

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vi
<i>Contributors</i>	vii
Introduction: Methods and Methodology in the English School <i>Cornelia Navari</i>	1
1 International Relations as a Craft Discipline <i>Robert Jackson</i>	21
2 What the Classical English School was Trying to Explain, and Why its Members Were not Interested in Causal Explanation <i>Cornelia Navari</i>	39
3 Constructivism and the English School <i>Christian Reus-Smit</i>	58
4 History, Theory and Methodological Pluralism in the English School <i>Richard Little</i>	78
5 International Society as an Ideal Type <i>Edward Keene</i>	104
6 Theorising the Causes of Order: Hedley Bull's <i>The Anarchical Society</i> <i>K. J. Holsti</i>	125
7 The English School and the Activity of Being an Historian <i>William Bain</i>	148
8 The English School's Approach to International Law <i>Peter Wilson</i>	167
9 Law, Power and the Expansion of International Society <i>B. A. Roberson</i>	189
10 The Limits of Progress: Normative Reasoning in the English School <i>James Mayall</i>	209
<i>Bibliography</i>	227
<i>Index</i>	240

1

International Relations as a Craft Discipline

Robert Jackson

Before undertaking an inquiry into the scholarly enterprise in the human sciences, it is necessary to understand the nature of the material that is the subject of study. The English School is a form of classical humanism, whose subject is human conduct. What we are concerned with in the English School approach is not technical facts but human relations, and human relations understood in terms of normative standards. Inquiry into world politics is inseparable from a normative inquiry. I refer to this as the classical approach, following Hedley Bull.¹

Normative inquiry into world politics

There are five things to notice or keep in mind when it comes to normative inquiry into world politics. The first is the contradictory conceptions of norms that political scientists operate with: some conceptions cannot lead to normative inquiry in the meaning of that term in classical political science. The second is the fundamental difference between a detached and disinterested orientation to international scholarship and a politically activist orientation. The third is the dialogical modality of international ethics and political ethics generally: it is a world of human communication, of question and answer, of dialogue and discourse. The fourth is that international ethics is, by and large, created by statespeople: it is their normative equipment. The fifth is that theory is a creature of practice and not the other way about, as is often assumed.

The Study of Norms

Misunderstanding of normative inquiry is caused by the ambiguous meaning of 'norm' in social science discourse. Karl Popper has distinguished between nature and artifice, between 'natural laws'—'i.e., a law that is factual and can be tested to see whether it is verifiable or falsifiable'—and 'normative laws'—'i.e., such rules as forbid or demand certain modes of conduct'.² Positivist social scientists could be characterized as those scholars who seek

to *discover* patterns of social behavior, conceived as an objective external reality, and to *explain* that reality in terms of falsifiable empirical propositions.³ By contrast, classical humanists could be characterized as those scholars who seek to *discern, clarify, and elucidate* human conduct: that is, human activity that is assessed by reference to normative standards of some kind. There can be no positivist explanations of human conduct. That would confuse these basic categories. There can only be history, philosophy, jurisprudence and related modes of understanding, interpreting, and elucidating its character and *modus operandi*.

One prominent meaning of norm is sociological: a norm is conceived to be a pattern of behavior—a norm is how people usually behave. That is a positivist concept of norm. In studying norms, positivists are studying behavior: norms are ‘recurring patterns of behavior’.⁴ That is not the meaning of norm employed here. Here the meaning is moral and legal: a norm is a standard of conduct by which to judge the rightness or wrongness, the goodness and badness, of human activity. In studying norms in the classical way we are studying conduct and not merely behavior. In studying behavior scientifically one could study animal behavior as well as human behavior. But it is impossible to study animal conduct in any recognized meaning of the term. Conduct (and misconduct) is exclusively a human activity that is judged by a moral or legal standard of some kind.

Political scientists, in conceptualizing norms, are sometimes prone to confuse, to mix up, to try to bridge, or to stretch this basic distinction. For example, it has been said that ‘Norms may “guide” behavior, they may “inspire” behavior, they may “rationalize” or “justify” behavior, they may express “mutual expectations” about behavior, or they may be ignored.’⁵ To combine these different notions is to invite and perhaps commit a category mistake: for example, the mistake in this case of considering norms as both causes of behavior and standards of conduct. Some post-positivist analysis, particularly constructivism, is marked by such ambiguous conceptions of norms and normative study.

There is a distinction in positivist social science between empirical theory and normative theory which indicates that norms could not be candidates for empirical inquiry. That clearly is a mistaken way of thinking. The human world is significantly composed of norms—that is, standards of conduct. Those standards have a historical existence. When historians study the conduct required of Christian kings during the Middle Ages or that demanded of Roman governors during late antiquity or that expected of member states of the United Nations today, they are engaged in an empirical analysis of basic political norms. It would be impossible to make much sense of Latin Christendom or the Roman Empire or present-day international society or any other political world, past or present, without grasping the basic norms that the people of the day use to justify or vindicate their political conduct.

Standards of conduct are not empirical in the same (external) sense that perceptible objects are empirical. For example, we can see the car approaching on the other side of the road. But we cannot see the rules of the road that are supposed to govern the driver of that car. We can see the solid yellow line down the middle of the road, but we cannot see what it means. The line in the middle of the road is a normative—that is procedural—idea or concept. The rules of the road have an ‘existence’ in that human understanding sense of the word. Norms exist socially and historically in the sense that a certain set of people who are engaged in a specified activity are subject to them at that place and time. They exist as ongoing standards of human conduct. That empirical notion of a norm also applies to the particular set of people—that is, statespeople—who ‘drive’ the approximately 190 ships of state. They are subject to standards of conduct which are the equivalent of traffic regulations: that is international law, diplomatic practice, rules of international organizations, and so on. That latter meaning of ‘empirical’ as referring to norms that exist at a certain place and time in regard to certain activities is the meaning employed in the classical approach.

A related misunderstanding is the belief that normative inquiry is prescriptive in character. I am here referring to a recommendatory or policy analysis—rather than an interrogatory or expository analysis—which aims at giving advice or proposing a course of action to be followed. It is the usual outlook of foreign policy analysis. University scholars are not in a good position to offer policy advice because they lack the immediate experience and precise, up-to-date information which are crucial to successful policy-making. They are not where policy is made and they cannot therefore have a very good feel for the situation and its constraints and demands. Louis J. Halle, who spent a number of years in the US State Department during and after World War II and went on to become a distinguished professor at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva started one of his books with the following comment:

Anyone who has experienced international relations in a foreign office, on the one hand, and has taught in the universities, on the other, knows that they are not the same thing. The difference . . . is fundamental . . . The immediate presumption, especially in an empirical society like our own, is that the difference ought not to exist. International relations as practiced in foreign offices is the real thing, and the real thing is what ought to be taught.⁶

Halle’s point is that the practical world of foreign policy and the theoretical world of academic analysis are worlds apart and although ‘the one ought not to be without some relevance to the other’, to confuse them is fatal—for both parties.⁷ Theory and practice are categorically different modes of understanding. (This point is expanded below.)

A further confusion is the equation of normative inquiry with moralizing in which the professor turns his or her lectern into a pulpit and gives a sermon rather than a lecture. A normative analyst is here represented as somebody who is standing in judgment and rendering judgment. It may be worth repeating a few cogent remarks by Hedley Bull on this issue:

What is important in an academic inquiry into politics is not to exclude value-laden premises, but to subject these premises to investigation and criticism, to treat the raising of moral and political issues as part of the inquiry. I am no more capable than anyone else of being detached about a subject such as this. But I believe in the value of attempting to be detached or disinterested, and it is clear to me that some approaches to the study of world politics are more detached or disinterested than others.⁸

Detachment or Engagement ?

