
BETWEEN SOCIETIES: COMMUNITIES AND CONSTITUENCIES IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS¹

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ABSTRACT

Although 'society' is a, if not the, central concept in much English School theorizing – serving as an organizing principle for relationships between states (i.e. interstate society) and those that transcend states, and which take place at both the local and global levels (i.e. interhuman and transnational society) – it remains an ambiguous concept, both as to what constitutes it and what the shape, form, and structural outlines of its constitutive elements may look like. In re-imagining the 'society-community link' within English school thinking, this paper offers a model of 'national society' composed of three key elements: competing, as opposed to common, interests (i.e. constituencies), a common existential identity (i.e. community), and a set of institutions through which the interaction between constituencies and community takes place. As such, it advances two main arguments. First, that theories of international politics must treat the emergence of a 'society of states' as the continuous extension of the aforementioned model of national society if they are to offer the most basic agential units of both societies (i.e. individuals) a clear sense of the importance of their actions in creating, sustaining, and diminishing the normative frameworks within which both national and international societies are also conceived. Second, that although both the nature of interaction and the functions of units differ fundamentally in national and international societies, the key structural elements of 'society' in both models, analytically speaking, remain the same. In this respect, second-order state societies are not simply replica models of first-order human societies, but rather, the development of the latter a key determinant of the overall shape, size, and character of the former.

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS 'SOCIETY'?

Doctrines must take their beginning from that of the matters of which they treat.

Giambattista Vico, *The New Science* (1725)

Never before in the short disciplinary history of International Relations (IR) has there been such widespread and such serious, if at times too ephemeral, and frequently contentious interest and discussion in the social dimension(s) of international politics. Central to the (re)invigoration of such approaches to the study of international politics has been the exposure of the explanatory limitations of most other system-orientated theories which not only failed to live up to their 'predictive' promises, but also exhausted their explanatory potential in the period after the end of the Cold War. And so, scholarly interest in the once marginal and 'underexploited resources' (Buzan 2001) concerned with the social totality of international politics has grown exponentially ever since.

One such underdeveloped social approach to the study of IR has been the work previously initiated by the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, and which has more broadly brought together a host of wide-ranging scholarly agendas under the banner of the English School of international relations both during and since the early 'classic' writings of such pioneering writers as Herbert Butterfield, Charles Manning, Martin Wight, Hedley Bull, Adam Watson and R.J. Vincent. Central to the main arguments advanced by English school writers has been the concept of *international society*, a general predisposition 'that states form an international society shaped by ideas, values, identities, and norms that are – to a greater or lesser extent – common to all' (Bellamy 2005: 2). Under this approach, although 'society' becomes central to international theorizing – serving as an organizing principle for relations between states (i.e. interstate society) and those that transcend states, and which take place at both the local and global levels (i.e. interhuman and transnational society) – it nevertheless remains an ambiguous concept, both as to what constitutes *it* and what the shape, form and structural outlines of *its* constitutive elements may look like.

Indeed, there is not much consensus between various writers in the English school as to what exactly is understood by the application of so variegated a concept as 'society' to the study of international politics. Failure to develop a cogent, analytically-sound model of international society, on the basis of which national and international variants of such a construct can be theorized, has had the unintended effect of limiting the explanatory power of the English school. Much energy has been expended toward articulating the analytical *use* and normative *relevance* of the concept 'society' at the expense of investigating both the analytical and normative *content* of such a term in the context of relations between states. In other words, what bedevils much of the debate surrounding international society is, first and foremost, a constricted conceptual framework which privileges a fairly narrow understanding of society as a social entity governed/defined by common understandings of order, rules, norms, interests and values. This has consequently left us with a neutralized concept at the heart of a contested theoretical terrain rooted in political and social activity.

Surely, part of the blame has to be placed on much deeper problems emanating from modern social and political theory branches of the social sciences of which IR theory has been a belated offshoot. While *positive* questions ask what the contingent, ever-dynamic social world *is* like, *normative* preoccupations dwell on what that contingent social whole *ought* to look like. What each of these conceptual frameworks crucially overlooks, however, is the *contingent* character of social reality in the first place. Rob Walker (1993: 6) perceptibly sums up the central tension at the heart of modern theories of international relations as follows:

As discourses about limits and dangers, about the presumed boundaries of political possibility in the space and time of the modern state, theories of international relations express and affirm the necessary horizons of the modern political imagination. Fortunately, the necessary horizons of the modern political imagination are both spatially and temporally contingent.

How is one to establish a coherent understanding of such concepts as 'international society' and 'world society' given the heterogeneous composition (and often distorted representation) of both state and human societies? The English School's usage of these concepts is particularly valuable in that through them it can potentially account for the changing dynamics of states both in terms of their domestic composition (i.e. national societies) and their outside interactions with other states (i.e. the society of states), and as a result have a greater explanatory power within IR theory. In their recent insightful interventions into this sociological dimension of international politics, Barry Buzan (2004a: 6-26), Tim Dunne (2004: 65-79) and Richard Little (2004: 45-64) have consistently argued for a historically-conscious sociological inquiry into the second-order society of states as 'the natural meeting point between Sociology and Political Theory on the one hand, and International Relations on the other' (Buzan 2004a: 26). However, how would such a study be undertaken when the central concept at the core of much English school theorizing remains both analytically and normatively indistinct? In offering a radical reinterpretation of the concept 'society', this paper aims to provide an answer to this question via a brief detour through social and political theory.

In the pages that follow, I shall offer a model of 'society' composed of three key elements: competing, as opposed to common, interests (i.e. *constituencies*), a common existential identity (i.e. *community*), and a set of *institutions* through which the interaction between constituencies and community takes place. As such, it advances two main arguments. First, that theories of international politics must treat the emergence of a 'society of states' as the continuous extension of the aforementioned model of national society if they are to offer the most basic agential units of both societies (i.e. individuals) a clear sense of the importance of their actions in creating, sustaining, and diminishing the normative frameworks within which both national and international societies are also conceived. Second, that although both the nature of interaction and the functions of units differ fundamentally in national and international societies, the key structural elements of 'society' in both models, analytically speaking, remain the same. In this respect, second-order state societies are not simply replica models of first-order human societies, but rather, the development of the latter a key determinant of the overall shape, size, and character of the former. Furthermore, my proposed model of society seeks to disentangle the study of international society from the study of international order, and to demonstrate how the latter is simply one possible outcome of social interaction between states.

