

China in the conception of international society: the English School's engagements with China

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Abstract. Since Martin Wight's famous LSE lectures in the late 1950s, the English School scholars have brought China into the conception of international society. As the English School scholars have been 'inventing' an international society, China's status in the conception, or conceptions of international society has also been invented and reinvented. The Chinese case vividly demonstrates how a non-European (or non-Western) country, as one of 'the others', has been dealt with and brought into the conceptualisation of international society by the English School. China's status in the conception of international society, to a great extent, has been invented by some of the English School scholars with Eurocentric bias.

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The English School of International Relations, coined by Roy Jones in his famous article published in *Review of International Studies* in 1981, has been an interest to the IR community since the end of the Cold War. Though, there still is not consensus on its origins, membership, and theoretical features.¹ The majority of the

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¹ Roy Jones, 'The English School of International Relations: A Case for Closure', *Review of International Studies*, 7:1 (1981), pp. 1–13; Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of*

English School scholars seem to regard the conception (or conceptions) of international society or society of states, as its theoretical ‘hard core’, and Hedley Bull’s characterisation of international society in his classic book *Anarchical Society* remains by far the most authoritative articulation of the English School’s conception of international society.² As Adam Roberts recently stated that ‘anarchical society’ of states is ‘the central idea of the English School.’³ According to the core writings of the English School, the international society, or society of sovereign states, originated in Europe as a European international society, and then expanded to become a global or universal international society.⁴ And in the English School’s narratives of the historical evolution of the international society, the Western countries have always been at the centre, although the non-Western countries have also been discussed and brought into its conceptualisation of international society.

This article, based on the English School’s publications, Martin Wight and Hedley Bull papers, and the author’s interviews with a few English School scholars, attempts to trace and analyse the historical evolution of China’s status in the English School’s conceptualisation of international society, and to explore how China has been engaged and brought into the conception of international society by the English School scholars over the past half-century. The author would like to focus his analysis on the following two interrelated points. Firstly, China, a non-European country, has always been used as an important referent or testing case by the English School for its theoretical arguments. Martin Wight, one of the founding fathers of the English School, referred to China in his lecture notes on international theory in late 1950s. There were several China experts or analysts with an interest in China in the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1959–1985), such as Geoffrey Hudson, Gerrit Gong, and Coral Bell who had made great contributions to the committee’s discussions on the historical comparisons of international systems/international societies and the expansion of the modern international society. China was a study case in Martin Wight’s historical state systems, Hedley Bull and Gerrit Gong’s standard of civilisation, Hedley Bull’s Third World revolt against the West, and R. J. Vincent’s human rights and international relations, etc. In the post-Cold War era, especially in the early 21st century, China’s integration into the international society and its subsequent ‘rise’ has also been drawing much attention from the English School scholars. Secondly, China’s status in the conception (or conceptions) of international society, to some extent, has been invented and reinvented by the English School scholars. In treating China as an important case to support their theoretical views on the historical comparisons of states systems, the expansion of the modern

the English School (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998); Brunello Vigizzi, *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954–1985): The Rediscovery of History* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2005); Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

² Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

³ Adam Roberts, ‘The Evolution of International Relations’, Notes for lecture at Royal College of Defence Studies, (21 January 2008), p. 15.

⁴ Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 1–9, pp. 13–32, pp. 117–26; Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 135–309.

international society, and the future development of the global international society, the English School scholars interpreted China's relations with and its status in the Western-dominated international society, in a selective and ethnocentric way. China's status in the English School's conception of international society is partly a fact and partly an intellectual invention. Ancient China in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period was used by the classic English School scholars as an important case to support their intellectual arguments on the formation of international society, but the China-centred tributary system was basically dismissed as an abnormal historical case. In much of the English School literature, especially in the earlier English School writings, China was described either as an uncivilised outsider, or as a less-civilised insider of the modern international society, and even as a potential problem in the future. I think this is mainly due to the Eurocentric or ethnocentric bias, although some of the contemporary English School scholars have made great efforts to reduce that bias.

China and the historical comparisons of state systems

According to the classic English School scholars, the core subject matter of international relations is international society.⁵ The classic English School scholars' definition of 'international society' is basically the society of sovereign states, which originated in 16–17th century Europe and then expanded into a global international society. In other words, the society of sovereign states has always been at the centre of the English School's conception of international society. To some extent, the English School's notion of international society is just the 'Westphalian conception of international society', as David Armstrong claimed.⁶ But in its conceptualisation of international society, the various kinds of 'pre-modern international society',⁷ or the historical international systems in the pre-modern world, are the important cases for the English School's comparisons of historical international systems. The warring states system of ancient China and China-centred tributary system in East Asia, the two cases of the pre-modern international society, were included in the historical comparisons of states systems by the English School scholars. The warring states system of ancient China was described as a historical international system/society which resembled the modern international system/society, but the China-centred tributary system which was different from the territorial state-based modern international system/society and therefore neglected by the earlier English School scholars.

⁵ Charles Manning, *The Nature of International Society*, reissue with a new preface (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975); Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (London: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 7–8, pp. 30–1, pp. 139–44; Martin Wight, 'Why Is There No International Theory?', in Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 18; Hedley Bull, *Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977); Alan James, *Sovereign Statehood: The Basis of International Society* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

⁶ David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: The Revolutionary State in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 14.

⁷ Geoffrey Stern, *The Structure of International Society: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd edition (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 58.

Warring states system in ancient China: a useful testing case

The period of Spring and Autumn and Warring States in ancient China (771 BC–221 BC) was widely regarded as a case similar to the modern sovereign states system. Hence it has been cited frequently by the English School scholars as an important case of the historical states systems, or one of the pre-modern international societies.

Martin Wight first referred to China, in his well-known ‘international theory’ lectures at LSE in the late 1950s.⁸ Wight even made an interesting and insightful comparison between the European and Chinese political theories, by stating that there was also a triad of philosophical traditions in the period of Spring and Autumn and Warring States of ancient China. The Rationalist philosophy was provided by Confucianism, it had a broad resemblance to Western Rationalism. The Revolutionist strand was Taoism. And the Realist strand in Chinese philosophy came from *Fa Chia*, or the school of law (legalism).⁹ It was obvious that Martin Wight tried to use the Chinese case to test his theoretical argument on the existence of three political traditions, namely realism, rationalism, and revolutionism.

In the early years of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, the committee members had devoted a lot of discussion to the theoretical conceptualisation of the international society which led to the publication of *Diplomatic Investigation*, an earlier English School classic, in 1966.¹⁰ But at the British Committee meeting in January of 1964, Herbert Butterfield, the Cambridge historian and the Committee’s first convener, argued that the committee should not be obsessed with the construction of theory, and he suggested the future research be concentrated on the historical comparisons of international systems, including the international systems in Europe, ancient Greece, Islamic world, and China.¹¹ The other committee members, including Martin Wight, supported him. Therefore from 1964 to 1978, the Committee’s discussions had been devoted to said research programme, and dozens of research papers were produced. The warring states system in ancient China was included as part of that research programme.¹² Martin Wight, a key figure of the committee who succeeded Butterfield as its convener in 1967 till his death in 1972, already referred to the warring states system in ancient China, as one of the earlier states systems, in one of his first papers to the Committee in early 1960s.¹³ He then submitted a series of working papers related to the historical comparisons of states systems from 1964 to 1972. These papers submitted by Martin Wight were later collected in his posthumous book *System of States* (1977), which was edited by Hedley Bull. In his book, Martin Wight

⁸ Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (London: Leicester University Press, 1991), p. 21, pp. 66–9, pp. 95–6, pp. 146–7, pp. 148, 175, 186, 193.

⁹ Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, pp. 66–9.

¹⁰ Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966).

