

The English School: How Much of an EU Theory Can it Make?

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Over two years since the single largest round of enlargement in EU history, theories of enlargement remain a relatively less developed part of EU studies. As even additional countries are negotiating membership, more systematic theoretical attention needs to be paid to EU enlargement. This paper invites a veteran theory, the English School¹ (ES henceforth), to the enlargement discussion table at a time when it has been receiving renewed interest from scholars. Already, attempts at building bridges between the ES and EU studies have been flourishing as the EU has taken the form of a very advanced international society, the hallmark idea of the School. The purpose of this study is to further those attempts within the specific context of the post-Cold War enlargement of the EU which has been both more orderly and less susceptible to extra-European influences than previously was the case. It will first lay down the groundwork to linking the theoretical tools of the ES to the EU and subsequently review the current state of EU enlargement research. ES will then be placed within the enlargement research scene and its contribution to the EU field will be determined.

English School Meets EU Studies: Members of the ES have not studied the European Community / Union in an organized way. They dealt with Europe in a historical perspective in accounts of how the initially European international society came to encompass the whole world in the 20th century (see Bull and Watson 1984). References to contemporary developments in Europe itself, on the other hand, were sporadic. Bull (1977: 264-6), for instance, did not see something too original in Europe whereas Watson (1991: 82) compared it to those societies already seen in the city-states of ancient Greece and ancient China. Meanwhile, the European picture has changed so dramatically since the most productive years of the School that it has become particularly ripe now to adapt the international society literature to EU studies. Bull's (1977: 13) famous definition of an international society is a useful point of departure for such a task:

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

¹ This paper has examined the works of Manning, Wight, Bull, Watson. Other scholars' papers submitted to the sessions of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics have been consulted as well.

The criteria Bull requires for an international society are all strongly present in the EU case. EU is a highly institutionalized system that is aimed at “creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe” as stated in the 1992 Treaty on European Union (European Union 2002) with a dense set of rules and common values such as liberty, democracy and respect for human rights. EU, furthermore, is not just any other international society that might be in place but the thickest one at the moment, reminding one more of the stronger solidarist society (Buzan 2001: 478, 485) than the weaker pluralist version based on the ES’ pluralist / solidarist gradation of international societies.

EU therefore can occupy a secure seat in the ES framework for the study of international relations as a well-developed example of a regional international society. From that secure seat, the ES offers a lot of ammunition for the analysis of EU governance, its role in international affairs, comparative studies with other international societies (Diez and Whitman 2002: 43) and even more notably for its enlargement. Besides *The Expansion of International Society*, a volume entirely dedicated to the processes involved in the formation of a universal international society from the European core, ES scholars have repeatedly examined how a society would admit new members in their other works too. Before directing the insights of the ES into the boundaries of a given society toward the EU, the paper will offer an overview of the current theoretical discussion on enlargement. This exercise will help determine the suitable location of the ES along the continuum of theories on EU enlargement.

From a theoretical point of view, EU enlargement has been under-studied. Works on enlargement have been more policy-oriented while the integration of the EU itself has received more theoretical attention (Schimmelfennig 2003: 2-3; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005: 3-4). Even the most dominant approaches in EU studies have contributed little to our understanding of the process of enlargement. Liberal inter-governmentalism, for instance, has stopped short of developing a full theory of enlargement despite the promising foundation it offers (Schimmelfennig 2004: 86, 92). Federalism and governance perspectives, on the other hand, have focused more on the impact of enlargement on EU policies, institutions and decision-making (Burgess 2004: 40; Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch 2004: 112) whereas (neo)functionalism has taken the skeptical view that additional members would burden the progress of spillovers (Schmitter 2004: 70). Analyses of the impacts of enlargement are indeed highly valuable yet there still remains a need for theories that are able to explain both the supply and demand sides of the process, that is both the decision to enlarge and the decision to apply for membership. For that purpose, students of the EU have mostly

turned to rational choice theories and sociological perspectives from international relations' theoretical arsenal.

