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From International to World Society?

English School Theory and the
Social Structure of Globalisation

Barry Buzan

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From International to World Society?

Barry Buzan offers an extensive and long overdue critique and reappraisal of the English school approach to International Relations. Starting on the neglected concept of world society and bringing together the international society tradition and the Wendtian mode of constructivism, Buzan offers a new theoretical framework that can be used to address globalisation as a complex political interplay among state and non-state actors. This approach forces English school theory to confront neglected questions both about its basic concepts and assumptions, and the constitution of society in terms of what values are shared, how and why they are shared, and by whom. Buzan highlights the idea of primary institutions as the central contribution of English school theory and shows how this both differentiates English school theory from realism and neoliberal institutionalism, and how it can be used to generate distinctive comparative and historical accounts of international society.

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Structure of Globalisation

Barry Buzan



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To Richard Little

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Preface

This book started conscious life when I decided in the late 1990s to attempt a reconvening of the English school. Much of its agenda is already visible in a paper I wrote for the public launch of that project at the BISA Conference in 1999, and subsequently published in the *Review of International Studies* as part of a forum on the English school. That paper opens many of the criticisms of the English school classics, and some of the suggestions as to how to develop and apply the theory, that are followed up here. This book has deeper roots both in my earlier attempts to link English school ideas to American IR theory, which I extend here, and in my world historical writings with Richard Little, which point strongly towards the English school as an excellent site for developing grand theory. Its particular genesis was a growing feeling that a lot of the problems I saw in English school theory hinged on the concept of world society. World society occupied a key place in a triad alongside international society and international system, but was the Cinderella of English school theory, attracting neither consistent usage nor, and in contrast to international society, any systematic attempt to explore its meaning. The vagueness attending world society seemed to underpin a lot of the problems in English school theory about pluralism and solidarism, and how to handle the cosmopolitan and transnational aspects of international life. This dissatisfaction led me to apply for ESRC funding to look into world society. I originally offered an article, but as I dug into world society it quickly became obvious that I was writing a book, and that it would have to take on the whole body of English school theory. In that sense, writing this book has reminded me of the process of writing *People, States and Fear* twenty years ago – indeed, this book could be titled *Peoples, States and Transnational Actors*! Then I was trying to understand the concept of security, and had to follow the threads wherever

Preface

they led without knowing what the whole thing would look like. Now I have pursued the threads opened by world society, and ended up focusing on institutions and the general theoretical framework of English school thinking.

I would like to thank the following for comments on all or parts of earlier versions of this work: Mathias Albert, William Bain, Chris Brown, Bruce Cronin, Thomas Diez, Tim Dunne, Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez, Stefano Guzzini, Lene Hansen, Andrew Hurrell, Dietrich Jung, John Keane, Morten Kelstrup, Bob Keohane, Anna Leander, Richard Little, Lene Mosegaard Madsen, Ian Manners, Noel Parker, Nick Rengger, John Ruggie, Brian Schmidt, Gerry Simpson, Hidemi Suganami, Ole Wæver, Adam Watson, Nick Wheeler, Richard Whitman, and several anonymous reviewers for the ESRC. My special thanks to Richard Little, Ole Wæver and the late Gerry Segal. Without my extensive collaborations with them I would never have learned half of the things I needed to understand in order to write this book. I dedicate it to Richard Little, who as well as being a good friend, has accompanied me on much of my intellectual journey towards the English school, and who has played a big role in the success of its reconvening.

I am grateful to the ESRC (award no. R000239415-A) for funding a two-year teaching buyout which enabled me to focus on this project, and to the University of Westminster, and then the London School of Economics, for giving me leave. I am also grateful to the late and much lamented Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) for funding both my presence there, and a regular seminar at which many drafts related to this book received incisive criticism.

Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BIS	Bank for International Settlements
BISA	British International Studies Association
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
COPRI	Copenhagen Peace Research Institute
CSD	Centre for the Study of Democracy
ECPR	European Consortium for Political Research
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
FIDE	International Chess Federation
FIFA	International Federation of Football Associations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCS	Global Civil Society
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, aka World Bank
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPE	International Political Economy
IPSA	International Political Science Association
IR	International Relations

List of abbreviations

ISA	International Studies Association
MFN	Most Favoured Nation

Montreal Protocol (1987) to the Vienna Convention for Protection of the Ozone Layer (1987)

NAFTA	North American Free Trade Association
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
PKO	peacekeeping operation
QUANGO	quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation
TNA	transnational actor
TNC	transnational corporation
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and Kyoto Protocol (1997)
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSRG	World Society Research Group
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Glossary

Binding forces – coercion, calculation, belief

Interhuman society – social structures based on interactions amongst individual human beings, and in this book referred to as *first-order societies*, and mainly manifested as large-scale patterns of shared identity

International society has two meanings in this book:

- (1) The classical English school usage: is about the institutionalisation of shared interest and identity amongst states, and puts the creation and maintenance of shared norms, rules and institutions at the centre of IR theory. I call this *interstate society*
- (2) A more specific meaning developed along the way in this book to indicate situations in which the basic political and legal frame of international social structure is set by the states-system, with individuals and TNAs being given rights by states within the order defined by interstate society

Interstate society – see *international society* definition (1)

International system – refers generally to the macro side of the interactions that tie the human race together, and more specifically to the interactions among states. Its usage in classical English school thinking is close to that in realism, being about power politics amongst states within a political structure of international anarchy.

Montreal Protocol – (1987) to the Vienna Convention for Protection of the Ozone Layer (1987)

Pluralism – defines *second-order societies* of states with a relatively low degree of shared norms, rules and institutions amongst the states, where the focus of society is on creating a framework for orderly coexistence and competition, or possibly also the management of collective problems of common fate (e.g. arms control, environment)

Primary institutions – the institutions talked about by the English school as constitutive of both states and international society in that they define both the basic character and purpose of any such society. For *second-order societies* such institutions define the units that compose the society

Secondary institutions – the institutions talked about in regime theory are the products of certain types of international society (most obviously liberal, but possibly other types as well), and are for the most part consciously designed by states

Second-order societies – those in which the members are not individual human beings, but durable collectivities of humans possessed of identities and actor qualities that are more than the sum of their parts

Solidarism – can be used as a synonym for cosmopolitanism, but in my usage defines international societies with a relatively high degree of shared norms, rules and institutions among states, where the focus is not only on ordering coexistence and competition, but also on cooperation over a wider range of issues, whether in pursuit of joint gains (e.g. trade), or realisation of shared values (e.g. human rights)

State – any form of post-kinship, territorially based, politically centralised, self-governing entity capable of generating an inside–outside structure

The three domains – *interstate*, *interhuman* and *transnational society*

Transnational society – social structures composed of non-state collective actors

Vanguard – the idea common to both military strategy and Leninist thinking that a leading element plays a crucial role in how social movements unfold

World society – has two meanings in this book:

- (1) the traditional English school usage takes individuals, non-state organisations and ultimately the global population as a whole as the focus of global societal identities and arrangements, and puts transcendence of the states-system at the centre of IR theory
- (2) the usage developed in this book labelling situations in which no one of the three domains or types of unit is dominant over the other two, but all are in play together

Introduction

The most fundamental question you can ask in international theory is,
What is international society? Wight (1987: 222)

After a long period of neglect, the social (or societal) dimension of the international system is being brought back into fashion within International Relations (IR) by the upsurge of interest in constructivism. For adherents of the English school, this dimension was never out of fashion, with the consequence that English school thinking itself has been somewhat on the margins of the discipline. In this book I will argue that English school theory has a lot to offer those interested in developing societal understandings of international systems, albeit itself being in need of substantial redevelopment.