¹¹ H. Butterfield, ‘Notes for a Discussion on the Theory of International Politics’, British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, Meeting of 10–13 January 1964, Martin Wight Papers, File 253, LSE Archives.

¹² British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, Meeting of 2–5 October 1964 at Peterhouse, Martin Wight Papers, File 253, LSE Archives.

¹³ Martin Wight, ‘Balance of Power’, in Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, p. 167.

regarded the warring states system in ancient China, along with the Western or modern international system, and the Hellenic-Hellenistic or Graeco-Roman states system, as some of the typical cases of states systems.¹⁴ He further elaborated that three historical international societies, namely the ancient China, Graeco-Roman international society and the modern international society, all originated from the areas with shared cultures and languages. Or to use Wight's own words, 'We must assume that a states-system will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members. The three states-systems that we have taken as paradigms, the Greek, the Western, and the early Chinese, each arose within a single culture.'¹⁵ Hedley Bull and Adam Watson echoed Wight's argument by treating the ancient China in the period of warring states as one of the 'non-hegemonial' regional international societies.¹⁶

It should be mentioned that, Geoffrey Hudson, a sinologist and fellow of St. Anthony's College, Oxford, provided related knowledge and insight to the other Committee members in the discussions of the warring states system in ancient China. He submitted two papers to the Committee in the early 1960s which were included in *Diplomatic Investigation*.¹⁷ From 1964, Hudson wrote several papers on China for the Committee. In his paper 'The Traditional Chinese Conception of International Relations' which was submitted to the British Committee's meeting in October of 1964, Hudson elaborated on the doctrine of Chinese international primacy.¹⁸ Martin Wight was quite impressed by that paper and got some inspiration from it.¹⁹ Hudson wrote two more papers on China for the Committee in 1965 and 1972, and the 1972 paper was especially devoted to the warring states system of ancient China.²⁰ Apparently, Geoffrey Hudson had largely influenced the other committee members' perception of China's relations with the international society, as he was the only China expert in the early years of the Committee.

Adam Watson's *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (1992), profited greatly from the discussions and papers of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, especially Martin Wight's *Systems of States*.²¹ But Watson's book moved far beyond Wight's *Systems of States*, by bringing into his survey Sumer, Assyria, Persia, India, China, the Islamic System, along with Classical Greece, the Macedonian System, Rome, the Byzantine Oikoumene, and the European international society. One of the three principal sections of that book is the main states systems of the ancient world which includes ancient China. Watson argued that, the warring states of ancient China, that

¹⁴ Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (London and Leicester: Leicester University Press in association with London School of Economics and Political Science, 1977), pp. 21–45.

¹⁵ Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, p. 33.

¹⁶ Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

¹⁷ G. F. Hudson, 'Collective Security and Military Alliances', in Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, pp. 176–80; G. F. Hudson, 'The Threats of Force in International Relations', *ibid.*, pp. 201–5.

¹⁸ G. F. Hudson, 'The Traditional Chinese Conception of International Relations' (2–5 October 1964), Martin Wight Papers, File 253, LSE Archives.

¹⁹ Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, p. 23.

²⁰ Geoffrey Hudson, 'The Extension of Western International System to Asia and Africa' (9–12 July 1965), Martin Wight Papers, File 253, LSE Archives; Geoffrey Hudson, 'The Period of the Warring States: A State System of Ancient China', Hedley Bull Papers, Box 8, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

²¹ Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis*, p. 2.

operated from 770 to 221 BC consisted of independent and equal states or independences. Those independent states had had the ability to preserve one's territory, to wage wars, to change allies, and to make treaties. They agreed that war should be regulated by customary rules. Watson also pointed out, in the warring states system, the more powerful states aspired to hegemony, and the growing power of the hegemonic state led to an anti-hegemonial league in which the leader (the *ba*), conducted war and diplomacy on the league's behalf.²² Finally, Watson supported Wight's argument that all of the historical international systems/societies were based on a common culture, by commenting that 'the sense of cultural unity among the Chinese of the warring states was as strong as the Greek or Indian, and their inter-state society as distinctively Chinese.'²³ In this sense, Watson actually treated the warring states system in ancient China as a regional international society.

The classic English School scholars referred to the warring states system in ancient China as an important and useful testing case to support the theoretical argument that an international society is composed of independent political communities and based on a common culture. The warring states system in ancient China was therefore invented and defined by the founding fathers of the English School as a historical regional international society.

China-centred East Asian tributary system as a suzerain-state system: an abnormal case

In comparison with the warring states system in ancient China, which was quite similar to the modern sovereign states system composed of sovereign or independent political communities, the China-centred tributary system in East Asia was treated as an abnormal case of states system or pre-modern international society, and relatively neglected by the English School, whether consciously or unconsciously. The China-centred East Asian tributary system lasted for about two thousand years, much longer than the modern states system. It was a unique regional international system or society, with its own organising principles, rules, norms and institutions, although different from the anarchical international society of sovereign states. Neither could it be simply categorised as a hierarchical empire.

The classic English School scholars did pay attention to the East Asian tributary system, but did not devote much research to it, because they simply regarded it as a hierarchical regional order and an abnormal case of historical states systems. Martin Wight named the China-centred tributary system as a 'suzerainty-state system', and differentiating it from the states system formed by 'sovereign states'.²⁴ He also explained why the China-centred tributary system did not become universal: 'Obviously the states-system developed out of Western Christendom. But the Western Christendom it developed out of was itself a peculiar culture. It combined universalist claims with a missionary dynamic. Perhaps China, or Byzantium, may be considered as having had universal claims

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 85–93.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

²⁴ Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, p. 23.

also, since they considered the rest of the world to be actually or formally in a tributary status; but they lacked the energy to give the claims effect.²⁵ In *Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull regarded the China-centred tributary system or 'suzerain-state system' as neither states system nor international society, because it was a system in which only one state – the suzerain state itself – possesses sovereignty and maintains supremacy over the vassals.²⁶ In *The Expansion of International Society*, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson did regard the China-centred tributary system as one of the regional international systems, but referred to its 'hegemonial or imperial' feature, because at the centre of the Chinese system was a suzerain, the Chinese Son of Heaven, 'who exercised direct authority over the Heartland; and around this empire extended a periphery of locally autonomous realms that acknowledged the suzerain's overlordship and paid his tribute.'²⁷ As a result, Wight, Bull and Watson did not treat China-centred tributary system as a comparable historical case of pre-modern international societies.

Gerrit Gong, a Chinese American scholar and member of the British Committee in the late 1970s and early 1980s, seemed to regard the tributary system as a regional international society in times of Chinese weakness. Gong stated 'The Chinese world order thus established a China-dominated tributary system in times of Chinese strength and a regional (for China, universal) international society in times of relative Chinese weakness.'²⁸ However, he did not elaborate on the China-centred tributary system in much detail. In one of his recent articles, Yongjin Zhang, an English School scholar of Chinese origins, provided a much vivid and persuasive account of the regional international systems/societies in both the ancient China and imperial China, including the China-centred East Asian tributary system.²⁹

In summary, the China-centred East Asian tributary system was treated as an abnormal case which was different from the European historical experience. Therefore it was basically excluded by the first generation of the English School scholars from the historical comparisons of international systems or pre-modern international societies. But some of the English School scholars, especially those in the post-Cold War period, did try to bring China-centred tributary system in, by challenging the ethnocentric bias, or Eurocentrism, as Barry Buzan, Richard Little and Yongjin Zhang and some other contemporary English School scholars tried to reduce that bias in their writings on the historical comparisons of international systems/societies.³⁰

²⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁶ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1995), pp. 10–11.

²⁷ Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis*, p. 3.

²⁸ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 132.

²⁹ Yongjin Zhang, 'System, Empire and State in Chinese International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 27 (2001), pp. 43–63.