The first section of this paper seeks to articulate the structural composition of 'society' by challenging the traditional 'society-community' conceptions formerly used within the English school. It then proceeds to offer an alternative model of society composed of *constituencies*, a 'thick' and 'thin' *community*, and a set of *institutions* to mediate between competing interests and a common existential identity. Lastly, it proposes a new interpretation of the 'agent-structure problem' in the application of social theory to international politics. In the second section, I set out to probe the social composition of the state in light of the revised model of society offered in Section One. As such, I will offer a model of *national society*, not as the bearer of a particular model of government with sovereign borders, but as an ever-evolving arbiter, through national institutions, between multifarious constituencies (i.e. political, social and economic interests) and the community at large (i.e. the existential bond which legitimates the common identity shared by the citizens of the state). The final section aims to demonstrate how international society can be better understood as the extension of

the social composition of national societies interacting with one another within it. Identifying a 'thin' notion of community to international affairs, I offer a reinterpretation of some of the classical literature in the English school in order to reveal how in a second-order society of states, in the absence of a central authority, although states do make up the membership, they are nevertheless just one set of possible constituencies. The implications of this latter point for 'world society', it must be said, are simply too immense to fit the scope and space limitations of this paper, and I shall discuss them briefly where appropriate. The paper will then conclude with a brief summary of the original critique and an overview of the solutions proposed.

1

REIMAGINING SOCIETY, LOCATING CONTINGENCY

It is a striking feature of these explanations of order that they have nothing to say about actual societies, let alone about the people who compose them.

James Mayall (1990: 12)

Reading some of the classic works in the English school canon, one would undoubtedly get the sense that the term 'society' is used to convey a sense of order, coexistence and mutual understanding, yet not necessarily harmony or peaceful consonance. To one of the foremost exponents of the School, Hedley Bull, international society can be said to exist 'when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relation with one another, and share in the working of common institutions' (Bull 1977: 13). Of course, as Tim Dunne (2001: 227) has aptly noted elsewhere, Bull's exposition perhaps stemmed more out of a desire to demonstrate the ontological difference between 'society' and 'system', hence his repeated emphasis on rules and institutions. More crucially, Bull's account of international society, which simply takes its beginnings from the key characteristic of order, says little to nothing about what actually is meant by 'society', what the nature of social interaction between states is like, and what accounts for its highly contingent dynamism and evolution.

Similar echoes of 'law and order' can be heard through other key English school figures, old and new. For Martin Wight (1992: 30) international society is 'attested to by the diplomatic system, diplomatic society, the acceptance of international law and writings of international lawyers'. Adam Watson (1992) and R. J. Vincent (1974, 1988) repeatedly employ such phrases as 'codes of conduct', 'rules and institutions', 'order and organization', and 'arrangements' as attributes of international society. Corresponding notions of 'society' in the context of relations between states can also be found in Buzan (2004a: xvii, 7-10) Dunne (2004: 66), Hurrell (1993: 56-60), Jackson (2000: viii), James (1978: 91-106), Little (1998: 59, 2004, 2005: 45), and Wheeler (1992). However, my characterization of the centrality of such notions as law and order to much English school theorizing must not be taken as a blanket comment, for there is a long and steady tradition of theoretical engagement with more variegated, complex and fluid definitions of international society. For instance, within the classical tradition, Manning's point of departure is the domestic, *national* society: '[A]...social reality...[which] includes numberless individuals nursing the images, experiencing the sentiments, thinking the thoughts, reacting to the symbols, and using the terminology, of nationhood' (1962: 11). He is more concerned in grounding his conception of international society in the complexities of a national society, while at the same time masterfully avoiding the sociological implications which this entails for international politics. James Mayall (1990: 11) is perhaps the least contented of the group with the conventional thinking on society: 'International relations are more often governed by contingency than by systematic rule-bound behaviour'.

However, Mayall, perhaps more interested in the linkage between his critique and the context of his argument (the study of nationalism), does not venture out into possible alternative offerings. More on this later, but for now a brief note on the major implication of the muddled use of 'society' in English school parlance. Bull's repeated emphasis on 'common interests' and 'common values' also had the side-effect of initially blurring the lines between yet another indistinct term, 'community'. Buzan's (2004a: 108-118) explication of both the problem and possible remedies is particularly illuminating. He sets up the challenge as follows:

The key question is whether society and community represent fundamentally different forms of social relationship, or are just different elements within what can be considered a single phenomenon. If they are fundamentally different forms, then the question has to be put as to whether they can be conflated within concepts such as international and world society. If they are aspects of a single phenomenon (a wider sense of *society*), then such bundling together is both more easily justified and less analytically suspect. (Buzan 2004a: 112, italics in the original)

My answers to these questions, in some respects, inform the key arguments advanced in this paper. Leaving aside Buzan's own answers to these questions for a moment, it is my intention in this paper not just to 'analytically disaggregate' (the phrase is Dunne's) these two concepts as different elements, but also to advance the hypothesis that society encompasses community, an additional element of constituency, and the institutions which come to being as a result of the interaction between the latter two elements. As such, my working-definition of society is borrowed from Michael Mann as an entity '*constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power*' (Mann 1986: 1-2). Mann's subsequent broad categorization of the four sources of social power – i.e. ideological, economic, military, and political – are necessary empirical tools in his socio-historical study of ancient systems, but they are less relevant to the scope of this paper, and so I shall avoid them. However, for my proposition to gain greater plausibility, I must now enlist the aid of some contributions to social and political theory in differentiating between *communities*, *constituencies* and *institutions*.