International society is the flagship idea of the English school. It carves out a clearly bounded subject focused on the elements of society that states form among themselves. This domain has been quite extensively developed conceptually, and considerable work has also been done on the histories of international societies, particularly the creation of the modern international society in Europe and its expansion to the rest of the planet. *World society* also has a key place in English school theory, but is much less well worked out. While international society is focused on states, world society implies something that reaches well beyond the state towards more cosmopolitan images of how humankind is, or should be, organised. Quite what that ‘something’ that defines world society is, however, remains at best contested, and at worst simply unclear. Since world society can be (and is) easily cast as a challenger to international society, ambiguity about it is a major impediment to clear thinking about the social structure of international systems. A key cause of this problem is a widespread failure in English school thinking to

distinguish clearly enough between normative theory and theory about norms. It is a central focus of this book to address that problem. Fortunately, several other traditions of thought have grappled with world society, sometimes using that label, sometimes with variants such as 'global society' or 'global civil society'. Latterly, its popularity, or that of its synonyms, perhaps can be understood best as a way of getting to conceptual grips with the phenomenon of globalisation. These other bodies of thought provide useful insights applicable to English school theory.

Consequently, although this book is about English school theory generally, and will have a lot to say about international society, much of the argument in the early chapters will focus on trying to clarify world society. The concept of world society, and especially how world society and international society relate to each other, is in my view both the biggest weakness in existing English school theory, and the place where the biggest gains are to be found. John Vincent's (1988: 211) observation that the need to work out the relationship between cosmopolitan culture and international order was one of the unfinished legacies of Bull's work remains true today. English school theory has great potential to improve how globalisation is conceptualised, but cannot do so unless it finds a coherent position on world society. I plan to survey the basic ideas and approaches to world society, and to attempt a coherent theoretical construction of the concept. My starting position is that there is not much to be gained, and quite a lot to be lost analytically, from simply using world society as a label for the totality of human interaction in all forms and at all levels. Globalisation fills that role already. My initial strategy will be to construct world society as a concept to capture the non-state side of the international system, and therefore as the complement/opponent to the already well-developed idea of international society.

The book is aimed at two distinct but not mutually exclusive audiences. The narrower audience comprises those already working in the English school tradition plus followers of Wendt's mode of constructivism. For the English school people, it offers a comprehensive critique of English school theory and an ambitious, detailed attempt to address this critique by developing a more purely social structural interpretation of the theory to set alongside its existing normative and historical strands. For the Wendtians, the book offers a friendly critique, an extension of the logic and an application of the theory. I seek to create a synthesis between the structural elements of the Bull/Vincent side of English school theory about international and world society, and Wendt's (1999)

social theory of international politics. I take from both sources a social structural reading of international society, and a methodologically pluralist rejection of the view that paradigms in IR are incommensurable. I insert into both two things that they ignore or marginalise: the international political economy, and the sub-global level. And I impose on both a more rigorous taxonomical scheme than either has attempted. The result is a radical reinterpretation of English school theory from the ground up, but one that remains supportive of, and in touch with, the basic aims of both English school and Wendtian theory – to understand and interpret the composition and the dynamics of the social structure of international politics.

The broader audience is all of those in IR who acknowledge that ‘globalisation’ represents an important way of labelling a set of substantial and significant changes in the international system, but who despair about the analytical vacuousness of ‘the “G” word’. To them, I offer a Wendt-inspired social structural interpretation of English school theory as a good solution to the problems of how to think both analytically and normatively about globalisation. English school theory is ideally tailored to address this problematique, though it has not so far been much used in this way. The English school’s triad of concepts exactly captures the simultaneous existence of state and non-state systems operating alongside and through each other, without finding this conceptually problematic. It keeps the old, while bringing in the new, and is thus well suited to looking at the transition from Westphalian to post-Westphalian international politics, whether this be at the level of globalisation, or in regional developments such as the EU. English school theory can handle the idea of a shift from balance of power and war to market and multilateralism as the dominant institutions of international society, and it provides an ideal framework for examining questions of intervention, whether on human rights or other grounds. Managing this expansion from interstate to world politics is important to IR as a discipline. IR’s core strengths are in the states-system, and it needs to combine these with other elements of the international system, and to avoid ensnaring itself in the trap of unnecessary choices between state and non-state alternatives. In my view, English school theory shows how this can be done better than any available alternative.