³⁰ Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 20–1; Richard Little, 'The English School's Contribution to the Study of International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 6:3 (2000), pp. 414–5; Yongjin Zhang, 'System, Empire and State in Chinese International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 27 (2001), p. 44.

China and the expansion of international society

In late 1970s and early 1980s, the expansion of international society was at the center of the English School's conception of international society when the British Committee concentrated its discussion on that research theme. When China's relevance to the expansion of the West-dominated international society became an important part of that inquiry, and the English School scholars produced the most important publication directly related to China during the Cold War years. The integration of China into the international society has also been on some of the English School scholars' research agenda since the end of the Cold War. In the English School's narratives of the expansion of the modern international society, China was first described as an outsider, then part of the revolt against the West, and finally a country which has been taking great efforts to integrate itself into the West-dominated international society.

Standard of 'civilization' and China's entry into the international society

The China-centred East Asian tributary system collapsed due to the West's expansion and then dominance in that region in the 19th century. China and most of its neighbours became either colonies or semi-colonies of the Western colonial powers, in order to be admitted into the modern international society, they had to meet membership standard set by the West, or 'reverted to the sovereignty they had lost'.³¹ The standard of 'civilization' is therefore the key to understand the non-Western countries' entry into the Western-dominated international society in late 19th century and the second half of the 20th century. The English School has devoted much research to this topic.

In late 1970s, in a research proposal for the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, Hedley Bull raised that research topic on the standard of 'civilization' and its relationship with the expansion of international society.³² Gerrit Gong elaborated on that theme in much detail, producing one book and a book chapter on the standard of 'civilization' and China's entry into the international society. Gerrit Gong, a Chinese American Rhodes Scholar, was educated in Oxford and received master and doctoral degrees from Oxford. Hedley Bull was his supervisor first for B.Phil. and then D.Phil in international relations. Gong was inspired by Hedley Bull's pioneering work on the expansion of international society³³ and started to attend the British Committee in late 1970s, taking part in the research programme on the expansion of international society, which was led by Hedley Bull, the last convener of the British Committee from

³¹ Hedley Bull, 'The European International Order', (1980), in Kai Alderson and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Hedley Bull on International Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 2000), pp. 179–80.

³² Hedley Bull, 'A Proposal for a Study', October 1978, reprinted in Brunello Viguzzi, *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954–1985): The Rediscovery of History*, pp. 425–8.

³³ In his email message to this author on 25 February 2008, Gerrit Gong acknowledged his debt to Hedley Bull: 'As you would imagine, my work on the Standard of "Civilisation" in International Society owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to Professor Hedley Bull for his intellectual framing of the field.' This author much appreciates Prof. Gong's kind response to his queries.

1978 to 1985. Although Gerrit Gong was not the first one to touch upon the standard of 'civilization' in the international society,³⁴ it perhaps was he who made the standard of 'civilization' a widely-cited concept of the English School. As a Chinese American, Gong focused his work on standard of 'civilization' and China's entry into the international society. He submitted a paper entitled 'China's Entry into the International Society' for British Committee meeting in the April of 1980, which elaborated on the standard of 'civilization' and China's entry into the international society, and led to heated discussions at that meeting.³⁵ His paper was later included in *Expansion of International Society* edited by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson.³⁶ Gong expanded his discussion on the standard of 'civilization' and the entry of China, Japan, and Siam, into the international society, in his influential book *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*.³⁷ The standard of 'civilization' and its relevance to the expansion of international society has since then been a reoccurring intellectual hot discussion topic.

According to Hedley Bull, the international society grew up in Europe, first emerging as the Christian international society in the 16th and 17th centuries, and then as the European international society in the 18th and 19th centuries, which included both the European secular states and Europe's offshoots in north and south Americas, and finally becoming a global international society in 20th century.³⁸ As the European powers expanded to non-European parts of the world and encountered the other civilisations, or the 'barbarous' and 'savage' worlds, the Europeans set and promoted the standard of 'civilization', to protect European 'basic rights' (such as life, liberty and property) in the sometimes hostile non-European countries, and determined which non-European countries deserved the membership of the Western-dominated international society.³⁹ Gong argued that the standard of 'civilization' was deeply rooted in the historical experience of the European Christian international society or Christendom. But it emerged as an explicit legal concept at the end of the 19th century when the interaction between the European and non-European worlds required that they be spelled out explicitly. It can be traced in, and documented by two historical records: the 19th century treaties which Europe signed with the non-European countries, and the international legal texts written by the leading international lawyers of the era. A

³⁴ Lass Francis Lawrence Oppenheim's *International Law* (1905) discussed the emergence of the standard of civilisation, and Georg Schwarzenberger published an article on the standard of civilisation in international law in 1955. And Hedley Bull touched on that theme and used the term 'standard of "civilization"' in his proposal for the British Committee in 1978. Hedley Bull, 'A Proposal for a Study' (October 1978), reprinted in Brunello Vigezzi, *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954–1985): The Rediscovery of History*, pp. 425–8.

³⁵ 'Summary of discussion of Mr G. W. Gong's paper on "China's Entry into International Society"', British Committee on Theory of International Politics, All Souls Meeting (18–20 April 1980), Hedley Bull Papers, Box 8, File III, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

³⁶ Gerrit W. Gong, 'China's Entry into International Society', Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 171–83.

³⁷ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

³⁸ Hedley Bull, 'A Proposal for a Study' (October 1978), reprinted in Brunello Vigezzi, *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954–1985): The Rediscovery of History*, pp. 425–8; Adam Watson, 'Some Comments on Our Theme' (January 1979), reprinted in Brunello Vigezzi, *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954–1985): The Rediscovery of History*, pp. 428–431; Hedley Bull, 'The Emergence of A Universal International Society', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society*, pp. 117–26.

³⁹ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, 'Foreword' by Hedley Bull, pp. vii–x, 24.

few conditions must be met by a non-European country to be recognised as a legal member of the Family of Nations, such as being a ‘civilized’ state, abiding by the international law, etc.⁴⁰ But the fact of the international environment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was that the European powers or ‘civilized states’ made the European particular standard of conduct an universal standard, and enjoyed the final say in deciding and judging whether a non-European country met the standard of ‘civilization’. Or in other words, ‘European military superiority left non-European societies no choice but to come to grips with the European standard of “civilization”.’⁴¹

China in the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century was just such a typical case of this kind of non-European society. Before the invasion of the West, China occupied a central place in East Asia for about two thousand years, and the Chinese rulers regarded their country as the only ‘civilized’ in the world, and dealt with other countries according to the China-centred standard of ‘civilization’. As Adam Watson argued, ‘The Chinese classified all their non-Chinese neighbours as “barbarians”, and regarded them as culturally inferior.’⁴² Gerrit Gong explained that the Chinese standard of ‘civilization’ was symbolised by the ritual kowtow, and led to its confrontation with the West’s standard of ‘civilization’.⁴³ The 1839–1840 Opium War, a turning point in Sino-Western relations, smashed China’s arrogance and cultural self-confidence. China was compelled by the British superior military force to accept unequal treaty provisions, first with Britain, then with France and the US, followed by a series of other unequal treaties. According to those unequal treaties, the Western powers enjoyed fixed and low tariff rates, extraterritorial jurisdiction and other privileges associated with their standard of ‘civilization’, which infringed on China’s sovereignty. The Western powers also took concerted action for policing and ‘civilizing’ China, such as when they cooperated in crushing the Boxer Uprising ‘in establishing the standard which that society considered necessary in the vast and increasingly chaotic Chinese Empire’ in 1900.⁴⁴

After the Opium War, China was widely regarded as an uncivilised, even barbarous country,⁴⁵ and excluded from the modern international society. China passively accepted the new rules of behaviour set by the West, by gradually conforming its governmental institutions, legal system, and international practices to the interests, rules, and values of the ‘civilized’ international society.⁴⁶ But as Gong argued, ‘The Middle Kingdom’s size, inertia, and adherence to its own standard of “civilization” made China slow to implement the European standard [. . .].’⁴⁷ Therefore, China was accepted as a ‘civilized’ country in the international society far after Japan and Siam. Although China did attend the Hague Peace Conference in 1899 and 1907, and even became a member of the League of

⁴⁰ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of ‘Civilization’ in International Society*, pp. 24–35.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴² Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis*, p. 85.

