

Civilising statecraft: Andrew Linklater and comparative sociologies of states-systems

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Abstract

In this contribution to the forum marking the publication of Andrew Linklater's remarkable book on *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems* we first locate the book in the context of Linklater's overarching intellectual journey. While best known for his contribution to a critical international theory, it is through his engagement with Martin Wight's comparative sociology of states-systems that Linklater found resonances with the work of process sociologist, Norbert Elias. Integrating Wight's insights into the states-system with Elias's insights into civilising processes, *Violence and Civilization* presents a high-level theoretical synthesis with the aim of historically tracing restraints on violence. The article identifies a tension between the cosmopolitan philosophical history which underpins the argument of the book, and which has underpinned all Linklater's previous works, and the 'Utrecht Enlightenment' that offers a conception of 'civilized statecraft' at odds with a universal conception of morality and justice. The article then examines Linklater's argument about the 'global civilizing process' as it applies to post-Second World War efforts to build greater institutional capability to protect peoples from harm. It is argued that Linklater overestimates the extent to which solidarism has civilised international society, and that the extension of state responsibilities and development of civilised statecraft owe more to pluralism than solidarism.

Keywords

Civilizing Processes; Statecraft; States-Systems; International Society; Pluralism; Human Protection; Norbert Elias; Martin Wight; Andrew Linklater

Introduction

Andrew Linklater's *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems* is a remarkable sequel to the 2011 study of *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*. The aim of the first volume was to grasp the theoretical problem of how far the modern world of international relations has succeeded in putting harm avoidance at the centre of moral and political debate. The aim of *Violence and*

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Civilization is to undertake a comparative sociology of Western states-systems that builds on the theoretical foundations laid out in the first volume. A projected third volume will extend the enquiry to world history.

From the outset, Linklater envisaged his study of harm in world politics as a trilogy. It's not the first time Linklater has conceived of his work in terms of a trilogy. Beginning with his first book, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (1982), Linklater embarked on a sustained normative and sociological enquiry, over almost four decades, into the way that the modern world has been shaped by the bifurcation of moral and political experience. Inside the world of the sovereign state, individuals, as citizens, are bound to each other by civil laws that enable sociability; outside and between sovereign states, humans, or the 'men' of Linklater's title, seem condemned to a lawless and violence-prone state of nature offering no consolation for humanity.

Men and Citizens can be thought of as volume one of a trilogy that sought to show how a reconstructed and *critical* theory of international relations, coupled with integrative processes underway in the world of practice, provides grounds for believing that the bifurcated experience of 'men' as citizens of a sovereign nation-state and as members of humanity could be overcome.¹ This way of framing the question – as a tension in the relationship between the ethical obligations one owes to fellow citizens as opposed to the community of humankind – may have originated in the natural law theories of Pufendorf and Vattel, but Linklater's answer was framed by the dialectical philosophical histories of Kant, Hegel, and Marx. The second instalment of the trilogy, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (1990), 'began at the point where [*Men and Citizens*] left off', by exploring how Marxist-inspired critical social theory could 'deal with the empirical question of how moral communities have expanded (and contracted) in the past'.² To be sure, Linklater argued that a critical theory of international relations would need to transcend both realism and Marxism, since while the latter had provided unrivalled insight into industrialisation and capitalist development, it had failed to account for the states-system as an autonomous political entity with its own geopolitical logics of state-building and war as realists had argued. Still, its concern with struggles between particularising and universalising social forces made Marxist theory more attractive to Linklater, whose normative project was concerned with enlarging the domain of human freedom. The final piece of the critical international theory trilogy, *The Transformation of Political Community* (1998) contended that the sovereign territorial state – as one of the principal sources of exclusion in the modern world – prevented humanity from utilising available moral resources to build more inclusive, cosmopolitan forms of community and governance. The advent of globalisation, Linklater argued, created conditions propitious for a post-Westphalian ethical re-foundation of political community and, as a result, world politics.

¹ *Beyond Realism and Marxism* and *The Transformation of Political Community* were the sequels in the first trilogy, which, it must be said, was never formally presented to the reader in this way. Full citations to these three books are: Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1990); Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998). For an extended account of Linklater's *Men and Citizens*, see Richard Devetak and Juliette Gout, 'Obligations beyond the state: Andrew Linklater's *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*', in Henrik Bliddal, Casper Sylvest, and Peter Wilson (eds), *Classics of International Relations: Essays in Criticism and Appreciation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 177–86.

² Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism*, p. vii.