The traditional academic study of norms is expository: it involves observation, discernment, interrogation, diagnosis, and explication. These are among the most important stages of classical normative inquiry, the goal of which is theoretical understanding. The purpose of a classical normative inquiry is exactly the same as Hedley Bull's purpose in writing *The Anarchical Society*: 'it is the purely intellectual one of inquiring into the subject and following the argument wherever it might lead'.⁹

Hedley Bull maintains that scholars should be as disinterested as possible in order to carry out scholarship that is properly academic and is not a vehicle of their own personal values or political ideology. He clarifies this important point in a defense of the classical approach:

The tradition of detached and disinterested study of politics is, I believe, a very delicate plant . . . Its survival depends on a form of commitment that is not political, but intellectual and academic: a commitment to inquiry as a distinct human activity, with its own morality and its own hierarchy of priorities, that is necessarily brought into conflict with the prevailing political values in any society.¹⁰

What Bull is referring to is the ethics of scholarship which is particularly important in political science for the obvious reason that partisanship in our field of study is always an immediate temptation. He sees partisanship as one of the big vices of academic life that scholars ought to do their best to resist. The endeavor to do that is for Bull not only a difficult academic challenge but also an essential responsibility of academic inquiry: it is at the heart of the ethics of scholarship.

Some scholars cannot accept Bull's definition of academic responsibility. Currently, critical theorists are among the most prevalent of academic improvers. They have set themselves the ambitious task of reforming

international society theory to make it more relevant to improving human conditions on the planet. They are often inclined to see the state as Rousseau saw it: an institution that keeps people in chains.¹¹ They see the society of states in a similar way and they seek to employ their critical knowledge to reform international society.¹² In exposing the injustice of the current states system they are hoping to pave the way, in thought, toward progressive international change.

In the course of adopting that activist orientation, critical theorists criticize the classical approach for not facing up to the value implications of its mode of inquiry: that is, for accepting the historical subject it is seeking to understand. In other words, it is seen to underwrite the international *status quo*. Classical international society theorists are understood to be prejudiced in favor of past and present normative arrangements of world politics. They are criticized for not looking forward to the future in terms of the progressive change that might be possible and preferable to existing arrangements. In short, the classical approach hides a political conservatism.

But critical theorists of international society are not content with discerning and elucidating international society as a distinctive historical arrangement of political life. They are seeking to change it. Critical international society theory is an offshoot of neo-Marxist critical theory. Critical theorists are critical of modern international society, as they see it, for tolerating inequality on a global scale: allegedly by acquiescing to the political hegemony of the great powers, by ignoring the economic hegemony of world capitalism, and by upholding a doctrine of sovereignty and non-intervention which serves as a barrier to the rescue and emancipation of human beings trapped in countries with despotic governments and destitute economies. Emancipation conjures up an image of liberating slaves and thus it implies that the populations of many countries are, in effect, enslaved by the current state system. In defining the role of the academic in these terms critical international society theorists are declaring, in the manner of Karl Marx, that the responsibility of knowledge workers is not merely to understand world politics. Their primary responsibility is to provide knowledge to change the world for the better. That rejection of agnosticism in favor of activism places them in a very different position from that of Martin Wight and Hedley Bull.

The question of the scholar's orientation to his or her subject is a fundamental question. How it is answered will shape the character of the resultant scholarship. Is it the business of academics to change the world for the better as they define that value—keeping in mind that there could be different and even contrary definitions which could pit one academic activist against another and might politicize academic life? Or is it the business of academics to render the subject they are studying intelligible in proper academic terms? As indicated, it was the view of Martin Wight and Hedley Bull that academics have the latter responsibility exclusively. For Wight that involved

the necessity of hearing not only the Grotian (rationalist) voice but also the Machiavellian (realist) voice and the Kantian (revolutionist) voice as well. As indicated previously, a voice is a distinctive and coherent expression of certain values and beliefs concerning world politics. To listen to only one of these voices is to close one's mind to the other two and thus to engage in a one-dimensional and partial analysis.

The classical international society approach to normative inquiry is, accordingly, a pluralistic approach. By 'pluralistic' I mean that international human conduct, taken as a whole, discloses divergent and even contradictory ideas, values, and beliefs which must be recognized by our theories, and assimilated by them, if they are to be faithful to reality. If scholars of international society seek to carry out an empirical inquiry, they must allow for the tensions and contradictions of human experience in that sphere of human conduct: contingency as well as rationality, intentions and also unintended consequences, ours as well as theirs, right and might, prudence alongside procedure, humanity as well as sovereignty, desire and duty, virtue and expediency, goals and rules, ideals and practices, and the rest.¹³

Values are of course the subject of normative inquiry. In the case of international society there is a family of important values including peace, security, independence, order, justice, human rights, environmental protection, and other values like them, which it is the business of scholars to inquire into and try to comprehend as fully as possible. Normative inquiry in the classical manner is the business of interrogating values and addressing value questions. That would include at some point, probably at the end of our inquiries, the assessment and justification of certain values if we were convinced that they were, on balance, of greater importance. We might end our inquiry by arriving at a view of the subject that gives moral priority to justice over order, or to human rights over sovereign rights, or more generally to solidarism over pluralism, or we might end by reversing that priority.

But to arrive at such a considered evaluation after a lengthy inquiry is not the same as starting our inquiries with a view to promoting our values. That latter orientation is not an academic orientation. It is a political orientation. If political scientists adopt such an orientation to their inquiries from the beginning, they have, in effect, given up on academic study as a disinterested and detached study.¹⁴ The role of the political scientist, as I understand it, is to try to give a plausible and coherent interpretation of the political practitioner's world: to construe that world in applicable academic terms in one's teaching and writing. Once that is achieved one's academic responsibility in that regard is at an end.

The Dialogical Modality of International Ethics

Normative questions, and questioning, are central to everyday political life and they are just as central to international politics as they are to domestic politics. Being in positions of responsibility and wielding substantial and

sometimes awesome power, national leaders and other people who engage in international relations cannot escape from such questions—even if they fail or refuse to answer them. At almost every turn they are confronted by normative controversies of one kind or another to which they must respond in one way or another. Responding means justifying their policies and the actions and consequences that flow from those policies. To ask for a justification is to call for a reasonable answer that invokes something more than narrow self-interest: a normative and not merely an instrumental response to the question. Thus a very important feature of world politics as indeed of all politics is the dialogical interplay involved in justifying policy—in this case foreign policy. And the justifications of foreign policy are the central material for those engaged in normative inquiry into world politics.

Behind the justificatory language of foreign policy, and central to the theoretical inquiry of the classical approach, are the great constitutive issues of the society of states. Normative inquiry into world politics seeks to come to grips theoretically with questions such as the following: Which groups of people qualify for recognition as sovereign states? Are the international responsibilities of all states the same or do some states have special responsibilities. Are there any circumstances under which a sovereign state's right of self-defense could be legitimately infringed? Is international society responsible for providing personal security or is that an exclusively domestic responsibility of sovereign states? Is international society responsible for the governance of independent countries whose governments have for all intents and purposes ceased to exist? Must 'ethnic cleansing' always be condemned? Can the goal of spreading democracy around the world—in the perhaps reasonable hope of securing greater peace in the future—justify military intervention and occupation of a country in the present? Can we reasonably expect national leaders to put their own soldiers in danger to protect human rights in foreign countries? Is there any moral basis for justifying the use of force to change international boundaries or partition states? In short, these are some of the most difficult but also the most urgent questions that could be asked about contemporary world politics.

These questions are not purely philosophical questions. They do not address transcendental issues. This is an important point; there are philosophers such as John Rawls who would try to give eternal and general answers to such questions. But they are not amenable to that kind of treatment. Such questions are historically situated. They arise in the evolving historical context of the modern sovereign state. Most of them nowadays are questions about the morality of the society of states and the ethics of statecraft that have arisen in recent decades and particularly since the end of the Cold War. We cannot even attempt to answer these questions with academic conviction unless we are informed about the historical context, and the historical context leads us to a different sort of treatment from that involved in purely

philosophical inquiry. It leads us to contextualize our inquiry and to stay close to the reasoning of the participants, not to impose abstract standards upon them.