I. Community

In what sense do communities differ from societies, or in what ways, as I mean to assert, are communities simply *encompassed* by societies? After all, both concepts are highly contested and have come to mean different things at different times. Within the international political theory literature, Chris Brown's (1995) reading of community is perhaps most instructive. He defines community as a normative construct, 'based on relationships which constitute a network of mutual claims, rights, duties, and obligations that pull people in ways that are qualitatively different from the impersonal forces which create a system' (Brown 1995: 185). Furthermore, Brown distinguishes 'society' from the latter formulation as a 'norm-governed form of association', one in which 'the norms under question emerge out of the requirements for social cooperation and do not *necessarily* require commitment to any common projects, common interests or common identity beyond what is required for social coexistence' (Brown 1995: 186). What emerges from Brown's careful distinction between the two terms is a sense of community, in the words of the great cultural historian Raymond Williams¹, as one 'more immediate than society', a sense which 'was strongly developed in the context of larger and more complex industrial societies' (Williams 1988: 75). Indeed, the differentiation between the two terms in theoretical writings on social and political history can be found earlier² in the writings of Hegel (1821) and Tönnies (1887).

For Tönnies (1887), the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) would at first glance seem one of domains (i.e. community/private domain, society/public domain): 'All intimate, private, and exclusive living together, so we discover, is understood as life in *Gemeinschaft* (community). *Gesellschaft* (society) is public life – it is the world itself' (Tönnies 2004: 33). As he expands his scope of inquiry, however, his differentiation of the two concepts becomes a matter of degrees: 'one could speak of a *Gemeinschaft* comprising the whole of mankind, such as the Church wishes to be regarded. But human *Gesellschaft* is conceived as mere coexistence of people independent of each other' (Tönnies 2004: 34). The analytical implications of Tönnies's definitions as regards the international society literature are nicely assessed by Buzan (2004a: 110-11); however, for my purposes here it is useful to highlight the elastic characteristic of community, especially since its usage in the modern-day lexicon of IR is often in the context of a particular sphere or domain, which I wish to dispense of completely. My reasons for getting rid of the domain/sphere distinction are simple enough: both the sphere of activity and the domain of influence of communities in any society are determined by the elasticity (i.e. 'thick' or 'thin' degrees) of the community in question. My point can be better understood by way of a brief detour through the origins of both community and society.

Perhaps the most lucid account of the origins of society and community can be found in Hegel's work. In *Philosophy of Right* (1996), one can trace the origins of both concepts in a process which Hegel terms the 'Transition of the Family into the Civic Community'; in other words, the separation of the family into a number of families as a result of procreation, 'which then exist as independent concrete persons, and are therefore related externally to one another' (Hegel 1996: 184). More importantly for Hegel, however, and this is where one can discern the distinct origins of 'society' and 'community', the separation of families into independent units occurs in two stages:

It is on one side the peaceful expansion of the family into a people or nation, whose component parts have a common natural origin. On the other side it is the collection of scattered groups of families by superior force, or it is their voluntary association, in order to satisfy by co-operation their common wants. (Hegel 1996: 185)

Hegel himself distinguishes the end result of these two stages as 'the civic community', and proceeds from there to develop a theory of 'the state' (1996: 185-350). Although Hegel, in my view, most cogently distinguishes between society and community, he does not go further and explain how, as societies expand (in the second stage of the transition from family), they come to encompass many communities (i.e. 'a people' with a common existential identity) within their realm of activities. That is the crucial connection which underpins my definition of community. In other words, communities are prior to, and a constituent element of much larger, more impersonal societies; they are distinguished in the sense that although their members may engage in competition with one another over the assertion of various interests, they would *not, ever*, on the basis of *identity*. Interests may well be defined/dictated by a particular sense of identity, but then again, shared identity on the basis of common interests is wholly different from shared interests on the basis of a common identity.

As briefly noted above, the difference here is simply a matter of degrees – and one most central to the discussion of community in the context of international politics. Hence, it is crucial here to offer two possible readings of community: a 'thin' community amounting to nothing more than a homogeneous abstraction, such as the 'world community of Muslims' or the 'neurosurgeon community'; and a 'thick' notion of community which can be identified as a homogeneous whole, such as the 'Kurdish community in Eastern Turkey and Northern Iraq' or the 'First Nations Peoples community in Canada'. However, and more importantly, both degrees of community are also *constituencies* in the sense that they compete with other

communities for the assertion of their rights and interests. Having established community as belonging in the realm of society and differentiated its degrees of homogeneity, I now turn to the element of constituency in society and its development out of, and relationship to, community.

II. Constituency

C. Wright Mills (1959) defines human agency in society as the contribution of the individual 'however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove' (Mills 2000: 6). Combining this rather general definition with Mann's (1986: 1-2) conception of society which I have adopted above, it can be logically inferred, then, that human beings are both the constituent elements of, and direct participants in, the 'socio-spatial networks of power'. As such, every society is also composed of *constituencies*, which signify the organization of human agency into goal-oriented social activity. At the most basic level, therefore, I mean to say that every individual human being is a constituency since even the slightest utterance of speech or encounter with the 'other' amounts to social interaction which is goal-orientated. What is more, my contention is that constituencies act as social vehicles and social venues through which the sense of difference in identity first engendered in the community – i.e. the 'we-ness' – is both mobilized and organized by means of collective assertion. For example, although both Shiites and Sunnis belong to a worldwide community of Muslims, they represent different sects that are organized as different communities and constituencies within Islam; also, within both Shiite and Sunni communities there exists additional constituencies and communities (e.g. Arabs, Kurds, Persian, etc.) which, again, can be broken down into smaller communities and constituencies.

My purpose in defining constituency in such elementary a way is twofold: first, to demonstrate the immanent possibilities that always remain for different forms, degrees, manners, and shapes of social organization and participation; and second, to highlight the ever-present dialectical process between the 'self' and the 'other' and the multiple contingencies which arise from social interaction under this dialectical setup. It is important here to mention that the nature of constituencies change at both the national and international society levels, but for now all I want to convey is that by virtue of participation in society, every individual is a constituency seeking to assert his/her presence; obviously, as humans organize themselves in collectivities they begin to assert themselves in different ways and contexts.

