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## **Analysing European Integration, Reflecting on the English School: *Scenarios for an Encounter***

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### **Abstract**

The article asserts that there is considerable value in bringing concepts developed within the literature of the English School to the study of contemporary European integration. We argue that the core concepts of the English School: international system, international society and world society, allow us to grasp the specificity of the European system of governance within a general framework, and to contextualise European integration both historically and within the current international system. In the article we use English School concepts to illustrate how new insights can be yielded in the examination of both the EU's system of governance and the international role of the EU.

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## **Analysing European Integration, Reflecting on the English School: *Scenarios for an Encounter***

### **1. General but Specific: The Promise of the English School**

The European Union (EU) has developed into a unique system of governance which in many ways transcends the rules of political organisation and international relations in the modern state system. This uniqueness is mirrored in the institutionalisation of research on European integration as an interdisciplinary but largely separate academic field in which the EU has traditionally been treated as a case *sui generis* (Haas, 1970; Moravcsik, 1998, 15).<sup>1</sup> But with the continuous deepening of European governance, Comparative Politics has over the last decade come to address the evolving European political system in more general terms (e.g. Hix, 1994, 1998; Marks et al., 1996). International Relations (IR), too, has started to bridge the gap by making the EU a prime object of study from various IR perspectives (e.g. Risse-Kappen, 1996; Moravcsik, 1998). But the fate of Andrew Moravcsik's 'The Choice for Europe' (Moravcsik, 1998), an outstanding revision of European integration history from the perspective of liberal IR theory (see Moravcsik, 1997), is indicative of the continuing gap between IR and European Studies: While the book was widely debated in Europeanist circles, it has made as yet much less of a splash in International Relations more generally.

This relative isolation of the study of European integration from International Relations and the characterisation of the EU as *sui generis* have often been deplored, and for various reasons. Most importantly, they prevent cross-fertilisation of research on the more specific (Europe) and the more general (the international system), and they often lead to a view from inside only, and therefore a neglect of historical and international context. Thereby, there is a tendency to overstate the difference between Europe and other parts of the world as much as there is a tendency to underrate external influences on the integration process. Moravcsik's work also exhibits an opposite danger: by applying general theories, the EU is made into just another, although wider and more heavily institutionalised, international regime between sovereign states. On both sides, then, there is a clear (more or less realist) picture of how 'normal' international politics is organised, and the EU is either juxtaposed to, or subsumed, under that picture.

What is missing, therefore, is an analytical approach that provides us with general categories to study the EU's system of governance, which nonetheless allow us to do

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<sup>1</sup> This has not always been the case. The work of scholars such as Ernst Haas or Karl Deutsch saw European integration as a particular case amongst others against which it could be compared, as a puzzle to be accounted for by existing theories, or (especially in the case of federalism) as a model for political organisation beyond the nation-state.

justice to the specificity of the EU. Our argument in this paper is that the body of work often categorised as the 'English School' presents just such an approach. This may come as a surprise given that the arguably most well-known member of the English School, Hedley Bull, once forcibly argued that the, then, European Community would not come to represent a civilian power radically different from the anarchical society of states, and would therefore not deserve the attention that it enjoys today as a novel system of governance. Replicating the federalism versus intergovernmentalism divide, Bull argued that European member states would either merge into yet another but bigger state, or would remain as separate entities (Bull, 1982). He therefore rejected, in his classic work on 'The Anarchical Society', the possibility that European integration would move into the direction of a 'new mediaevalism' (Bull, 1977, 264-6) – a metaphor that, ironically, has come to some prominence lately within European Integration Studies to describe the current system of governance in the EU (see e.g. Hyde-Price, 2000, 89; Rengger, 2000, 59). The tone and tenor of Bull's piece has left many within European Studies to think that there is little of interest within English School theorising to plunder for the study of European integration.

Why, then, the English School, apart from a generally growing interest in this body of work (Buzan, 1999; Dunne, 1998)? We argue that the core concepts of the English School: international system, international society and world society, allow us to grasp the specificity of the European system of governance within a general framework, and to contextualise European integration both historically and within the current international system. At the core of the English School argument is the claim that the realist worldview freezes a particular form of the international system, while the latter has actually varied across both time and space (Buzan and Little, 2000). The variation in this system lies partly in the type of its constituent units, and partly in the form and degree to which elements of international and world society are discernible. It is these types of questions that are central to, for instance, the current debates about the legitimacy of European governance, or the future role of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). From such an angle, it is rather surprising that the English School has not yet been brought closer to European Studies, a neglect that has been mutual, apart from a few exceptions in what we call (below) the fourth phase of English School theorising (see in particular Wæver, 1996), and despite the fact that Martin Wight, one of the central figures of the English School, founded the School of European Studies at Sussex University in the early 1960s (see Morgan, 2000).