Rational Choice and Sociological Perspectives on EU Enlargement: Both rational choice and sociological theories are meta-theories that have contributed the most to the literature on institutions in international relations, ultimately making it wise to study the EU with their tools (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005:9-10). Although the variants of rationalist and sociological theories seem to be in competition frequently, they end up needing each other many times in order to check their respective weaknesses (Folker 2002). Below is an overview of the main premises of the two positions on institutions and an assessment of the degree to which each can contribute to our understanding of post-Cold War EU enlargement.

As far as rationalism is concerned, institutions serve instrumental purposes for states in an anarchical environment. Institutions should provide for benefits such as security, welfare or power for their members (Schimmelfennig 2003: 25-27). The same logic applies to the rationalist view on enlargement as well; enlargement will be considered so long as the benefits can be established to both existing and prospective members at the same time (ibid.: 19-20). Considering the obvious benefits to the accession states, it appears that rationalism does indeed convincingly explain the demand side of EU enlargement since the Cold War but not the supply side. A rationalist perspective cannot account for why the EU decided to admit the countries of Central and Eastern Europe despite the net costs of their membership that exceeded the benefits (ibid.:5).

Sociological perspectives, the most dominant of which has been constructivism, by taking a community view of organizations in a cultural / institutional environment, do help explain the supply side of enlargement (Schimmelfennig 2003: 68). From a sociological standpoint, enlargement is the continuation of the community-building exercise and will proceed until the cultural and institutional borders of the organization match (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005: 16-17). In a sense, enlargement is a normative obligation toward non-members who share the identity of the particular community (Risse 2004: 172-173). Even material benefits can be overlooked if the candidate cannot relate to the community's collective identity. (Schimmelfennig 2003: 75). It is doubtful for instance that the highly developed Austria, Finland and Sweden, the first countries to be admitted to the EU after the Cold War, would be looked at as desirable members had they not been considered part of the European family.

Although this study has confined itself to the post-Cold War enlargement of the EU, the overall historical pattern of enlargement does indeed fit the enlargement as community-building framework (Schimmelfennig 2003: 4). Europe has been a community of liberal democratic norms since its beginnings and its founding treaties as well as key subsequent treaties have defined the conditions for membership on these civic terms (Wallace 2000: 486). What has been a non-negotiable criterion for the beginning of accession talks throughout the history of enlargement has been full compliance with the liberal norms of the community while other technical criteria could be fulfilled in the course of the talks or even after formal membership (Schimmelfennig 2003: 100). No case of enlargement so far has refuted the thesis that democracy / liberal norms are the most important determinants of enlargement decisions (ibid.: 148).

The costly expansion into Central and Eastern Europe confirms sociological perspectives' expectations that non-material factors push the process of enlargement. For the applicants, however, the sociological thesis needs to be qualified since membership means not only normative validation but also strong material benefits (ibid.: 91). Leaving aside the weakness of the demand side, sociological theories cannot fully explain some other aspects of enlargement such as the timing or the scale of particular enlargement rounds while member states' enlargement preferences and the actual bargaining processes for membership are better explained by rationalist theories (Risse 2004: 172-173; Schimmelfennig 2003: 282). As stated already, rationalist and sociological schools of thought are often complementary when one needs to examine a process in its entirety. Overall, however, the sociological viewpoint offers a more satisfactory account of enlargement than rationalism (Schimmelfennig 2003: 108-109).

Where can the ES be located across the spectrum of different approaches to international relations in general and to EU enlargement studies in particular? Considering that some have included the ES within the realist paradigm (see Almedia 1999), is it possible to locate it there in the first place? Even when questions usually associated with the realist tradition were studied by members of the School, they were studied with a different focus. Bull (1977) took war and the balance of power as institutions essential to the functioning of international society. Thus, the realist label on the ES looks misplaced. For Buzan (2001: 479), the methodological pluralism of the ES means that it offers the potential for a grand theory of international relations. Little (2000) clarifies what the pluralism of the School entails by connecting each one of its three ontological units with a methodology. Accordingly,

positivist, interpretative and critical tools of analysis are associated with the study of international system, international society and world society respectively.