Since the introduction of the element of constituency necessarily entails talking about the organization of human agency in society, identifying the forces and processes which influence this phenomenon also becomes necessary. In other words, what is the relationship between agents and structures in society? Constructivists' answer to this question, via structuration theory³ (Giddens 1982) explains that the object of study 'is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time' (Giddens 1982: 2). Human agents and the social structures which they set up are, therefore, mutually-constitutive of each other, rendering important only contingent patterns of behaviour and the means by which they create and repeat themselves through time and space. Drawing on Giddens's structuration theory, Alexander Wendt (1999) identifies three such social structures as 'material structure, structure of interest, and ideational structure', with interests defined by ideas (i.e. an agent's knowledge of his/her surroundings), material conditions by interests, and reality by material conditions (Wendt 1999: 139). The interplay of these structures, for Wendt, culminate in 'socially *shared* knowledge or "*culture*", which is, 'knowledge that is both common and connected between individuals'⁴ (Wendt 1999: 141).

What is the significance or relation of all this to constituencies? Constructivist accounts of agency, structure, and culture, while they tell us a great deal about how ideas, interests and material conditions impact on social interaction, explain little as to where the static, neutral, and dynamic zones of social activity are located. Having highlighted the elasticity of communities in society, my formulation of constituency offers an added dimension to constructivist explanations by actually locating contingency (i.e. continuity and change) in every-day social interaction. Social structures built on common/divergent identities and shared/competing interests enable us to differentiate between 'cooperative' and 'conflictual' processes (Wendt 1992: 399), that much is true; however, how can we identify the past, present and future locations in which such processes manifest themselves? Seeing as society is the realm of power (as opposed to sheer authority), the interaction between constituencies and communities in every society necessarily entails manipulation, manufacture, and embellishment of shared knowledge, which can often times lead to distorted representations of ideas and interests through public and private institutions. Moreover, the element of constituency neatly captures and incorporates the contingent social setting of agents, structures and the cultures that they set up within the sociospatial networks of power. The question of (mis)representation necessarily leads us to the third key element in society, institutions.

III. Institutions

Now that my basic formulations regarding communities and constituencies have been fleshed out, it is time to consider the social space in which the facilitation of their interaction in society takes place. Institutions are social constructs set up to moderate, regulate, or facilitate human agency in society. Institutions represent the point at which competing interests and divergent identities are reconciled with one another for the sake of preserving existential needs and interests. Both the essence (i.e. underlying values) and function (i.e. performance of assigned activities) of institutions vary from one social space to another (i.e. from national to international society); but it is important to note how they are ultimately defined by the contingencies of social interaction. In other words, although institutions embody a 'stable set' (Wendt 1992: 399) of social relations, their relevance (and promise) depends as much on what happens within their procedural limits as it does on what occurs outside their social purview. Moreover, institutions do not exist independent of the meanings which human cognition ascribes to them; for although material conditions are a logical prerequisite to the existence of institutions in the first place, it is the fact of ascribing meaning to specific social practices – that are then institutionalized – which renders them 'factual'.⁵

However, to reframe my argument in the same context as constituencies and communities, institutions are the ultimate reflection of power dynamics between constituencies and communities in society. They may embody certain values, interests, and identities, but to the extent that they are adhered to and are central to social interaction in society, they rely on constant collective organization and power distribution. Institutions with high concentrations of power cease existing as institutions, but rather, as organizational arms of specific constituencies. For example, in highly corrupt law enforcement agencies and judicial institutions the concentration of power is no longer in the hands of the representatives of the people, but under the control of organized crime, at which point such bodies come to represent the interests of a specific constituency and cease to serve their institutional purpose. In a world of finite material resources and infinite social (re)productions, shared knowledge of agreed rules and norms are as tenuous as the contingent power dynamics between constituencies and communities.

NATIONAL SOCIETY: ONE COMMUNITY, MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCIES

What most commonly counts in the social universe is not simply whether something has existence in fact, but whether it has existence in effect.

Charles A. W. Manning (1962: 16)

In this section I seek to probe the dual character of the state as both the bearer of a particular model of government with sovereign borders, and as an ever-evolving arbiter – through national institutions – between multifarious constituencies (i.e. political, economic and social interests) and the national community at large (i.e. the existential bond and sovereign authority which legitimate the common identity shared by the citizens of the state). I have less in mind the evolution of the state or the rights of its citizens, but rather the relationship between central authority (i.e. the state) and what falls outside of its direct control but nevertheless remains inside the social space in which networks of power operate (i.e. society). There is indeed a long tradition in both political theory and sociological history in separating the ‘state’ from the ‘nation’, or discriminating between the administrative and bureaucratic machinery of the state and the actual social composition of that entity.⁶ I have partly alluded to the differentiation in my introduction and in the first section of this paper; however, in lieu of both space and scope limitations, I shall not revisit this debate here, only to say that I have incorporated the distinction into my community-constituency-institution model. My disaggregation of ‘society’ and ‘state’ here, it must be said, is heavily influenced by Manning’s (1962: 22) differentiation between the ‘nation’ as ‘a social whole’ and the ‘state’ as ‘an organizational setup’, a mere ‘apparat’.

Although Manning’s distinction is apt enough, he nevertheless does not extend his definition of the nation to that of society (even though his definition of society comes to encompass the ‘social whole’). As such, and in lieu of the presentation of an alternative conception of society offered above, I will be advancing a reconfigured version of the nation-state in the form of ‘national society’ in order to capture this duality. My purpose in proposing such a model is two fold: first, to bring into sharper focus the differences in social function between communities and constituencies in the most dominant and pervasive political unit in the world; second, to lay the groundwork for a discussion of national communities and constituencies in the context of international society.

