist one. The controversy over non-territorial religious communities, especially when they are significantly present in political systems that emphasise national citizenship and identity, is another example. The fierce debate over the status of the headscarf worn by some Muslim women in Western societies offers a public policy example of the complex and highly contested relationship between geographical residence, state citizenship, cultural ties to the land of one's forebears and religious values. To whom is loyalty owed? Where is the site of authentic authority? How do we reconcile secular and religious imperatives? Where is the line between 'private' moral conviction and 'public' political statement? These are all questions tied up in such a debate. The state is no longer the final arbiter on such matters and the political spaces and nascent institutions of world society are being used to bring pressure to bear.

At an empirical level, therefore, the idea that it is solidarism that represents the 'authentic' voice of world society may be difficult to sustain. Indeed, given the relatively limited number of members of international society it may be the case that solidarism is easier to attain here than in a babel-voiced world society.⁶⁴ However, this does not address the normative question of whether or not solidarism ought to be the authentic voice of

world society. Powerful, critical approaches suggest that it is, with Linklater's use of Habermasian Critical Theory leading the way. This generates a world society that is certainly characterised by the kind of non-territorialised form of politics we associate with world society. Instead it offers a form of politics that is characterised by a dialogue between different identities, communities and ethical schemas that, at least in ideal form, leads towards reconciliation and universality.

If diversity is about a conversation or dialogue, then why this must necessarily be directed towards agreement or resolution of difference is unclear. Linklater offers good reasons as to why it might be and, in his view, ought to be, because of the ethical imperative of emancipation. However, it can be a dialogue about re-stating difference, about experiencing and encountering others whose ways of life we find inexplicable and even repugnant. Some societies and groups may reach out to others, attempting to learn from or comprehend those they find strange. Others may wish to use the condition of globality as a means for hiding, in a way that the cracks in the walls of non-intervention are making less viable in international society. Linklater's scheme rules out this kind of approach to world society on principally philosophical grounds. Such behaviour does not conform to the rules of what counts as 'communication'.

Richard Shapcott uses Hans-Georg Gadamer as an alternative philosophical inspiration for creating a normative vision of a world society that, he argues, offers a superior means of generating certain basic solidarist values without coercively crushing difference. Once again, though, the philosophical premises about what counts as communication and the nature of human beings as communicating creatures establish powerful limits on what is and what is not admissible political debate and dialogue. Shapcott's schema is somewhat less restrictive than Linklater's but it does nevertheless rest upon an ultimately foundational claim about ethics that denies the authenticity of radical

difference on the basis that it does not conform to an essentialised notion of communication.

Taking diversity as being the starting place for ethics, though, offers an alternative ontology of difference that can inform a pluralist version of world society. Thus there is no need to justify it as being the outcome of dialogue rather than power, or as an acceptable alternative interpretation of notions of human rights. Diversity needs both protection and limitation, in particular from the violently imposed homogeneity that is a part of a Westphalian deferral that has enabled the repression and persecution of minority groups to take place behind the façade of sovereignty and non-intervention. World society is normatively desirable because it offers scope for the repressed and marginalised communities to find some form of political voice. Requiring that voice to accord with pre-determined rules about what counts as authentic or admissible re-creates and re-locates some of the very repressive and discriminatory practices such groups may be seeking to escape.

The normative character of a pluralist world society moves away from the dialogue, negotiation and pursuit of universal ethical community of either a Habermasian, Gadamerian or more straightforwardly rights-based cosmopolitanism. Instead virtues such as toleration and a self-critical open-mindedness are more prominent in normative accounts of what sort of world society it is desirable to see develop. These do not preclude the emergence of universal values or a universal community, but these ends become secondary, even providential, rather than being hard-wired into the normative agenda of world society.

Thus a partly de-territorialised pluralist *modus vivendi* offers a normative agenda for world society. By predicating it upon a more deep-seated and fundamental diversity and need for community than that manifested in the sovereign states-system it may be able to more thoroughly address, rather than defer, the diversity issue. However, a pluralist world society must not be a free-for-all. It should not be an effort to enable violently intolerant

groups, identities and communities to find a new place in which to live and thrive. There are limits to a tolerable diversity and a need for order to enable meaningful social life to exist, as Bull pointed out, and that includes order within and between communities in world society.⁶⁵

There is, therefore, a need for world society to develop institutions that are able to restrain violently intolerant groups that threaten the normative potential of world society. This paper has argued that the efforts of states in international society to respond to the exogenous pressures of globalisation and cosmopolitan normative pressures have produced some such institutions. It has also pointed to the limitations of international society as a mechanism for addressing diversity as an endogenous source of world society. This, however, has yet to produce such distinctive institutional manifestations. The role of national and religious diasporas has been identified as one potential institution and the growing significance of trans-national networks of NGOs can also be mentioned, such as the loosely grouped anti-globalisation movement.