This broader audience includes practically everyone engaged in the debates about IR theory. Some of them may baulk initially at the idea of wading through a sustained critique of what they may see as a somewhat marginal and traditional body of IR theory. Why, they may ask, should

we bother with something so demonstrably flawed? They should take this book in three stages. First, it can be read as a relatively compact introduction to a stimulating and useful body of theory with which they may not be very familiar. Second, it is a sustained attempt to bring together the IR tradition of thinking about international society, and Wendtian constructivism, and to set both of these against more sociological thinking about society generally and world society in particular. Wendtian thinking is broadened out to include non-state actors, and English school theory is forced to confront neglected questions about the constitution of society in terms of what values are shared, how and why they are shared, and by whom. Third, it is about developing out of this conjuncture a theoretical framework that can be used to address globalisation as a complex social interplay among state and non-state actors mediated by a set of primary institutions. This interplay can be captured as a finite, though not simple, set of structural possibilities governed by a relatively small number of key variables. Using English school theory to address globalisation does not offer the predictive oversimplifications of neorealism and neoliberalism. But by opening the way to a wider historical interpretation, it does offer an escape from the Westphalian straitjacket. It gives powerful grounds for differentiation and comparison among types of international society, and ways of understanding both what Westphalian international society evolved from, and what it might be evolving into. In that mode, this book also speaks to those grappling with integration theory, and how to understand, and manage, developments in the EU.

The plan is as follows. Chapter 1 provides a quick overview of English school theory in order to set the context, and to note some of the problems that a more social structural interpretation might redress. Chapter 2 sets out a detailed exegesis of the world society concept in English school thinking, establishing the role it plays in the debates about pluralism and solidarism, the incoherence of its usage, and its importance to the whole structure of English school thinking. Chapter 3 surveys how others outside the English school have deployed the idea of world society, and looks for ideas there which can be applied to the English school framework. Chapter 4 engages four analytical tensions at the heart of English school theory (state versus non-state, physical versus social concepts of system, society versus community and individual versus transnational), and develops a revised framework for thinking about international and world society. Chapter 5 returns to the pluralist–solidarist debates, focusing on the neglected question of what

counts as solidarism, and particularly the place of the economic sector. It reconstructs this debate as a way of thinking about the spectrum of interstate societies. Chapter 6 explores the concept of the institutions of international society in English school theory, relating them to usage in regime theory, and attempting a comprehensive mapping of them and how they relate to types of international society. Chapter 7 introduces geography, arguing that the traditional focus on the global level needs to be balanced by an equal focus on international social structures at the sub-global scale. Among other things, bringing in a geographic variable opens the way into understanding the dynamics and evolution of international societies through a type of vanguard theory. Chapter 8 uses the analytical lens developed in chapters 4–6 to sketch a portrait of contemporary international society, to look back at the institutional change of the last two centuries that brought us to where we are now, and to think about the forces driving it. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the likely directions of its development, and with proposals for the English school research agenda.

1 English school theory and its problems: an overview

We need sharper analytical tools than those provided by Wight and Bull. Dunne (2001b: 66)

This chapter starts with a summary of English school theory as it is conventionally understood. The second section looks at the different strands, tensions and potentials within the school, and locates within them the line to be taken in the rest of this book. The third section reviews the main areas of weakness in English school theory that subsequent chapters will address and hopefully rectify. The fourth section tackles the question of whether English school theory is really theory.

English school theory: a summary

The English school can be thought of as an established body of both theoretical and empirical work dating back to the late 1950s (Dunne 1998; Wæver 1998; Buzan 2001). Robert Jackson (1992: 271) nicely sums up the English school conversation by seeing it as:

a variety of theoretical inquiries which conceive of international relations as a world not merely of power or prudence or wealth or capability or domination but also one of recognition, association, membership, equality, equity, legitimate interests, rights, reciprocity, customs and conventions, agreements and disagreements, disputes, offenses, injuries, damages, reparations, and the rest: the normative vocabulary of human conduct.