A neglected but vitally important component of Linklater's critical international theory is the contribution of the English School. The English School's core concept of international society entailed a focus on systemic *principles*, such as principles of order and legitimacy for example, rather than systemic *forces*, which neorealism emphasises.³ In this way, the English School provided Linklater's critical international theory with the intellectual tools to track the origin and historical development of moral norms and principles in relations between states, and thus form a bridge over the chasm that had long been thought to separate theories of international relations from Kantian philosophical histories. Translated into the social-theoretic language of Jürgen Habermas, Linklater regarded the English School as a resource for understanding the dimension of moral-practical learning in the modern states-system.⁴ Linklater's interest in the disciplinary emergence of writings on international society became explicit in the book he co-authored with Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Assessment*.⁵ It became evident in this book that Linklater saw in Wight, Bull, Vincent, Watson (and their followers) the theoretical resources of a theory capable of identifying 'progressive potentials embedded in anarchical states-systems', potentials he associated with Kant's normative approach to international relations. In the process of grafting the English School notion of international society onto a cosmopolitan foundation, Linklater goes so far as to describe Kant as a 'radical rationalist'.⁶ In truth, that is probably a better description of Linklater himself than the philosopher of Königsberg.

The co-authored book on the English School is like a 'switchman' (to use Weber's metaphor) in relation to Linklater's intellectual journey, linking the tracks along which his thinking has evolved. In moving from critical theoretical accounts of how boundaries of inclusion/exclusion are drawn and contested to his current project on historical and sociological accounts of civility in international society, Linklater has moved closer to an English School perspective (perhaps too close for comfort given his Scottish heritage and his current affiliation as Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Politics at Aberystwyth University). At the same time, English School scholarship has evolved to the point where there is now a discernible difference between those privileging an academic account of the institutional and analytical processes that enable international society to 'hang together', and those attentive to a normative recovery of historical and legal practices through which the assemblage of international society is made, reproduced, and transformed in the direction of cosmopolitan norms. While Barry Buzan is unquestionably the intellectual innovator in the theoretical analytics of the English School,⁷ Andrew Linklater is identifying a pathway for more explicitly normative and historical theories of international society.

The purpose of this article is to probe these theoretical boundaries further. How far is it possible to combine the normative sociology of Elias with a Wightean approach to the international that was

³ Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism*, p. 17.

⁴ Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 150.

⁵ Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁶ 'Rationalist' here is used in the sense Wight gave it, drawing on John 'Locke's premise that men are reasonable, and that they live together according to reason even when they have no common government, as in the condition of international relations.' Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, eds Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press/The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p. 14; Linklater and Suganami, *The English School of International Relations*, p. 160. This appears in Chapter Five, one of the four chapters written by Linklater.

⁷ See, in particular, Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

grounded in history and sociology?⁸ What does such an endeavour mean for both critical theory and the English School? And what substantive openings emerge from *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems* upon which new research can be generated?

I. Locating *Violence and Civilization*: Civility, Enlightenment, and international society

Violence and Civilization must be situated in the broader objective of the harm trilogy, which is to understand how the modern world has ‘made progress in making harm a key moral and political question for humanity as a whole’.⁹ The particular aim of *Violence and Civilization* is to understand the extent to which Western states-systems have socialised standards of self-restraint. It is an examination of the changing thought and practice around the permissibility of violence both within, and especially between, states, predominantly in the West. Put differently, Linklater is interested in the harm conventions that have historically governed different Western states-systems.

Central to Linklater’s story are the concepts of civility, civilisation, and civilising processes, concepts that had been entirely absent from his first trilogy of books on critical international theory. A further significant departure from the first trilogy is Linklater’s in-depth engagement with Norbert Elias and process sociology. One of the reasons Linklater is attracted to Elias is his ambition of ‘promoting higher levels of synthesis in social-scientific inquiry at a time when increasing specializing and the fragmentation of knowledge are prevalent’.¹⁰ Elias’s sociologies are nothing if not remarkable empirical-theoretical syntheses of large-scale histories. Linklater’s *Violence and Civilization* is no less ambitious or remarkable in its grand historical synthesis as it stretches from the Hellenic city-states system to the present. But more specifically, it is Elias’s process sociology and his account of the civilising process that Linklater utilises. In his classic 1939 account *The Civilizing Process*, Elias explained how the refinement of manners and the cultivation of tact, civility and politeness in early modern Europe contributed to the state’s ability to pacify society. What is missing from Elias’s story, Linklater argues, is an account of whether and how states themselves have cultivated practices of civility in their interaction with one another.

It is in this context that Linklater turns to Martin Wight, one of the leading lights of the English School. Wight’s comparative sociology of states-systems provides Linklater with resources for examining civilising processes in international relations.¹¹ Linklater believes that the English School’s concept of international society enables the historical study of what Elias called ‘social standards of self-restraint’.¹² In other words, the core institutions of international society – diplomacy and

⁸ See Wight’s comment that international society ‘can be properly described only in historical and sociological depth’. Martin Wight, ‘Western values in international relations’, in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 96.

⁹ Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 5.

¹⁰ Andrew Linklater, *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. xiv. Hereafter referred to as *Violence and Civilization*.

¹¹ For two book length studies on Wight, see Ian Hall, *The International Thought of Martin Wight* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), and Michele Chiaruzzi, *Politica di Potenza nell’età del Leviatano: La Teoria Internazionale di Martin Wight* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008).