It is for sure that we cannot avoid the School's pluralism since Bull (1977: 49) himself advised a pluralist outlook to students of international relations warning that reifying either one of the three units would be illusory. He put international society as only one element in international politics that would constantly compete with the other two (ibid). At one point, however, the competition between international society and world society gives way to confusion as members of the School have neither fully elaborated nor agreed the nature of the relationship between the two. World society referred to "a community of all mankind" (Bull 1977:24) in distinction to international society which was formed by a group of states. While it appears that world society was a precondition to international society for Wight, Butterfield and Watson, Bull feared that it could end up destroying international society (Buzan 2001: 477, 482).

Diez and Whitman (2002: 51-53) find strong elements of both world society and international society in the EU, the former represented in discursive terms and working to undermine the latter. It might subsequently be argued that it unsafe to leave the critical / world society dimension aside as one links the ES with EU studies, particularly when world / international society dynamics cannot be resolved clearly. Yet what is clear is that it world society takes us to the citizenry level (Buzan 2001:479) which is not entirely the case with the EU at the moment although it might be the ultimate ideal. A full world society perspective on the EU can be taken eventually but the state level of the EU polity cannot simply be overlooked at this stage. We might think that the current shape of EU world society can largely pacify Bull's fears and that it is an already met condition for Butterfield, Wight and Watson. Whichever perspective on the EU world society is taken, there is no doubt that the EU is well past the international system. Therefore, it is indeed safe to stay with the EU as an international society assumption, a solidarist society as mentioned earlier, and to work with the sociological rather than the critical from the rich research menu offered by the ES.

The sociological within the ES too has been subject to debate. Dunne (1998: 185) is convinced that the ES used constructivist meta-theory as Diez and Whitman (2002:62) mention that there is an implicit constructivism in the ES. The constructivism of the School, which is particularly visible in the works of Manning and White, cannot go unnoticed. Waeber (1999) though cautions not to assign the School from here the status of constructivism's forerunner and reminds that although the ES is close to Wendtian constructivism on important points, it still differs from constructivists on many other

important ones. Furthermore, remembering that it is people like Wight and Butterfield who brought the concepts of culture and identity to international relations (Dunne 1998: 63), such a line of thinking can lead us to underestimate the role ES work might have had on constructivism. ES should maintain its position as a distinct school of thought in international relations while it should be acknowledged that its understanding of the nature and expansion of international society is very similar to that of constructivism. Hence, constructivism and the ES can be placed next to each other within the sociological school in studies of EU enlargement.

Earlier in the paper, it had already been established that the sociological / community perspective, with its emphasis on the role of norms and culture, contributes more to the story of post-Cold War EU enlargement. In this section, the ES joins the sociological camp of the theoretical menu of enlargement right beside constructivism as one of the originators of normative and cultural concepts in international relations literature. Attention can now be turned to channeling the discussions of the individual members of the School on the expansion of international society toward EU enlargement, sticking to the “enlargement as community building” perspective.

English School Speaks EU Enlargement: As hinted previously, ES scholars have differed on some of the fundamentals of their research program such as the nature of the relationship between world society and international society. They differed even more on the role a common culture played in the formation as well as the expansion of international society. For Watson, Wight and Butterfield, a common culture is and has been the key to international society. Bull was more flexible and suggested that common interests rather than a common culture could work in society formation. Since culture is a major concept in sociological approaches to EU enlargement, the paper will review both ES perspectives in detail.

Bull has never fully elaborated what cultural differences would do to international society (Alderson and Hurrell 2000: 6-7). As and when he tried to tackle the question, he changed his mind a few times. At one point, he assigned an important role to cultural similarities and then shifted his views to believe that an international society could survive without a common culture (Hoffman 1990: 29-35). Later on, he presented it both as a weakness for an international society to outgrow its cultural base and as a sign of strength at the same time which showed its ability to adjust after expansion (Bull and Watson 1984: 433). Like his colleagues, Bull (1977: 15) observed that historical international societies have all been founded on a common culture or elements of it since a common culture brings easier

communication together with easier consensus on common rules and interests. On the other hand, Bull's understanding of culture has always been less rigid and he ended up emphasizing the role of common interests more, backing his argument by suggesting that conflicts of interests may not be eliminated even under the umbrella of a common culture. For him (1980: 184), cultures could be transferred to unwilling parties too and practice would make culture perfect so to speak since common rules would be improvised in the absence of a prior common culture that would in the long-run become the basis of a new common culture.