⁴³ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of ‘Civilization’ in International Society*, pp. 130–6.

⁴⁴ Adam Watson, ‘European International Society and Its Expansion’, in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 30–1.

⁴⁵ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of ‘Civilization’ in International Society*, p. 57.

⁴⁶ Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society since 1949: Alienation and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., in association with St. Anthony’s College, Oxford, 1998), p. 10.

⁴⁷ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of ‘Civilization’ in International Society*, p. 146.

Nations after the end of the World War I, but it was still a 'semi-civilized' state, rather than a full member of international society before 1943. China did not enjoy full recognition and membership in the Family of Nations until 1943 when extraterritorial jurisdiction was finally abrogated through its treaties with the US and Great Britain.⁴⁸

The process of China's entry into the Western-dominated international society demonstrated that only the Western powers could decide when China had met the criteria. As one scholar commented, 'But the unequal treaties that exploited China were not abrogated until the height of the Second World War in 1943 – when the Chinese demands were not as much of a concession from Britain and America since Japan controlled the treaty ports covered by these treaties. Thus China actually entered International Society not as the result of a gradual process of ethical civilizing to European norms but through pragmatic diplomacy that was spurred by the contingency, uncertainty and violence of war.'⁴⁹

China and 'the revolt against the West' in the international society

Although China was recognised as a full member of the international society in 1943 and even became one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council in 1945, it was still not able to become a real power on the international stage in the 1940s because of the civil war which erupted shortly after the end of the World War II. The Chinese communists took power and founded the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 which led to a great transformation of Chinese state and society. The new China declared that the treaties forced upon China over the past 'one century of humiliation' were unequal and illegal. At the same time, with the rise of communist China, the ideology raised new questions about China's relations with the international society.⁵⁰ The new China was just born in the context of the East-West Cold War, and as an ally of the Soviet Union during the early Cold War years, the PRC was regarded by the West as a grave threat to the international society, and even named as an aggressor in the Korean War (1950–1953). Most of the Western countries denied diplomatic recognition to the communist China, a 'revolutionary state in the international society',⁵¹ and imposed economic sanctions on it before 1971. China had therefore been alienated in the international society for decades.

The rise of the revolutionary China coincided with the rise of the Third World after the end of the World War II. As a large number of the former colonies of the Western powers in Asia and Africa declared their independence, the international society expanded at a rapid pace, and the majority of the international society membership was no longer the Western countries. The newly independent

⁴⁸ But Yongjin Zhang argued that China entered into the universal international society in 1918–1920. Yongjin Zhang, *China in the International System, 1918–1920: The Middle Kingdom at the Periphery* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1991).

⁴⁹ William A. Callahan, 'Nationalizing International Theory: Race, Class and the English School', *Global Society*, 18:4 (October 2004), p. 321.

⁵⁰ Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 183.

⁵¹ David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: The Revolutionary State in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

countries became the backbone of the so-called Third World, which was formed in the 1950s and grew in the 1960s and 1970s. The Third World countries posed a great challenge to the West in the international society, both in economic and political terms. To some extent, the Third World revolted against the standard of 'civilization' set by the West. The PRC regarded itself as an ally to and even a part of the Third World. The Chinese premier participated in the Bandung Conference of 1955 which was one of the early indicating signs of the formation of the Third World.

The rise of the Third World let the English School scholars turn their eyes to the new independent states' impacts on the international society. Beginning in late 1960s, Hedley Bull paid increasing attention to the expansion of international society and the so-called Third World's revolt against the West.⁵² In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, directed by Hedley Bull, focused its research on the Third World and produced a collection of working papers that was published in 1984. Bull contributed a chapter entitled 'The Revolt against the West' to the collection, which he and Adam Watson coedited. Bull pointed out, after the end of the World War II, with the emergence of an increasing number of new independent states, the Third World consisting of a group of Asian, African and Latin American and other non-Western countries, was leading a revolt against the West-dominance in the international society, through struggling for self-determination, racial equality, economic justice and cultural autonomy. The Third World states grouped together with one another in the Afro-Asian movement, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Group of 77, and commanded majorities of votes in the political organs of the UN. Some of the Third World countries even gained the support of the Soviet Union, the communist superpower.⁵³

The revolutionary PRC seemed to be defined by Bull and his British Committee colleagues, as part of the 'revolt against West', because the Communist China participated in the Bandung conference of 1955, and had a great influence on Afro-Asian nations, etc.⁵⁴ At the same time, Bull also noticed that, since the early 1960s, China had been mobilising Third World sentiment against the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ According to Bull, the nuclear and underdeveloped China was one of the 'revisionist' and 'Have Not' countries in international society, struggling against the 'Have' countries.⁵⁶ Even worse, China at the height of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1968) was regarded by Coral Bell as 'the most determined and implacable revolutionary enemy of the existing international order'.⁵⁷

But China's image changed from a revolutionary or revisionist country to a much normal country in the early 1970s, when it became a partner of the *status*

⁵² Kai Alderson and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Hedley Bull on International Society*, p. 170, 'Introductory note'.

⁵³ Hedley Bull, 'The Revolt against the West', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society*, pp. 217–28.

⁵⁴ Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 227, 229, 257, 277.

⁵⁵ Hedley Bull, Justice in International Relations, the Hager Lectures, reprinted in Kai Alderson and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Hedley Bull on International Society*, p. 239.

⁵⁶ Hedley Bull, 'The Twenty Years' Crisis Thirty Years On', *International Journal*, Xxiv:4 (Autumn 1969), pp. 625–38, reprinted in Kai Alderson and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Hedley Bull on International Society*, p. 133, pp. 135–6.

⁵⁷ Coral Bell, 'China and the International Order', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 255.

quo powers (the US, Western European countries, and Japan), in the international society. China joined the UN and some other international institutions, and the US and the PRC even approached each other by establishing a *de facto* alliance against the USSR. The rapprochement with the US also led to the normalisation of China's relations with most of the Western countries, and therefore enhanced China's legitimacy as a member of the Western-dominated international society.

Some of the English School scholars in the 1970s followed the change of the PRC's relationship with the international society quite closely. Martin Wight, Geoffrey Hudson, and Coral Bell submitted related papers to the British Committee.⁵⁸ Hedley Bull, then a professor of Australian National University, even took a three weeks group trip to China in September and October of 1973.⁵⁹ It was the first and last time Bull visited China, and he described his trip in three diary note books and a detailed report. He seemed to be quite impressed by the Chinese friendly attitude towards the 'foreign friends', and the negative impact of the Cultural Revolution on the Chinese society, especially on the Chinese higher education. He also raised the question about the future 'invasion' of the foreign ideas into the Chinese social and political systems.⁶⁰ Bull actually had another opportunity to visit China again when then Australian ambassador in Beijing invited him to visit China in 1974, but he declined the invitation.⁶¹ In the introduction to a book on Asia-Pacific international relations published in 1975, Bull regarded China as 'a regional great power' and touched upon 'the re-emergence of China as an active great power'.⁶² He made similar remarks in *Anarchical Society*, one of the English School classics.⁶³

Nevertheless, for most of the 1970s, while China was still in the Cultural Revolution and political chaos, and it kept its faith in the revolutionary potential of the Third World by declaring itself as part of the Third World. To some of the English School scholars, China was still following a concept of international order incompatible with the usual Western assumption,⁶⁴ or continued its 'commitment to revolutionary struggle throughout the world'.⁶⁵ In *Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull argued, (in early 1970s) 'China disavows entirely the role of a great power, and views itself as the champion of the Third World nations in their struggle

⁵⁸ Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, pp. 174–200; G. F. Hudson, 'The Defection of Lin Piao' (March 1972), Martin Wight Papers, File 253, LSE Archives; Coral Bell, 'The Contest for Asia: A New Diplomacy', *New Society* (17 February 1972), Martin Wight Papers, File 253, LSE Archives.