¹² Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 5.

international law – have had a civilising effect on the European states-system. Just as the civilising process internal to states required citizens or subjects to assert self-control in order to restrain aggressive and violent behaviour, so too does the civilising process of international society function to develop self-restraint by states.

Linklater's central argument is that Europe, though divided into independent sovereign territorial states, has nonetheless developed forms of 'civilized statecraft' that have been improvised to deal with complex moral and political issues. Since its development during the Renaissance, diplomacy has functioned as a vital civilising process among states by maintaining standards of restraint and self-control, especially in relations among the great powers. Linklater cites Gibbon who viewed Europe, following Vattel, as "one great republic" with shared standards of "politeness and cultivation" and a common "system of arts, and laws, and manners" that "imposed moderation", preserved "the mutual influence of fear and shame" and installed "a sense of honour and justice".¹³ Referring to Callières, Linklater notes how diplomacy served to moderate or restrain the 'traditional ethic of the absolutist prince'.¹⁴

Linklater acknowledges the importance of these practices to the civilising process of international relations, but refrains from aligning them with the Enlightenment. In the chapter on the Enlightenment, Linklater moves between the French *philosophes* and the German *Aufklärung* to characterise it as 'radical' and 'cosmopolitan'. While acknowledging the 'reality of multiple Enlightenments',¹⁵ Kant's cosmopolitan philosophy of history remains central to Linklater's project, providing the normative architecture within which the exercise of public reason and compassion can reform social and political institutions and enlarge the moral freedom of humanity. The guiding principle is the Kantian assumption that a universal conception of justice exists, or can be established.

The historical problem for Linklater, however, is that the forms of civilised statecraft that have been improvised in the states-system are grounded in a rival intellectual and political culture to the cosmopolitan philosophy of history associated with Kant, namely, the law of nature and nations. Kant understood this, which is precisely why he positioned his argument for perpetual peace against the 'sorry comforters' – Grotius, Pufendorf, and Vattel.¹⁶ But that does not mean Kant achieved a monopoly over Enlightenment thinking. As the intellectual historian Ian Hunter has argued, these proponents of the law of nature and nations simply offered a rival form of Enlightenment that sought to pacify and civilise relations among states without subscribing to universal conceptions of morality or justice.¹⁷ Instead, responding to a context of moral and imperialist, as well as lingering confessional and dynastic, threats to the European states-system, their concern was to preserve the states-system on the basis of civilised statecraft and its evolved diplomatic ethos. No higher moral or political end was pursued than maintenance of international order and preservation of the territorialised states-system.

¹³ Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 217. On Vattel, see Richard Devetak, 'Law of nations as reason of state: diplomacy and the balance of power in Vattel's *Law of Nations*', *Parergon*, 28:2 (2011), pp. 105–28.

¹⁴ Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 222.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual peace: a philosophical sketch', in Hans Reiss (ed.), *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 93–115 (p. 103).

¹⁷ See Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Ian Hunter, 'Kant's regional cosmopolitanism', *Journal of the History of International Law*, 12:2 (2010), pp. 165–88.

The kind of diplomatic ethos described by Linklater is perhaps better termed the ‘Utrecht Enlightenment’, so as to differentiate its objectives from the cosmopolitan Enlightenment promulgated by Kant. Motivated by a commitment to suppress the wars of religion, the Utrecht Enlightenment gave rise to a notion of Europe characterised by ‘French manners and English liberty, in which sovereign civil societies were associated in a pattern of treaties and commerce, able to restrain the disruptive forces of religion and conduct their own wars within the disciplines of *jus gentium* and European civility.’¹⁸ This Enlightenment programme of cultivated civility and polished manners (*moeurs*), evident in the territorialised diplomatic states-system of Europe, was motivated by a resolve to avoid the extremes of confessional conflict and universal monarchy and their tendency to unrestrained warfare, not to advocate for a Kantian ‘perpetual peace’.¹⁹

This casts doubt over the compatibility of the Utrecht and Cosmopolitan Enlightenments. Starting from quite opposed intellectual positions on the existence or possibility of universal morality or justice, these rival Enlightenments are geared towards very different political ends: the one content to work within the limits of the territorialised states-system to serve diplomacy and statecraft; the other, from the vantage point of the moral philosopher, intent on its ultimate transcendence.²⁰ This is not simply a matter of rival accounts of the Enlightenment. The ramifications for histories of international society run deeper. Institutions such as international law and diplomacy that have evolved to enable states to manage order are artifices of practice, rather than theory or philosophy. This explains why Wight believed there was a discernible pattern in the history of international thought and practice that privileged ‘the quality of the *via media*’ and made the balance of power a ‘constituent principle’ or ‘unwritten constitution’ of international society.²¹

