For Emily, Martha and Jeremy

Foreword to the Third Edition: *The Anarchical Society* 25 Years On

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The status of *The Anarchical Society* as a classic text is clear. It provides the most elaborate and powerful exposition of the view that states form amongst themselves an international society; and it develops this idea as a powerful vantage point from which to analyse and assess the possibilities of order in world politics. It also remains a fundamental teaching text, not just as the exemplar of a particular position or as the representative of the so-called English School;[1] but also for its capacity to unsettle established and comfortable positions, for the clarity of its exposition, and for the sharpness of Bull's writing and his intellectual rigour. Clearly a very great deal has changed in the twenty-five years since the book was first published. The first part of this Foreword links *The Anarchical Society* to some of the main developments that have taken place within International Relations theory in this intervening period. The second section sets Bull's approach and some of his conclusions against some of the major changes that have occurred in the structures and practices of world politics.[2]

The Anarchical Society and the Study of International Relations

Bull's importance in the academic study of International Relations has long been recognised, but, as Stanley Hoffmann suggests in the foreword to the second edition, precisely where and how his work fits in is more contested.

Realism and Neorealism

Even a cursory reading of *The Anarchical Society* suggests Bull's many affinities with realism, not least his emphasis on the role of

power in international relations and the fact that the 'institutions' of international society that he analyses in *The Anarchical Society* include war, the Great Powers, the balance of power and diplomacy. Indeed, in a very important sense, the balance of power remains the most important foundation for Bull's conception of international society. Without a balance of power and without sustained and stable understandings between the major powers on the conduct of their mutual relations, then the 'softer' elements of international order (international law, international organisations, the existence of shared values) would be so many castles in the air. Bull also stressed the critical function of realist analysis – unmasking the pretensions of those who purport to speak on behalf of international or global society and underlining the extent to which, even when shared, universal or solidarist values will tend to further the interests of particular states. Finally, Bull's idea of international society grew out of his very close critical engagement with classical realists such as Carr and Morgenthau and retained many of their concerns, especially the relationship between power, law and morality.

Despite textbook stereotypes, a realist is not simply someone who writes about states and believes in the importance of power. Bull did both of these things but did not see himself as a realist: 'I am not a realist', he said unequivocally in a 1979 lecture.[3] He emphasised the extent to which the classical realism of Carr, Kennan or Niebuhr was rooted in particular historical circumstances. It was part of the intellectual temper of a particular age – a period when conflict and anarchy was 'in fact the main ingredient in I[nternational] R[elations] at the time'. From Bull's perspective, both classical realism and, even more, its neorealist variant (as in the hugely influential work of Kenneth Waltz) pay insufficient attention to the framework of rules, norms and shared understandings on which international society depends. This does not imply that norms somehow control the actions of states, acting upon them from outside. But it does mean that they shape the game of power politics, the nature and identity of the actors, the purposes for which force can be used, and the ways in which actors justify and legitimise their actions. Thus, on Bull's account, even conflict and war take place within a highly institutionalised set of normative structures – legal, moral and political. As he puts it: '. . . war is as a

matter of fact an inherently normative phenomenon; it is unimaginable apart from rules by which human beings recognise what behaviour is appropriate to it and define their attitude towards it. War is not simply a clash of forces; it is a clash between the agents of political groupings who are able to recognise one another as such and to direct their force at one another only because of the rules that they understand and apply.'[4]

Similarly, even the quintessentially realist 'institution' of the balance of power appears not as a mechanical arrangement or as a constellation of forces that pushes and shoves states to act in particular ways from outside. It should, rather, be understood as a conscious and continuing shared practice in which the actors constantly debate and contest the meaning of the balance of power, its groundrules, and the role that it should play. Equally Great Powers are to be studied not simply in terms of the degree to which they can impose order on weaker states or within their spheres of influence on the back of crude coercion, but rather in terms of the extent to which their role and their managerial functions are perceived as legitimate by other states. Power remains central to Bull's analysis of international relations, but power is a social attribute. To understand power we must place it side by side with other quintessentially social concepts such as prestige, authority and legitimacy. International society is therefore centrally concerned with norms and institutions. But this does not necessarily lead, notwithstanding the influence of the seventeenth-century international lawyer Hugo Grotius on Bull's work, to a soft, liberal Grotianism concerned solely with the promotion of law and morality as is so often mistakenly assumed.

The distance and differences between Bull and neorealism are particularly clear: the international system simply cannot be viewed solely in material terms as a decentralised, anarchic structure in which functionally undifferentiated units vary only according to the distribution of power. Central to the 'system' is a historically created, and evolving, structure of common understandings, rules, norms, and mutual expectations. Indeed it was the dominance of Waltzian neorealism in the 1980s and early 1990s that explains the relative marginalisation of international society perspectives in that period.