This thin institutional beer may not be a sign of the paucity of the conception on offer, though. On the one hand we can point to the length of time that the institutions of international society have been evolving and contrast this with the novelty of the possibility of institutions of world society. More in tune with the normative thrust here, though, is the idea that the human action that is making world society is unpredictable in its intentions and outcomes, including institutional outcomes. As Ian Clark argues in relation to the end of the Cold War, the transformative intentions and effects of this shift in the international system also brought with it conservative, regressive measures. These entrenched existing sites and forms of power and authority in ways unintended by those driving forward the end of the Cold War.⁶⁶ World society is subject to the same vagaries of action – it can just as well produce pluralist effects and dynamics as solidarist ones, even if these are not necessarily intended. Attempting to limit world society to an essentially solidarist form potentially

repeats the same error of a teleological reading of history that can be laid at the door of a classical pluralist like Jackson.⁶⁷

The unpredictability of a global politics that is predicated on diversity is one of the attractions of a pluralist world society. It has the potential to offer individuals and groups not just the comfort, safety and familiarity of their own communities, but the chance to step out into the world, to engage and act in a public way and on their own terms. This insertion of people and groups into world society is unlikely to be amenable to specific rules, forms and institutions of action. Instead, it carries with it an unpredictability of outcome that is exciting and, of course, occasionally dangerous.⁶⁸ Solidarism recognises this, too, in its pursuit of principles and institutions that will minimise the unpredictable and dangerous consequences of diversity. Pluralism is more willing to pay the price of unpredictability in the name of giving scope to a far-wider range of communities to play a role in world society. Judging the costs and benefits of these two approaches is, ultimately, a pragmatic matter that seems ill suited to *a priori* philosophical resolution. Political ethics will, and ought to, remain contextual and circumstantial, as the English School has always argued.

Conclusions

The issue of change is of great importance to all I.R. theory. The English School, via the idea of interaction between realist, rationalist and revolutionist traditions of thought and action, has an in-built mechanism for addressing and explaining change. Constructivist solidarism is indicative of how English School theory can respond to issues such as globalisation, humanitarian intervention and challenges to its established understandings and concepts of territory. Efforts to take the English School in a more normatively cosmopolitan direction have produced substantial and innovative work that not only pushes forward a normative agenda, but offers real insight into major policy issues. The practical, and praxeological, strengths of English School thought are being reproduced.

However, this paper has suggested that this work relies too heavily on seeing the dynamics of change as exogenous to the institutions of international society. Instead, I have tried to map out developments within international society, focused on questions of diversity, that strain the fabric of international society, pushing towards a framework that is less constrained by a narrow and static notion of territoriality.

Consideration of this tension offers an alternative to the solidarist interpretation of the outcome of global change. Instead, a preliminary defence has been developed of how and why a pluralist response to the opportunities and demands of globalisation may be made. This, too, seeks to offer a positive and progressive normative agenda, but one that emphasises the inescapability of diversity, rather than seeing it as part of the 'second best' world of an international society that is now in ever closer contact with the ideal of a world society.⁶⁹

Thus the pluralist-solidarist tension in English School theory, embodied in so many ways in the role and understanding of territory in international society, looks set to continue and, indeed, ought to continue. A vision of a pluralist 'supraterritorial' world society emerging in part through the economic, financial, social and political dynamics of globalisation and in part from within international society itself, offers a vibrant normative agenda to set alongside that of solidarism. Diversity may have been corralled within the territorial state, but the change signified by alternatively territorial or non-territorial forms of politics does not mean that diversity remains within the fences of the territorial borders of sovereign states. The identification of revolutionism with solidarism and the assumption that world society has to be solidarist has been taken too much for granted in English School thinking about change in international relations and the opportunities it presents. Recognising the depth of diversity in the human condition and its normative significance, appreciating its role in engendering change from within international society and appealing to a more open, fluid and dynamic vision of world society suggests there is plenty of

potential left in pluralist thinking about change, and the outcome of change, in international relations.

References

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1 This is one of the main elements of the research programme identified by Barry Buzan, 'The English School: an underexploited resource in IR', *Review of International Studies*, 27(3), 2001, p. 482.

2 Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: a study of order in world politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 13.

3 Richard Little, 'The English School's Contribution to the Study of International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 6(3), 2000, pp. 395-422.

4, Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p. 153.

5 Martin Wight (edited by Gabrielle Wight and Brian Porter), *International Theory: the three traditions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991).