For Wight, the concept of international society was meaningful in so far as it captured the search for a *via media* between two over-stylised alternatives – a ‘realist’ state of war and a ‘revolutionist’ or cosmopolitan denial that states could play a constructive role in world politics. In his essay on ‘Western Values in International Relations’, Wight gave glimpses of what the *via media* (or ‘rationalism’ as he called it) means in practice: war is permitted but only for certain collectively agreed purposes; order might be the guiding purpose of international society but order is unstable without justice; intervention is generally to be avoided unless it is to uphold civilised standards of behaviour or, as a last resort, to maintain the balance of power; morality in statecraft is often imperfect because political actors are not judged by the standards of individual morality, nonetheless, that does not mean ‘any measures are possible’ in the pursuit of the national interest. Borrowing Ian Hunter’s terminology we can redescribe Wight’s conception of the *via media* as a form of ‘diplomatic casuistry’ in which moral principles are continuously adjusted to the context of a society of sovereign states.²² Moral judgements therefore do not issue from pure reason or

¹⁸ J. G. A. Pocock, ‘Enlightenment and counter-enlightenment, revolution and counter-revolution; a Euro-sceptical enquiry’, *History of Political Thought*, 20:1 (1999), pp. 125–39 (p. 128). See also J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Volume Two: Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) on Enlightenment narratives of civil government.

¹⁹ Richard Devetak, ‘Historiographical foundations of modern international thought: Histories of the European states-system from Florence to Göttingen’, *History of European Ideas*, 41:1 (2015), pp. 62–77 (pp. 70–2).

²⁰ See Hunter, ‘Kant’s regional cosmopolitanism’.

²¹ Wight, ‘Western values’, pp. 89–131; Wight, ‘The balance of power’, in Butterfield and Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations*, pp. 132–75 (p. 153).

²² Ian Hunter, ‘Vattel’s law of nations: Diplomatic casuistry for the protestant nation’, *Grotiana*, 31 (2010), pp. 108–40.

abstract principles of moral philosophy, but from the practices of civilised statecraft and conventions deemed necessary to international society.

Many later English School writers have taken from Wight the belief that states-systems need to be understood ‘through the exploration of the ideas that inform those concerned with the practice of international relations’.²³ This required, according to his most famous protégé Hedley Bull, scholarship that was close to state practice rather than relying on an external standard founded on an abstract philosophical justification.²⁴ While Linklater shares with Wight the belief that all political inquiry is normative, their understanding of what is entailed by this assumption is different. Linklater offers the reader a normative argument grounded in cosmopolitan moral values, whereas Wight sought to reveal the political normativity of international practices such as diplomacy, the balance of power and international law.

II. The ‘global civilizing process’ and human protection

Linklater’s discussion of the historical inflection point of 1945 is intriguing. His argument is bold and progressive. In his words, a key claim in the book is that ‘the relationship between violence and civilization has been transformed fundamentally’ particularly ‘over the last few decades’.²⁵ Before interrogating this claim, it is worth pausing to note the historiographical method underpinning his approach. Through all of Linklater’s writings there is a dialectical philosophical history at work. In *Men and Citizens* for example it operated at the level of theory. In *Violence and Civilization* it operates at the level of history, revealing the embeddedness of civilising processes in international society and tracing its development in dialectical relation to decivilising forms of unrestrained state violence. In other words, the dialectical philosophical history continues to frame Linklater’s narrative of the progressive growth of cosmopolitanism.

This dialectic is visible in Linklater’s discussions of empire, total warfare, and the Holocaust (Chapters Six, Eight, and Nine). If the Enlightenment (and to a lesser extent the Renaissance) brought to the fore the possibility of a transformation in moral sensibilities such that the suffering of the vulnerable became a concern of the powerful, then it is also the case that the changing character of states and warfare created new contexts for, and new modes of, violence. Colonial states continued through the nineteenth centuries to perpetrate egregious violence against Indigenous populations. Such acts of colonial violence were legitimated by a hierarchical and racialised conception of European civilisation and non-European barbarism; they were not even deemed to count as wars.²⁶

In his discussion of the Holocaust (Chapter Nine), Linklater recognises that modern equivalents of ancient mass exterminations ‘could only have occurred in highly advanced industrial societies’²⁷ with the capacity to mobilise sections of society toward the goal of state-sanctioned genocide, ethnic

²³ Ian Hall, *The International Thought of Martin Wight*, p. 97.

²⁴ Andrew Hurrell, ‘Society and anarchy in the 1990s’, in B. A. Roberson (ed.), *International Society and the Development of International Relations Theory* (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 17–42 (p. 36).

²⁵ Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 341

²⁶ See for example, Bruce Buchan, ‘The empire of political thought: Civilization, savagery and perceptions of Indigenous government’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 18:1 (2005), pp. 1–22; see also Paul Keal, ‘Beyond “war in the strict sense”’, in Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit (eds), *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 165–84.