Unlike Bull, Manning, Wight, Butterfield and Watson stressed pre-existing cultural similarities more so than common interests in the formation of an international society. For Manning (1962: 85), it was largely possible to reduce the socio-psychological map of the world to a cultural map. He (*ibid.*: 17, 19, 67, 180) viewed communities as existing only in the mind and underlined their sentimental nature; membership in such a formation is a matter of regardedness which comes easier in the presence of cultural similarities.

From Manning's culturally-defined understanding of international society, the ES moved into less secular territory with Wight and Butterfield. Both have held deep religious beliefs throughout their lives (Dunne 1998: 47, 76) and their studies have been marked by a religious undercurrent. Butterfield paid full attention to religion in his *Christianity in European History* (1952. London: Collins) while Wight divided international society into a Christian core and a non-Christian periphery (Kingsbury and Roberts 1990: 14).

The Christian core owed its cohesiveness to its cultural unity; the greater the degree of cultural unity, the greater was the degree of "external cultural differentiation" (Wight 1977: 34). Wight used the terms "states-systems" and "secondary systems" to refer to societies with and without a common culture respectively. The latter can be intercultural (*ibid.*: 33) but the former "presupposes both regularity of diplomatic intercourse and homogeneity of culture: it is the political articulation of a macro culture" (*ibid.*: 175). Wight looked at cultures / civilizations a historic whole (Dunne 1998: 124) and saw in the political end result of such wholes universal empires (Wight 1977: 43). As for Europe, it was a "*Respublica Christiana*" in Wight's (1991: 9, 290) view whose initially strong natural law tradition had been weakened as a result of the admission of cultural aliens such as Turkey and Japan. Like Wight, Butterfield considered alien cultures and concluded that incorporating them was a tremendously difficult task requiring deliberate efforts from the statecrafts of both sides (Dunne 1998: 125).

From Watson's (1992: 121, 216-217) perspective, regulatory rules need to be arranged when two different civilizations interact since such interactions are only mechanistic.

Ottoman – European relations were the chief example of such a regulatory relationship which Watson labeled as secondary systems or inter-state societies. Even when the Ottomans, an important part of the European system, were admitted to the European society of states with Treaty of Paris in 1856, they never fully became part of it in practice because each regarded the other as too different. On the other hand, the Americans, whose state was modeled on European terms, were considered to be part of the European international society despite not participating in the European system (ibid.: 268).

Watson (1991: 17, 24-25; 1992: 32, 307, 312, 317-318) found in his historical study of international societies that relations among members of the same civilization have always been different than those with others since Sumerian times. The former have been intimate while the latter have been contractual. Furthermore, unicultural societies have always been more integrated as evidenced most lately by the European community. Such unicultural societies have either voluntarily pooled their sovereign rights or re-integrated after a period of separation in history. Turning to history again, Watson identified culture as something mainly inherited from the past and detected elements of Latin Christendom that never fully disappeared in Europe.

The question of how cultural similarities matter has been debated at sessions of the British Committee as well. Dore (1984: 407-408, 413) identified three mechanisms through which they do matter; preventing value clashes, creating a fellow-felling and avoiding cognitive dissonance in communication. Taken together, the three mechanisms increase the likelihood of perceiving common interests as well. As to why culture matters, Watson (1997: 99; 1991: 76, 222) replies that it conditions political behavior and may complicate such tasks as the discussion of ethical issues like human rights.