Neo-liberal Institutionalism

On the face of it one would expect a significantly greater degree of overlap and commonality between Bull and liberal or rationalist institutionalists. In the first place the object of explanation is similar. The central problem is to establish that laws and norms exercise a compliance pull of their own, at least partially independent of the power and interests which underpin them and which are often responsible for their creation. There is also some degree of overlap in terms of how rules and institutions function. Institutionalists are concerned with ways in which institutions make it rational for states to cooperate out of self-interest. They view norms and institutions as purposively generated solutions to different kinds of collective-action problems. There is certainly a good deal of this kind of thinking in Bull's work: the notion that states will further their own interests by mutual respect for each others' sovereignty, by recognising certain limits on the use of force, and by accepting the principle that agreements between them should be honoured. Bull recognises that interest-driven cooperation can indeed be built on Hobbesian assumptions and a contractualist and rationalist logic runs through much of his discussion of the institutions of international society.

Yet there are also important differences between Bull and many institutionalists. One relates to Bull's distrust of attempts to understand cooperation purely in terms of abstract ahistorical rationalism. Bull was concerned with the processes by which understanding of common interest evolved and changed through time. Denying that 'Grotian theorists' had any great confidence in abstract human reason, he wrote that:

> Grotius and other exponents of the natural law theory certainly did have 'confidence in human reason', but the Grotian idea of international society later came to rest on the element of consensus in the actual practice of states, and it is on this rather than on 'human reason' that (in common with other contemporary 'Grotians') I rest the case for taking international society seriously.[5]

Standing back, we can see that Bull examined international society from two distinct directions, one analytical, the other

historical. On the one side, he arrived at his understanding of international society by thinking through, in purely abstract terms, those essential elements that would have to be present for any society of states to be meaningfully so described. But, on the other, he insisted that, however plausible this abstract reasoning might be, it had to be set against the cultural and historical forces that had helped shape the consciousness of society at any particular time and had moulded perceptions of common values and common purposes.

This emphasis on historically constructed understandings leads to a second area of divergence: the extent to which successful cooperation often depends on a prior sense of community or, at least, on a common set of social, cultural or linguistic conventions. Rationalist models of cooperation may indeed explain how cooperation is possible once the parties have come to believe that they form part of a shared project or community in which there is a common interest that can be furthered by cooperative behaviour. But, from Bull's perspective, rationalist approaches neglect the factors which explain how and why contracting is possible in the first place and the potential barriers that can block the emergence of such a shared project – perhaps because institutionalist analysis has been so dominated by studies of cooperation amongst liberal developed states that enjoy a compatibility of major values and a common conceptualisation of such basic concepts as 'order', 'justice', 'state', 'law', 'contract' and so on. Yet so much of Bull's work was concerned with precisely these kinds of problems – the constant fascination with the boundaries of international society, with the criteria for membership, and with the position of groups that lie on or beyond its margins (infidels, pirates, barbarians).

Constructivism

Almost all constructivists make at least passing reference to Bull and recent writings have sought to compare Bull and the English School explicitly with constructivism.[6] Constructivism is far from a unified position and is becoming ever less so. Yet a number of claims unite much constructivist writing on international relations, including the view that international norms are constitutive as well as regulative; the claim that norms, rules and institutions create meanings and enable, or make possible, different forms of social action; and the idea that many of the most important features of

international politics are produced and reproduced in the concrete practices of social actors.

It is evident that Bull was deeply committed to the centrality of norms and institutions in international politics and to the notion that society is constituted through diverse political practices built around shared, inter-subjective understandings – that is, understandings that exist between and amongst actors. Take, for example, his approving characterisation of the objectives of *Diplomatic Investigations* (one of the other classic texts of the English School):[7]

> Above all, perhaps, they saw theory of international politics not as 'models' or 'conceptual frameworks' of their own to be tested against 'data' but as theories or doctrines in which men in international history have actually believed.[8]

Equally Bull's core definition of international society highlights *shared* conceptions of interests and common values and the *shared consciousness* of being bound by legal and moral rules.