Our main purpose in what follows is to outline how English School concepts can be used to fruitfully analyse the two major areas in European Studies indicated above, the EU's system of supranational governance and its international role. In order to do so, the following section presents the central concepts of the English School for our purpose - international system, international society, world society as well as the notion of empire - in some more detail. In section three, we then first turn to a historical contextualisation in showing how the EU represents a specific form of

empire, and how international and world society interact to enable and simultaneously problematise supranational governance. We then, in section four, place the EU in its international context, specifically addressing the issues of enlargement and the EU's identity as a civilian power. In the conclusion, we assess the contribution that an English School perspective may bring to European Studies in the light of our suggested avenues of research, and reflect on the reciprocal effect of such an enterprise, that is what it means for a refinement of the concepts we have used, in particular the one of 'world society'.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Core English School Concepts for Analysing the EU**

What specifically do we mean when we refer to the 'English School'? The notion of a distinctive 'English School' approach for the study of international relations is a relatively recent categorisation (Jones, 1981), but there is now a substantial amount of literature that is designated as a part of the School reaching back to the late 1950s, when the British Committee for the Study of International Politics was founded (Buzan, 1999; Dunne, 1998; Watson, 1998).<sup>3</sup> The central concept around which this School is defined, and self-defines, is 'international society', that is the acceptance of the existence of a set of basic 'societal' norms beyond the domestic sphere of states. English School writing has therefore been characterised as being part of a wider 'Grotian tradition', with authors such as Hedley Bull, Martin Wight and Adam Watson more accurately described as 'neo-Grotian' (Cutler, 1991, 41).

The work of the English School can be divided into four phases (Wæver, 1998a). The first two phases saw the 'invention' and then the development of the concept of international society. The latter two phases have seen the addition of a new generation of English School writers and then a greater reflection upon the place of the English School alongside other approaches to theorising international relations. One central argument emerging from this most recent phase is the proximity of English School writing to various strands of constructivism, in particular in its stress upon norms, the interplay of structure and agency, and the importance of historical context in

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<sup>2</sup> This paper represents part of a wider project to reconsider the utility of 'English School' thinking for a variety of areas in the study of international relations (Buzan, 1999). For further information, consult <http://www.ukc.ac.uk/politics/englishschool/>. We are indebted to Barry Buzan for his encouragement to participate in this endeavour, and to the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) for enabling Richard Whitman to stay in Copenhagen in June and July 2000, where the first draft of this paper, available as COPRI-Working Paper 20/2000, was written. We are also grateful to the following individuals for their comments: Barry Buzan, Lene Hansen, Ulla Holm, Ian Manners, Antje Wiener, Jaap de Wilde, Ole Wæver, and the participants at the panels on the English School and European integration at the BISA annual conference, Bradford, December 2000.

<sup>3</sup> For a stimulating account of the origins and history of the English School, see Dunne (1998), and the debate surrounding Dunne's account (Knudsen, 1999; Makinda, 1999; Suganami, 1999; Dunne, 1999).

theorising. This is relevant to our enterprise in as far as constructivist perspectives have recently gained a prominent voice in the study of European integration and governance (see for example Jørgensen, 1997; Christiansen et al., 1999, 2001). This research has an agenda similar to the one proposed here, most often analysing the development of a new system of European governance and the relations of this system with the international system at large. We see our turn to the English School as a useful addition to such constructivist scholarship. However, we also argue that the core English School concepts that we identify below have the advantage of placing the EU in its wider historical and global context. This is a corrective to a tendency within constructivist analyses to treat the EU as an individual case and therefore to remain within the tradition of the European integration studies.

The English School concepts particularly useful for the study of European integration are the following: 'international system', 'international society' and 'world society'. In considering international system and international society, we will also refer to the concept of 'empire' within Adam Watson's pendulum conception of possible forms that the political organisation of international society can take (Watson, 1992).

### *International System and International Society*

The distinction between the concepts of international system and international society is central to the English School account of international relations. Hedley Bull, for instance, defines them as follows:

'A *system of states* (or international system) is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions, to cause them to behave - or at least in some measure - as parts of a whole.' (Bull, 1977, 10-11)

'A *society of states* (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.' (Bull, 1977, 13)

Whereas an international system thus operates more or less mechanically and by necessity, international society represents the conscious effort to transform and regulate relations amongst its constitutive units. The classic international society of English School writing, composed of territorial states recognising each other and a basic set of common rules between themselves, can now be said to be nearly global in its reach (Bull and Watson, 1984). More interesting for our purposes though is that within the EU, this society is particularly well developed in that the set of common rules is particularly dense. This suggests that the EU forms a specific sub-system of

the current international system in which the societal element is stronger than elsewhere.

While Bull primarily focused upon contemporary international society, work on comparing historically situated international systems has been taken forward by Adam Watson building upon the earlier work of Martin Wight (Watson, 1992; Wight, 1977). In their view, the system's units do not have to be modern territorial states as we know them. This allowed Wight and Watson to identify varieties of international systems across time and space.

Watson argues that '... when a number of diverse communities of people, or political entities, are sufficiently involved with one another for us to describe them as forming a *system* of some kind (whether independent, suzerain, imperial or whatever), the organisation of the system will fall somewhere along a notional *spectrum* between absolute independence and absolute empire' (Watson, 1992, 13). Watson thereby introduces a variation in the degree and forms of hierarchical power within international systems, which is more or less absent in Bull. He divides the spectrum of possible international systems into five categories of internal relationships: independence, hegemony, suzerainty, dominion and empire (Watson, 1992, 13-18). What is particularly interesting is Watson's notion that a system does not remain fixed at any point on this spectrum. Rather, the relationship between political communities shifts across time. To capture these historical transformations, Watson introduces the metaphor of a pendulum. The spectrum of possible international relationships form the arc through which the pendulum swings, raising the question as to whether there is a gravitational point within systems. Following Wæver (1996), we take this to be a fruitful starting point for addressing the specificity of the European Union within a general framework, both in our considerations of EU governance and the EU's international role.