An Ethics of Practitioners

Even though international ethics is as wide-ranging as the subject of world politics itself, at its core it concerns the moral choices of a very select category of people. It is the distinctive ethics of the men and women who wield the power of states: it is a construct of statespeople. It is the normative equipment required for carrying out their responsibilities. The answers to international normative questions, such as those listed above, are provided in the first instance and most significantly by the practitioners involved. An important task in the academic study of international ethics is to interrogate those answers with the aim of spelling out, clarifying, and scrutinizing the framework of justification disclosed by them.

State sovereignty has long been and still is a towering feature on the landscape of world politics. The partitioning of the world into sovereign states, whatever we may think of it, affects profoundly the shape and substance of the practical ethics of world politics. The sovereign state defines not only the citizenship of people—that is, their basic rights and obligations—but very often also their political identity and allegiance, perception of friend and foe, conception of security, source of welfare, and much else besides. There is no longer a territorial sphere beyond international society that is occupied by parallel civilizations.¹⁵ The world is still divided among different civilizations but no civilization today is geographically outside the state system in the way that the Islamic world or the civilization of China in times past were outside the Christian world where the state system was originally located. Today everybody around the world is inside a particular sovereign state—that is, is a citizen or subject—and is thus also inside the society of states. That global political fact has profound normative implications and consequences.

Statespeople, like everybody else, operate in a flow of human activity that is particular to them. Nobody knows that experience in any intimacy except themselves and their immediate advisers and confidants. The stream of human activity that they are involved in is one of the most important currents of history; perhaps it is the most important. The main current of modern international history is the record of their activities. Statespeople are historical actors: their activities are a contribution to the making of international history in their own time of office. The main platforms from which they operate are the ruling offices of particular sovereign states: the states on whose behalf they conduct foreign policy and engage in foreign relations. There is a common humanity, of course, evident in the cosmopolitan discourse of human rights and humanitarian assistance. There are countless non-governmental organizations of one kind or another which engage in activities that cut across the boundaries of states. There is a vast international

marketplace that encircles the planet. But the territory and population of the world is still partitioned into sovereign states which are the primary right and duty-bearing units of world politics whose leaders are the principal international actors who carry the heaviest responsibilities for managing world affairs. They are the leading actors around which the political drama unfolds: they constitute the *dramatis personae* of history.

International ethics is shaped fundamentally by the heavy weight of state power, both military and economic, in the hands of statespeople: in no other sphere of human relations is organized power as consequential. Today the largest concentrations of power on earth are in the control of a few states: the five permanent nuclear-armed members of the UN Security Council (P-5) and the eight leading economic powers of the developed countries (G-8). Very significant state power is of course distributed far more widely. Indeed, organized power, both destructive power and constructive power, is greater than it has ever been. Some national leaders have it within their power to destroy life on the planet as we know it. And some also have the power to improve planetary living conditions and to protect the planetary environment. At base, therefore, international ethics is an ethics of responsibility because some very powerful players are involved who can do a lot of good and also a lot of harm. Indeed, their actions taken together affect virtually everyone on the planet, both for the better and for the worse.

This raises an important question: how can academics assess those actions in correct normative terms? International ethics is not an applied ethics: it is not thought up by moral philosophers or political theorists and then applied to politicians or other political actors. International ethics does not originate in the offices of university professors. There is no relevant moral standpoint outside international politics, such as John Rawls' 'veil of ignorance', from which to impartially judge the conduct of international actors—not if we aim to capture the situational realities of moral choice in that demanding sphere of human relations.¹⁶ That would impose a standard of conduct on the subject that was not its own. University professors cannot determine the moral standards of politicians, at least, not outside the activity to which those morals apply.

Just like ethics in any other sphere of human activity, international ethics develops within the activity itself—in this case the activity of world politics—and is adapted to the characteristics and limits of human conduct in that sphere. International ethics is not *external* to the human activities and practices of world politics: it is not something brought in from outside. International ethics is *internal* to world politics: it is the moral standards worked out over time by the practitioners involved; it is the normative world within which they are obliged to operate; it is embodied in the practice of statecraft. To understand the practical ethics of world politics the scholar must be willing to enter imaginatively and with discernment, although not uncritically, into the situation of the people who make foreign policy and conduct

the relations of states, the most important of whom are national leaders. 'Scholars must assess the conduct of statespeople by the standards that are generally accepted by those same statespeople.' Otherwise our normative inquiries lose touch with political reality and become irrelevant.

Practice and Theory

The argument that international ethics is the handiwork of statespeople becomes clearer from a brief analysis of the distinction between theory and practice. They are different kinds of knowledge and their relationship is not quite what it is often made out to be. It is a common assumption that theory comes before practice: we contemplate and then we act. Academic political theorists are particularly prone to make that assumption. Theorists certainly can and do shape the world indirectly through their theories both when they are right and when they are wrong: the theories of Machiavelli and Marx molded the future to a significant extent. But theoretical knowledge usually cannot be converted directly into practical know-how because some usually indefinable insight rooted in particular talents and derived from relevant experience is also involved. Political science graduates are not guaranteed solely by their academic credentials to become successful politicians. That clearly is absurd, for they would still have to acquire practical political know-how which can be derived only from experience in a political role, such as serving an apprenticeship in the office of a political party or political official.

By political theory I do not refer to scholastic debates among political theorists and moral philosophers about a theorist and his or her theory.¹⁷ As indicated previously, by political theory I mean theoretical understanding of the existential political world, either contemporary or historical. That is, political theory in the classical meaning. That latter kind of political theory is parasitic on political practice: it is empirical in the classical meaning of seeking to give an account of the world of human experience. We need a historical event or episode—that is, a human activity, occurrence, or coincidence—before we can theorize it. Thucydides' 'realist' international theory depends, for its existence, on the Peloponnesian war fought between Athens and Sparta from 431 BC to 404 BC, which provoked him to write it.¹⁸ Theory is the knowledge of the observer and is generally characteristic of academic subjects. Theorizing in the human sciences is discerning and interpreting intellectually whatever part or aspect of the world of human relations the theorist happens to be curious about.

Practice is entirely different. It involves knowing how to do something—for example, how to play chess, how to speak Russian, how to conduct a political campaign, how to command an armored brigade, how to present a legal argument in a court of law, how to negotiate a peaceful settlement of an international dispute, and an endless number of other practical activities that human beings manage to engage in.¹⁹ Practical knowledge is possessed by those who are able to engage effectively in an activity. Political practice is

an engagement: engaging a problem or situation which involves other people who are also engaging the same thing but not necessarily from the same angle or with the same interests or concerns in mind. Engaging in a practice is acting on something usually by trying either to preserve it or to change it but in any event trying to come to grips with it. Practical knowledge of human affairs ultimately is knowing how to put the human world into a better alignment with our interests and concerns.

Theoretical knowledge, as academically solid as it may be, is not a substitute for practical know-how. For example, we know that the Duke of Wellington led the Allied Powers to a decisive victory over the Grand Army of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815 and we have a pretty good idea that Wellington did this by making the most of his opportunities and the military means at his disposal before and during the battle. Maybe he also was lucky on that day. Yet, as much as we may discover and learn about that remarkable military achievement from our historical researches and reflections, we would not expect owing solely to our academic knowledge of the event that we could have pulled it off ourselves. That would call for talents and experience which scholarly knowledge alone cannot supply. It would not prevent us from recognizing the force and significance of Wellington's achievement and communicating our understanding to others. But one cannot take a theory and use it to enter into the world of practice. Theorists cannot communicate with practitioners in the language of theory—at least not if they wish to be clearly understood; they can only communicate with other theorists in that language.