And yet there are problems with trying to squeeze Bull into a constructivist mould that is too confining. He differs greatly from the influential constructivist work of Alexander Wendt in the much greater emphasis that he places on the actual historical evolution of different types of international society.[9] Similarly he places more emphasis on international law as a concrete historical practice and set of normative structures which merit far more direct engagement than has been the case in most constructivist scholarship (and indeed within International Relations theory generally). Although ideas and language matter, Bull's philosophical realism distinguishes him from many of the more strongly reflectivist or discursive constructivists (and still more from post-modernism). Bull rejected the notion that international relations could be ever studied *solely* in terms of shared understandings rather than in terms of the interaction between material and social facts. For Bull, ideas mattered to the extent that they are taken up and acted upon by powerful states, and the relevance of particular norms and institutions would always be linked to the underlying distribution of material power. Finally, in contrast to more self-consciously 'critical' constructivists, Bull believed that brute material facts and cold power politics could act as a powerful check on both the aspirations of practitioners and the methods of the analyst.[10]

Other Approaches

The Anarchical Society also needs to be related to two other important bodies of academic work: the history of ideas about international relations and international normative theory.

Commentators routinely stress the importance of history in English School writing – both the historical method and the need to historicise international society itself. But within the English School, and certainly for Bull, the history of thought about international relations occupies a particularly important place. After all, Bull's three competing traditions of thought (Hobbesian, Grotian and Kantian), which he took and developed from Martin Wight and around which the book is constructed, were themselves the product of one reading of how the history of thought on international relations had evolved within Europe from the late fifteenth century.

The continued importance of this approach cannot be underestimated. The neglect of history and the relentless presentism of Political Science are all too evident. Examples abound, as in the common belief that it was only in the 20th century that realists came to stress the importance of systemic forces; that Kant is merely an early democratic peace theorist or, worse still, a believer in pro-democratic interventionism; or that we had to wait until the arrival of constructivism to discover that sovereignty was a constructed and contested concept.

All human societies rely on historical stories about themselves to legitimise notions of where they are and where they might be going. For Bull, a central element in the study of International Relations is about uncovering actors' understandings of international politics and the ways in which these understandings have been gathered into intelligible patterns, traditions, or ideologies. The past matters because of the changing, contested, plural, and completely unstraightforward nature of the concepts with which we map the international political landscape.

At the same time it is clear that contemporary readers of Bull's work will need to engage with the large amount of work that has been produced in this area over the past twenty-five years. Thus the study of classical theories of international relations has grown

significantly; there have been important reassessments of the major traditions of thought on the subject; Westphalia has been demythologised; and others have traced the evolution of the constitutional structures of international society and the revolutions in sovereignty that have taken place. And finally, there has been a very important move into the area of 'international relations' on the part of those working on the history of political thought and on the development of historical concepts and ideologies – a move which has expanded immensely the degree of sophistication in the study of the subject. A good deal of this work forces us to reconsider some of Bull's specific claims (for example, his reading of Kant) and even to rework quite radically his central theoretical category of a 'Grotian tradition'. But specific critiques and re-readings should not lead us to neglect the continued importance of the history of thought in the way in which International Relations is both taught and studied.

Finally, it is important to look briefly at the relation between Bull's work and the explosion of writing on moral and ethical issues in world politics. Here the criticisms of Bull are often sharper. For the critics, Bull (and the English School more generally) opened up a fertile realm of classical political thought but conceived of 'classical theory' in narrow and impoverished ways. The result was to separate the subject of International Relations from the far richer traditions of political and social theory to which it is necessarily intimately connected, and to downplay or ignore a range of fundamental questions about state, community and nation that could never be satisfactorily addressed solely from the perspective of the society of states. Much of this criticism is clearly justified, above all, if the aim is to develop a normative theory of international or world order. The range of intellectual resources available has expanded enormously over the past twenty-five years and anyone working in this area would very soon move beyond *The Anarchical Society*.[11]

It is important to remember, however, that Bull's own purpose, while related, was a somewhat different one. The subtitle of his book is not 'A Study of Order' but 'A Study of Order in World Politics'. What makes Bull's approach fascinating, but also sometimes frustrating, was that he was interested in the relationship between order as fact and order as value, and with the bridges that have been, or might be, constructed between theory and practice. He was therefore centrally concerned with the legal and moral

understandings of order and justice as they had developed within and around international society; with the political and material prerequisites of a meaningful moral community; and with the complex and often dispiriting ways in which the procedural and substantive rules of international society are connected to concrete institutions, to power-political structures and to the often very rough trade of world politics.

Thus, unlike most political theorists, Bull's particular contribution is his insistence on the inevitably close links between the struggle for moral consensus and questions of political practice: for example, how particular normative issues are related to patterns of unequal power, to the coherence of states and state structures, and to the legitimacy of international norms and institutions. Bull's work suggests that many of the most pressing and intractable ethical dilemmas in the field of world politics are as much about the legitimacy of practice, power and process as they are about philosophical foundations. This is certainly not the only approach to the study of normative issues in world politics, but it remains an important one.