### ***World Society***

Unlike the concept of international society, which has been subject to considerable exploration, the concept of world society has attracted much less attention in the English School literature. In its broadest sense, the term denotes transnational social relations of global scale (e.g. Shaw, 1992, 429). Barry Buzan draws a clear distinction between

'... "international society", which is about the nature of relations among states (or whatever political units compose the international system), and "world society", which takes individuals, nonstate organizations, and ultimately the global population as a whole as the focus of global societal identities and arrangements.' (Buzan, 1993, 336-337)

While international system and international society, therefore, are constituted by aggregate political units, world society is composed by individuals who see themselves to share a certain basic identity and interest. World society can therefore exist at the same time as international society and, indeed, like the possibility of there being more than one international society in existence at any one time there can also be more than one world society, although both may ultimately be conceived of as embracing the entire globe. But while 'classic' international society has achieved such global reach, it is widely contested whether there are more than building blocs of a truly global world society (Bull, 1977, 317).

A central puzzle emerging from English School writing, and one that is of central importance for our account of the EU's system of governance in the following section, concerns the relationship of international and world society. Buzan makes the case for two strands within the English School: a civilisational one represented by C.A.W. Manning, Wight and Watson, in which international society presupposes a minimum of world society to make it stable, and a functional one represented by Bull, in which international society at a minimum requires a common desire for international order, but not the common culture or identity of a transnational world society (Buzan, 1993, 336-8). Related to this argument about the emergence of international societies is a controversy about their deepening. As Buzan (1993, 337) points out, Bull (1977, 152) warns that the expansion of world society, for instance through making individuals subjects of international law, would undermine 'the international order based on the society of states'. Buzan himself sides with the opposite view that the further development of international society is dependent on an extension and deepening of world society (1993, 338; see also Rengger, 1992).

In our view, Buzan overstates the difference between the two sides. Although Bull, is indeed more concerned with preserving world order through the society of states and takes a more functional view on the latter's emergence, he does, as his definition of international society quoted above clearly shows, not disregard world society elements in the form of a basic common culture as a basis for international society. Furthermore, he clearly states in his 'Anarchical Society' that the 'future of international society is likely to be determined, among other things, by the preservation and extension of a cosmopolitan culture' on both the elite and the popular level (Bull, 1977, 317). Other writers also refer to both tendencies, and John Vincent, another prominent English School author, clearly moved from the 'undermining' to the 'underpinning' position (Neumann, 1997).

The problem then lies not in two clear-cut alternative views, but that the supporting and the undermining tendencies of world society vis-à-vis international society remain unconnected, which, in turn, may be a consequence of the murkiness surrounding the definition of world society in English School writing. But making this ambiguity explicit and treating it as an inherent characteristic of the international will help us

understand the conflicts surrounding the future of European governance. This illustrates that the encounter between the English School and the study of European integration is not a one-way street. Analytical concepts are always surrounded by considerable debate, even within the theoretical context in which they are developed, and the English School is no exception (see Little, 1998). Using the concepts of international system, international society, world society and empire for the study of the EU inevitably has consequences for the concepts themselves. In the conclusion, we will therefore return to the issue of what the application to European integration has done to these English School concepts. First, however, we will outline how they can be useful for the analysis of the EU's system of governance and its international role.

### **3. Exploring the EU's System of Governance**

#### *A Postmodern Empire?*

A central puzzle that the EU poses for its analysts is its system of governance, and how this may be compared to the modern, territorial state system. Among the most prominent answers to this puzzle is the conceptualisation of the EU as a system of multi-level governance (Christiansen, 1997; Marks, 1996), as opposed to a system where governing was, by and large, the responsibility of a single centre within a territorially and hierarchically organised society (although federalism had always complicated this simple formula). Others, critical of the orderly picture of clear cut levels in European politics, have described the EU as a system of network governance, either to then study the decision-making processes in EU policy networks (Kohler-Koch et al., 1998), or to theorise the ethical implications of such a decentred form of governance in contrast to the modern state government (Diez, 1997). The number of attempts to clarify the 'nature of the beast' (Risse-Kappen, 1996) are legion, but what they all share is an understanding of the EU that stands in stark contrast to Bull's dismissal of its transformative potential: namely that the EU transcends the state system to develop a system of governance in which the separation of a clear hierarchical order inside, and an anarchical order outside, no longer holds.

The question of whether the concept of the international system is a useful analytical tool for studies reaching far back into antiquity (Buzan and Little, 2000), or whether it is tied to the modern territorial state is of some relevance here. We have argued above for the former, which allows us now to remain agnostic on the issue of whether the EU is transcending the international system or not. As we have seen, international systems do not have to be built up from territorial states as we know them, and they may oscillate on a continuum between complete independence of their units, or anarchy, and complete subordination, or hierarchy. According to this line of thought, the EU lies at the core of an international (sub-) system that differs from the 'classic'



territorial state system of a global scale, as Bull sees it evolving after World War I, but it does not fall outside the Watsonian pendulum.