²⁷ Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 380.

cleansing, and forced displacement. Even then, being an advanced technocratic state was not a sufficient condition for decivilising practices to occur: the genocide that occurred during the Second World War was in part caused by the economic and political crisis that was afflicting German and many other countries in the interwar period, coupled with the fact that Europeans believed that advanced civilised states were not capable of such barbarism.

They were. Yet even on the dark side of modernity the possibility of progressive change exists. The ever-increasing capability to destroy human life ‘has done much’, Linklater argues, ‘to promote the realization that most people have similar aversions to pain and suffering’.²⁸ The horror of total war foreshadowed ‘the most recent phase in a civilizing process’ – a process that was ‘inspired by core Enlightenment principles’.²⁹

With respect to the meaning of what counts as civilised, the Second World War provoked, unsurprisingly, normative revulsion at the Holocaust and how it was possible that Nazi Germany could kill and maim millions of ordinary people without apparently being in breach of the law. Here Linklater is able to find the perfect quotation to illustrate his argument. According to the chief British prosecutor at Nuremberg Sir Hartley Shawcross, such actions could not be regarded as being a matter ‘of domestic concern’; rather, that it was ‘in the interest of civilization’ that they were deemed to be ‘crimes against the law of nations’.³⁰

Beyond the legal precedents set at the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals, the new postwar order signalled a stark rupture from the imperial standards of civilisation that had been used to exclude, humiliate, and in some cases exterminate, non-European states and peoples. In place of a European-dominated society of states and empires there developed a global international society in which all peoples living under colonial rule were accorded a right to self-determination expressed through the institution of sovereign statehood.³¹

Few working on the history of international societies would contest that 1945 was an inflection point,³² signalling not only the completion of the sovereign state project but also the progressive articulation of universal aspirations to improve the international ‘good life’. We argue that Linklater’s ‘transformation’ thesis with respect to violence and civilisation is vulnerable to a number

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 307. Linklater quotes Elias in relation to this point: practices of violence, Elias argues, differ historically ‘mainly in terms of the techniques used and the numbers of people concerned’ (Norbert Elias, *Involvement and Detachment: Collected Works* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007), p. 175). While this may be true at a high level of generality, it should also be noted that some of the most brutal wars of extermination in the post-Cold War period were fought with hand-held knives and machetes.

²⁹ Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 383.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 388. Linklater creatively draws on Elias as well as conventional IR writers such as Hinsley in his description of the attributes of statehood. ‘[T]he idea of sovereignty underpinned two other monopoly powers that reflect the linkages between state formation, the process of civilization, and the emergence of European international society: the legal right to represent the community in diplomatic negotiations and the associated authority to bind it in international law.’ For historical accounts of the globalization of the sovereign state and popular sovereignty, see David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); and also Richard Devetak and Emily Tannock, ‘Imperial rivalry and the first global war’, in Dunne and Reus-Smit (eds), *The Globalization of International Society*, pp. 125–44.

³² Edward Keene *International Political Thought: An Historical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Dunne and Reus-Smit (eds), *The Globalization of International Society*.

of critiques set out below: the extent to which the institutions of post-1945 international society succeeded in restraining the propensity for sovereign states to engage in mass killings, and related, whether in recent times we can meaningfully talk about the emergence of a more solidarist international society that has succeeded in embedding cosmopolitan Enlightenment principles.

1945 and the new international society

An initial point to make about this conceptualisation of the civilising process is that it is a progressivist reading of the new order of 1945. While Linklater recognises that the end of the Second World War ‘did not inaugurate an entirely new phase in the history of the modern states-system’,³³ he nevertheless makes bold claims about the character of the transformation. In relation to the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes tribunals, the reader is told that the balance of power between the Kantian ‘triptych’ (civil law, the law of nations, and the law of world citizenship) ‘changed fundamentally’.³⁴ Coupled with the growing civility of law was a change in human consciousness, or what Hedley Bull referred to as growing ‘cosmopolitan moral awareness’.³⁵ Here Linklater provides examples of changes in post-1945 sensibilities with respect to the use of corporal punishment in Schools, sexual and gender-based forms of violence, cruelty to animals, and so on. In parallel, international society incorporated ‘the belief that societies had to support international principles that outlawed genocide’.³⁶ Underpinning Linklater’s argument is a claim that the emergence of global sensibilities is being institutionally embedded in ‘global agencies’: both aspects of this claim are open to question.

Other internationalists are less sanguine about the instruments and purposes created to protect peoples from crimes against humanity immediately after 1945. As Michael Ignatieff writes, the human rights regime created after 1945 was not a triumphant shift away from the past so much as ‘a war-weary generation’s reflection on the European nihilism and its consequences’. Far from building human rights protection on the basis of solidarist foundations, the regime was ‘designed to create firewalls against barbarism’.³⁷

This more sceptical account of the configuration of the UN system matters because it reveals a momentum towards establishing a new international order founded upon, and limited by, the prerogatives of sovereign statehood. Gestures to international moral purposes were made and important victories were won with respect to the founding treaties such as the UN Charter, the anti-Genocide Convention, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet these victories did not significantly limit the room for manoeuvre that state elites craved – whether in the metropolises of the great powers or in the capitals of weak and divided decolonised states. The UN Security Council mirrored the politics of power and interests: great powers abrogated to themselves the right to veto any resolution that potentially had the support of all other members. This ensured that the ‘will of the international community’ as expressed by the UN General Assembly or through the

³³ Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 339.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

³⁵ Hedley Bull, *Justice in International Relations* (Hagey Lectures, Ontario: University of Waterloo, 1984), p. 12.