The Anarchical Society and Contemporary World Politics

For many readers *The Anarchical Society* appears outdated because Bull so often emphasised continuities between past and present. As a result he seemed to downplay the dynamic forces at work in global politics and to fail to recognise the extent to which the system was moving decisively 'beyond Westphalia'. Factors such as the impact of economic globalisation and political democratisation, the increased importance of transnational civil society, the increased density, scope and range of international institutions, the multiple problems that result from the break-up of states and ethnic self-assertion have developed to such a point that, for many commentators, Bull's narrow focus on the society of states is now wholly inadequate and outdated.

It is clearly the case that much of Bull's work was heavily shaped by the concerns of the Cold War and of superpower rivalry; that he was openly sceptical about the possibility of radical change in the character of superpower relations; that he gave very little space in his work to economic factors and forces; that, at least in this book,

he expressed little interest in formal international institutions, including the United Nations; and that he was generally critical of 'Kantian' optimism about the spread and impact of liberal democracy – the set of claims that would subsequently develop into democratic peace theory. It is also clearly the case that *The Anarchical Society* was intended as a defence of a state-based international society as the best available means for the management of power and the mediation of difference. In response to charges of outdatedness, four points can be highlighted.

Systemic Change and Transformation

One response is simply to see *The Anarchical Society* as providing a model exposition of how to think about claims for change. Bull did not ignore change but he did advocate sobriety in analysing change. He argued consistently that contemporary trends and features which appear novel – from transnational corporations to the privatisation of violence in the form of terrorist groups or warlords – look more familiar when approached from a sufficiently long historical perspective. Equally, he suggested that we can gain much from comparing the present with previous epochs of change – hence his suggestive, if underdeveloped, ideas about 'neo-medievalism' and of a 'neo-Grotian moment'.

A further possibility is simply to view Bull's rather sober and sceptical conclusions as a mark in the sand against which more recent work should be judged. Pedagogically it makes great sense for students to read Bull alongside the many works of the 1990s that have stressed the idea of systemic transformation, especially in the context of globalisation. Which parts of Bull's picture still hold? Which do not? And why?

But a final possibility is to argue that he was often right to be sceptical. Clearly his own arguments cannot simply be replayed and there will be important differences of emphasis and of empirical application. And yet as the claims of the 1990s about globalisation have been subjected to scrutiny and criticism, the pattern of argumentation that we see in Bull's work and some substantive conclusions recur: that the historical novelty of current globalising forces has been exaggerated; that there was never a neat 'Westphalian model' in which understandings of sovereignty and norms of non-intervention were stable and uncontested and that can be easily

contrasted with the complexities of the post-Cold War world; and that the decline in state capacity has been overdone. Not only has globalisation been driven by state policies but state retreat is reversible and the power resources available to states are still critical and distinctive – Microsoft matters but so, too, do the marines.

Normative change and transformation

A second point to stress is that Bull's primary concern was not with change in general but with change within the international legal and normative structure of international society. This is arguably the aspect of the debate on globalisation and transformation that has been least well developed. On one side, ideas about 'post-sovereign states' or 'multi-layered geo-governance' do indeed point to potentially very important changes, but they are embedded in a discourse of transformation that is in most cases extremely difficult to pin down. On the other side, those who stress continuity within the Westphalian order often rely on such a one-dimensional view of the role of norms and such a very thin notion of the legal order that it becomes impossible to make sense of the tremendous changes that have indeed taken place, above all in the period since 1945.

There are different ways forward. Thus some have picked up on Bull's distinction between pluralist and solidarist versions of international society and have suggested that, contrary to the scepticism expressed in *The Anarchical Society*, a consensus has in fact developed around such expanded normative goals as humanitarian intervention.[12] In still more strongly progressivist mode, but still owing much to Bull's work, Linklater has explored how the changing conditions of global politics may be opening political and moral spaces for the transformation of political community.[13]

There are still other possibilities: for example, taking on board the degree to which regionalism has become an important characteristic of contemporary world politics but examining and comparing these 'regional international societies' within the framework of Bull's ideas and concepts. Or thinking through the notion of 'world society', whose importance Bull stresses but which is left underdeveloped in his work, and the complex ways in which international and world society relate to each other. Following this line of enquiry might lead the analyst to consider the structure of

rules, norms and institutions that lie beyond the state. Thus, if one set of legal and normative developments look to an improved society of states united by a far higher degree of solidarity, another looks beyond the state, or at least comes to view the state within the context of a broader legal and normative order. This image builds on many of the trends already visible in the contemporary international legal system: the pluralism of the norm-creating processes; the role of private market actors and civil society groups in articulating values which are then assimilated in inter-state institutions; and the increased range of informal, yet norm-governed, governance mechanisms often built around complex networks, both transnational and trans-governmental. Moves in this direction would involve a substantial reengagement with the changing practices of international law and with recent work within that field – another somewhat neglected legacy of Bull's approach.