Watson places empire on the hierarchical end of his spectrum of international systems. But as Wæver has convincingly argued, empires are usually not strictly hierarchical, but come in the form of 'graded' political structures, in which a more hierarchically organised centre's influence fades in concentric circles (1996, 225). We will come back to these circles below when we discuss the EU's international role. What interests us in this section is the organisation of the centre. For the most part, Wæver treats the EU as a whole as the centre, but it is clear right away in his analysis that there is also an imaginary, non-territorial centre within the centre, which may only metaphorically be located in Brussels. Drawing on Watson's analysis of the Sumerian empire, Wæver thus argues that the 'EU is built around a socially constructed centre which emerges from the political will to have a centre' (1996, 246) – but without that centre developing as an autonomous force able to impose its own will. Instead of neo-medieval, the EU would thus be rather 'neo-Sumerian' (Wæver 1996: 250).

Wæver thus casts the internal conflicts about the future development of the EU in terms of 'centre' and 'periphery'. The rejection of the original Maastricht Treaty by the Danish electorate in 1992 is seen as 'driven by a fear of coming too close to the centre' (1996, 227). But while this statement makes sense within the Danish discourse on European integration (see Hansen, 2001; Larsen, 2000), it remains problematic in a more general perspective because it is unclear what exactly the centre is. As Wæver himself has argued, there are different ways to construct 'Europe', and so the 'political will to have a centre' is quite varied (Wæver, 1998b, 2001; see also Jachtenfuchs et al., 1998; Diez, 2001). It is only when the different constructions of 'Europe' are presented as incompatible that the centre-periphery rhetoric sets in. Keeping a distance to the centre of the EU thus is effectively a matter of the discursive construction of this centre. This makes it less a matter of 'centre' and 'periphery' than of the dispute about particularity and universality, the English School expression of which is the interrelationship between international and world society. It is therefore that while we believe the empire-metaphor is a useful starting point to reflect on the EU's system of governance, we find the expressions of international and world society in today's EU to be crucial to our understanding of the debate about the future path of integration. We will return, however, to the notion of empire in the next section, when we move from the internal construction of the EU to the EU's role as a centre of a larger international societies, and its relation with other international societies.

#### *International and World Society within the EU*

Our argument is that one finds strong elements of both international and world society in today's EU. Both operate as discourses that help construct actor identities within the

EU and are reproduced by these actors. We also find the world society discourse to both underpin and undermine the EU international society. As argued above, we contend that the relationship between these discourses is inherently ambiguous, and always needs to be balanced through political practice. This ambiguity helps us understand why it was possible to build this postmodern polity (Ruggie, 1993, 140) with its empire-like structures, but also why these structures themselves remain contested.

Articulations of an EU International Society discourse are still abundant in today's EU. Ideal typically, they are reflected in the intergovernmentalist scenario of integration: states participate in a dense structure of commonly recognised norms and rules, but they ultimately retain their right to determine these norms and rules. As in the more realist Bullian branch of the English School, it is states that bring about this particularly dense form of international society. They therefore have the legitimate right to ultimately control the integration process. The post-Maastricht referenda have been a reminder of the prevalence of this discourse. So has the ruling of the German federal constitutional court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) of October 1993, in which the EU was denied the so-called *Kompetenzkompetenz*, i.e. the competence to delineate competencies within the Union. This right, the court ruled, rested with the member states. Institutionally, this discourse finds its expression in the Council of Ministers and the European Council, and in particular in the right by member states to use a veto if vital national interests are at stake. Although a number of analyses have shown that beyond these formal institutions, the identity of state agents changes through interaction on the European level in a process of 'intergovernmentalist integration' (Øhrgaard, 1997; Glarbo, 1999), this does not affect the continuing importance of the international society discourse in the sense that it is still the member states that are constructed as central political units within these contexts, even though their common values and interests may have been transformed. As a social constructivist reading of English School works would argue, states set up international society, but the latter feeds back into their own identity (Dunne, 1995). It is in this sense that Roger Morgan, building on Wight, conceptualises the EU as a 'community of states [...], sharing certain common purposes and values, responsive to each others' views and interests (or at least some of them), accepting the formal rule of law in some matters as well as the authority of common institutions, and behaving in relation to many other matters as if they were bound by formal legal rules, even if they are not' (Morgan, 2000, 563).

Finding articulations of a world society discourse is more difficult. A first problem is that we would be talking of a European rather than a truly global society. But as argued above, world society should not necessarily be understood in a geographical sense. With the global extension of classic international society, such an understanding makes, of course, most sense, but in our case we are dealing with a specific international subsystem, and just as we use 'international society' confined to Europe, we may use 'world society' in this context, although it may be more apt to

write of 'transnational society'. Just as we found international society to be particularly dense in today's EU (and, as the next section will show, in its surroundings), we argue that the transnational relations of world society are particularly dense amongst EU societies.