6 Bull, *Anarchical Society*. See also Hedley Bull, 'The Concept of Justice in International Relations', in Hedley Bull, *Justice in International Relations: the Hagey lectures* (Waterloo: University of Waterloo Press, 1984).

7 João Marques de Almeida, 'Challenging Realism by Returning to History: the British Committees contribution to IR 40 years on', *International Relations*, 17(3), 2003, pp. 273-302.

8 Almeida, 'Challenging Realism', p. 296.

9 For a discussion of this see Ana Gonzalez-Palaez and Barry Buzan, 'A viable Project of Solidarism? The Neglected Contribution of John Vincent's Basic Rights Initiative', *International Relations*, 17(3), 2003, pp. 321-40.

10 These ideas are taken from Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: a critical introduction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

11 E.g. John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: hegemony, territory and political economy* (London: Routledge, 1995). Michael Shapiro and Hayward Alker (eds), *Challenging Boundaries: global flows, territorial identities* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1996).

12 Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p. 10.

13 David L. Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah, 'The Westphalian Deferral', *International Studies Review*, 2(2), 2000, pp. 29-64.

14 E.g. Onora O'Neill, 'Justice and Boundaries', in Chris Brown (ed.), *Political Re-structuring in Europe: ethical perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1994). Onora O'Neill, 'Permeable Boundaries and Multiple Identities', in Preston King (ed.), *Socialism and the Common Good: New Fabian Essays* (London: Frank Cass, 1996).

15 Key texts here are Bull, 'Concept of Justice'; Robert H. Jackson. *The Global Covenant: human conduct in a world of states* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); R. J. Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian intervention in international society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: ethical foundations for a post-Westphalian age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).

16 Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p. 23

17 Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp. 233-81.

- 18 Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp. 286-8, 292, 294-5.
- 19 Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp. 268-8, 292, 294-5, 316-7. He emphasise the fragility of the value consensus enabling international society to operate, with the concomitant danger that action that undermines this consensus runs the risk of returning international relations to the less desirable, because more violent and conflictual, condition of an international system.
- 20 Jackson, *Global Covenant*.
- 21 Jackson, *Global Covenant*, pp. 249-293, 400-425.
- 22 This characterisation is at the root of what Agnew and Corbridge describe as 'the territorial trap,' which they see as stifling the ability of international relations theory to deal adequately with the trends and transformations currently underway in the global political economy. Agnew and Corbridge, *Mastering Space*.
- 23 See the critique of Jackson by Hidemi Suganami, 'British Institutionalists, or the English School, 20 Years On', *International Relations*, 17(3), 2003, pp. 262-3.
- 24 Thus Hedley Bull, 'The State's Positive Role in International Relations,' *Daedalus*, 108(4), 1979, pp. 111-24; Bull, 'Concept of Justice', and Jackson, *Global Covenant* discuss pluralism almost entirely in terms of states.
- 25 Martin Wight, *System of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), chapter 6.
- 26 Blaney and Inayatullah, 'Westphalian Deferral'.
- 27 For further criticism of this form of pluralism, including methodological weaknesses, see Christian Reus-Smit, 'Imagining Society: constructivism and the English School', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 4(3), 2002, pp. 502-5.
- 28 Little, 'English School's Contribution'.
- 29 E.g. Mayall, *Nationalism*; Alan James, *The Bases of International Order* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- 30 See for example the discussion of solidarism in Bull's thought presented in Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'Hedley Bull's Pluralism of the Intellect and Solidarism of the Will', *International Affairs*, 72(1), 1996, pp. 91-107.
- 31 E.g. Dunne and Wheeler, 'Hedley Bull's Pluralism', Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'Pluralist or Solidarist Conceptions of International Society: Bull and Vincent on humanitarian intervention', *Millennium*, 21(3), 1992, pp. 463-87. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers*.
- 32 Bull, 'Concept of Justice'. Contrast Bull's thinking at this time with John Vincent's appeal to the possibility of solidarism, see *Human Rights*.
- 33 Gonzalez-Palaez and Buzan, 'A Viable Project of Solidarism'.
- 34 Ian Clark, 'Another "Double Movement": the great transformation after the Cold War?', *Review of International Studies*, 27(Special Issue), 2001, pp. 237-56.
- 35 An example of this difficulty can be found in The International Commission on Intervention in State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001). This report accepts in principle transformatory notions, such as the contingency of sovereignty on a state's treatment of its population in accordance with human rights norms. However, it rows back from them in the adoption of pragmatic restrictions on the operationalisation of these principles so as not to challenge excessively established notions.
- 36 ICISS, *Responsibility to Protect*, offers an interesting example of the impact on practitioners of international politics of these debates. See in particular the discussion of sovereignty, pp. 7-8.
- 37 E.g. John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999). ICISS, *Responsibility to Protect*, pp. 5-7.