⁵⁹ When I interviewed Mary Bull in Oxford on 13 March 2008, Mrs Bull kindly showed me the photos Hedley Bull took during his trip in China.

⁶⁰ Hedley Bull, 'Report by Professor Bull' (28 October 1973), Hedley Bull Papers, Box 4, File II, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁶¹ Hedley Bull to Stephen Fitzgerald (Australian Ambassador to China) (28 June 1974), and Stephen Fitzgerald to Hedley Bull (8 August 1974), Hedley Bull Papers, Box 4, File V, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁶² Hedley Bull, 'Introduction: Towards a New international Order in Asia and the Western Pacific?', in Hedley Bull (ed.), *Asia and the Western Pacific: Towards a New International Order* (Canberra: The Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1975), pp. xi–xii.

⁶³ Hedley Bull, *Anarchical Society*, 2nd edition, pp. 98, 108–10, 197–9.

⁶⁴ Coral Bell, 'China and the International Order', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society*, pp. 255–67; Hedley Bull, 'Report by Professor Bull' (28 October 1973), Hedley Bull Papers, Box 4, File II, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁶⁵ Geoffrey Goodwin, 'International Institutions and International Order', in Alan James (ed.), *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honor of C. A. W. Manning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 184.

against “super power hegemonism”.⁶⁶ In other words, China seemed to continue to be part of ‘the revolt against the West’, although the country was already less frightening and threatening than it was in the past decades. As Martin Wight wrote in early 1970s, ‘A triangular relations may yet develop between China, the Soviet Union, and the US. In any event, China’s avenging ambitions and enormous population have made her the only potential external danger that might threaten the dominant Powers apart from one another.’⁶⁷

China’s ‘reform and open door’ policy and its integration into the international society

China started to adopt the ‘reform and open door’ policy in late 1970s and early 1980s while the British Committee devoted itself to the research programme on the expansion of international society. China has since then been in the process of integration into the international society, and the new policy has brought out dramatic changes in the Chinese society and China’s relationship with the outside world.

Although Coral Bell, in her contribution to *The Expansion of International Society*, did notice some positive changes in Chinese foreign policy for serving the four modernisation drive in early 1980s, she did not seem to be optimistic about the future of China’s relations with the international society, by stating that ‘Present Chinese concepts of the world order as-it-should-be presumably continue to embody the vague Marxist notion of the eventual withering-away of the state, a development which (if it ever occurs) will obviously make the notion of a society of states obsolete.’⁶⁸ The other contributors, including the two editors (Hedley Bull and Adam Watson), could not even say a word about the potential change of China’s relationship with the international society. In the early 1980s, the process of China’s voluntary integration into the international society was just at the beginning and its future was not so certain. It seemed to be logical that the English School scholars were not so enthusiastic with that theme, and demonstrated a lack of interest in it, even expressed pessimism about its future. In his classic book *Human Rights and International Relations* published in 1986, John Vincent devoted one section to China’s different conception of human rights rooted in Confucian teaching and Marxist theory, which emphasised collective rights, rather than individual rights.⁶⁹

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s led to the revival of the English School. At the same time, the reform and open door policy had resulted in great and obvious changes of China both in domestic and foreign policy domains, and therefore China drew more and more attention from the international community in general and the English School scholars in particular. In 1991, Adam Roberts,

⁶⁶ Hedley Bull, *Anarchical Society*, 2nd edition, p. 286.

⁶⁷ Martin Wight, ‘The Balance of Power and International Order,’ in Alan James, ed., *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honor of C. A. W. Manning*, p. 114.

⁶⁸ Coral Bell, ‘China and the International Order’, in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society*, p. 265.

⁶⁹ R. J. Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 41–2.

then Montague Burton professor of international relations, Oxford University, attended an international conference on China's IR studies in Beijing, China, organised by Institute of International Relations, Peking University. Professor Roberts, in his working paper for and presentation at the conference, introduced the concept 'English School' or 'British School' for the first time to his Chinese audience, and his paper was included in a Chinese book published in the following year.⁷⁰ David Armstrong touched upon the integration of once revolutionary China into the international society by taking steps to 'conform to the norms of the society of states'.⁷¹ The intervention of English School scholar of Chinese origins, Yongjin Zhang, to some extent, filled that knowledge gap of the English School in this regard. He published two books on China's relations with the international society in the 1990s.⁷² Zhang especially devoted most of his second book *China in the International Society since 1949* to the interpretation of China's integration and socialisation into the international society and its limitations in perceptual, political and economic terms since the reform and open door policy was first adopted in late 1970s.⁷³ Zhang contributed greatly to the English School's interpretation of China's integration into the international society. Therefore, in the post-Cold War era, China's status in the English School's conception of international society seemed to be much more positive than in the past.

The English School approached the 'rising China'

In the process of China's integration into the international society, the 'rise' of China became a focus, perhaps a fashionable trend in IR scholarship, especially in the early 21st century. In the late 1990s, there were still debates on whether China was a big power, as Gerald Segal posed the question, 'Does China Matter?' in *Foreign Affairs* in 1999.⁷⁴ But in the early 21st century, 'the rise of China as a great power has become nearly conventional wisdom among most scholars, pundits, and policy-makers in the West.'⁷⁵ The effect of a rising China on the international society has been taken into serious account by the Western analysts ever since. John Ikenberry elaborated on the rise of China and its impact on the future of the West in *Foreign Affairs* in early 2008.⁷⁶ 'Peaceful rise', a concept articulated by

⁷⁰ Adam Roberts, 'A New Era of International Relations', in Yuan Ming (ed.), *Kuashiji de tiaozhan: Zhongguo guoji guanxi xueke de fazhan* (The Trans-Centurial Challenge: The Development of International Relations as an Academic Discipline in China) (Chongqing: Chongqing People's Press, 1992), pp. 22–56; Yongjin Zhang, 'English School in China: A Travelogue of Ideas and Its Diffusion', *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:1 (2003), pp. 87–114. I happened to be at the 1991 conference as a junior faculty member of Institute of International Relations, Peking University, and heard the name 'English School' for the first time although I first came across an English School book (*The Expansion of International Society*) in 1987.

⁷¹ David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: The Revolutionary state in international society*, pp. 183–4.

⁷² Yongjin Zhang, *China in the International System, 1918–20: The Middle Kingdom at the Periphery*; Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society since 1949: Alienation and Beyond*.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 99–251.

⁷⁴ Gerald Segal, 'Does China Matter?', *Foreign Affairs*, 78:5 (1999), pp. 24–36.

⁷⁵ Samuel S. Kim, 'China in World Politics', in Barry Buzan and Rosemary Foot (eds), *Does China Matter? A Reassessment: Essays in Memory of Gerald Segal* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 40.