Theory is not a key to practice. A philosopher put that point as follows: 'a soldier does not become a shrewd general merely by endorsing the strategic principles of Clausewitz; he must also be competent to apply them.'²⁰ Practical competency derives from talent and training honed by experience—which is why young officers who have just graduated at the top of their class at West Point or Sandhurst and possess the most up-to-date military education do not start their careers as generals. Practical manuals are, as a rule, no substitute for talent and experience although they are, of course, an excellent aid to them. Cookbooks undoubtedly have a practical use. However, even an excellent cookbook probably will not suffice for someone to become a chef. The cookbook is at best an abridgment or summary of practical knowledge and cannot begin to communicate everything that is relevant to the activity of cooking.²¹ We cannot say or write down everything we know about an art or a craft that we have mastered. Much that we know will remain unarticulated. Most people will acquire the culinary art only by carefully and repeatedly preparing different recipes, ideally under the supervision of an experienced chef. Even then some people may still not be very good cooks. Practice does not always make perfect. Talent is also required.

Machiavelli's famous book *The Prince* offers what purport to be practical maxims concerning how to achieve political power and hold on

to it.²² However, we could not become successful politicians by studying Machiavelli's political maxims because, as indicated, we would still have to know how to apply them, and that know-how comes from gaining experience and not from reading books. The main value of *The Prince* is as an essay in political theory—one of the most important of such essays ever written. Machiavelli is famous as a theorist of politics and war, not as a diplomat or soldier. Practical knowledge is knowing how to get on effectively with whatever human activity one is engaged in. It is practical in that it is the crucial element that helps to get the job done. Otherwise it is impractical.

To sum up, practice and theory offer two different kinds of insight into human relations. The first kind of insight is the know-how of the participant who can make things happen or prevent things from happening or can at least influence, if not shape, the subsequent course of the human activity he or she is involved in: the player who can score winning goals; the politician who can conduct successful election campaigns; the soldier who can win battles; the lawyer who can defend clients; the diplomat who can defuse a situation and bring about an agreement. The second kind of insight is the knowledge of the observer—whose role is to construe the course and outcome of those same events by figuring out their point, discerning their deeper meaning, trying to grasp their significance, and generally by giving an academic account of the episode—in the classroom or in an article or book—which at least partly satisfies our aspiration to understand the subject in the most intellectually comprehensive way possible.

International relations as a craft discipline

The classical humanist approach calls upon the scholar to enter with imagination and insight into the roles and situations of statespeople not with the aim of advising them but, rather, with the hope of understanding their conduct. If we cannot talk to such people directly—which often is not an option—we can always fall back on the empirical method of historians. We can interrogate the evidence that statespeople leave in their tracks: the record of their policies and actions and the statements by which they attempt to justify them. The history of the public activities of statespeople and other political practitioners leaves a trail of evidence behind—like the tracks of a wild animal in the snow—which the international relations scholar can follow in the hope of capturing intellectually his or her quarry.

What is a craft discipline? It is not a scientific discipline that calls for knowledge of the philosophy of science or requires mastery of the best currently available techniques or methods of research. A craft is not a science or a technique. It is more like an art. Mastering a craft involves deep familiarity with the material that one is working with: its characteristics, limitations, and possibilities. A craftsman or craftswoman knows from experience what can be achieved by carefully working on the material with the proper tools

and in the correct way. Craftsmanship is judged by its works. Crafts are the creation of craftsmen and craftswomen who work according to the same standards of excellence. Crafts involve proper ways of doing things based on past experience. Crafts consist in the established practices of the craftspeople. There are certain dispositions and skills—that is, certain virtues—that are conducive to certain crafts and are associated with them. A virtue is disclosed in performance: virtuosity is revealed in an excellent performance.

Virtues are centrally involved in the craft of political science even though they do not capture much attention from political scientists, as compared to methodology. Perhaps that is because research methods and techniques can be packaged and taught through textbooks and classroom exercises which are necessary for education on a massive scale such as we have today. But the virtues of classical political science cannot be taught that way. They can only be imparted in a teacher–student relationship that is akin to that of a master and an apprentice of a medieval craft.

Some political scientists are outstanding scholars and we make that judgment by reference to the excellence of their scholarship. An outstanding scholar is somebody who has a deeper and broader understanding of the most important and difficult subjects of his or her discipline. Only a very few political scientists achieve that high level of academic knowledge. That is not merely a question of good methodology. It is far more a question of academic virtue. All political scientists can be fairly judged by the academic virtues involved in the study of human affairs including, among others, mastery of existing knowledge, insight into the subject, creative imagination, discernment, detachment, judgment, even-handedness, and skepticism. When scholars of human relations write academic letters of reference for their students or colleagues, these are the standards by which they assess their scholarship. A craft discipline is mastered by degree and marked by degrees. Each subsequent degree recognizes a deeper and more comprehensive knowledge of the same subject. That is a medieval notion and it is still the way we think about mastering academic disciplines in the human sciences.

The craft discipline of classical international society scholarship involves the following main stages of research. First, it calls for attention to those theorists who have something to say which is not only sound or wise but also perceptive and precise concerning the subject at hand—or rather the human activities related to that subject which they are noticing, scrutinizing, reflecting on, and writing about. We should begin by reading the classical works that provide the foundation of learning upon which we can, hopefully, build. Classical commentators, past and present, who offer some of the most profound commentaries would certainly include Thucydides on political necessity, Augustine on the just war, Machiavelli on power politics, Grotius on natural law and international law, Hobbes on the state and the state of nature, Burke on prudence and civility, Kant on the human

community and the rule of law, J.S. Mill and Michael Walzer on freedom and nonintervention, Max Weber on the ethics of responsibility, Arnold Wolfers on statecraft and moral choice, Herbert Butterfield on the tragic element of international conflict, Hans Morgenthau on political wisdom, and Stanley Hoffmann on duties beyond borders. This is only a personal selection from a long list of outstanding commentators on international relations, past and present.

Second, as emphasized above, the classical approach involves paying attention to what statespeople and other important international players are doing, and saying, which includes scrutiny of their pronouncements and those of others with whom they are dealing. That requires a sharp and skeptical watchfulness for the justifications employed by international actors: those justifications, which abound in world politics, are the specific empirical subject that we are theorizing. These are usually recorded and reported, and that is what we interrogate when we engage in such an inquiry.

If we are studying contemporary international issues, we might be in a position to engage practitioners in conversation directly. Our aim would not be to report practical thinking on current affairs or to comment instrumentally on it: that is, the activity of journalists and experts. Our aim is to be informed about practical thinking in order to make our reflections more to the point than they might otherwise be. I once had a conversation in Vienna with an ambassador of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. She was concerned to discuss the violent secessionist conflict in Chechnya. She wanted to emphasize not only the OSCE's humanitarian efforts to curb the violence by inserting peace keepers into the conflict but also the importance of having Russia's consent, which was more conceivable and obtainable by that country's OSCE membership. From a classical international society perspective, the OSCE's involvement with Chechnya could be read as a small chapter in an effort to integrate a post-Soviet Russia into a human rights—protecting international society. Here was an instance of a recurrent theme of order and justice in world affairs and of the difficulties of promoting justice at the risk of instability and disorder.

Third, those justifications must be interrogated in the context of the situation in which they are made. By this I mean that the discourse of statespeople and other important international players should be scrutinized with a view not only to their explicit content and referents, but also to their discernible intentions and what they assume or take for granted about the conduct of international relations. Discerning this latter, often implicit, ideational context of international justifications is the most important theoretical understanding to be derived from the interrogative process. That is because it discloses the real, or lived, normative world of the people involved and is thus anchored in human experience and human history. An international relations scholar working in the classical tradition would seek to become conversant with the evidence of international justifications

surrounding a particular controversy to know what is going on and thus to acquire some sense of the practitioner's situation and what he or she has in mind and is prepared to disclose publicly. Public disclosure is important because it usually gives an indication of how a leader wishes to be seen in order to secure public approval for his or her policy.