Two core elements define the distinctiveness of the English school: its three key concepts, and its theoretically pluralist approach. The three key concepts are: international system, international society and world

society (Little 1995: 15–16). Within the English school discourse, these are sometimes (and perhaps misleadingly) codified as *Hobbes* (or sometimes *Machiavelli*), *Grotius* and *Kant* (Cutler 1991). They line up with Wight's (1991) 'three traditions' of IR theory: *Realism*, *Rationalism* and *Revolutionism*. Broadly speaking, these terms are now understood as follows:

- *International system* (Hobbes/Machiavelli/realism) is about power politics amongst states, and puts the structure and process of international anarchy at the centre of IR theory. This position is broadly parallel to mainstream realism and neorealism and is thus well developed and clearly understood. It also appears elsewhere, as for example in Tilly's (1990: 162) definition that states form a system 'to the extent that they interact with each other regularly, and to the degree that their interaction affects the behaviour of each state'. It is based on an ontology of states, and is generally approached with a positivist epistemology, materialist and rationalist methodologies and structural theories.
- *International society* (Grotius/rationalism) is about the institutionalisation of shared interest and identity amongst states, and puts the creation and maintenance of shared norms, rules and institutions at the centre of IR theory. This position has some parallels to regime theory, but is much deeper, having constitutive rather than merely instrumental implications (Hurrell 1991: 12–16; Dunne 1995: 140–3). International society has been the main focus of English school thinking, and the concept is quite well developed and relatively clear. In parallel with international system, it is also based on an ontology of states, but is generally approached with a constructivist epistemology and historical methods.
- *World society* (Kant/revolutionism) takes individuals, non-state organisations and ultimately the global population as a whole as the focus of global societal identities and arrangements, and puts transcendence of the states-system at the centre of IR theory. Revolutionism is mostly about forms of universalist cosmopolitanism. It could include communism, but as Wæver (1992: 98) notes, these days it is usually taken to mean liberalism. This position has some parallels to transnationalism, but carries a much more foundational link to normative political theory. It clearly does not rest on an ontology of states, but given the transnational element neither does it rest entirely on one of individuals. Critical theory defines some, but not all of the approaches

to it, and in Wightian mode it is more about historically operating alternative images of the international system as a whole than it is about capturing the non-state aspects of the system.¹

Jackson (2000: 169–78) puts an interesting twist on the three traditions by viewing them as defining the diverse values that statespeople have to juggle in the conduct of foreign policy. Realism he sees as giving priority to national responsibilities, rationalism he sees as giving priority to international responsibilities, and revolutionism (which he prefers to call cosmopolitanism) he sees as giving priority to humanitarian responsibilities. He adds a fourth, more recent value – stewardship of the planet – in effect, giving priority to responsibility for the environment.

The classical English school framework is summarised in figure 1 below. So far, the main thrust of the English school's work has been to uncover the nature and function of international societies, and to trace their history and development. The basic idea of international society is quite simple: just as human beings as individuals live in societies which they both shape and are shaped by, so also states live in an international society which they shape and are shaped by. This social element has to be put alongside realism's raw logic of anarchy if one is to get a meaningful picture of how systems of states operate. When units are sentient, how they perceive each other is a major determinant of how they interact. If the units share a common identity (a religion, a system of governance, a language), or even just a common set of rules or norms (about how to determine relative status, and how to conduct diplomacy), then these intersubjective understandings not only condition their behaviour, but also define the boundaries of a social system. Within the idea of international society, the principal debate has been that between pluralists and solidarists. This hinges on the question of the type and extent of norms, rules and institutions that an international society can form without departing from the foundational rules of sovereignty and non-intervention that define it as a system of states. Pluralists think that the sovereignty/non-intervention principles restrict international society to fairly minimal rules of coexistence. Solidarists think that international society can develop quite wide-ranging norms, rules and institutions, covering both coexistence issues and cooperation in pursuit of shared interests, including some scope for collective enforcement. As indicated on figure 1, pluralism and solidarism define the boundary zones, respectively, towards realism and revolutionism.