⁷⁶ John Ikenberry, 'The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberalism Survive?',

some Chinese strategists and then expressed by the Chinese top leaders in 2003, has become a research topic itself in IR scholarship.⁷⁷ Some of the Western observers found that with the increasing power, China has become much more confident and active on the world stage. A commentator argued that, 'In the last few years, China's foreign policy has both become much more active and reached out to parts of the world where its presence was marginal in the past.'⁷⁸ The irony here is that, as one China expert pointed out, China's own assessments of trends in comprehensive national power in comparative terms are quite pessimistic about its ability to catch up to the US.⁷⁹

Some of the English School scholars, or the scholars who identify in some way with the English School's tradition, did approach the rising China and its potential impacts upon the international society in one way or another.⁸⁰ But it is very difficult to summarise the English School scholars' perceptions of China and its potential impacts upon the international society, because they treated China in different ways and expressed different conceptions of international society. Some of them are pluralists, emphasising the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and respect for political and cultural diversity.⁸¹ Some of them are solidarists, emphasising the universal values of human rights, humanitarian intervention, and democracy.⁸² Some of them are pluralist-solidarists, trying to keep a balance between pluralism and solidarism.⁸³ Although they perceived the 'rise' of China from different angles, they all took the 'rise of China' seriously, and devoted much attention to the possible challenges of the rising China towards the values, norms

Foreign Affairs, 87:1 (January/February 2008), pp. 23–37.

⁷⁷ Bonnie S. Glaser and Evan S. Medeiros, 'The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy Making in China: Then Ascension and Demise of the Theory of "Peaceful Rise"', *China Quarterly*, 190 (June 2007), pp. 291–310.

⁷⁸ Jean-Pierre Cabestan, 'China Is Reaching Out to the New World', *Asian Perspective*, 30:4 (2007), p. 5.

⁷⁹ Samuel S. Kim, 'China in World Politics', in Barry Buzan and Rosemary Foot (eds), *Does China Matter? A Reassessment: Essays in Memory of Gerald Segal*, p. 40.

⁸⁰ Those related works directly devoted to China include the following: Yongjin Zhang, 'System, Empire and State in Chinese International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 27 (2001), pp. 43–63; Barry Buzan and Rosemary Foot (eds), *Does China Matter? A Reassessment: Essays in Memory of Gerald Segal* (London: Routledge, 2004); William A. Callahan, 'How to Understand China: the dangers and opportunities of being a rising power', *Review of International Studies*, 31 (2005), pp. 701–74; Rosemary Foot, 'Chinese Strategies in a US-hegemonic Global Order: Accommodating and Hedging', *International Affairs*, 82:1 (2006), pp. 77–94.

⁸¹ Robert Jackson and Adam Roberts could probably be put into this category. Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Adam Roberts, 'International Relations after the Cold War', *International Affairs*, 84:2 (2008), pp. 1–16.

⁸² Nicholas Wheeler and Tim Dunne could probably be put into this category. Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler (eds), *Human Rights in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Nicholas Wheeler and Tim Dunne, 'East Timor and the New Humanitarian Interventionism', *International Affairs*, 77:4 (2001), pp. 805–27; Nicholas Wheeler and Tim Dunne, *Moral Britannia?: Evaluating the Ethical Dimension in Labour's Foreign Policy* (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2005).

⁸³ James Mayall, Andrew Hurrell and Barry Buzan could probably be put into this category. James Mayall (ed.), *The New Interventionism 1991–1994: UN Experience in Cambodia, Former Yugoslavia and Somalia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); James Mayall, *World Politics: Progress and Its Limits* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007); Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

and institutions of the Western-dominated international society. It seems to me, their discussions about the 'rise' of China and its impacts on the international society are much related to the following two recurrent questions which the English School scholars have been trying to deal with after the emergence of a global international society.

Is the standard of 'civilization' still relevant in China's relations with the international society?

As I mentioned, Hedley Bull and Gerrit Gong touched upon the importance of the standard of 'civilization' and its relationship with the expansion of the international society in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. As claimed by Gerrit Gong, the standard of civilisation was relevant to interpreting the long process of China's entry into the international society. It was obviously that the Western countries were the ones that set the standard of 'civilization' and judged whether a non-Western country had already met the criteria to be accepted as a 'civilized' member of the international society. The standard of 'civilization' connotes cultural imperialism, racial arrogance and ethnocentrism, assigning superior status to 'civilized' countries and inferior status to those 'uncivilized' or less 'civilized'.⁸⁴ As Hedley Bull argued, that concept has had a bad name since the end of World War II when a large number of the former colonies and semi-colonies became sovereign states or full members of the international society.⁸⁵

But we could not say that the standard of 'civilization' has already ceased to exist in the contemporary global international society. As Gerrit Gong pointed out, although the standard of 'civilization' as a legal concept vanished and the meaning of the 'civilized' changed during the World War II and in the post-World War II era, the other or hidden form of the standard of 'civilization' or cultural superiority still lingers on. He named the standard of human rights and standard of modernity as the two successors to the old standard of 'civilization'.⁸⁶ Even in the late 20th century and the early 21st century, some English School scholars still acknowledged the existence of the standard of 'civilization' in the international society of sovereign states, and regarding human rights and democracy as its key elements.⁸⁷ As the Western countries are still dominating the international society in terms of real power, instead of in terms of membership number, they continue to be the setters, judges, and jurists of the standard of 'civilization'. They try to make their own conceptions of human rights and democracy as the universally-accepted values, and the sources of legitimacy and authority in the international society,

⁸⁴ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, p. 66.

⁸⁵ Hedley Bull, 'Foreword', Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, pp. vii–viii.

⁸⁶ Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, pp. 90–3.

⁸⁷ Interviews with Barry Buzan (4 March 2008), LSE; Jack Donnelly, 'Human Rights: A new standard of civilization?', *International Affairs*, 74:1 (1998), pp. 1–24.

through international institutions, global civil society and the powerful mass media. That is to say, the West has the power to ‘make particular values general’, as R. J. Vincent stated.⁸⁸

The rising China has therefore been facing a great challenge from the ‘invented’ normative changes in the Western-dominated international society, and its regime’s legitimacy and authority in the international society has always been contested. As Yongjin Zhang commented in 2001, ‘Yet, even at the dawn of the new millennium, China’s full membership in the global international society continues to be contested, as many question China’s sincerity and willingness to accept the responsibilities that are associated with Great Power status. As a rising power, China, for its own part, has fiercely contested the normative changes in post-Cold War international society that have seen human rights and democratisation become part of the daily round of political practice. As the world seems to be moving beyond Westphalia, China stands as a staunch defender of the Westphalian order.’⁸⁹ Although Yongjin Zhang advocated for (moving) ‘beyond the standard of “civilization”’ in an earlier article,⁹⁰ he seemed to persuade China to conform to the new standard of ‘civilization’ in his 2001 article. Similarly, other English School scholars have also devoted attention to the rising China and its attitude towards the normative changes of the international society, or the emerging new standard of civilisation. But the solidarists, pluralists and solidarist-pluralists of the English School expressed different views in this regard.

The English School solidarist scholars have been most enthusiastic about the promotion of the universal human rights in international society, and they mentioned China’s human rights records occasionally. As early as in the Cold War, R. J. Vincent, an earlier English School solidarist, argued that human rights played a part in the decision about the legitimacy of a state (and of other actors and institutions) in international society.⁹¹ Nicholas Wheeler, a contemporary English School solidarist, supported this view by stating that ‘As a result of the international legal obligations written into the UN system, clear limits were set on how governments could treat their citizens. For the first time in the history of modern international society, the domestic conduct of governments was now exposed to scrutiny by other governments, human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations.’⁹² He even moved further, and declared that ‘humanitarian intervention has become a legitimate practice in international society’.⁹³ Tim Dunne, another famous contemporary English School solidarist, scolded China and other countries (such as Libya, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe) for their ‘appalling human rights record’ and for discrediting the UN Committee on Human Rights by becoming its members.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ John Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations*, p. 129.