Culture and Context

One of the most important features of Bull's work is his view that international relations could neither be understood nor studied solely from the perspective of the powerful. What is so striking in retrospect is not that he wrote under the shadow of the power-political and ideological conflicts amongst the major powers that dominated so much of the twentieth century, but that he argued so consistently that these conflicts represented only one dimension of world politics. Thus, for Bull, the Cold War had to be set against the transformations produced by decolonisation, the rise of what came to be called the Third World, and the clash between North and South. Typically, too, he insisted that these transformations were part of a broader process of historical evolution that he labelled the revolt against western dominance.[14]

As mentioned above, this perspective involved close attention to the boundaries of international society and the criteria for membership. It also led to a recurring line of questioning and argument – that a durable international society must depend on a sense of legitimacy, and that this, in turn, must reflect the interests and values of the weaker members of international society. It is true that there remains a good deal of ambiguity here. Who needs to be accommodated? Only those capable of mounting a revisionist challenge or the truly excluded and powerless? But Bull's central

point remains: understanding cooperation will involve understanding not just clashes of power and shifting prudential calculations of interest amongst the strong, but also the policies of weaker states and how their conceptions of international order and justice have varied across time and space.

The methods and approaches reflected in Bull's work retain their value today. They suggest that serious academic research may necessitate less emphasis on the research tools of that mythical being, the universal social scientist; less emphasis on metatheoretical disputation; and rather more stress on the linguistic, cultural and historical knowledge and resources needed to make sense of the variation of understandings of international and world society in different periods and places. Bull's call to look beyond International Relations as an American social science helps explain the continued receptivity to his ideas outside of the United States and Europe – for example, in Latin America and Japan.

This line of enquiry is partly about power: how far and how securely are emerging, revisionist or revolutionary states or groups integrated within the institutions of international society? But it is also, critically, about culture. Cultural diversity has also long been a central problem for all those who ask, 'How broad and how deep is international society?', 'How strong is the consensus on the nature of a desirable world order and the means by which it might be achieved?'. Part of Bull's concern was with a *procedural* and not a *substantive* value consensus – the extent to which states have been able to create a shared framework of rules and by which clashes of interests and conflicting values can be mediated. But he was also deeply concerned with the impact of the expansion of international society beyond its historic, European core; and with the degree to which modernisation and increased interdependence were, or were not, producing a unified and unifying global culture. Here it should be noted that Bull did not believe that international society *necessarily* rested on the existence of a common value system as accounts of Bull's writing often suggest.[15] The role of culture is an empirical question to be investigated, not an analytic assumption.

It is clear that Bull's preoccupation with culture and cultural forces is by no means outdated; there is a link here with recent debates on the degree to which globalisation involves powerful pressures towards homogenisation and convergence, but also towards resistance and backlash. It is also clear that, as the

international legal order moves in more solidarist and transnational directions and as the 'waterline of sovereignty' (to use David Kennedy's phrase) is lowered, so the political salience of societal and cultural difference rises. International rules relating to human rights, to the rights of peoples and minorities, to an expanding range of economic and environmental issues impinge very deeply on the domestic organisation of society. Divergent values therefore become more salient as the legal order moves down from high-minded sloganising towards detailed and extremely intrusive operational rules in each of these areas and towards stronger means of implementation (through the proliferation of sanctions and conditionalities). Culture does not necessarily matter but difference and diversity do. Understandings of world order vary enormously from one part of the world to another, reflecting differences in national and regional histories, in social and economic circumstances and conditions, and in political contexts and trajectories.

The State System and International Order

At the core of *The Anarchical Society* is the question, 'To what extent does the inherited political framework provided by the society of states continue to provide an adequate basis for world order?'. Bull's writing can be related directly to the debates on global governance that have been so prominent since the end of the Cold War. Much of this writing has been rationalist in method and technocratic in character. Institutions are analysed in terms of how self-interested egoists overcome the many collective-action problems arising from increased interdependence and interaction. States are seen as competing with international bodies and civil society groups to provide cost-effective and efficient solutions to governance problems. In contrast, Bull's legacy points us in two directions. In the first place, it suggests the need to focus less on theoretical understanding of how particular institutions or regimes emerge and develop, and more on assessing the overall character of institutionalisation in world politics, the normative commitments of different varieties of institutionalism, and the adequacy of existing institutions for meeting practical and normative challenges. Second, whilst it is important to maintain the emphasis on norms, rules and institutions, Bull's concerns highlight the need to shift the focus

back to the first-order political questions of power, values and legitimacy.