¹ I am grateful to Ole Wæver for this latter point.

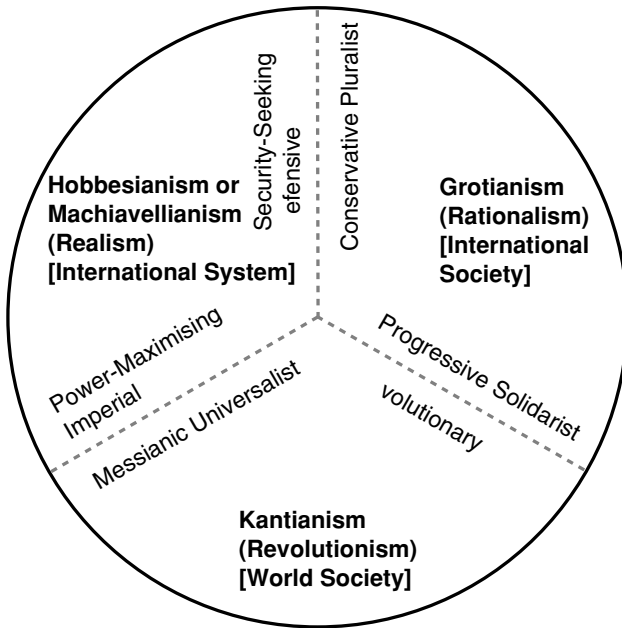


Figure 1. The classical 'Three Traditions' model of English school theory

Note: Titles in () are Wight's labels; titles in [] are the analytical focus; titles along the border zones are where the traditions blend into each other

The main focus of English school work has centred on a synthesis of realism and rationalism. This focus is nicely captured by Bull and Watson's (1984: 1) classic definition of international society as:

a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements.

This definition neatly demonstrates the combination of the Hobbesian/realist element of international system, with the Grotian/rationalist element of a socially constructed order. It interleaves the logic of more material theories of the international system, driven by billiard ball metaphors, with the view that sentience makes a difference, and that social systems cannot be understood in the same way as physical ones.

But the pursuit of international society has obliged the English school to engage with the element of liberal revolutionism. Once the idea of society was conceded, one had to think not just of international society (amongst states), but also 'world society' (the idea of shared norms and values at the individual level, transcending the state). It is clear from figure 1 that world society is fundamental to the ability of English school theory to focus enquiry along these lines.

As captured in figure 1, the idea is that these three key concepts form a complete and interlinked picture of the IR universe. Although each element is conceptually and methodologically distinct, they blur into each other at the boundaries. In the English school perspective all three of these elements are in continuous coexistence and interplay, the question being how strong they are in relation to each other (Bull 1991: xvii–xviii; Dunne 1995: 134–7). The three key concepts thus generate the second distinctive feature of the English school, its theoretical pluralism. Little (1998, 2000) makes a strong case that the English school should be seen not just as a series of ontological statements about reality, but more as a pluralist methodological approach. By introducing international society as a third element, not only as a *via media* between realism and liberalism/cosmopolitanism, but also as the keystone to an interdependent set of concepts, English school theory transcends the binary opposition between them that for long plagued debates about IR theory. By assuming not only that all three elements always operate simultaneously, but also that each carries its own distinctive ontological and epistemological package, English school theory also transcends the assumption often made in the so-called inter-paradigm debate, that realist, liberal and marxist approaches to IR theory are incommensurable (McKinlay and Little 1986).