- 38 Timothy Dunne, 'The Social Construction of International Society', *European Journal of International Relations*, 1(3), 1995, pp. 367-89. See also Buzan, 'The English School'. For a critique of the limited engagement of the English School with constructivism see Reus-Smit, 'Imagining Society', pp. 489-92.
- 39 Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society* (London: Routledge, 1992). Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).
- 40 E.g. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers*.
- 41 Linklater, *Transformation of Political Community*.
- 42 Clark, 'Double Movement', pp. 250-3.
- 43 Tim Dunne, 'Society and Hierarchy in International Relations', *International Relations*, 17(3), 2003, pp. 303-20.
- 44 Barry Buzan notes Jackson's position at one extreme of English School theory. See his review of 'The Global Covenant' in *Millennium*, 31(2), 2002.
- 45 Bull, *Anarchical Society*, section 2.
- 46 Susan Strange is one example of this, although she had doubts about how long the Westphalian system could endure in a useful form. Susan Strange, 'The Westfailure System', *Review of International Studies*, 25(3), 1999, pp. 345-54.
- 47 The examples are Scholte's, *Globalization*, p. 48.
- 48 The use of Waltz's idea of state units forming a system through 'co-action' – and the implication that Scholte's portrayal of territorial IR relies on a restricted and inadequate neo-Realist account – is deliberate.
- 49 Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp. 16-17.
- 50 See Blaney and Inayatullah, 'Westphalian Deferral', pp. 44-54 for an account of the deferral in contemporary international society.
- 51 An interesting example of this is the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *Responsibility to Protect*. This sets out a version of sovereignty that appears to make it contingent on a universal human ethic – the responsibility to protect human beings from grave harm. However, the report sets about resisting the implications of such a move for intervention in international relations by emphasising criteria and caveats that serve to protect the established order, and established sites of power and authority, under all but the most serious of circumstances.
- 52 See Jackson's discussion of contemporary issues for an example of an approach that does seem to accept these restraints. *Global Covenant*, pp. 185-370, especially 216-93 and 316-35.
- 53 Iver B. Neumann, 'The English School on Diplomacy: scholarly promise unfulfilled', *International Relations*, 17(3), 2003, pp. 341-70.
- 54 Jackson hints at a defence of this, but does not, in my view, develop it fully enough. *Global Covenant*, pp. 400-26). See also John Williams, 'Territorial Borders, Toleration and the English School', *Review of International Studies*, 28(4), 2002, pp. 737-58 and John Williams, 'The Borders of Ethics and the Ethics of Borders: International Society and Rights and Duties of Special Beneficence', *Global Society*, 13(4), 1999, pp. 467-87.
- 55 Scholte, *Globalization*, p. 59.
- 56 As Hannah Arendt notes, '... we are all the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live.' Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 8.
- 57 E.g. David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), part III. A useful survey and critique is provided by Chris Brown, 'Cosmopolitanism, World Citizenship and Global Civil Society', in Simon Caney and Peter Jones (eds), *Human Rights and Global Diversity* (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

58 Linklater, *Transformation of Political Community*.

59 David Newman and Anssi Paasi, 'Fences and Neighbours in the Postmodern World: boundary narratives in political geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 22(2), 1998, pp. 186-207.

60 Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: frontiers of identity, nation and state* (Oxford: Berg, 1999) p. 4.

61 Quoted in Herbert Dittgen, 'The End of the Nations State?' in Martin Pratt and Janet Allison Brown (eds), *Borderlands Under Stress* (London: Kluwer Law International, 2000) p. 53.

62 Peter Mandaville, 'Reading the State from Elsewhere: towards an anthropology of the post-national', *Review of International Studies*, 28(1), 2002, pp. 199-207.

63 E.g. Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society*.

64 I am grateful to Barry Buzan for suggesting this argument which he develops in a forthcoming publication.

65 Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p.5

66 Clark, 'Double Movement', p. 254.

67 This understanding of action is informed by the ideas of Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*. See her discussion of the *vita activa*.

68 This notion of political action existing in inter-subjective, ephemeral and non-institutionalised spaces 'in-between' individuals and groups is influenced by the account of politics developed by Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*. Also Williams, 'Territorial Borders' and John Williams, 'Hannah Arendt and the International Space In-Between', in Anthony F. Lang, Jr. and John Williams (eds), *Hannah Arendt and International Relations* (New York: Palgrave, forthcoming).

69 The idea of pluralism as a 'second best' ethic is drawn from Chris Brown, 'International Theory and International Society: the Viability of the "Middle Way"', *Review of International Studies*, 21(2), 1995, pp. 183-96.