³⁶ Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 401.

³⁷ Michael Ignatieff, quoted in Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 102. For an alternative argument asserting that Ignatieff is wrong in attributing the rise of human rights to a response to the Holocaust because the postwar origins of human rights lie more in domestic European political debates about ‘how to create social freedom within the boundaries of the state’, see Samuel Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History* (London: Verso, 2014), pp. 73–6.

non-permanent members of the Security Council could never compel the great powers to act in ways that undermined their narrow national interests.

Returning to the anti-genocide Convention, Linklater is right to note that the Convention recognised genocide as ‘a crime under international law’ that can be committed ‘in time of peace or in time of war’;³⁸ in this respect there was a convergence between developments in international law with new standards of civility. Yet despite being an important milestone the Convention had a number of limitations that have been widely acknowledged in the genocide studies literature:³⁹ the definition of the scale of the massacres, the intent of the perpetrator, identity of the group that was targeted, and the absence of any provision ‘that recognises that states must, or even may, intervene to prevent genocide from occurring beyond their borders’.⁴⁰ Earlier drafts of the Convention came close to setting out an expectation that states ‘shall do everything in their power’ to prevent or halt genocide, but this was diluted by the big three – the US, the Soviet Union, and China – who favoured a more timid formulation whereby the contracting parties would ‘call upon’ the organs of the UN to take action.⁴¹

The progressive understandings of the emergence of a human rights culture after 1945, offered by Linklater, must confront the claim by Samuel Moyn that human rights ‘in the beginning and for a very long time’ were in fact ‘a history of *nonglobalisation*’.⁴² The cascade of human rights norms in the post-Second World War era ‘failed to occur’, he insists, because ‘no one cared about [them] for decades’.⁴³ Here is not the place to question Moyn’s account (others have done this);⁴⁴ what is relevant in relation to *Violence and Civilization* is to consider whether the argument about ‘civilizing practices’ risks being over-determined. What is required to sustain the civilising practices thesis is an account of how politicians, diplomats, and activists practised human rights rather than sacrificing them to the doctrine of state necessity, as well as engaging with the significance of the struggle over meanings that is evident in the many worlds of human rights activism.

Taming sovereigns, protecting civilians

Bringing the argument in *Violence and Civilization* closer to the current period, how does the latest stage in the ‘global civilizing process’ reveal the traces of restraint and responsibility? As noted above, Linklater believes that the experience of total war and genocide led to ‘unprecedented’

³⁸ See Article I of The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide (The United Nations General Assembly 1948).

³⁹ This description of the Genocide Convention draws on Tim Dunne and Eglantine Staunton, ‘The genocide convention and Cold War humanitarian intervention’, in Alex Bellamy and Tim Dunne (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 38–55. For debates about the Convention and its provisions, see Helen Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective* (New York: SAGE Publications, 1993); Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Martin Shaw, *What is Genocide?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

⁴⁰ Luke Glanville, *Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect: A New History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 148.

⁴¹ Glanville, *Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect*.

⁴² Samuel Moyn, ‘On the nonglobalization of ideas’, in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (eds), *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 187–204 (p. 192).

⁴³ Moyn, ‘On the nonglobalization of ideas’, p. 192; Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, p. 76.

⁴⁴ Christian Reus-Smit, *Individual Rights and the Making of the International System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). See also Gary J. Bass, ‘The old new thing’, *New Republic* (20 October 2010), available at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/78542/the-old-new-thing-human-rights>.

advances in establishing mechanisms for compliance with human rights standards. It is worth quoting Linklater in relation to how he sees the norms of restraint and responsibility emerging from earlier intellectual systems of thought:

In an unparalleled change in the relationship between violence and civilization in world politics, national governments, international organizations, and non-state actors have in their different but complementary ways created the outlines of a cosmopolitan legal and political sphere that links two interrelated principles – the Stoic value that every human being has a *prima facie* duty to refrain from harming all others, and the Kantian conviction that all people should unite to ensure that assaults on human rights in any part of the world are universally condemned and prevented wherever possible. Those twin normative standpoints that have affirmed the values of ‘ordinary life’ have their institutional counterpart in global agencies with responsibility for promoting compliance with international humanitarian law.⁴⁵