Articulations of a world society discourse can be found in three respects. First, we find references to a common European history and what Bull (1977, 316) terms a 'common intellectual culture', for instance in justifications for the EU membership of applicant countries, or in attempts to foster a European 'consciousness' as by the Adonnino committee of the 1980s. These are of course just another variation of the process of imagining a community rather than 'hard facts', but again what is important to us is the existence of these articulations, not their referent. Second, there are articulations of what Bull (1977, 316) terms 'common values' (see also Hyde-Price, 2000, 59). These values take on various forms, from human rights to a 'social' form of market liberalism. Their most visible outlet is Art. 6 in the EU Treaty, or the 'Copenhagen Criteria'. Third, we find a high number of transnational activities amongst civil society actors on an EU level (Hyde-Price, 2000, 59), from common interest representations to student exchange programmes, although such activities are still more focused on individual member states than they are Europe-wide (Kohler-Koch et al., 1998). Again, such a 'European world society' is institutionalised in EU Treaty provisions, including EU citizenship as a complement to national citizenship, the European Parliament, or the fundamental freedoms of the European market, even though these provisions may as yet not amount to a 'thick' conception of 'Post-Westphalian citizenship' (Linklater, 1996, 95-6).

It is easy to see how such an EU world society underpins EU international society in a way that the specificity of the latter would hardly be possible without the former. The elements of a 'European world society' identified above provide the necessary basis for the shared values of the European 'community of states', which in turn has allowed integration to proceed (Morgan, 2000, 563). The single market requires, for instance, a basic common conviction that a market economy is to be preferred over a statist economy, even though this leaves enough room for internal disagreements about the concrete rules to be followed. Similarly, common positions in foreign policy are easier to achieve the more compatible basic values, such as human rights, are. And financial redistribution amongst member states is more likely to be regarded as legitimate if there is a sense of having a common identity with a common history. All of this reflects Rengger's claim that 'the values and shared understandings that mark out international society must be culturally generated and sustained' (1992, 88). As indicated above, this does not mean uniformity of culture across the whole of European society. It does imply, however, a shared general consensus of what the basic foundations of this society are, if only in the acceptance of some defining problems. One may argue that such a foundation is not an expression of a genuine EU world society, but rather the outcome of hegemony of a few great powers in Europe

(usually Britain, France and Germany). But even if this were true, hegemony can only work if those on whom it is imposed accept it.

Much as it supports it, the world society discourse also carries with it the potential to undermine international society because its reference point ultimately is the universal, while international society exists, amongst other things, to 'preserve the independence of the member communities' (Wight, 1978, 96). Three examples taken from recent integration history shall illustrate this point. After the insertion of European citizenship into the Maastricht Treaty, some member states were insisting on a clarification that this would not replace national citizenship. Accordingly, the first paragraph of Art. 8 (1) now explicitly states that 'Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship.' Although such a delineation is still rather vague, it nonetheless functions as a warning sign against the incremental extension of a theoretically unbound European citizenship, which would have undermined national categories of belonging. As a second example, we may recall Wæver's discussion of Denmark and its struggle against being drawn too much into the centre. Here is a country in which mentioning the word 'union' was traditionally met with fierce opposition. While co-operating according to fixed rules was fine up to a certain limit, any deepening of integration continues to be seen by a substantial part of the Danes as a threat to their distinctiveness, their welfare state and self-determination (Hansen, 2000; Larsen, 2000). Thirdly, the boycotting of Austria's right-wing government including the FPÖ, which is seen by many as belonging to the extreme right, was waged in the name of European norms and values, but violated the basic international society norm of the independence of its member communities.

In all of these cases, world society discourse, although enabling the deepening of international society on the one hand, was threatening, or seen as threatening the very foundation of international society on the other hand. The presence of both discourses within the EU, not least institutionalised in the EU Treaty, gives actors a place, identity and certain interests in the EU's structure, and enables them to make legitimate claims that are not necessarily compatible with each other, while at the same time the project of an EU as the centre of a particular form of international society would not be possible without a corresponding world society discourse. This ambiguity, it seems to us, is built into the relationship of international and world society. The post-World War II international system worked with the fiction that they were in balance, but in the final analysis, the solution of universality and particularity in this system worked very much in favour of the classic international rather than world society (Walker, 1993, 62). Deepening international society requires a deepening of world society, which embodies the potential of undermining the basics of international society. This is the basic dilemma of European integration that has haunted it right from the start. But the progress of integration also shows that it is not an unsolvable dilemma. In the end, it will depend on the creativity of political practice to find new ways of balancing in the further dissolution of the distinction between a

‘purely’ international and a universal world order (see Hyde-Price, 2000, 57). For some, such a balance is found in an Economic Community, with supranationality limited to the market (Jachtenfuchs et al., 1998); for others, only an increasing flexibilisation of membership can ensure the balance (Stubb, 1997). In any possible model, however, the balancing will only be of temporary nature, since neither the discourse on international or on world society will come to a halt.

#### **4. The International Role of the EU**

If we turn our analysis from the EU’s internal system of governance to its international role, the English School concepts presented above remain helpful in conceptualising, for instance, the EU’s relations with its neighbours. However, in doing so, there is a twist to the way that we have used the concept of ‘international society’ so far in this paper. Most importantly, we have, in the preceding section, reserved the concept of a ‘EU international society’ for actual EU members. From a perspective beyond the territorial borders of the EU, this makes, as we will argue below, much less sense. While we thus wish to maintain the argument that this international society is most developed and institutionalised within the institutional boundaries of the EU, we will also argue that this society has several layers and is therefore best understood as a gradated one extending beyond these boundaries. This is of utmost importance for our understanding of the EU’s relations with non-EU members.