More importantly, it cannot be overemphasised that Bull's preoccupation in *The Anarchical Society* is not with world politics in general, but with the nature and possibilities of international order. Bull never argued that states were the only legitimate objects of study in world politics, nor that they are, or would necessarily remain, in 'control'. He was in fact rather pessimistic about the prospects for international society. Thus, in response to a reader's comments on *The Anarchical Society*, he wrote in 1975:

> I am not sure that it is correct to say . . . that in the book I see 'an international society emerging'. I think I rather argue that international society exists but is in decline.[16]

The reasons for this decline have partly to do with the degree to which the normative ambition of international society has expanded so dramatically, and partly with the erosion of its political foundations. Equally, he was perfectly aware of the potentially transformative nature of what has come to be called globalisation. But he was less sure that these new elements provided an adequate basis for order (or, for that matter, justice) within international society.

It is certainly the case that, even within its own terms, Bull's conception of inter-state order was too starkly divorced from the social and economic structures within which states and societies are embedded. It is also the case that, as is often noted, his work tended to downplay political economy and his view of the state's capacity to direct the direction and scope of economic developments was strained, even in the mid-1970s. Any contemporary analysis of order and governance needs to place order within the state system against the other two arenas within which all social order needs to be understood and certainly social order within the context of globalisation: civil society on the one hand (including what is now termed transnational civil society), and economic markets on the other.

And yet it remains plausible to argue that these alternative global structures of order are either weak (for example, transnational civil society, especially when it comes to the management of social violence and conflict), or efficient but unstable (as in the case of the global economy). Yes, the past twenty-five years have seen an

intensification of economic and social globalisation, but the inequalities and discontents of globalisation have generated increased political strains both internationally and within many states. Yes, there have been significant moves in the direction of solidarist consensus; but it is very hard to argue that globalisation leads easily or unproblematically to shared values, resilient institutions, or to a meaningful global moral community. Yes, the density of the norms, rules and institutions of international society has increased tremendously, often pushing in a liberal direction. Yet Bull's scepticism may still be merited: Whose solidarist or liberal order? What kind of liberal and liberalising order is it that seeks to promote democracy but ignores distributive justice and brushes aside calls for the democratisation of global decision making? How stable and how legitimate can such a liberal order be when it depends so heavily on the hegemony of the single superpower whose history is so exceptionalist and whose attitude to international law and institutions has been so ambivalent?

We are still left with Bull's concern with two fundamental tensions in the constitution of international society: first, between those rules and institutions that seek to mediate amongst different values and conceptions of the good, and those that seek to promote, and perhaps enforce, a single set of universal values; and second, between the vaulting normative ambitions of contemporary international society and its still-precarious power-political, institutional and cultural foundations. Although sometimes seen as optimistic, complacent, or even nostalgic, Bull was constantly worried by what he called *premature global solidarism* – that too many hopes, too many demands, and too many moral claims were being placed on the still thin fabric of international society. Contemporary readers will disagree as to whether Bull's own conclusions remain valid; but his questions and the framework for analysing them provided by *The Anarchical Society* remain one of the most important points of departure for any study of order in world politics.

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Notes

1 Writing on, and within, the English School of International Relations has increased dramatically. For a full bibliography, *see* www.ukc.ac.uk/politics/englishschool.buzan
2 A more complete account and assessment can be found in Kai Alderson and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Hedley Bull on International Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), chapters 1–3. These chapters both draw on Bull's unpublished papers and contain fuller references to the literature referred to in this Foreword.
3 'Power Politics', lecture, Sunningdale, 23 April 1979. Bull Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
4 'Recapturing the Just War for Political Theory', *World Politics* 31, 4 (1979): 595–6.
5 Letter to Shaie Selzer, Macmillan Publishers, 14 November 1975, Bull Papers.
6 *See*, for example, Tim Dunne, 'The social construction of international society', *European Journal of International Relations* 1, 3 (1995): 367–90; and Ole Waever, 'Four meanings of international society: A transatlantic dialogue', in Barbara Allen Roberson (ed.), *International Society and the Development of International Relations Theory* (London: Pinter, 1998), especially 93–8.
7 Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966).
8 Review of Michael Donelan (ed.), *The Reason of States*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 March 1978.
9 Contrast Bull's Hobbesian, Grotian and Kantian traditions with Alexander Wendt's three 'cultures of anarchy', *Social Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
10 For distinctions within constructivism, *see* Karin Fierke and Knud Erik Jorgensen (eds), *Constructing International Relations. The Next Generation* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).
11 For a survey and assessment, *see* Andrew Hurrell, 'Norms and Ethics in International Relations', in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002): 137–54.
12 *See*, for example, Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). It is worth noting that Bull examined the possibilities of change in norms concerning intervention well before the subject became fashionable. Hedley Bull (ed.), *Intervention in World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
13 Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community. Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).
14 Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
15 Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty. Organized Hyprocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 47.
16 Letter to Shaie Selzer, Macmillan Publishers, 14 November 1975, Bull Papers.