Running through this quotation – and the final chapters of the book – is an empirical and normative claim about changing practices of sovereignty. Drawing heavily on Elias’s metaphor of the ‘we-I balance’, Linklater tells a complex story about how the struggle between the different understandings of international society was brought to the fore during and after the great wave of decolonisation that occurred post-Second World War. He uses the familiar English School categories of pluralism and solidarism to show that contemporary international society is at a turning point in which neither approach appears to be entirely convincing. Following Andrew Hurrell,⁴⁶ Linklater argues that the limited ethic of coexistence identified with pluralism is at odds with the globalised character of norms of responsibility, while the promise of solidarism remains unfulfilled. Or, to put it another way, there is more to international responsibility than the pluralist suggests but less than the solidarist desires.⁴⁷ Since neither pluralism nor solidarism can carry the day, Linklater settles on outlining solidarist ‘advances’ in relation to humanitarian law, universal jurisdiction for international crimes, and the development of the responsibility to protect (R2P) framework.

In keeping with the style of Hedley Bull’s lectures on international justice, which have exerted a powerful grip on Linklater’s thinking, it would be wrong to classify his *Violence and Civilization* as a book that makes a definitive case for liberal solidarism. It is also worth noting that Linklater’s use of pluralism and solidarism (and the wider claim about global civilising processes) arguably positions him closer to Bull than it does to Martin Wight. Bull’s mentor did not use pluralism and solidarism in his writings; moreover, disentangling Wight’s international thought in relation to any category is fraught with difficulty.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, pp. 382–3.

⁴⁶ Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ This is of course a variant of Linklater’s insightful remark: ‘If there is more to international politics than realists suggest, there will always be less than the idealist or cosmopolitan desires.’ Andrew Linklater, ‘The English School’, in Scott Burchill et al. (eds), *Theories of International Relations* (5th edn, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 88–112 (p. 90).

⁴⁸ One can overstate how much they featured in Bull also. While pluralism and solidarism were foregrounded in ‘The Grotian conception of international society’ they feature much less prominently in *The Anarchical Society*. Compare Hedley Bull, ‘The Grotian conception of international society’, in Butterfield and Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations*, with Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (London: Macmillan, 1977). For a discussion of the fraught character of scholarly attempts to categorise Wight’s thought, see Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), ch. 3, and Hall, *The International Thought of Martin Wight*, particularly ch. 1.

With respect to Linklater's powerful argument about a 'shift' in standards of civility, it is important to assess whether such claims are supported by evidence that civilising practices are increasingly shaping state conduct. In relation to both universal jurisdiction for international crimes and R2P the more persuasive argument is to regard whether the transition in sovereign state responsibilities is compatible with pluralism rather than running ahead of it. This ambiguity was arguably there when Bull initially mapped out these contending normative categories: the obligation to collectively enforce the rules can be reconciled with the pluralist idea of states consenting to collective action under certain restricted circumstances. While the content of the reason for collective action *could* include cosmopolitan purposes – such as protecting the rights of non-citizens not to suffer harms – it could equally be used to prop up authoritarian and uncivilised regimes in the name of countering 'violent extremism'.⁴⁹

From the vantage point of the present rather than the solidarist 'moment' at the turn of the twentieth century,⁵⁰ it could be argued that the extension of sovereign state responsibilities is better captured by the changing character of pluralism than it is by solidarism. The framework developed in the UN system to widen and deepen international responsibility for the protection of peoples against the worst atrocities is a good illustration. The 2005 World Summit held at the UN headquarters in New York, and attended by more than 170 heads of state, is noticeable for the clarity with which sovereign member states of the UN were deemed accountable for preventing, or responding to, any of the 'four crimes' (genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity) in their jurisdiction. Member states *also* have a responsibility to assist other member-states who are unable to act effectively; as a last resort, they may forcibly intervene in the domestic jurisdiction of a third party if the UN Security Council has mandated the action.

To the extent that this framework captures the prevailing diplomatic and legal understanding of R2P, it is evident that pluralism continues to retain the upper hand: no prior international legal norms or duties were modified by the version of R2P that emerged out of the 2005 Outcome Document; any breach of non-intervention could only legitimately occur if the relevant inter-governmental organ of the United Nations deemed such action to be necessary and just; and that prudential considerations would continue to colour local decision-making about how to respond to egregious human rights violations, as opposed to relying solely on a foundational ethical judgement that compels action in the name of a universal duty to 'save strangers'. The great powers have been consistent all along in rejecting the idea that they have a binding legal obligation to take decisive military action even if the Security Council deemed this to be appropriate. It is no surprise that the prominence of pluralism in UN debates about sovereign states' responsibility was not lost on former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, who argued that R2P should be seen as a friend of sovereign states and not its enemy.⁵¹

While the number of intervention cases has increased, and the quantum of publications has expanded many times over, the diplomatic consensus remains close to the position Bull adopted in

⁴⁹ John Karlsrud, 'Towards UN counter-terrorism operations?', *Third World Quarterly*, 38:6 (2017), pp. 1215–31.