World society, and the problems and potentials of English school theory

As just noted, the foundation of English school theory is the idea that international system, international society and world society all exist simultaneously, both as objects of discussion and as aspects of international reality. This theoretically pluralist formulation takes the focus away from the oppositional either/or approaches of much IR theory (interparadigm debate, realism-idealism, rationalist-reflectivist, etc.) and moves it towards a holistic, synthesising approach that features the patterns of strength and interplay amongst the three pillars. But world

society has been the Cinderella concept of English school theory, receiving relatively little attention and almost no conceptual development. To the extent that it gets discussed at all, it is in the context of other concerns, usually, but not always, human rights.

So long as day-to-day world politics was dominated by the international system and international society pillars, with world society only a residual element in the background, the English school could get away with treating world society as a Cinderella. But if, as many people think, the world society element is rising in significance, this neglect becomes untenable. There are at least three compelling reasons for giving priority to rectifying this weakness. First is that the English school needs to clarify the nature of its own claim to the idea in relation to the claims of others using the concept. Second is that English school theory itself cannot develop until the weak world society pillar is brought up to strength. Third, is that there is an opportunity to use English school theory to clarify the perennially unfocused, but politically central, debate about globalisation. This opportunity depends on the English school getting its own theoretical house in order. Even if the current assumptions about the rising importance of world society are wrong, the English school still needs to sort out the concept, partly in order to come to a judgement on the matter, and partly to move to completion in the development of its distinctive theoretical approach.

On this latter point, part of the case I want to make is that there is a pressing need for the English school to begin pulling away from its founding fathers. Manning, Wight, Bull, Vincent and others deserve much credit for originating an extremely interesting and already quite influential set of ideas. Krasner (1999: 46) acknowledges the English school as the 'best known sociological perspective' in IR. But as I hope to show, they also deserve criticism, both for not developing some of these ideas, and for steering them down a number of narrow channels that, while not dead ends, and still of interest and importance in themselves, have hamstrung the development of the theory. Among other things, I will show that some of the English school's founding fathers allowed their normative concerns with human rights to distort their theoretical reflections; were too much in thrall to universalist principles of order and justice derived from debates in political theory; and were too disinterested in international political economy. These shortcomings blinded them and most of their successors to much of the actual development in international and world society. The emphasis on universalism, and also on the high politics issues of human rights and (non-)intervention,

has strongly conditioned both the pessimism and the political pluralism that mark much of the school's 'classical' work, as has posing the hard test of willingness to support the collective enforcement of international law as a measure of solidarity (Bull 1966a: 52). The potential of English school theory as a basis for grand theory in IR (Buzan and Little 2001) will not be realised unless English school theory can be disentangled from its roots, and presented in a more systematically structured way.

World society is the key to linking English school theory to the debate about globalisation (Weller 2000: 47) and as well, to linking English school theory to the debates about the European Union (Diez and Whitman 2000). Scholte (2000: 8–9, 59–61) argues that globalisation is defined by a deterritorialisation of social life which has created new actors and networks alongside the existing territorial ones: 'territoriality and supraterritoriality coexist in complex interrelation'. The more sensible globalisation writers all agree that there is no simple zero-sum game between globalisation and the states-system. Both Woods (2000) and Held *et al.* (1999) agree with Scholte's idea that the states-system and the non-state system(s) coexist side by side, and argue that states, especially the stronger states and powers, have played a major role in bringing globalisation into being and steering its development. Some even think that 'the word "globalisation" is really a contemporary euphemism for American economic dominance' (Kapstein 1999: 468; see also Woods 2000: 9). Either way, as argued above, English school theory is ideally tailored to address this problematique because of the way in which it takes on board both the territorial and the non-territorial elements.

By this point some readers will be shaking their heads in disapproval on the grounds that I am misrepresenting the English school. They have a point. It is possible to understand what English school theory represents in at least three different (though potentially overlapping) ways:

- (1) as a set of ideas to be found in the minds of statesmen;
- (2) as a set of ideas to be found in the minds of political theorists;
- (3) as a set of externally imposed concepts that define the material and social structures of the international system.

Manning (1962) is the classical exponent of the first view. For Manning, the idea of international society was just that – an idea. What was important for him was that this was not just any idea, or anyone's