16. Herbert Bufferfield, 'Crowe's Memorandum of January 1, 1970' (July 1960).
17. See, for example, *Understanding International Relations.*
18. Ken Booth, 'Human Wrongs and International Relations', *International Affairs* 71 (1995), 103–26.
19. This, of course, is an adaptation of David Luban's remark about the state.
20. Andrew Hurrell 'Society and Anarchy in the 1990s' in B. A. Roberson (ed.), *The Structure of International Society* (London: Pinter, 1996).

Does Order Exist in World Politics?

HEDLEY BULL

The late Professor Bull identifies three traditions of thought—Hobbesian (or realist), Kantian (or universalist), and Grotian (or internationalist). Bull's own work is a blend of the Hobbesian and Grotian traditions as order in world politics rests, in his view, on both the balance of power and agreed-on rules or norms. Hedley Bull's work and that of his predecessor and mentor, Martin Wight, are core to the present-day English School that focuses not just on the state system, but also on various aspects of international society.

Order in world politics may one day take the form of the maintenance of elementary goals of social life in a single world society or great society of all mankind.... It cannot be seriously argued, however, that the society of all mankind is already a going concern. In the present phase we are still accustomed to thinking of order in world politics as consisting of domestic order, or order within states, and international order, or order among them.

No one would deny that there exists within some states a high degree of domestic or municipal order. It is, however, often argued that international order does not exist, except as an aspiration, and that the history of international relations consists simply of disorder or strife. To many people the idea of international order suggests not anything that has occurred in the past, but simply a possible or desirable future state of international relations, about which we might speculate or which we might work to bring about. To those who take this view a study of international order suggests simply a design for a failure world, in the tradition of Sully, Cruce, St. Pierre and other peace theorists.

This present study takes as its starting-point the proposition that, on the contrary, order is part of the historical record of international relations; and in particular, that modern states have formed, and continue to form, not only a system of states but also an international society. To establish this proposition I shall begin by showing first that there has always been present, throughout the history of the modern states system, an idea of international society, proclaimed by philosophers and publicists, and present in the rhetoric of the leaders of states....

The Idea of International Society

Throughout the history of the modern states system there have been three competing traditions of thought: the Hobbesian or realist tradition, which views international politics as a state of war; the Kantian or universalist tradition, which sees at work in international politics a potential community of mankind; and the Grotian or internationalist tradition, which views international politics as taking place within an international society.[1] Here I shall state what is essential to the Grotian or internationalist idea of international society, and what divides it from the Hobbesian or realist tradition on the one hand, and from the Kantian or universalist tradition on the other. Each of these traditional patterns of thought embodies a description of the nature of

international politics and a set of prescriptions about international conduct.

The Hobbesian tradition describes international relations as a state of war of all against all, an arena of struggle in which each state is pitted against every other. International relations, on the Hobbesian view, represent pure conflict between states and resemble a game that is wholly distributive or zero-sum: the interests of each state exclude the interests of any other. The particular international activity that, on the Hobbesian view, is most typical of international activity as a whole, or best provides the clue to it, is war itself. Thus peace, on the Hobbesian view, is a period of recuperation from the last war and preparation for the next.

The Hobbesian prescription for international conduct is that the state is free to pursue its goals in relation to other states without moral or legal restrictions of any kind. Ideas of morality and law, on this view, are valid only in the context of a society, but international life is beyond the bounds of any society. If any moral or legal goals are to be pursued in international politics, these can only be the moral or legal goals of the state itself. Either it is held (as by Machiavelli) that the state conducts foreign policy in a kind of moral and legal vacuum, or it is held (as by Hegel and his successors) that moral behaviour for the state in foreign policy lies in its own self-assertion. The only rules or principles which, for those in the Hobbesian tradition, may be said to limit or circumscribe the behaviour of states in their relations with one another are rules of prudence or expediency. Thus agreements may be kept if it is expedient to keep them, but may be broken if it is not.