I. National Community: The Imagination of Power

When one speaks of a ‘national community’ it is generally understood that one is referring to a community defined in terms of its national identity as a people, and *not* as a homogeneous whole. As straightforward as this point may seem, however, it tells us little about the actual social composition of the state at the level of community. For instance, do all communities within the state identify themselves as belonging to a national community, or do they simply view themselves as consenting to a particular legal authority? Is the national character of the state shaped by a minority community or a majority one? One can quickly discern from these and other similar questions that within the national society, in the words of Benedict Anderson (1983: 6), there lies an ‘imagined political community’. In other words, national communities are social constructions based on what membership in a bounded political entity entails. The attributes of membership in the national society are then made exclusive and are ‘limited’ to a specific ‘people’ so as to form a communal bond between individuals as citizens of a particular sovereign state. Perhaps what is most interesting at the national society level is the emergence of a diverse form of community, manufactured, as it were, by founding narratives of myth and glory, and packaged as ‘one’ under a particular legal-

constitutional framework. In other words, disparate communities under the banner of the nation-state become the very threads out of which the fabric of a 'thick' national community is weaved together. One need only refer to the recent history of twentieth century nationalist movements to grasp the powerful, if often destructive, impact of this illusory entitlement on national societies everywhere.

The role of narratives – especially in light of the preceding discussion about agents, structures and cultures (or narratives) – becomes ever more important to the unity (or lack thereof) of the national community since it is necessarily tied up with the overlapping networks of power in society. Contests over identity and difference are what cultures are all about; as the great cultural historian, the late Edward Said so powerfully observed in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993):

...culture is a sort of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another. Far from being a placid realm of Apollonian gentility, cultures can even be a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another, making it apparent that, for instance, American, French, or Indian students who are taught to read *their* national classics before they read others are expected to appreciate and belong loyally, often uncritically, to their nations and traditions while denigrating or fighting against others. (Said 1993: *xiii*, italics in the original)

Cultures are, therefore, engaged in a dialectical interaction with constituent communities, where contests over what the national community as a whole ought to look like. Moreover, cultural forms are almost by definition hybrid, mixed, impure and contingent; they both encompass and result from multiple social contexts, constantly (re)producing narratives of power and resistance. This is precisely where the normative dimension of politics at the national level enters the fray, and, as I wish to propose in the next section, also the arena in which normative questions surrounding the viability, nature, or function of international society can trace their beginnings. Hence my assertion in the introduction – and one of my main arguments throughout this paper – that international society must be seen as the extension of national societies in which key questions about its foundations are framed. There are other reasons, of course, for holding this view (and I shall get to them in subsequent subsections), but for now it shall suffice to say that narratives, and the structures which they give rise to, are normatively grounded in a contingent social space collectively recognized as society.

Since it has been my intention to distinguish between the state apparatus and the wider social space within which national community operates, I want to make two important distinctions about national community as a subset, *not* of the state, but of the national society. First, national communities are rarely discernible in the absence of a 'national other' or a universal principle rendering them unique and exceptional. For instance, the principle of self-determination through which many of the ex-colonial possessions of the great European empires in the twentieth century came to claim their sovereignty was almost ubiquitously adopted on the basis of identity and premised on the essentialized representations of 'self' and 'other'. Even in the case of the great powers during the Cold War, much of the identity of the national communities in their respective societies was largely framed within such universal ideals as 'liberty', 'democracy', 'working-class rights', 'anti-imperial', etc., each apparently the object of 'our' universal aspiration, and therefore, detested by 'them'.

The second point is about the degree to which the state has the *authority* and the national community the *power*, to influence one another. Neither the 'people' comprising the national community nor the state exercising authority over them has a monopoly over the national character of the state. Moments of national tragedy and triumph notwithstanding, there is rarely a consensus among the members of a national community as to what the

identity and character of the national society is or ought to be like. Indeed, there is a constant struggle between various communities and constituencies for the enforcement of particular views, values, and interests. Although the state has the authority to mobilize its citizens in times of war, and enforces a particular national code of conduct, its motivations for doing so almost always have to be reconciled with the interests of the national community at large. National communities, therefore, are inextricably linked with national constituencies; far from being unitary or monolithic entities, they are constantly being negotiated by the social networks of power in society.

II. National Constituencies: Interested Powers, Contested Spaces

The contingent nature of the national community leads us directly to the source of this dynamism: national constituencies. The intricacies between national community and constituencies which I alluded to in the previous section rest on the relations of power (i.e. domination/submission) in the national society, which are, in turn, interlinked with the means by which both power and authority are exercised. The role of brute power and force 'in the founding of legitimate national states' (Mayall 1990: 31), and in the constant remaking and reordering of social, economic and political arrangements within the national society, is central to the formation and evolution of national constituencies seeking to steer its direction and to define its scope. However, as Mayall notes, while the principle behind monopoly of legal force is tantamount to claims of sovereign political authority within a defined boundary, it is '*always and necessarily* advanced by, or on behalf of, a particular group of people' (Mayall 1990: 40, italics in the original). At the national level, the power struggle between various constituencies belonging to, and representing, a host of interests and values, thus involves 'normative judgments of a moral and political character' (Lukes 2005: 37) that are 'a product of a specifically *historical* consciousness' (Mayall 1990: 38, italics in the original). What I mean to convey by all this is that constituencies which, through relations of power, come to occupy and influence positions of authority within the national society (i.e. national elites) do so on behalf of certain interests and values. Along the way, these interests and values must be reconciled with the interests and values of the national community at large, if they are to be trusted with the exercise of legal force.

The most pronounced example of this power struggle between competing constituencies can be seen through the tumultuous decolonization era, where the break-up of the European multinational empires pitted multiple post-colonial constituencies against one another for control over the instruments of the state. Perhaps Mayall (1990: 43), parodying Pirandello, offers the best observation on the nature of such constituencies:

...they were for the most part characters in search of a constituency. Political leaders who wish to establish their right to lead, on the basis of the principle of self-determination and popular sovereignty, must obviously appeal to a sentiment of group identity and loyalty. And where it does not already exist or is only latent, they may even have to create it.