The existing literature on the foreign policy of the EU tends to be analogous to approaches of theorising EU governance in that one of its central questions is whether the EU in its international role is comparable to other social institutions, i.e. states or international organisations, or whether it is unique (Tonra, 2000). In short, the literature on the EU’s foreign policy can largely be divided into approaches that treat EU foreign policy either in *comparativist* or in *sui generis* terms. An English School approach exploring the EU’s position in the international system suggests an alternative vista which takes as its starting point the existence of an EU international society embedded in other international societies. In this sense, the argument here has much more in common with governance (Friis and Murphy, 1999) and negotiated order perspectives (Smith, 1996) on the relationship of the EU to the world beyond itself.

Our argument in this section of the paper has three components. The first issue addressed is how to differentiate between EU, European and global international society. This strand argues that each of these international societies operate as different layers, or planes. The second aspect explored is the manner in which the EU, as an international society, is characterised by an empire-like structure and a power relationship between EU member states and non-member states. The third component

of our argument finally explores the relationship between EU international society, European international society, and global international society.

### ***Differentiating Between Societies***

Bull's definition of an international society implies that differentiation between international societies is connected to the 'consciousness' of common interests and values as well as the acceptance of the binding nature of common rules and institutions. Considered in these terms, we have argued above that the EU represents a particularly 'thick' international society existing between its member states and underpinned by EU world society. Moving our analytical focus from the EU-internal system of governance to the EU's international role, it makes sense to reconsider what we mean by membership in EU international society.

We suggest that although there is a 'core' EU international society that was the focus of the previous section, membership of EU international society should be distinguished from formal membership of the EU. All international societies are delineated through the *self-identification* of their members with common interests and values, and furthermore the acceptance of being *bound by rules and institutions*. Their existence therefore is primarily a discursive one. As a consequence, although we can argue that EU membership formalises being part of EU international society, in principle EU and European international society cannot be distinguished solely on the basis of formal membership. The decisive criterion for distinction rather is the degree of self-identification and of the acceptance of being bound by the rules and norms of the respective international society.

EU international society discourse embraces all states that self-identify with the common interests and common values of the EU (explored in the previous section) and accept common sets of rules in the relations with other members of the society. States that define themselves as candidates for entry, or re-entry into 'Europe' do not all fall within the category of candidate member states for the EU e.g. Croatia. Therefore the EU international society discourse embraces more states than those that are formally applicant states to the EU. The degrees of self-identification can also be differential. This is true not only beyond the borders of the EU, but also for EU members. A reflection of this is the current debate about an increasing flexibilisation of EU membership, be it in the form of a 'core Europe' or a structure of 'concentric circles'. More importantly for our purpose here, however, considering EU international society in this manner places both EU member states and prospective member states of the EU within the same international society.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> We realise that a country such as New Zealand may also self-identify with the interests, norms and values of EU international society, while we would not include it in our understanding of this society. Partly, this reflects that New Zealand's identity may only in part

In comparison, European international society is founded upon more informal norms, rules, institutions and boundaries than those of the EU international society. The EU remains at the core of European international society, the origins of which date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the development of which has been charted primarily by first and second phase English School writing. After the Second World War, it was strengthened and institutionalised through arrangements such as the Council of Europe and its conventions, or the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. As these examples show, European international society is still characterised by a number of norms that make it 'deeper' than global international society, but in terms of institutionalisation, amount of norms and degree of self-identification, it is of far less significance if compared to EU international society.

The classic international society of English School writing, such as Bull's, then is a global international society, operating alongside EU international society and European international society. The self-identification of its members does not involve a particularly strong sense of community, and its norms and values as well as its institutionalisation lacks the depth and breadth of both EU and European international society. It may therefore be described as being 'thinner' than the latter.

Each of these three layers or planes of EU, European, and global, international society are interrelated and interpenetrated, and the boundaries between each are fuzzily drawn. This interrelationship can be illustrated, for example, through the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which has to be in conformity with the values of both European and global international society and to be implemented through their respective institutions (Whitman, 1998a).

### ***The Structure of EU International Society***

The gradated structure of EU international society is best characterised by the use of Watson's pendulum introduced in section two. As discussed above, EU member states form the core of EU international society. The gradated relationship of other states to the core is dependent upon both the self-identification with the common interests and values of the core and furthermore the degree to which they accept the EU rules and institutions. This places EU applicant states in a dominion or suzerain relationship within the EU international society, where the EU can extend its governance regime

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be constructed as European, with important additional elements added. One central element would be geographical proximity. The importance of this factor in the process of constructing an identity is changing over time, and it may be about to lose its significance. It seems to us, however, that it is still a vital ingredient of international politics today, and possibly even more so after the end of the Cold War than before (see Buzan and Wæver, 2001). As we will argue below, this does not mean that there cannot be significant overlap and linkages between international societies.

beyond its formal borders (Friis and Murphy, 1999; Smith, 1996). The fuzziness of the borders of the EU's system of governance (see also Christiansen et al., 2000) is therefore a result of a two-way relationship:

On the one hand, the choice by the EU to use particular kinds of trade and aid instruments to deepen the relationship with a third party state, such as a membership applicant, can be understood as being reflective of the position that the EU puts that third party within its gradated empire (Manners and Whitman, 1998). Considered in these terms, the act of the EU promulgating views about the structure of the relationship that it wishes to develop with third parties (for example, the issuing of common strategies under the Common Foreign and Security Policy or Commission Communication setting out new strategies towards countries or regions) take on a different significance.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of such policies and the nature of the power relations within the EU international society are not dependent on the EU and its member states alone. Rather, the self-identification of those states to which the policies are directed, and its overlap with the values and interests of the EU core are equally important to determine these states' position in the EU's empire, and the EU's possibilities to impose its system of governance on them (Diez, 2000).