Whereas Wight and Watson provide a historical analysis of the sociological dynamics of enlargement, the Bull wing of the School enables us to additionally consider the role of interests. For Watson (1991: 82), common interests serve to cement a society which is already very similar in terms of cultural traits. Bull (1980: 184) tilted the balance towards common interests and believed that a new common culture and a new set of common rules and institutions could subsequently develop in a society. This indeed seems to have been very much the case with Ottoman – European relations after 1856 when the chief Ottoman interest had become survival and the chief interest of Concert of Europe members became to preserve its territorial integrity against Russian ambitions after 1856. Earlier, the Ottoman – European relationship was on bicultural and unequal terms both of which gradually disappeared in favor

of Europe (Watson 1992: 257-259). Ottomans had to transform themselves culturally² to adapt to the superiority of Europe due to their “need generated weakness” (Naff 1984: 144). But even after formal admission into the European society, the Ottomans were never fully part of it in practice according to Wight (1995) and Watson (1992). Wight saw (1995: 290) the Ottomans as a passive member of European society after 1856 and Watson (1992: 218) thought that the post-1856 shape of Ottoman - European relations was “somewhat of a society” (that is an inter-state society or a secondary system) mainly evidenced in the working of common institutions like the now reciprocal diplomacy.

Japan was another striking example. The primary motivation of the Japanese to participate in the European international society was not survival but a desire to renegotiate unequal treaties that had been imposed earlier by Europeans and to obtain great power status (Suganami 1984: 185). Despite it did not participate in the European international society from a position of weakness like the Ottomans, the status of the Japanese was still different since they were not from Voltaire’s grand republic (Watson 1992: 272). Essentially, what Wight and Watson draw attention to is a distinction between formal membership into society and membership in practice, a distinction Diez and Whitman (2002: 57-58) have recently drawn in relation to formal EU membership and membership in EU society. Going back to Manning’s idea that a community is something in the mind and membership is a matter of “regardedness”, Watson (1992: 272-273) speaks of the inevitably different nature of the relationship when both parties are aware that the other belongs to another culture. However, all this is not to preclude the possibility of enlargement to include cultural aliens. Butterfield emphasized that deliberate efforts would be required to do so. Neither has Watson assumed away the role extra-cultural factors, what he (1991: 25) termed “outside pressures”, in society formation. He (1992: 272-273) nevertheless stressed that bicultural / multicultural societies would not go beyond a regulatory arrangement. In other words, interests cannot compensate for the lack of pre-existing cultural similarities for Watson or for Wight, and the Ottoman-European predicament is the primary example of this.

The “regardedness” of the Ottomans as full members of the European society did not bother Bull as much as it bothered Watson or Wight. Bull, who already has a more practical conception of international society, has looked at the Ottoman case from the positive side. He thought (1977: 32) 1856 was proof that those who passed the “standards of civilization” tests

² Cultural transformation is usually seen as a one way process in the ES, to be achieved by those willing to join in. One exception to this one-sidedness is when a large number of states come in suddenly. In that case the old members themselves need to adjust and give concessions to the new members (Watson 1991: 19).

of the Europeans could be admitted to the European international society of the 19th century. Earlier, natural law had held a more influential role in regulating relations between Europeans and non-Europeans. By the late-19th century, however, the standards of civilization test had come to occupy a more central role as the sense of European exclusiveness increased. In the end, Bull (1977: 14) sufficed by pointing out to the delay the Ottomans experienced in achieving full equality within the European international society which for him was attained in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne.

Post-Cold War enlargement of the EU can be seen as a case of the re-integration of the separated members of unicultural societies which Watson (1991: 25) has identified as a historical trend or as the creation of a universal empire by members of a single culture in line with Wight's (1977: 43) expectations. The degree to which post-Cold War members of the EU were all originally part of the 17th century "grande republique of Europe"³ Voltaire described can and has been disputed. Some were apparently more so than others. On the other hand, neither Watson nor Wight used single culture to refer to uniformity; diversity within a single culture was something that they valued. Watson (1997: 37) believed that "the dynamic culture and civilization of Europe owes its vigor to diversity rather than to sameness". As for Central and Eastern European states, their accession was characterized by the theme of re-integration at least in discursive terms. Accordingly, the accession of post-communist states was their "return to Europe" (Schimmelfennig 2000: 131) or an end to the "artificial separation of Europe" (Danish EU Presidency 2002: 2).