⁸⁹ Yongjin Zhang, ‘System, Empire and State in Chinese International Relations’, *Review of International Studies*, 27 (2001), p. 63.

⁹⁰ Yongjin Zhang, ‘China’s Entry into International Society: Beyond the Standard of “Civilization”’, *Review of International Studies*, 17:1 (1991), pp. 3–16.

⁹¹ John Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 130, 132.

⁹² Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹⁴ Tim Dunne, ‘Fundamental Human Rights Crisis after 9/11’, *International Politics*, 44 (2007), p. 283.

Dunne made it quite clear that, human rights had become a new standard of ‘right conduct’ and ‘a new standard of legitimacy in international society’.⁹⁵

Andrew Hurrell, a pluralist-solidarist English School scholar, was sceptical of the solidarists’ claim on the universality of human rights, by arguing that it was immensely difficult to reach a stable and sustained consensus on human rights in a world of cultural and religious diversity, and the international society must be sensitive to the claims of difference and diversity.⁹⁶ But he also noticed the dramatic normative changes in the international society characterised by greater solidarism, and its substantial challenge to the ‘would-be great powers’, including China, India, Russia, and Brazil, which have preferred for ‘the older pluralist norms of sovereignty and non-intervention.’⁹⁷ Hurrell argued, ‘the changing norms of international society have had a significant impact on the character of the great powers’ club. Being a great power has never been solely related to notions of legitimacy and authority. A state can claim great power status, but membership of the club of great powers is a social category that depends on recognition by smaller and weaker states willing to accept the legitimacy and authority of those at the top of the international hierarchy.’⁹⁸ Hurrell seemed to support the Western countries as the ‘facilitators of common interest and promoters of shared values, institutions and sites of powers.’⁹⁹ This seems to be another way of expression for the new standard of civilisation.

Pluralist English School scholars, such as Robert Jackson and Adam Roberts, seem to avoid comments on the so-called standard of civilisation and they are continuing to emphasise the importance of sovereignty, non-intervention and diversity in international society. With respect to China, Jackson strongly doubted the West’s ability to force China to accept the West’s demands for democratisation or the protection of human rights. He stated that ‘neither Prime Minister Blair nor any other responsible leader of a Western democracy would be prepared to demand that China sign up for the “doctrine of international community”’. That would go against the fundamental commercial interests of such countries. It would be an irresponsible and unrealistic foreign policy. If China ever sets course to become a democracy that will be the determination and decision of the Chinese government, and if it is successful that will be the achievement of the Chinese people.’¹⁰⁰ Adam Roberts stressed the importance of understanding and showing respect for foreign countries and cultures.¹⁰¹ He criticised the pervasive belief that today’s world is a single united entity ‘buttressed by the rhetoric of globalisation; by the belief in the West that democracy is a panacea; and by a reluctance to understand the extent and depth of different world views.’¹⁰² He also noticed

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 69–286.

⁹⁶ Andrew Hurrell, ‘Power, Principles and Prudence: Protecting Human Rights in a Deeply Divided World’, in Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler (eds), *Human Rights in Global Politics*, pp. 277–302.

⁹⁷ Andrew Hurrell, ‘Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What space for would-be great powers?’, *International Affairs*, 82:1 (2006), pp. 1–4.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 364.

¹⁰¹ Adam Roberts, ‘International Relations after the Cold War’, *International Affairs*, 84:2 (2008), p. 3.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 11.

‘remarkable rise of new powers (especially Japan, India and China)’ and China’s willingness to engage in the discussion of human rights.¹⁰³

In a word, among the contemporary English School scholars, some of them (especially the solidarists) expressed the importance of the new standard of civilisation in the engagement of China in the international society, some of them (especially the pluralists) demonstrated sensitivity to the cultural diversity in international society in general, and to the Chinese political culture in particular.

Is China still part of the revolt against the West?

This second question is quite closely related to the first one. According to the West’s standard of civilisation, China is still a ‘less civilized’ country in the international society, and a ‘rising’ China is easy to be described as a challenge, even a threat. As seen when some Western observers and commentators talked of a ‘return to the Yellow Peril’ in the early 21st century.¹⁰⁴

So far none of the English School scholars have clearly depicted the rising China as part of the revolt against the West or a challenger to the global order dominated by the US in the post-Cold War era. They took notice of China’s steady integration into the world economy, its embrace of market economy and economic globalisation, aspiration to be a ‘responsible great power’ in world politics, and strategy of ‘soft bandwagoning’ with, rather than a type of ‘hard balancing’ against the US. Some of them also acknowledged China’s accommodating attitude towards the international human rights regime, by signing the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹⁰⁵

On the other hand, the English School scholars, more or less, also expressed concerns about the potential and possible challenges a rising China might pose to the West in the future. As pluralist Adam Roberts claimed, in the post-1945 era human rights law, and the laws of armed conflict, have both developed enormously. The resulting role of human rights and humanitarian issues in international politics is significantly greater than in earlier eras. Roberts said, ‘This role presents special problems. The idea of a global society – based on liberal economics, human rights and democracy – clashes constantly with the continued existence of sovereign states [. . .]’.¹⁰⁶ He cited the crises over human rights in China as part of the clash between ‘global values and local realities.’ Although, he also noticed China’s recent acceptance of the legitimacy of human rights dialogue.¹⁰⁷ Pluralist-solidarist Andrew Hurrell and some other researchers, devoted attention

¹⁰³ Adam Roberts, ‘The Evolution of International Relations’, Notes for lecture at Royal College of Defence Studies (21 January 2008), pp. 19–21.

¹⁰⁴ David Scott, *China Stands Up: The PRC and the International System* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 15–19, 83–85.

¹⁰⁵ Rosemary Foot, *Rights beyond Borders: The Global Community and the Struggle over Human Rights in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Rosemary Foot, ‘Chinese Strategies in a US-hegemonic Global Order: Accommodating and Hedging’, *International Affairs*, 82:1 (2006), pp. 777–94; Adam Roberts, ‘The Evolution of International Relations’, Notes for lecture at Royal College of Defence Studies (21 January 2008), p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Adam Roberts, ‘The Evolution of International Relations’, Notes for lecture at Royal College of Defence Studies (21 January 2008), p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

to the aspiration of rising China's to be a great power, its unhappiness with the structure of Western-dominated international society, and the potential challenge to the normative changes in the international society.¹⁰⁸ To those solidarists who have been interested in, even obsessed with, the promotion of human rights and humanitarian intervention in world politics, a rising China with its own distinct conceptions of human rights and democracy, seems to remain as a pariah in the international society. The solidarists noticed that China was especially critical of the unilateral humanitarian interventions without the authorisation of UN Security Council.¹⁰⁹

As we know, China is still on the rise. The process of China's integration into the international society has not been completed, and the Chinese state and society have been undergoing dramatic and evolutionary changes. The future of China and its relationship with the international society is unpredictable. The English School scholars would continue to follow the rise of China closely, treating it either as a 'stakeholder' or a challenger in the international society which has been continuously dominated by the Western powers. They have to approach the rising China in a much more sophisticated way than how Hedley Bull simply treated the revolutionary China as part of the 'revolt against the West', because the rising China in the 21st century is a much more powerful and complex entity in the international society.