Fourth, that interrogation should be carried out with the major normative preoccupations of classical scholarship in mind. The classical scholar should be able to report not only what is going on or what happened. He or she should also be able to interpret those goings-on in light of our inherited body of classical knowledge of the subject. What do the UN Security Council resolutions and the US Congressional debates on the Gulf War disclose about war as a normative idea? What do the justifications and condemnations of the UN and US operations in Somalia tell us about intervention as a normative idea? How do these episodes inform our normative theories of war and intervention? Unfortunately, many international relations scholars who are conversant with the goings-on of world politics, who even justifiably pride themselves on being well informed about current political events, often do not take that theoretical step. They do not connect their own otherwise excellent research to the larger classical tradition within which they might very well be working. They break off their scholarly hunt at the most critical moment and leave unanswered the most fundamental questions which are theoretical.

Of course, any theoretical conclusions are always bound to be provisional for they are connected, ultimately, with the historical events and episodes that provoked them in the first place. History rarely stands still and so we must be open to revising or changing our theories. But I take encouragement from the fact that some provisional statements about events that are very localized in space and time have a way of becoming long-standing theorems of international studies. Thucydides' fascinating dialogue on necessity and choice in the Peloponnesian war, by our standards a minor conflict fought in a tiny corner of Europe more than two millennia ago, is the classic case in point.²³ These theorems are always our main points of reference in theorizing new international episodes or problems. They are our academic inheritance. By taking them up as a theoretical point of departure our own work becomes part of the classical literature of international relations. When we take up the classical approach we are seeking to make a contribution to that literature.

Fifth, our theoretical writings should avoid academic jargon beyond the absolute minimum that is necessary for communicating with other scholars. Our academic inquiries should take up the living language of the subject: we ought to be at home with the practical discourse of international relations. That is because international relations—like all human activity—consists fundamentally of language which is a principal vehicle for its expression. In studying international human conduct we are in a basic sense studying

the practical language by which foreign policy, military affairs, diplomacy, international commerce, and so on are not only expressed but are also carried on.

That language contains many clues about our subject because, as indicated, it is fundamentally relational: that is, dialogical. Its vocabulary has been fashioned to facilitate communication, interaction, and exchange between statespeople and other important international players. It facilitates question and answer, address and rejoinder, offer and counter-offer, acceptance and refusal, agreement and disagreement, accusation and denial, condemnation and justification, and many other dialectical pairs. International relations, as indeed all human relations, is interactive and transactive: the expressions 'international' or 'transnational' are intended to capture exactly that characteristic. So when we theorize international relations we should always be alert to the ongoing dialogue of the political actors who are contemplating actions, initiating actions, or responding to actions which affect each other—and may also be of interest or concern to other people who are not directly involved but are also affected or might be affected. That dialogical activity is at the heart of our subject. By employing the literary device of the dialogue classical Greek theorists, such as Thucydides, in some ways get closer than modern theorists to capturing accurately the character and *modus operandi* of international human relations.

If we resort to a more theoretical terminology, as we must in order to connect our writings with the classical tradition, our terms should be a translation of ordinary language that expresses a more general idea but does not lose any of the original meaning. That is how the theoretical vocabulary of the classical approach is fashioned: it is derivative of and based on ordinary language. Thus, the origin or derivation of classical terms of art such as 'international order', 'international society', 'Westphalia', 'rationalism', and so on can always be traced to the practical discourse of international relations. Hedley Bull's notion of international order is not far removed from the ordinary language of diplomacy. Martin Wight's notion of 'rationalism' is traceable to the language of international law. Even in terminology, the theorist is always hostage to the practitioner.

Our theoretical language should therefore avoid stipulative definitions that have no reference to ordinary language. A stipulated definition is one that is made up by the researcher. Such definitions are arbitrary from the point of view of their subject. They are rejections of the language of experience and practice. They cut us off from the people and activities we are trying to learn more about. They have the unfortunate effect of alienating the world of political science from the world of politics. Such definitions are a currency of positivist and post-positivist political science and they have contributed significantly to the scholasticism of those approaches.

This discussion can be summed up as follows: first, the classical approach to the study of international relations is first of all acquaintance with the

literature on the subject to which we ourselves are seeking to make a contribution. Secondly, it is familiarity with the actors' understandings of their world. In becoming conversant with the sayings and doings of states-people the classical scholar thereby becomes vicariously conversant with the world of practice. Those sayings and doings are of course registered in almost endless speeches, policy statements, parliamentary debates, resolutions, declarations, announcements, press conferences, interviews, press releases, broadcasts, reports, and various other statements and commentaries that the real world of international relations not only leaves in its wake, like a great ship ploughing a furrow through historical time, but also employs as its principal *modus operandi*. The point of interrogating such evidence is not merely to be informed about what is going on—although that is undeniably important. The point is larger: if we are seeking theoretical knowledge about international relations, we need to be informed because we want to theorize from a basis of fact rather than fiction. The theoretical alternative is a dreamland.

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Index

In this index figures are indicated in italics, enclosed in parentheses, following the page number. Works are entered in italics.

- abolition of slave trade, 99
- absence of government
 - consequences, 169–70, 171
 - ES emphasis on, 169
- Activists Beyond Borders* (Keck/Sikkink), 67–8
- Adler, Immanuel, 61
- advocacy network, transnational, 67–8
- Afghanistan, 220, 224
- Africa, 223
- Agenda for Peace* (UN), 214
- Ahliyah legal system, 195–6, 200
- Alexandrowicz, C.H., 42, 98
- ‘Alternative Paths to World Order’ (Bull), 139
- American Civil War, 98–9, 216
- Anarchical Society, The* (Bull), 24, 39, 41, 44, 46, 47, 51–2, 65, 113–16, 125–45
- anarchy, 58, 87–8, 128, 130, 132, 161, 174, 216
- ancient Greeks, 40–1, 43
- Anderson, Benedict, 215
- appeasement, 48–9, 158
- arms control
 - Bull’s work, 9, 48, 176
 - see also nuclear weapons
- Arms Race, The* (Noel-Baker), 176
- Ashley, K., 42, 90
- Ashley, Richard, 42, 90
- Austin, John, 176

- Bain, Will, vii, 11, 12, 148–63
- balance of power
 - and the American Civil War, 98
 - in Bullian thought, 137
 - Butterfield’s theory, 9, 40
 - post-Westphalian ascendancy, 117–18
 - in Wightian thought, 117
- Bangladesh, 216
- behaviour, influence of law on, 170–1

- Beitz, Charles, R., 13
- Bellamy, Alex, 3
- Beyond the Anarchical Society* (Keene), 119–20
- bipolarity, 45, 50
- Blair, Tony, 221
- Bosnia, 216, 224–5
- Boucher, David, 89–92
- Bourdieu, Pierre, 17
- Boutros-Ghali, Boutros, 214, 215, 218, 222
- Brewin, Christopher, 8
- Britain, 7, 16, 98–9, 125, 219
 - judicial reform in Egypt, 196–200
 - occupation of Egypt, 192–3
- British Committee of International Theory, 5, 39, 65
- Brown, Chris, 13
- Bull, Hedley, 2, 10, 13, 14, 15, 24, 25, 36, 39, 40, 43, 44, 46–8, 49, 50–2, 59, 64, 65, 82, 88, 89, 113–16, 120, 125–45, 148, 149–52, 159–60, 161, 167, 169, 172–3, 174–5, 177
- Burke, Edmund, 43, 212–13
- Bush administration, exceptionalism, 141–3
- Bush, George W., 152–3, 158
- Butterfield, Herbert, 7, 9, 11, 34, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 51, 52, 65, 148, 152–5, 157, 159–60
- Buzan, Barry, vii, 10, 14, 16, 46, 78–9, 82, 83, 85, 95, 104

- Cambodia, 224
- capitalism
 - interpretive view, 111
 - ‘Protestant ethic’ thesis, 110–12, 115, 116, 118
 - in Weberian thought, 14, 108
- capitulations system, 192