Indeed, constituencies exist in multiple forms and functions other than those which I have highlighted above; and depending on the geographical location of the national society in question, its natural and human resources, the shape and size of its socioeconomic and political sectors, the social composition of its national community, etc., the purpose and utility of its national constituencies also vary. Examples abound: from defence contractors to peace lobbies to religious and environmental groups to loose and centralized political parties, guerillas or even influential academic ideologues. What is important to note about all of these, however, is that they are constituencies in that each, a combination of some, or all of them may at one point or another come to shape and (mis)represent the character of a given

national society in international society, regardless of the actual heterogeneity of the national community in question.

The latter point raises the question of representation in the national society, which, I believe, can only be understood in relation to the contingencies of social life that result from the movement of constituencies. As social systems, national societies, in the words of Anthony Giddens, 'are always "power systems", or exhibit forms of domination, in the sense that they are comprised of relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities of actors' (Giddens 1985: 8). Therefore, constituencies' 'transformative capacities', i.e. 'the capability to intervene in a given set of events so as in some way to alter them' (Giddens 1985: 7), differ from one another in many respects and, accordingly, are an important factor in how they define their agendas. The implications of this for the relationship between power and authority in the national society are immense; for the inequity between constituencies on the basis of resources employed leads to social relations of domination and resistance, which then manifest themselves in national institutions of the national society, affecting constituencies and communities both.

III. National Institutions: Internalizing Power Relations

Within the confines of the national society, institutions are constructed for the specific purposes pertaining to the relationships between communities and constituencies in that society. As such, institutions vary from one national society to another, reflecting varying degrees of socio-historical practices and procedures governing societal relationships between people. For instance, the role of religion as a social institution differs greatly in the British national society as it does in the Saudi, Brazilian or Taiwanese societies. Similarly, the organization of the military, civil service and bureaucracy, and numerous other national institutions, all vary from place to place. In short, institutions vary as cultures vary. Yet, the social networks of power exist in every society and at the level of national societies – where central authority and governance structures are a fact of life – their influence is even more pronounced.

National institutions are the medium through which the mediation of competing power interests takes place. Elsewhere, Giddens (1985: 9) has identified this process as the 'institutional mediation of power', where 'domination is expressed in and through the institutions that represent the most deeply embedded continuities of social life'. However, if one employs Giddens's follow up concept, 'the 'dialectic of control' (1985: 11), where strategies of domination are defined in relation to strategies of resistance (and vice versa), then one would have to concede that institutions are as much about continuities as they are about discontinuities in social life. One need only look to the institution and subsequent abolition of slavery, or institutional discrimination against women and minorities and their gradual 'emancipation' in order to understand the duality.

However, such easily-identifiable social institutions contain within them numerous other 'institutional facts' (Searle 1995: 31) which can be either constitutive of, or regulated by, national institutions. For example, gender inequalities within the institution of marriage are manifested within the institution of family which itself is one of the elementary units of every society. National institutions can therefore be divided into two categories: institutions which 'constitute' social interaction (i.e. family) and those which 'regulate' social behaviour in national society (i.e. laws and social codes) (Kratochwil 1989). Later, in the context of international society, I will use Buzan's differentiation between 'primary' and 'secondary' institutions to further highlight the contrast I mean to suggest here.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY: MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES AND CONSTITUENCIES

We need a theoretical account of international society that highlights the relationship between variable domestic structures and the creation and reproduction of frameworks of shared norms and purposes.
Tim Dunne (2004: 69)

So far in the preceding discussion I have sought to offer a more complicated theoretical model of society: first by introducing three key elements (i.e. communities, constituencies and institutions) which develop out of the sociospatial networks of power, and then by examining the interplay between these elements under a model of national society. Together, the first two sections of this paper are meant to offer a better route to developing a biographical sketch of the political societies we call 'states', and also to underline the contingent nature of these biographies in space and time. I now turn to the more difficult task of assessing the implications of these 'really existing' biographies for the study of international society. My aim at this juncture is to demonstrate the multitude ways in which politics among nations in international society is shaped by the interplay between national communities and constituencies.

Furthermore, I wish to ground my specific formulation of society within international society in the debate between pluralists and solidarists, which has been central to English school theory. My reason for not having introduced this debate in the preceding sections has largely been a structural one: I have wanted to establish communities and constituencies as independent constituent elements of society without necessarily linking them to differing conceptions (or types) of international society. The 'pluralist-solidarist debate' has had many characterizations and reformulations over the years (Suganami 2002; Dunne and Wheeler 1996; Jackson 1992, 2000; Buzan 2004a; Bellamy 2004), but at the core of the exchange are differing conceptions about the social form and content of international society. Do states form a society together out of the *desire* to cooperate and develop shared norms and values, or is such a society, to the extent that it exists, formed out of *necessity*? As Bellamy (2004: 291) observes, 'the key feature that distinguishes a solidarist from a pluralist society is its purposive content: a solidarist society has purposive content while a pluralist society is a purely practical association'.

Since the heterogeneity of the society of states is in little doubt, the burden of proof is thus placed on solidarists to explain international society as more than a mere 'practical association'. My own reformulation of society has indeed room for both sides to this debate, and I would like to argue that both sides can better be understood through the interaction between communities and constituencies. The element of contingency is, as always, key to relations between states; both the 'purposive content' and the nature of the 'practical association' between states must be understood in relation to the dominant constituencies and communities in those states. In international society, relations between states are in essence between dynamic social, economic and political biographical entities that are hardly ever fixed in either space or time. Admittedly, the absence of a central authority in international society renders difficult the task of identifying concrete communities and constituencies; principally since, in contrast to national societies, no clear lines between authority and power seem to exist. However, it is precisely this absence of authority which renders the social space shared by states a *real* society; for societies are characterized by multiple overlapping networks of power with specified zones of authority. Communities and constituencies are ever-present; only in this instance disguised by national authorities and diplomatic cultures.