EU could in the future slow down the integration process, turn less picky about candidate countries, become more numerous and evolve in a more Bullian direction. At the moment though, the Wight / Watson side of the culture debate within the ES is more applicable to the thick EU society. Furthermore, the current debate surrounding Turkey's accession to the EU echoes their arguments well. References to Turkey in debates on EU enlargement have mostly been as an important (security) partner to Europe (Sjursen 2002: 503-504); it has never been included in the "return to Europe" discourse despite Turkey's self-identification with Europe as expressed in a ministry of foreign affairs note: "Historically, geographically and economically, Turkey is a European country. Therefore, it is only natural for Turkey to become a full member of the European Union within a reasonable period of

³See European Society for Early Modern Philosophy web page for a detailed discussion of the period on <http://www.kongress.esemp.de/index-Dateien/page0070.html>

time”⁴. Perhaps, it was Vallery Giscard d’Estaing, the former French president in charge of negotiations on the EU constitution, who expressed the question of Turkey in sharpest terms when he declared in November 2003 that Turkey’s membership would mean “the end of Europe” as it simply is not a European country with “a different culture, a different approach and a different way of life” (Teitelbaum and Martin 2003). Watson (1991: 162-163) himself discussed the possible impact of admitting culturally different members on the European community in milder terms. If an existing member state were to disintegrate, Watson argued, the result would be to complicate matters in the community. If Europe were to expand to include states like those of North Africa, this would mean that things would be complicated in a different way given the divergences in culture, traditions and in the level of development. To stay with the example of Turkey; it can finally achieve formal EU membership yet fail to achieve recognition as a member of EU international society from the Wight / Watson ES perspective.

ES is of course not a full cure to the weaknesses within the sociological school on enlargement in that neither does it fully cover the specifics. On the other hand, no theory can be expected to predict all the specifics of a given process. Likewise, the ES offers an account of the much broader sociological dynamics of the process of enlargement. Where it does stand out is to infuse a precious historical depth to our understanding of enlargement as an expected development in a culturally similar place like Europe. By revisiting the societies of the past, ES work historicizes the phenomenon of integration and allows us to see the current European community as a case in historical continuity. Moreover, the ES does actually hint at certain particulars of the enlargement process like the question of timing and the motivations of members / applicants.

ES has introduced the theme of “superiority” in relation to the timing of enlargement not only as a facilitator of but also as a motivation for enlargement. European society has expanded when it was superior to the rest of the world in terms of scientific and technological achievement (Bull 1980: 173-176). This pattern of enlargement is puzzling to rationalist perspectives since they advise to keep it small in order to avoid the crowding and similar costs that additional members bring (Schimmelfennig 2003: 22-25). From an ES perspective, Europe’s superiority both made expansion possible and motivated Europeans to expand as they perceived a duty to spread their level of civilization to the rest of the world (Watson

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Overview of Turkish foreign policy on http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA_tr/DisPolitika/GenelGorunum/Genel+Gorunum.htm (translation from Turkish text, Ipek Ruacan)

1984: 27). Right at the end of the Cold War when the superiority of the West was proven, the European community felt a similar duty to spread its system to the rest of Europe in order, among other reasons, to demonstrate its universal applicability (Schimmelfennig 2000: 124). From the applicants' perspective, the time to knock on the door comes when joining in becomes a matter of survival as in the Ottoman case or an end to discrimination / reach equality as in the Japanese case. It is likely for the latter, a desire to terminate discrimination, to grow stronger among the countries of the European continent. First, "European-ness", it seems, is already on the way to becoming synonymous with EU membership. Second, as Schimmelfennig (2003: 147) points out, proximity motivates the excluded to apply. All this resembles a domino effect whereby each new member to the EU motivates the surrounding ones to bid for equality and recognition as "European".

This paper started by posing the question of how much of an EU theory the English School could make. As it concludes, the answer is that it can make very much one. First and foremost, the English School is the flag bearer of the idea of society in contemporary international relations literature whose most perfectly developed example today is the European Union. Furthermore, members of the English School have industriously studied the issue of how international society expands - offering valuable insights for considering EU enlargement along the way. Their studies add a historical depth to the sociological school on EU enlargement and enable us to consider additional dimensions of the enlargement process. Moreover, the different groups within the School provide tools for analyzing different configurations for international society; tools that can be utilized as necessary depending on the future shape of the EU. Ultimately, the English School should become an essential part of EU enlargement studies.

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