The relationships within EU international society considered in terms of multiple independencies, through hegemony to suzerainty, dominion and empire, offer a redrawn map of the EU's relations with its neighbours in particular. Analysed in these terms, considerations of whether the EU possesses a foreign policy in state-like terms (or not) become second order to considerations of the form of the relationship that the EU and the states surrounding it have created for themselves.

### ***The Relationship Between International Societies***

The interrelationship between EU international society, European international society and global international society provides the basis on which to conceptualise the role of the EU beyond EU international society. This approach to the international role of the EU is on a somewhat different tack from the normal approach to the EU's relationship with the world beyond itself that focuses upon the relationships that the EU has cultivated primarily through region-to-region relationships or studies of bilateral EU-third party relations (Edwards & Regelsberger, 1990; Piening, 1997).

With membership of an international society considered to be in terms of self-definition, the relationship between EU international society and members of European and global international society becomes a relationship to be comprehended in terms of identity (see Whitman, 1997, 1998b). This self-definitional relationship



between the members of the EU international society can be illustrated by the practice of the prospective member states of the EU aligning themselves with the foreign policy positions developed within the core by the member states of the EU. It is common practice for the applicant states to frequently associate themselves with declarations and common positions issued under the Common Foreign and Security Policy and to permit the core states to represent the collective position on their behalf within regional and international organisations (Whitman, 1999).

The conception of the EU member states at the core of an EU international society raises questions about the desire of the core to transmit the rules and values that they share collectively. The different facets of the EU's international identity; the shared institutional arrangements, the form of the rule of law that exists between the member states, the integration process in general can then be considered as values that the EU may transmit though its presence in the international system. These values are not, of course, just the repository of institutions, but where they are held and how they are transmitted through and beyond the EU is perhaps best framed in the concept of civilian power Europe.

Duchêne's concept of civilian power Europe assists in considering the relationship of EU international society *vis-à-vis* European and global society:

'The European Community's interest as a civilian group of countries long on economic power and relatively short on armed force is as far as possible to *domesticate* relations between states, including those of its own members and those outside its frontiers. This means trying to bring to international problems the sense of common responsibility and structures of contractual politics which have been in the past associated exclusively with 'home' and not foreign, that is alien affairs.' (Duchêne, 1973)

Duchêne's notion of civilian power Europe has figured greatly in considerations of the EU as an international actor whilst remaining chronically underdeveloped as a concept (e.g. Laursen, 1991; Lodge, 1993; Tsakaloyannis, 1989). The argument here is that the core of EU international society seeks to advance the rules and values that are shared collectively into the European and global international society. Conditions placed upon EU trade and aid relationships with third parties are then reflective of the attempt to 'build' EU international society core values within European international society and global society. The ability to resist such conditions (for example on the part of Russia) both by states within European international society and in global society illustrates both the limits of civilian power and the gradation of relations between the EU and third parties.

The picture to emerge from this encounter of the English School with the study of the EU's international role is much more complex than traditional accounts: boundaries

become fuzzier, and actors therefore harder to identify; the EU's influence is analysed not only in terms of its material capabilities, such as in a European rapid reaction force, but also in terms of its discursive power to disseminate its values in the global international society.

## **5. Towards a Dialogue**

Our aim in this paper has been to delineate scenarios for an encounter between the English School and European integration research. We believe that the English School can provide us with general concepts that allow an analysis that adequately addresses the specificity of the EU, while not falling back upon *sui generis* categories. In the preceding sections, we have found the concepts of 'international society' and 'world society' to be particularly helpful to address two central problematics of European integration today: the structure of the EU's system of governance, and its relationship to the wider world. By way of conclusion, we now first summarise what we see as our major findings, then draw out some questions for further research from these findings, and finally reflect upon how our scenarios have affected the English School concepts that we use.

### ***The EU Seen Through the Lens of the English School***

Our primary observation was, that seen through an English School lens, we can delineate three different international systems that overlap in Europe. Each of these systems is characterised by different degrees of international and world society. Thus, we distinguished a EU international system with a dense international society and, at least in its core, a fairly developed world society, from a European international system with an international society of much less density, and where world society is equally less developed. In addition to these international systems the global international system has only a basic international society, and at best a rudimentary world society. Furthermore, we noted that the international societies of these different planes of international systems do not have clear borders but blur into each other as far as their membership is concerned, and that they are interdependent as far as their rules and their institutions are concerned.

Focusing on the EU international system, we argued that its international society is structured as a gradated empire, in which the core is formed by the EU member states, with applicant states surrounding them in circles until they blur into European international society. In the EU international society, the EU centre is able to impose its system of governance, or parts of it, due to its hegemonic power as the centre of an empire, and the applicant states' self-identification in belonging to this society with its

norms, values and interests. As the empire is gradated, however, this power also weakens towards the empire's fringes.