I. International Community: 'Thin' Universalism, Multiple Solidarisms

It would be useful to begin here by revisiting my earlier definition of community as an entity distinguished by a shared existential identity and one which exists in degrees (i.e. thin-thick) independent of social domains (i.e. private/public). In the previous section I also asserted that a national community may be said to exist by the virtue of belonging to an imagined political community held together by a central authority. What are we to make of such an entity in the absence of neither ingredient at the international level? To be sure, there is neither a sense of shared identity on a planetary scale, nor a central world governing body with the same prerogatives as the sovereign state. This is an area within the English school where two very different global social spaces (i.e. international and world society) are often mistakenly mixed together (Buzan 2004a: 27-62). Much of the confusion stems from the fact that membership in the society of states is made up of national societies which are in turn made up of individual human beings. At bottom, both societies are made up of individuals who set up organizations and institutions which help sustain and construct both first-order and second-order societies.

In this sense, national societies share a common feature in their relations with one another: they are composed of a diverse range of communities and constituencies, located in bounded territories under the control of sovereign authorities; without such constitutive elements they cannot call themselves national societies worthy of membership in the society of states. There is, thus, a set of universal characteristics on the basis of which membership in the society of states is both defined and granted as such. Yet, these shared characteristics amount only to a 'thin' universalism as far as common identity is concerned. Not all states trace back their origins to the same time period or the same set of events as those of their neighbors, trading partners, or even strategic allies; indeed, many conflicts are fought precisely over disputes about history and biography.

However, this is not to say that beyond a rudimentary level of mutual recognition national societies are fundamentally singular and self-interested. Instances of solidarity – defined here as the embrace of 'shared norms, rules and institutions about functional cooperation (Buzan 2004a: 47) – among states abound in international society. This argument underlies the solidarist vision of international society with respect to common moral dilemmas such as the use of force and the enforcement of universal human rights (Dunne 2002; Vincent 1986; Wheeler 2000). Of course, the sociospatial networks of power, as ever, play an important role in defining both the nature and scope of solidarity between states. As Andrew Hurrell (1998: 31) has acutely observed, acceptance of shared norms, rules and institutions may come about as a result of either 'coercive' or 'consensual' forces and processes – that is, solidarities between states may emerge out of either voluntary cooperation or forced compliance. Given the existence of multidimensional socioeconomic and political spheres, therefore, solidarism in international society can subsist in multiple forms and across a range of social sectors in different geopolitical regions. Examples can be found in the highly concentrated, yet nevertheless global, neoliberal economic regime (Buzan 2004b), an emerging universal human rights discourse (Wheeler 2000; Dunne 2002), regional security pacts (Buzan and Wæver 2003), and a variety of other affiliations among states along fundamentalist religious lines (Falk 2003).

To the extent that the component of community in international society may be said to exist, therefore, it does so on the basis of a 'thin' universal recognition of national societies as the members of the society of states, and also by virtue of the emergence of multiple solidarisms out of the sociospatial networks of power governing the relations between states. It is important to note, however, the extent to which the development of multiple solidarisms is contingent upon the interaction between national communities and constituencies which come to shape the character of the national society in the eyes of other national societies in international society. The emergence of a common sense of identity, as I asserted in the first section, on the basis of shared interests is quite different from an understanding of shared

interests on the basis of a common identity. At the international society level, the element of community exists insofar as common interests and values (derived from them) define the relationship between members; and in the absence of a central authority such commonalities develop into multiple solidarism, however tenuous and contingent they may be at times.

II. International Constituencies: Pluralism, Anarchy, and Power

On what does the maintenance of international society, in the absence of a central authority, depend on? Pluralists' answer to this question places the burden squarely on individual national societies (Jackson 2000: Ch. 11). Rejecting solidarist assumptions about the role of great powers as the guardians of international society (Wheeler 2000: 306), pluralists view 'sovereign political communities to be each responsible for their own citizens' welfare' (Suganami 2004: 40). It is within this context that I wish to discuss the relevance of international constituencies in international society. As discussed above, national societies are often (mis)represented through particular national constituencies which come to control the levers of power in their interaction with other constituencies and the national community as a whole. The interests and values of constituencies in charge of other national societies are then adjusted accordingly. The implications of the internal dynamics within national societies for international society, therefore, are immense. For example, the dichotomy between the international standing of Iran under the Pahlavi regime in the 1970s (as a secular Muslim state, 'friend of the State of Israel', and an ally of the United States) and after 1979 Islamic revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini (as the first Shiite fundamentalist Muslim state, 'state-sponsor of terrorism', and an exclusive member of the 'axis of evil') cannot be explained as a result of the change in Iranian peoples' sudden change in identity. But if one were to introduce the constituency element, it quickly becomes apparent that the Islamic revolution brought about a pronounced change in the character and international standing of Iranian society, which came about as a result of a complex process of interaction between various national constituencies (e.g. Bazaar merchants, radical student movements, secular movements' acceptance of Khomeini as a figurehead, etc.) and particular aspects of Iranian identity (e.g. revival of Islamic expression after years of suppression by the Shah, the lingering legacy of secularism's collusions with corrupt westernized puppet regimes, etc.).

How is all this related to international constituencies and pluralist thinking on international society? My contention here is that pluralist perspectives in the English school offer a more complex explanation of the nature of state interaction in international society than the realist point of view which they are so often associated with. Although they may have overemphasized the role of norms, rules, order and justice in international politics at the expense of analytical clarity as regards the constituent elements of society, their emphasis on such principles is clearly derived from a much deeper appreciation of the complex social composition of the state as a power theatre between multiple constituencies and communities. International constituencies, thus, are representative of national power struggles between such domestic entities. There is no need to present evidence of such propensities here since I have touched upon them in the first section; however, some reflection on Bull's and Wight's elucidation of these matters, I believe, would be necessary.

In Bull's case, such normative objectives as 'order' and 'justice' are sustainable inasmuch as they are internalized by domestic constituencies in charge of states which are highly contingent; the extent to which they can, in cooperation with other national constituencies, develop enduring legal institutions for the long-term conduct of relations between them, they draw closer to achieving such objectives (Bull 1977: *xii-xiii*). Similarly, Wight's (1992) 'three traditions' are realized as a consequence of the social make-up of the national societies in question, and not as immutable pre-existing categories in which states elect to participate. In short, the interaction between constituencies and communities within national societies during specific social-historical periods produces certain types of collective

entities whose interaction with other collective entities then produce a certain type of international society. The same logic can be said to underlie Wendt's three 'cultures of anarchy' (1992: 391-425). Of course, constructivists have long asserted the centrality of ideas and interest-formation processes to the social construction of international politics, but these are attributes of constituencies and communities and I am only concerned about the agents which carry them at this stage. With this point in mind, I now turn to international institutions which develop out of the interaction between national societies.