The Kantian or universalist tradition, at the other extreme, takes the essential nature of international politics to lie not in conflict among states, as on the Hobbesian view, but in the transnational social bonds that link the individual human beings who are the subjects or citizens of states. The dominant theme of international relations, on the Kantian view, is only apparently the relationship among states, and is really the relationship among all men in the community of mankind—which exists potentially, even if it does not exist actually, and which when it comes into being will sweep the system of states into limbo.[2]

Within the community of all mankind, on the universalist view, the interests of all men are one and the same; international politics, considered from this perspective, is not a purely distributive or zero-sum game, as the Hobbesians maintain, but a purely cooperative or non-zero-sum game. Conflicts of interest exist among the ruling cliques of states, but this is only at the superficial or transient level of the existing system of states; properly understood, the interests of all peoples are the same. The particular international activity which, on the Kantian view, most typifies international activity as a whole is the horizontal conflict of ideology that cuts across the boundaries of states and divides human society into two camps—the trustees of the immanent community of mankind and those who stand in its way, those who are of the true faith and the heretics, the liberators and the oppressed.

The Kantian or universalist view of international morality is that, in contrast to the Hobbesian conception, there are moral imperatives in the field of international relations limiting the action of states, but that these imperatives enjoin not coexistence and cooperation among states but rather the overthrow of the system of states and its replacement by a cosmopolitan society. The community of mankind, on the Kantian view, is not only the central reality in international politics, in the sense that the forces able to bring it into being are present; it is also the end or object of the highest moral endeavour. The rules that sustain coexistence and social intercourse among states should be ignored if the imperatives of this higher morality require it. Good faith with heretics has no meaning, except in terms of tactical convenience; between the elect and the damned, the liberation and the oppressed, the question of mutual acceptance of rights to sovereignty or independence does not arise.

What has been called the Grotian or internationalist tradition stands between the realist tradition and the universalist tradition. The Grotian tradition describes international politics in terms of a society of states or international society.[3] As against the Hobbesian tradition, the Grotians contend that states are not engaged in simple struggle, like gladiators in an arena, but are limited in their conflicts with one another by common rules and institutions. But as against the Kantian or universalist perspective the Grotians accept the Hobbesian premise that sovereigns or states are the principal reality in international politics; the immediate members of international society are states rather than individual human beings. International politics, in the Grotian understanding, expresses neither complete conflict of interest between states

nor complete identity of interest; it resembles a game that is partly distributive but also partly productive. The particular international activity which, on the Grotian view, best typifies international activity as a whole is neither war between states, nor horizontal conflict cutting across the boundaries of states, but trade—or, more generally, economic and social intercourse between one country and another.

The Grotian prescription for international conduct is that all states, in their dealings with one another, are bound by the rules and institutions of the society they form. As against the view of the Hobbesians, states in the Grotian view are bound not only by rules of prudence or expediency but also by imperatives of morality and law. But, as against the view of the universalists, what these imperatives enjoin is not the overthrow of the system of states and its replacement by a universal community of mankind, but rather acceptance of the requirements of coexistence and cooperation in a society of states.

Each of these traditions embodies a great variety of doctrines about international politics, among which there exists only a loose connection. In different periods each pattern of thought appears in a different idiom and in relation to different issues and preoccupations. This is not the place to explore further the connections and distinctions within each tradition. Here we have only to take account of the fact that the Grotian idea of international society has always been present in thought about the states system. . . .

My contention is that the element of a society has always been present, and remains present, in the modern international system, although only as one of the elements in it, whose survival is sometimes precarious. The modern international system in fact reflects all three of the elements singled out, respectively, by the Hobbesian, the Kantian, and the Grotian traditions; the element of war and struggle for power among states, the element of transnational solidarity and conflict, cutting across the divisions among states, and the element of cooperation and regulated intercourse among states. In different historical phases of the states system, in different geographical theatres of its operation, and in the policies of different states and statesmen, one of these three elements may predominate over the others. . . .

Notes

1. This threefold division derives from Martin Wight. The best published account of it is his "Western Values in International Relations," in *Diplomatic Investigations*, ed. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967). The division is further discussed in my "Martin Wight and the Theory of International Relations. The Second Martin Wight Memorial Lecture," *British Journal of International Studies* 2, no. 2 (1976).

2. In Kant's own doctrine there is of course ambivalence as between the universalism of *The Idea of Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (1784) and the position taken up in *Perpetual Peace* (1795), in which Kant accepts the substitute goal of a league of 'republican' states.

3. I have myself used the term 'Grotian' in two senses: (i) as here, to describe the broad doctrine that there is a society of states; (ii) to describe the solidarist form of this doctrine, which united Grotius himself and the twentieth-century neo-Grotians, in opposition to the pluralist conception of international society entertained by Vattel and later positivist writers. See "The Grotian Conception of International Society," in *Diplomatic Investigations*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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