The development of the core of the EU international system exhibits a particular deep discourse of both international and world society and accordingly a particularly dense network of rules and institutions. We argued that the debate about the future of these rules and institutions is characterised by the inherent ambiguity of the relationship between world and international society and that while a deepening of the former allows a deepening of the latter, it also has the potential to undermine international society. We therefore concluded that international and world society always need to be balanced, and that the debate about the EU's future can be read as a debate about how to balance these two societies. This debate is of interest not only to the core, but also to EU international society at large to the extent that, due to the core's hegemonic power, members of this society that are not members of the EU and must be concerned with the core's development for the sake of their own future.

Finally, we found the global international relations of the EU to be characterised by the promotion of the values and interests of the EU international and world societies, exhibiting what is usually referred to as 'civilian power'. This is a characteristic not only of the EU's relations with the outside world, but rather extends to the whole of EU international society, as is visible in the applicant countries regularly signing common positions under the roof of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

### ***Questions for Further Research***

These preliminary findings enable us to chart four sets of research questions for future encounters of English School and European integration research. The first two sets are of a comparative nature, while the second two should promote a more critical analysis.

1. If we compare across time, how have the discourses on international and world society developed within the EU, and what attempts were made at balancing them? How has the relationship of the EU international society and the wider international society developed, in particular, if one looks at specific policy areas, such as global trade or human rights policies?
2. If we compare across space, how do the discourses on international and world society, as well as the nature of their balance within the EU differ from those in other international systems? Furthermore, how are these related to each other? Again, it would be fruitful to pursue this question in relation to specific policy areas.
3. Which are the major actors enabled by, and making use of, international and world society discourses, both in relation to the future development of the EU and to

stake out claims vis-à-vis the EU, and which political practices are employed in this process?

4. How are the values of EU international and world society used by EU actors to expand a particular understanding of the world both within the EU's empire and beyond EU international society?

This agenda, we admit, is fairly abstract, but we believe nonetheless that these questions could fruitfully guide both empirical research and further theoretical explorations of the EU, placing English School concepts at the centre of the analysis.

### ***English School Concepts Seen through the Lens of European Integration Studies***

Finally, however, we also need to reflect on how our attempt to bring together English School and European integration has affected the concepts that we took to be central for such an encounter. Here, five remarks are in order, the first three of which can be dealt with promptly, since we have elaborated on them above: First, we have treated international and world society as discourses rather than material reality, a theme that would be fruitful to explore further in relation to the debate about an inherent, but also implicit, constructivism in the English School. Second, we found the relationship between international and world society not to be a matter of world society either supporting or undermining international society, but to be inherently ambiguous. Third, we argued for the existence of multiple international and world societies that need not be geographically separate.

The two final comments are related to a refinement of the concept of 'world society'. In section two we found world society to be rather underdeveloped in previous English School writing. In addition, we now raise the question as to whether there is an increasing functional differentiation of international and world societies.

Our discussion of world society has brought about three concretisations of the concept. One was that we argue that world society does not have to be global in nature, but that it refers to transnational relations that are not inherently bound to geography, although they may, and usually would be, in their historical contexts. Such world societies are, furthermore, related to the values, interests, and rules, attributed to individuals or non-governmental organisations, or the relationships between the latter. Here we understand a non-governmental organisation to be differentiated from a political unit that is a constitutive part of international (rather than world) society in that the latter, like the state, has the capacity and function to produce binding rules for society at large. We admit, however, that this latter differentiation is becoming increasingly blurry, as visible for instance in the process of comitology within the EU (Joerges and Neyer, 1997). Finally, we find world society also to be institutionalised in forms of citizenship, i.e. by guaranteeing individual rights, and of representation,

i.e. by guaranteeing participation, beyond the constitutive units of the international system. In both respects, the EU shows a much further development of world society than other international systems (see e.g. Wiener, 1998).

Finally, we treated international and world societies to be territorially, more or less, congruous. It is theoretically possible to distinguish between societies on a functional basis, for instance according to sectors in which they operate (Buzan and Little, 2000), and it is often claimed on empirical grounds that there is, indeed, an increasing functional differentiation of the world (Albert, 1999; Albert and Brock, 1996). While we agree that an analysis of EU international society, in particular, shows elements of such a functional differentiation in that states both inside and outside the EU increasingly 'opt-in' to pursue specific policy areas in a more integrated fashion (or 'opt-out' of such endeavours), we also think that these developments have not, as yet, progressed as far as to justify the alignment of international and world societies primarily along functional lines. This is reflected, for instance, in the reluctance both of EU member states and applicant countries to accept varied forms of EU membership.

This does not mean, however, that in the near future, the process of functional differentiation may not become a more dominant feature, especially of EU international society. This would make analyses informed by the above scenarios more complex, but it would not reduce the value of English School concepts to analyse issue of European integration, in particular if international society is not tied to the state. Having outlined our scenarios for an encounter between the English School and European integration research, we find it more than surprising that these fields have as yet largely neglected each other. It is our hope that this piece will help creating awareness on both sides that there is much more to be gained from each other than the literature so far seems to suggest.

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