- Carr, E.H., 64, 158, 171
 causal analysis, 130
 causal explanation, Weber's
 view, 109
 causality
 evidence of ES interest, 47–8
 push/pull, 49
 Wight's arguments, 48
 causal theorizing, 53–4
 causation
 Bull's definition, 47–8
 rules and norms and, 54
 central government, absence of, *see*
 absence of government
 Chamberlain, Neville, 152
 Chechnya, 34, 217
 Chile, 142
 China, 44–5, 133, 222
 Churchill, Winston, 158
 'Civic Republicanism and
 Self-Determination' (Navari), 13
 civilisation, contrast between toleration
 and, 119
civitas maxima, 117
 Clark, Ian, 99
 classical approach
 Bull's defence, 2, 24, 66
 Bull's embrace, 149–50
 central themes, 27, 34–7
 criticisms, 25, 53
 term analysis, 21, 23
 theoretical vocabulary, 36
 codes of conduct
 in Hellenic system, 40–1
 see also rules of conduct
 Colas, Alejandro, 190
 Cold War, 7, 15, 43, 44, 46,
 144, 181
 Cold War system, 53, 213
 colonialism, 96
 colonial process, in Kennedy's
 theory, 191
 communication, as indicator of
 international status, 16
Community of States, The, 8
 comparative analysis, 2, 52
 concept formation, in Weberian
 theory, 107
Condition of States, The, 8, 13
 conduct, rules of, *see* rules of conduct
 Congo, 142
 Congress of Mantua, 46
 consciousness
 in methodological pluralist
 approach, 93
 nature of historical, 49
 constructivism
 axes of debate, 61–4
 Foucauldian/Habermasian
 variations, 62
 levels of analysis, 63
 methodology discourse, 63–4
 and normative theory, 67–9
 pluralist/solidarist debate, 69–72
 resemblance to ES, 58
 Reus-Smit's arguments, 3
 sociological institutionalist
 roots, 61–2
 Wendt as key text, 60
 Crawford, James, 221
 Critical Legal Studies, 176
 cultural discrimination, 119
 Czechoslovakia, 158

 Darfur, 221
 democracy, 218–23
 preservation of, 216–17
 and US foreign policy, 142
 Deutsch, Karl, 16
 diplomacy, 17
 historical vs new, 40
 and international law, 169
 and international order, 36, 136
 Western practice, 43, 117
Diplomatic Investigations
 (Butterfield/Wight), 39
 diplomatic representation
 as indicator of international status, 16
 and international law, 169
 discrimination, racial/cultural, 119
 dominion, 88
 Donelan, Michael, 7
 Dunne, Tim, 7, 14, 51, 53, 58, 60, 65, 66

 East Timor, 217
 economics, 95–6, 107
 economic sanctions, 221–2

- Egypt, 189–90, 192–205
 Ahliyah legal system, 195–6, 200
 British occupation, 192–3
 British power and judicial reform, 196–200
 Brunyate report, 199
 debt repayment, 195
 independence declaration, 202
 legal borrowing, 192–205
 Milner Mission, 200–2
 Mixed Court system, 192–3, 194, 195, 197, 200, 201
 Montreux Convention, 203
 nationalist movement, 202–3
 Shari'a, 195
 strategies and legal processes, 193–6
 treaty solution, 201–3
- Emancipation Proclamation, 99
- empire, 87–8, 141, 202
- empiricism, 210, 211–12
- English School
 American criticisms, 126–7
 axes of debate, 64–7
 growth in interest in, 78–9
 methodology, *see* methodology
 overview, 125
- English School approaches, lacunae, 3, 13–18, 100
- environment conference (UN), 6
- Epp, Roger, 66
- Eritrea, 216, 217
- ethics
 international, 21, 26, 28–30
 political, 21
 relation between value systems and, 110
 of responsibility, 29, 34
 of scholarship, 24
 situational, 65, 69–72
 of statecraft, 27, 65
- Europe
 establishment of hierarchical world order, 96(*Fig. 4. 11*)
 financial viability model, 189
 minority protection, 222
 OSCE, 34, 222
- European state-system
 ES development account of, 88
 impact, 95
 uniqueness, 10
- evaluative interpretation, cultural significance and value relevance, 106–8
- exceptionalism, in US foreign policy, 141–3
- Falk, Richard, 176
- Few Words on Non Intervention*, A (Mill), 224
- Finnemore, Martha, 1, 2, 14, 15, 45, 59, 61, 126
- First World War, 198
- Footsteps into the Future* (Kothari), 46–7
- force, use of, *see* use of force
- foreign policy, force as instrument of, 221
- foundation and process, Holsti's theories, 10
- framework, theoretical, *see* theoretical framework
- France, 140
- Frost, Mervyn, 8, 54
- Fukuyama, Francis, 215
- game theory, 9, 40
- Gattungsbegriff* (class concept), 107
- Gellner, Ernest, 215, 220
- Glaser, B., 42
- Global Covenant, The* (Jackson), 65
- global warming, 49
- Gong, Gerrit, W., 97–8
- Gonzalez-Palaez, Ana, 95
- government, absence of, *see* absence of government
- Grader, Sheila, 44
- Grawemeyer Prize, 67
- Great Britain, *see* Britain
- Grotius, Hugo, 117, 139
- Guatemala, 142
- Haas, Peter, 6
- Halle, Louis J., 23
- Halliday, F., 87
- Hall, Rodney, 63
- Hart, H.L.A., 115, 169
- hegemony, 25, 48, 87–8, 97, 128, 133, 137, 139–40, 143
- Hellenic system, codes of conduct, 40–1
- Herodotus, 40–1
- Higgins, Rosalyn, 176

- history
- in Bullian thought, 139–43, 149–52
 - ES orientation towards, 4–5
 - ES and the theory of, 53, 87–8
 - ES typology, 10–11
 - as fable (Oakeshottian approach), 154–9
 - as interim knowledge (Butterfieldian approach), 152–4
 - interpretation, causation and axiological affinity, 109–12
 - lessons of, *see* lessons of history
 - place in ES thought, 148
 - as speculation (Bullian approach), 149–52
 - ‘whig’, 153
- History of England* (Hume), 211
- Hitler, Adolf, 140, 158
- Hobbesian elements
- persistence of, 139–40
 - in US foreign policy, 142
- Hoffmann, Stanley, 34
- Hollis, M., 42, 81
- Holsti, Kalevi, J., vii, 10, 13, 14, 125–6
- homo sociologicus/homo economicus*, 9, 44
- Hopf, Ted, 61
- humanitarian intervention, 65, 223–5
- human rights
- Bull on, 50–1
 - as indicator of international status, 16
 - of minorities, 222
 - UN commission, 182
 - Wheeler’s work, 8
- Hume, David, 13, 210–11, 212, 213, 214, 215, 218, 226
- Hurrell, Andrew, 182
- Hurst, Cecil, 200
- Hussein, Saddam, 158, 221, 224
- Ian Clark, 99, 220
- ideal types, 5, 54
- and causal explanation, 110
 - existence of multiple, 108
 - formation process, 106–7
 - purpose, 107–8
- India, 222
- institutionalisation
- Buzan’s theories, 16, 46
 - in Wightian thought, 50
- institutions
- Bull’s definition, 137
 - international, *see* international institutions, in Bullian thought
- instrumental/non-instrumental behaviour, 82–3
- interdependence, 47, 49, 212
- international ethics, 21, 26–30
- international institutions, in Bullian thought, 136–9
- international law
- in Bullian thought, 169, 172–3
 - courts and tribunals, 181
 - criticisms of ES readings, 175–80
 - declaratory tradition, 178–9
 - and discriminatory flexibility, 220–1
 - ES approach, 167–85
 - as instrument of social change, 169–70
 - and lack of solidarity, 174
 - Manning’s view, 172, 173–4
 - normative framework, 168
 - norm change, 182–3
 - as process, 176–7
 - reference groups, 183–4
 - the role of power, 180–1
 - security and, 171
 - sociological approach, 168–9
 - state compliance, 173–4
 - and state consent, 174–5
- international order
- Bull’s selection of constituent elements, 129–30
 - concept analysis, 115
 - durability of Bull’s explanation, 144–5
- international relations
- as craft discipline, 32–7
 - ES and the interpretation of, 112–18
- international societies, Buzan’s continuum, 83 (*fig. 4. 3*)
- international society
- in Bullian thought, 134–6
 - Bull’s role in the development of the concept, 127
 - concept analysis, 134–6
 - defining features, 169–75
 - Gong’s argument, 97–8
 - as historical phenomenon, 189
 - levels of analysis perspectives, 85–6, 86 (*fig. 4.6–7*)
 - maintenance, 131–4