Conclusion

Since Martin Wight's famous LSE lectures in late 1950s, the English School scholars have brought China into the conception of international society, by using it as an important case or referent to test and support their theoretical core arguments. China was brought into the British Committee's research project on the comparisons of the historical states systems or pre-modern international societies. The states system of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period in ancient China was treated as one of the most important historical cases to support the theoretical argument that an international society was composed of independent political communities and based on a common culture. China was also brought into the discussions on the expansion of the international society by the English School, first as case on the relevance of the standard of civilisation to the expansion of the international society in the late 19th century and the first part of the 20th century, then as a case of the 'revolt against the West', and finally as a case of a non-Western country's integration into the Western-dominated international society. With the 'rise' of China in the late 20th century and early 21st century, the English School scholars have devoted much attention to the potential impacts of a rising China on the West in the international society. China's status

¹⁰⁸ Andrew Hurrell, 'Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What space for would-be great powers?'; Rosemary Foot, 'Chinese Strategies in a US-hegemonic Global Order: Accommodating and hedging'.

¹⁰⁹ Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'Introduction: The Political and Moral Limits of Western Military Intervention to Protect Civilians in Danger', in Colin McInnes and Nicholas J. Wheeler (eds), *Dimensions of Western Military Intervention* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), p. 4.

in the English School's conception of international society seems to have been upgraded in the 21st century, either as a stakeholder or as a challenger in the international society. To some extent, we could understand the historical evolution of China's relations with the international society from the English School's related narratives. In comparison with the other major Western IR theoretical schools, the English School has treated China as a much more important case because of its historical approach.

As the English School scholars have been 'inventing' an international society,¹¹⁰ China's status in the English School's conception, or conceptions, of the international society has also been invented and reinvented. The Chinese case vividly demonstrates how a non-European (or non-Western) country, as one of 'the others', has been dealt with and brought into the conceptualisation of the international society by the English School with Eurocentric or ethnocentric bias. The earlier English School scholars used China as a historical case to test and support their theoretical arguments in a selective and ethnocentric way. The warring states system in ancient China was described as one of the typical historical cases of international system/society because it quite resembled the modern international system/society of sovereign states. But the much longer China-centered East Asian tributary system, different from the modern international system/society of sovereign states, was basically neglected as an abnormal case, although the later English School scholars made efforts to bring the East Asian tributary system into their analysis. In the English School's narratives about the expansion and evolution of the international society, China used to be depicted first as an uncivilised outsider of the international society, then part of 'revolt against the West' in the international society, and finally a country in the process of integration into the international society and a potential challenger to the norms, values and institutions in Western-dominated international society. China's status in the English School's conception of international society has always been in the process of change, partly because of historical facts and partly because of intellectual inventions which have been used to test and support the English School's theoretical core arguments on the international society. In the English School's engagements with China, China has always been treated as part of 'the others' which is different from the West's 'self', and therefore marginalised or regarded as a problem (or potential problem) in the Western-dominated international society. It is mainly due to the English School's Eurocentric or ethnocentric bias.

It should be pointed out that, in the post-Cold War era, some of the contemporary English School scholars have taken great efforts to reduce that bias which might make the English School of international relations look more attractive to the non-Western IR scholars and students, including the Chinese IR scholars and students. As we know, the Chinese IR scholars and students have been paying increasing attention to the English School since the end of the Cold War, especially since the mid-1990s. The Chinese IR community demonstrated a great interest in the English School's conception of international society, its theoretical features, and the 'via media' and historical approach to academic inquiries. Some of the English School's publications (such as Hedley Bull's

¹¹⁰ Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School*.

Anarchical Society) were translated into Chinese. Dozens of Chinese articles, and even a few Chinese books or book chapters were devoted to the English School.¹¹¹ But until recently, the influence of the English School in the Chinese IR community, in comparison with the American mainstream IR theories, has been relatively marginal. Only a limited number of the English School's classics have been translated into Chinese. The American intellectual hegemony in the Chinese IR scholarship, as one English School scholar noticed,¹¹² is surely one of the reasons. But it seems to me, the English School's Eurocentrism might be a greater barrier for its travelogue to China, as a number of Chinese IR scholars were critical of the English School's cultural bias in their publication on the English School.¹¹³

My purpose is not to blame the English School scholars for their engagements with China, but to point out that it is not easy for the English School, along with the other major Western IR theoretical schools (including the so-called scientific theoretical schools) to escape ethnocentrism or cultural bias in their perceptions of and dealings with the non-Western countries. They are all culture-laden and value-laden. In fact, there is not a true value-free and universal IR theory in the world. Every IR theory is provincial in cultural terms. The English School's conception of international society is, without doubt, deeply rooted in the modern European political, philosophical, and legal traditions, as well as the experience of European diplomacy. It seems to me, what concerns the English School most is how to maintain the order in the Western-dominated international system/society. And the non-Western countries used to be treated as the 'others' different from the West's 'self'. In the 21st century, the world is still multi-cultural in nature. Respect for and tolerance of cultural diversity, promoting cross-cultural communication, and encouraging mutual accommodation is surely a better way to deal with international disputes and differences. Unfortunately none could say with confidence that it is easy to do cross-cultural dialogues, because cultural bias is quite difficult to be overcome, especially in a context of the Western cultural supremacy.

The English School's conception of international society has been a very attractive and powerful IR theory. But in the age of globalisation, it could be more attractive and gain more interpretative power by bringing in 'the others', in a more sensitive and sophisticated way, as some of the contemporary English School

¹¹¹ See Yongjin Zhang, 'English School in China: A Travelogue of Ideas and Its Diffusion', *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:1 (2003), pp. 87–114; Barry Buzan, English School Bibliography for China: writings principally on China, or by Chinese authors about the English School (version of May 2007), {<http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/research/international-relations-security/english-school/>}; Miao Hongni, 'The English School in China', in Wang Yizhou (ed.), *Zhongguo Guoji Guanxi Yanjiu, 1995–2005 (IR Studies in China, 1995–2005)* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2006), pp. 196–224; Chen Zhirui, Zhou Guiyin and Shi Bin (eds), *Kaifang De Guoji Shehui: Guoji Guanxi Yanjiu Zhong De Yingguo Xuepai (Open International Society: The English School in IR Studies)* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2006); Xu Jia, *Yingguo Xuepai Guoji Guanxi Lilun Yanjiu (A Study of 'English School' Theories)* (Beijing: Contemporary Affairs Press, 2008).

¹¹² Yongjin Zhang, 'English School in China: A Travelogue of Ideas and Its Diffusion', *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:1 (2003), p. 98.

¹¹³ Wang Yizhou, *Xifang Guoji Guanxi Xue: Lilun Yu Lishi (Western International Politics: History and Theory)* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1998), pp. 378–9; Chen Zhirui, Zhou Guiyin and Shi Bin (eds), *Kaifang De Guoji Shehui: Guoji Guanxi Yanjiu Zhong De Yingguo Xuepai (Open International Society: The English School in IR Studies)*, p. 21, pp. 69–70; Wang Cungang, 'Learn From and Be Critical of the English School: Some Thoughts on Working on and Learning from the English School', *Europe Studies*, 4 (2005), pp. 48–52.

scholars have been pursuing in their research. To the Chinese IR community, it is of critical importance to work on and retell the story of Chinese foreign relations and China's relations with the Western-dominated international society from their own perspectives, and make their research products accessible to their colleagues in the Western IR community, including the English School scholars.¹¹⁴ The point is that, it is equally important to look at the international society from non-European or non-Western standpoints.

¹¹⁴ Some of the Chinese IR scholars have been taking great efforts in this regards. Zhao Tingyang, *Tianxia Tixi: Shijie Zhidu Zhaxue Daolun (The Tianxia System: An Introduction to the Philosophy for the World Institutions)* (Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Press, 2005); Zhao Tingyang, 'Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept "All-under Heaven" (Tian-xia)', *Social Identities* 12:1 (2006), pp. 29–41; Qin Yaqing, 'Core Problematic of International Relations Theory and the Construction of a Chinese School', *Social Sciences in China*, 3 (2005), pp. 165–76; William A. Callahan, 'Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or a New Hegemony', *International Studies Review*, 10 (2008), pp. 749–61.