⁵⁰ Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵¹ Ban Ki-Moon, 'Responsibility to Protect: State Responsibility and Prevention, Report of the Secretary-General', General Assembly 67th Session (9 July 2013), available at: ([http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/SG%20report%202013\(1\).pdf](http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/SG%20report%202013(1).pdf)).

the 1980s. He argued then that we should exercise caution in assuming that there is a convergence in international society about the meaning and priority accorded to human rights. Nevertheless, a consensus that intervention is justifiable can occur particularly when an intervention ‘expresses the collective will of the society of states’.⁵² UN Security Council Resolution 1793 on the eve of NATO’s attacks on Libya in March 2011 illustrates both the possibilities and the limits of intervention for protection purposes. The momentary consensus⁵³ to ‘use all necessary means’ to ‘protect civilians and populated areas’ soon collapsed as a rift opened up between the regime change policy that France, Britain, and the United States favoured, and the view – shared by other Security Council members and most of the rest of international society – that they had exceeded the mandate and in doing so had weakened the legitimacy of human protection norms in the UN system.⁵⁴

There is reasonable disagreement on the part of journalists, practitioners, and scholars, as to whether the development of the human protection regime constitutes a significant step towards an ‘international social consciousness’, to use Martin Wight’s phrase.⁵⁵ Followers of Wight searching for evidence of moral progress would need to show how diplomats and practitioners go about the business of civilising statecraft. Such a close-up view would likely reveal much greater scrutiny being exercised over state conduct with respect to the perpetration of atrocity crimes, while severe limitations persist with respect to implementing a human protection regime. Or to put this point in the language of *Violence and Civilization*, evidence of the ‘taming of sovereigns’ is conspicuously less apparent than the important, though infinitely less demanding, practice of shaming sovereigns. Mass killings, which were permitted in earlier states-systems, may now be ‘forbidden’. In this sense, international legitimacy has evolved. Yet as the wars without end in Central Africa and Syria remind us, the pattern of thought and practice associated with restraint and civility continues to co-exist alongside other decivilising logics, such as that of extermination, and other brutal forms of state action that are routinely justified by the doctrine of necessity.

Conclusion

Where does Linklater’s grand synthesis of Eliasian process sociology and Wightean histories of states-systems leave critical international theory? One major contribution of *Civilization and Violence* relates to the historical knowledge that is generated by the attention to civility in statecraft. This is an under-explored area in International Relations where histories are often oriented by present conceptions and values, and where states are considered as fundamentally flawed ethical entities by critical international theorists. Previous histories of the globalisation of European international society have neglected the development of norms of self-restraint or the way that institutions of law and diplomacy have had, at times, a civilising effect on the European states-system. We see the ‘Utrecht Enlightenment’ as being an example of how restraint emerged as a shared purpose against the backdrop of the disruptive violence of confessional conflict. This kind of Enlightenment was forged through practice – what Wight saw as the value of the *via media* and Hunter calls ‘diplomatic casuistry’ – rather than through the articulation of definitive cosmopolitan principles or judgements.

⁵² Hedley Bull, ‘Conclusion’, in Hedley Bull (ed.), *Intervention in World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 195.

⁵³ With regard to Resolution 1973 there were ten affirmative votes, five abstentions, and no votes against.

⁵⁴ After the armed attack on Tripoli, the Indian Ambassador to the UN, Hardeep Puri, referred to NATO as the ‘armed wing’ of the UN Security Council. Discussed in Simon Adams, ‘Libya’, in Bellamy and Dunne (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of The Responsibility To Protect*, pp. 768–85 (p. 772).

⁵⁵ Wight, ‘Western values’, p. 97.

The second major contribution that we have discussed concerns Linklater's reading of the limits and possibilities of civilising statecraft today. Caution must be exercised when considering how far international society has been civilised as it has globalised. Rival conceptions of what civility means is a challenge that grows ever more significant as liberalism struggles to manage internal fault-lines while rising and re-emerging powers are advancing their own understandings of order, governance, diplomacy, and responsibility. Caution must also be exercised when evaluating the extent to which civilising practices have genuinely become embedded in institutions such as the International Criminal Court and the wider human rights protection regime. Responsibilities within these institutions remain unevenly distributed with powerful states rejecting the idea that a shared norm can generate binding commitments, and weaker states having little or no capability to make a difference.

Reasonable people will disagree about how much of a difference 'civilizing processes' have made to international society today. That there is now a language for describing and condemning the worst abuses that one part of humanity can inflict on another is one civilising step forward: sovereigns who abuse their citizens or harm the basic rights of others suffer shame and estrangement. Yet, as Linklater recognises, the solidarist or cosmopolitan aspiration to eliminate decivilising practices is unlikely to be realised any time soon. Grounded in this political reality, Linklater's project of steering critical international theory to consider practical questions about civility in states-systems past and present remains a priority of the highest order.

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