- international society – *continued*
 in pluralist theory, 70–2
 role, 113–14
 understanding the ‘spirit’ of, 117–18
 warp and weft, 70
 Wight’s description, 45
- International Society and its Critics*
 (Bellamy), 3
- From International to World Society*
 (Buzan), 10
- interpretive sociology, Weber’s, *see*
 Weberian interpretive sociology
- intervention
 effects of unauthorised, 221
 legality of Kosovan, 225
 necessity of, 223
 success of post-Cold War, 224
 Wheeler’s book on, 65
- Inventing International Society* (Dunne), 65
- Iran, 142
- Iraq, 158, 221, 224, 225
- irrationality, 47, 112
- Jackson, Robert, vii, 1, 3, 15–17, 21–37,
 42, 43, 59–60, 65, 71, 82, 167,
 177–9, 218
- James, Alan, 14, 167, 169, 171–2,
 176, 185
- Japan, 16
- Jennings, Ivor, 176, 215
- Jepperson, R.L., 59
- Jones, Dorothy V., 171
- Jones, Roy, 1, 41, 47, 171
- justice, 26, 34, 43, 59, 61, 69, 89,
 105, 117–18, 128, 144, 168, 196,
 201–2, 214
- Kahn-Freund, Otto, 190, 191
- Kaplan, Morton, 54
- Katzenstein, Peter, 59–61, 63
- Keck, Margaret, 67–8, 71, 126
- Keegan, John, 158
- Keene, Edward, vii, 5, 13, 14, 96, 98,
 119–20
- Keens-Soper, Maurice, 17
- Kellogg-Briand Pact, 171
- Kennan, George, 218
- Kennedy, Duncan, 191
- Keohane, Robert, 1, 11, 161
- Klotz, A., 61
- Koskenniemi, Martti, 176
- Kosovo, 180, 218, 219, 221, 223, 225
- Kothari, Rajni, 46–7
- Krasner, Stephen, D., 54, 58, 62, 80
- Kratochwil, Friedrich, 60, 64
- lacunae, in ES approaches, 3, 13–18, 100
- Lake, Anthony, 218
- Landes, David, 193
- law
 legal reception theory, 190–2
 potential impact, 170–1
see also international law
- Lawler, Peter, 13
- Law of Nations, 214
- Law of Peoples, The* (Rawls), 8
- League of Nations, 171, 222
- legal borrowing, 191
 Egypt and, 192–205
- legal positivism, influence of 19th/20th
 century, 176
- legal reception, theory of, 190–2
- lessons of history, 153–4, 158–9,
 162, 217
- Lewis and Clarke, 220
- liberalism, 87, 142
- Lincoln, Abraham, 99, 216
- Linklater, Andrew, 59, 90, 150
- Little, Richard, vii, 3–4, 5, 10–12, 14, 52,
 53, 65–6, 78–100, 95
- London School of Economics (LSE),
 7–8, 176
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 31–2
- machstaat* (power state), 8
- Maitland, Frederic William, 148
- Malinowski, Bronislaw, 7
- Manning, C. A. W., 7, 127, 167, 169,
 172–4, 176, 179, 183–5
- Marxism, 87
- Mayall, James, vii, 13, 59, 70, 209–26
- McDougal, Myers, S., 176
- Mearsheimer, John J., 98
- Mendlovitz, Saul, 176
- methodological pluralism
 in Boucher’s approach, 89–90
 divergent approaches relying on,
 91 (*Fig. 4.9*)
 limits of, 5–10
 in Linklater’s approach, 90, 91

- meaning of, 79
 narrowing the research agenda, 80–1
 Wendt's interpretation, 92–4
 methodology
 in Bull's work, 144
 constructivist discourse, 63–4
 overview, 3–5
 primary sources of ES, 39
 methods, and issue areas, 10–12
 Meyer, John, 61
 Mill, John Stuart, 34, 216–17
 Milner Mission, 200–2
 Milošević, Slobodan, 223
 minority rights, 222
 Mixed Court system, 192–3, 194, 195,
 197, 200, 201
 Montreux Convention, 203
 moral action, 59, 64, 69, 72
 moral choice, 28–9, 34, 72
 morality, 27, 69, 89, 116, 178, 225
 moral order, 117–18
 Morgenthau, Hans, 34, 120
 Morocco, 190
 Mozambique, 224
 Munich Agreement, 158
 mutual deterrence, 44, 45, 51

 Namibia, 224
 Napoleon I, Emperor of the
 French, 140
 Nardin, Terry, 11, 15, 157, 167, 177,
 178, 179
 nationalism, 202–3, 214–18
 NATO, 17, 220–1, 225
 Navari, C. B., vii, 1–18, 39–55
 neoliberalism, 79
 neorealism, 79, 81, 84
 New Haven School, 176, 177
 NGOs
 local vs transnational, 68
 Western agenda, 182
 Noel-Baker, Philip, 176
 non-state actors
 primacy displacement, 71
 role in norm development, 182
 normative inquiry
 detachment/engagement, 24–6
 pluralistic approach, 26
 practical ethics, 28–30
 practice and theory, 30–2
 purpose, 24
 into world politics, 21–32
 normative rules, typology of, 171
 normative theory, and constructivism,
 67–9
 normativity, term analysis, 210
 norm literature, second-wave, 6
 norms
 concept analysis, 22
 and state behaviour, 6
 study of, 21–4
 see also rules of conduct
 nuclear weapons, 9, 29, 44, 47, 141
 see also arms control

 Oakeshott, Michael, 11, 15, 149, 154–61,
 177, 178
 Okawara, Nobuo, 61
 Onuf, Nicholas, 126
 Onuma, Yasuaki, 170
 order
 Bull's understanding, 128–9
 Bull's values of world, 114–16
 constituent elements, 129–30
 durability of Bull's explanation, 144–5
 maintenance of, 131–3
 see also international order; world
 order
 OSCE (Organisation for Security and
 Cooperation in Europe), 34, 222
 Ottoman Empire, 193, 201
 Outer Space Treaty (1967), 142

pacta sunt servanda (respect for treaty
 obligations), 114, 115
 Pact of Paris, 130
 Participant Standpoint, 41–2, 43
 Pax Americana, 219
 Peloponnesian war, 30, 46
 pendulum metaphor, Watson's, 87–8,
 87 (*fig.4.8*)
 pluralism, methodological, *see*
 methodological pluralism
 pluralist-solidarist quarrel, 16–17
*Political Community and the North Atlantic
 Area* (Deutsch), 16
 political ethics, 21
 political scientist, role of the, 26