III. *International Institutions: Mediation and Order*

I shall take as my starting point in this segment the insightful differentiation made by Buzan (2004a: 161-204) between 'primary' (English school usage) and 'secondary' (regime theory usage) institutions in international society. This distinction is crucial to the understanding of relations between states in international society. For example, while sovereignty, territoriality, the practice of diplomacy, balance of power, trade, nationalism, etc. signify a more entrenched and constitutive body of rules, norms and patterns of interaction between states, various other international conventions and bodies such as the Nonproliferation Treaty, the International Criminal Court, UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, or even international Humanitarian Law are, by contrast, consciously constructed by states and are therefore representative of a defined set of preferences and interests.

My particular usage of institutions corresponds with my earlier formulation of society: They are constitutive of social spaces and practices which come to being in the process of mediation between communities and constituencies. As such, in the context of international society, they play a mediative role between multiple solidarisms which exist under a thin layer of international community (as explained above) and a 'really existing', yet often latent, pluralism in the form of individual sovereign states (i.e. international constituencies). In their mediative capacity, they can either be constitutive or regulative, as in Kratochwil's definition (1989); however, their 'life-cycles' (Buzan 2004a: 176) are inextricably tied to the sociospatial networks of power which operate across the pluralist-solidarist spectrum.

International institutions are, therefore, the structural manifestation of the 'dialectics of control' (Giddens 1985: 11) which I have already alluded to above. National societies which enter into social interaction with other national societies in international society, do so mindful of what Waltz (1979) refers to as the 'distribution of capabilities', with all the implications which this principle entails in terms of comparative (dis)advantage. The 'dialectics of control' which results from the 'institutional mediation of power' (Giddens 1985: 9-11) exists within every international institution. Such power dynamics, in turn, result from the interaction between international communities and constituencies, which, as noted above, can trace their origins to sociospatial networks of power in national societies.

Perhaps an example will better illustrate the linkage between the relations of power and the mediative role of institutions. The promise of international institutions – both primary and secondary – in the period since the end of World War II has been determined by the actions taken by the great powers, and since the collapse of the Soviet Union, by the behaviour of the sole superpower, the United States. From sovereignty to trade to environmental pacts and human rights, the upkeep and relevance of almost every international institution has depended on the type of constituencies in charge of powerful national societies and their attitude toward multiple solidarisms (and vice versa). Put simply, and to borrow an oft-repeated phrase in IR, international institutions are what states make of them. Sovereignty is as much an institution in international society as preemption; in fact, they are mutually constitutive of one another, and are both entangled in the politics of (mis)representation that is a distinguishing feature of national constituencies (as noted above).

CONCLUSION

Understanding how a society of states may differ from, or be similar to, a first-order society of humans inevitably forces one to look for patterns and structures through which both humans and states function. As a result, much of the thinking must first be focused on the sociological make up of both 'societies'. Yet, it is precisely the lack of such an endeavor within the English school which has until recently received little to no attention. Many English school thinkers have consistently shunned the prospect of employing a 'domestic analogy' (Suganami 1989) in offering multiple models of international society; and rightly so – after all, there is 'an unusual and striking mismatch between the egalitarian order of law [in the national society] and the hierarchical order of power in international politics' (Mayall 1990: 22). However, this particular insistence has also had the unintended consequence of isolating, too much, the social space inhabited by states away from the more contingent domestic forces which make possible the existence of international society in the first place. International society, therefore, must be understood as the continuous extension of national societies which themselves are in turn made up of innumerable communities, constituencies and institutions.

At bottom, it is the unrelenting interaction between competing and common identities and interests in a physical space of finite material resources which renders the world 'social'. To redefine the concept of society in the manner which I have above is not to dispense of the centrality of states in international society, but rather to subject such collectivities to a more rigorous interrogation as regards their social composition and to also highlight the contingent nature of their constituent parts. In the end, my main concern has as much to do with domestic forces (i.e. common bonds, identities, and competing interests) which give meaning to the state from the inside as it does with outside factors and actors (e.g. commercial enterprises, foreign governments, civil movements, etc.) to whom the state resembles certain interests and peoples which must be weighed and contemplated with one's own set of circumstances. In this respect, second-order societies are simply not replica models of first-order human societies, but rather, more importantly, the former are contingent upon the latter. In fact, national and international societies may be said to be mutually constitutive of one another, inextricably linked by what occurs *between* them.

NOTES:

¹ Brown's own formulation is partially based on Williams's earlier definition of 'community' as one of his *Keywords*, which Brown directly addresses in 'International Political Theory and the Idea of World Community' in Booth and Smith (eds.) (1995).

² I particularly would like to avoid Max Weber's definition of 'social action' as something which is 'meaningfully related to the behaviour of other persons' (Weber 1968) for the simple reason that it places an emphasis on rational intentionality. Much of social interaction can indeed be based on relations of power which would govern one's behaviour in society independently of one's intentions.

³ On Giddens's complete formulation of structuration theory, see (Giddens 1982: 1-40).

⁴ Hidemi Suganami's (1999: 365-386) critique of Wendt's original constructivist reformulation of the 'agent-structure problem' drew attention to the missing third element in addition to human agency and social structures, namely that of 'narrative intelligibility', or the story-telling capacity of agents and its impact on shared narratives (i.e. knowledge) in society. Wendt's addition of the element of culture as a 'structural subset' (1999: 141) largely reflects this neglected dimension.

⁵ See the chapter on 'Creating Institutional Facts' in Searle, J. (1995); also on 'Institutionalization' in Berger and Luckmann (1966).

⁶ For an excellent overview of the debate on state-society, its evolution within sociological history, and its implications for IR theory see Fred Halliday (1987: 215-229).

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