- political theory
 concept analysis, 30
 Skinner approach, 9–10
- Popper, Karl, 21
- positivism, 2, 8, 22, 54–5, 60, 64, 66,
 90, 94, 98, 126, 156, 176, 211–12
- Powell, Enoch, 217
- power
 importance in ES explanations, 9
 role of, 180–1
- power balance
 requirements for maintaining, 51–2
see also balance of power
- practical reasoning, 3, 8, 13, 60, 212
- practice
 development of notion of, 2
 empirical exploration, 12–13
 and ethics, 28–30
 telic vs causal notions, 17–18
 and theory, 30–2
 Turner's 'telic' notion, 17
 Wight's recommendations, 43
- praxis*, 43, 44
- Price, Richard, 61, 62, 70
- Prince, The* (Machiavelli), 31–2
- Progress and its Limits* (Mayall), 217,
 218, 221
- 'Protestant ethic' thesis, 110–12, 115,
 116, 118
- public opinion, 40, 42, 49
- push/pull process, 49
- quantification, 66
- quantum physics, 93
- Quebec, 217
- racial discrimination, 119
- Radcliffe-Brown, A.R., 7
- rationalism, 36, 90, 225–6
- Rawls, John, 8, 27, 29
- reasoning, practical, 3, 8, 13, 60, 212
- Reason of States, The*, 8
- Reformation, 111
- Rengger, Nicholas, 132, 144
- Reus-Smit, Christian, 3, 13, 58–73
- revolutionary model, Bull's account,
 46–7
- rights espousal
 Bull's discussion, 50–1
see also human rights
- Roberson, B. A., 11, 12, 54,
 189–205
- Rome, 41–2
- Rousseau, J.-J., 25, 139
- Ruggie, John, Gerard, 60, 63, 64
- rules of conduct
 ES focus, 10
 Keene on, 5–6
 Navari on, 4
 and patterns of behaviour, 51
 in system/society distinctions, 14–15
see also codes of conduct; norms
- Saddam Hussein, 158, 221, 224
- sanctions, as siege warfare, 221–2
- Saving Strangers* (Wheeler), 65
- 'scientific approach', Bull's
 denunciation, 149
- Scott, J. H., 194
- Security Council (UN), 182–3, 214, 224
- security dilemma, 51
- security, and international law, 171
- self-conceptions, 7, 12, 39, 42
- self-defence, 27, 141
- self-determination, 116–17,
 214–17, 222–3
- self-government, 198–9
- self-interest, 27, 82, 132
- self-understandings, 2, 4, 8, 15, 62
- Shari'a, 120, 191–2, 194–5, 204
- Shaw, Martin, 144
- siege warfare, sanctions as, 221–2
- Sikkink, Kathryn, 67, 68, 71, 126
- Skinner, Quentin, 9, 42
- slave trade, abolition of, 99
- Smith, Adam, 211
- social change, international law as
 instrument of, 169–70
- Social Theory of International Politics*
 (Wendt), 60
- Social Theory of Practices, The* (Turner), 17
- societas/universitas*, 178
- sociology, Weber's interpretive, *see*
 Weberian interpretive sociology
- Somalia, 224
- sovereign states
 international society formation, 65
 in pluralist theory, 70

- sovereignty, 214–18
 in ideal type construction, 106
 Krasner's challenge, 54–5
 mutual recognition, 114
 Soviet Union, 43, 44, 45, 140–1, 216
 Spegele, Roger D., 1, 89
 Stanford School, the, 61
 state
 Boutros-Ghali's arguments, 214
 Hume's arguments, 214
 Rousseau's view, 25
 Wight on origins of the modern, 50
 state-centricity, of ES theorists, 8–9
 state sovereignty, 28
 state-systems
 classic statements, 41
 comparative analysis, 52–3
 European, *see* European state-system
 persistence of regional, 95
 statistical analysis, Bull's rejection, 113
 Steve, 42
 Stirk, Peter, 13
 Stivachtis, Yannis, 190
 Strauss, A., 42
 Suez Canal, 193
 Suganami, Hidemi, 47–8, 53, 59, 80,
 150–1
 system/community/society contrasts,
 15–16
 system/society distinctions, 14–15, 45
Systems of States (Wight), 39
- Taliban, 224
Taming the Sovereigns (Holsti), 144
 territorial revision, governmental
 opposition to, 216–17
 terrorism, 63
 Thailand, 16
 Theophylact of Simocatta, 41–2
 theoretical framework
 embrace of history, 95
 historical and geographical scope,
 95 (*Fig. 4.10*)
 levels of analysis perspective,
 84 (*fig. 4.4*)
 main elements of ES's, 81–2
 multidimensional aspects, 82, 83
 theoretical vocabulary, derivation, 36
- theories
 Krasner's typology, 80 (*fig. 4.1*)
 Wendt's typology, 81 (*fig. 4.2*), 85
 theory of history, Watson's metaphorical
 pendulum, 87 (*fig. 4.8*)
Theory of International Politics (Waltz), 84,
 85, 128
Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis
 (Wilson), 1, 48
Thoughts on the Cause of the Present
Discontents (Burke), 212
 Thucydides, 30, 33, 35, 36
 toleration, 25, 96, 119, 178
 transnational advocacy network, 67–8
 treaties, 'aspirational', 170
 tribunals, international, 181
 trusteeship, 12, 162
Twenty Years' Crisis, The (Carr), 158
- UN Charter, 213
 understanding, Hollis/Smith concept,
 42–3
 UNESCO, 182
 United Kingdom, *see* Britain
 United Nations
 conflict involvement, 223
 damage to, 221
 and declaratory tradition, 179
 environment conference, 6
 and international law, 174, 179
 United Nations Charter, 129
 United States, 43, 44, 45, 98
 ES critiques, 126–7
 exceptionalism, 141–3
 foreign policy, 141–3
 norm scholarship, 6
 universal monarchy, 128
 UN Security Council, 182–3, 214, 224
 use of force, 27, 129–31, 169–70, 200,
 217, 221
uti possidetis juris, 216
- values, 26
 Versailles Settlement, 118
Verstehen, 42–3, 105
 Vietnam, 158
 Vigezzi, Brunello, 5, 7
 Vincent, John, 8, 13, 59, 126
 violence, 52, 137

- Waever, Ole, 42, 44, 60
 Waltz, Kenneth, 14, 44, 48, 84, 85, 128
 Walzer, Michael, 34
 war
 in Bull's work, 9, 137–9
 causes of, 8
 and ethics of best choice, 71
 and hegemony, 128
 historical perspective, 161–2
 and international order, 114, 128, 137, 139
 irrationality of, 47
 justification, 224
 just vs holy, 40
 and lack of solidarity, 174
 in Missouri Indian society, 220
 Noel-Baker's view, 176
 normative theories, 35
 as policy instrument, 47
 relation between social change and, 11
 Watson, Adam, 10, 87–8, 90–1, 97, 116, 120, 190–1
 Weberian interpretive sociology
 ES interpretive comparisons, 112–18
 evaluative interpretation, 106–8, 111
 historical interpretation, 109–12
 method, 105–6
 'Protestant ethic' thesis, 110–12, 115, 116, 118
 Weber, Max, 5, 14, 34, 54, 105
 Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of, 31
 Wendt, Alexander, 5, 41, 58–60, 63–4, 66, 67, 79, 81, 85, 92–4, 100, 104, 161
 Western state-system, Wight on development of, 50
 'Western values' (Wight), 117, 119
 Westphalian system, 5, 8, 46, 213
 Wheeler, Nicholas, 8, 13, 17, 59, 60, 65, 180
 'whig' history, 153
 Wight, Martin, 2, 7, 10, 15, 25–6, 36, 39, 40–1, 43–4, 45, 46, 48, 52, 70, 87, 89, 90, 92, 93–4, 97, 104, 105, 117, 119, 120, 127, 148
 Williams, John, 13
 Williams, Paul, 17
 Wilson, Peter, vii, 1, 11, 48, 167–85
 Wohlstetter, Albert, 44
 Wolfers, Arnold, 34
 world order, Bull's values of, 114–16
 World Order Models Project, 176
 world politics, 21, 24–9, 34–5, 63–4, 69, 72, 82, 90, 105, 114, 118–19, 131, 173, 175, 222
 normative inquiry into, 21–32
 understanding the practical ethics of, 29–30
 world society, 3–5, 10, 66, 68–9, 71, 79, 82–6, 88–9, 91, 95, 99, 100, 104–5, 127, 133–5
 Bull's concerns, 88
 changing elements, 135(*Fig.6.2*)
 WTO (World Trade Organisation), 12