THE ‘ENGLISH SCHOOL’ IN CHINA: A STORY OF HOW IDEAS TRAVEL AND ARE TRANSPLANTED

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Canberra
December 2000

National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Entry

Zhang, Yongjin.

The English school in China: a story of how ideas travel and are transplanted.

Bibliography.


327.07051

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International Relations (IR) as an academic discipline in China has just grown out of its teens. In the last 20 years, Chinese scholars have been increasingly brought into global communication about and production and consumption of ideas, concepts, methods and theories of what Ole Waever calls ‘a not so international discipline’. The emerging epistemic community of IR in China has been shaped by its engagement with what is purported to be ‘Western theories’. In this paper, I tell the story of how the English School (ES) as a non-mainstream approach to theorising about IR has travelled to China. I examine how ideas closely associated with the ES have influenced the IR theoretical discourse in China to date. I argue that as a non-American approach, the influence that the ES has achieved in China’s IR studies is noteworthy. That helps validate the global claim of the ES. I offer sociological explanations of why and how the intellectual hegemony of American studies of IR has been reproduced in China and how ideas travel across borders. This is an essay about the sociology of knowledge as much as the growth of IR as an academic discipline in China.
THE ‘ENGLISH SCHOOL’ IN CHINA: A STORY OF HOW IDEAS TRAVEL AND ARE TRANSPLANTED

Yongjin Zhang

And what work nobler than transplanting foreign Thought into the barren domestic soil; except indeed planting Thought of your own, which fewest are privileged to do?

Thomas Carlyle, Santor Resartus

Introduction

succeeded in establishing a globally recognised brand name (no mean feat for a non-American theory in the second half of the twentieth century). The ES,
however, ‘still remains outside the mainstream of American IR’ (Buzan 1999: 2).³

There is little dispute that the ES as an approach to IR theory is now well established and has provoked serious debates in Continental Europe. The *European Journal of International Relations* and *Cooperation and Conflict* have now become two major forums for the ES debates.⁴ In Adam Watson’s assessment, ‘the best—one might say only—historical account’ of the British Committee for the Theory of International Politics is written in Italian, not in English, by an Italian professor, Brunello Vigezzi (Watson in Buzan 1999: 28).⁵

Across the Atlantic, in spite of severe criticism about the American unawareness of and indifference to the British scholarship in IR,⁶ there is increasing evidence to suggest that the ES has now been taken seriously by the American scholarship, particularly with the constructive turn of IR theorising. Martha Finnemore, for example, sits the ES with constructivism and sociological institutionalism as one of the three main strains of the so-called ‘social-structure oriented approach’ treating social structures as causal variables (Finnemore 1996). Peter Katzenstein and others clearly acknowledged the strong social imagery of the ES in their discussion of culture and security (Katzenstein et al 1996). And even Stephen Krasner has taken notice of the ES. He argued most recently that the essential difference between the neorealism cum neoliberalism and the ES is that the former explains a logic of consequences of the international system, whereas the latter, a logic of appropriateness (Krasner 1999).⁷ Examples of cross-fertilisation of trans-

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³ Tim Dunne (1998: 2) offers a similar assessment: ‘… key English School scholars have been no more than a marginal presence in the dominant self-images of the discipline’.


⁵ Professor Brunello Vigezzi’s essay on the British Committee for the Theory of International Politics consists of 90 pages and forms the preface to the Italian edition of Bull and Watson (1984).


⁷ ‘Various efforts to employ a logic of appropriateness, reflected most prominently in the English School and more recent constructivist
Atlantic IR scholarship on the ES are plenty. In an earlier attempt to bridge ‘the Atlantic divide’ in the studies of IR, Buzan took the ES right across the Atlantic and tried to establish the linkage between the ES and structural realism and regime theory (Buzan 1993). Theoretical contributions to reconceptualising international society, as Waever observed, have also come from James Der Derian and Richard Ashley, American scholars who are outside of, but closely related to, the ES (Waever 1992).8

Acknowledging that the ES, as a school of thought, has travelled to and made an impact in Europe and America,9 however, cannot establish its global claim. How well-known is the ES in other parts of the world? What influence, if any, has the ES scholarship exerted on the theoretical enquiries of other national IR scholarly communities? How marginalised is the ES vis-à-vis American dominance in IR in the global context? In what way does this ‘non-mainstream’ theory contribute to the overall evolution of the discipline worldwide?

China provides an ideal ground to test how the ES and ideas associated with that tradition have travelled globally. In terms of culture and history, China is not only outside Holsti’s ‘Anglophone peripheries’, it is also beyond what Gene Lyons (1986: 628) called cultural ties and university links that ‘survived the end of the [British] empire’. Further, the intellectual tradition of the IR epistemic community in China cannot be more different from the ES in terms of its divergent world views shaped either by the traditional Chinese treatments, understate the importance of power and interest and overemphasize the impact of international, as opposed to domestic roles and rules’ (Krasner 1999: 6).

8 It should be noted that James Der Derian was a student of Hedley Bull. One could argue that the ES was ‘exported’ to North America through such a relationship. As will be discussed later, Der Derian (1995) becomes an important, and perhaps the only readily available source for Chinese scholars to access Martin Wight’s and Bull’s earlier writings such as Wight’s ‘Why is there no international theory?’ and Bull’s ‘Theory of international politics, 1919–1969’.

9 We should also note the influence of the ES in what Kalevi Jaakko Holsti (1985: 94) calls ‘Anglophone peripheries’, particularly Canada and Australia. Many central ideas associated with the ES may be said to have been generated from these peripheries. Bull, for example, wrote most of his book *The anarchical society* while he was a Professor of International Relations at The Australian National University. As another example, Robert Jackson is based in the University of British Columbia.
world order or by the Marxism-induced revolutionary outlook of the world. China’s *alienation* from international society since 1949 (see Zhang 1998) plays a decisive role in shaping an entirely different discourse environment for IR, in two senses. First there was no ‘professional communication’ between IR scholars in China and the West until the late 1970s. There was no shared ‘production’ nor ‘consumption’ of theories, ideas, concepts, methods and data between members of the two communities before then. Second, IR as an academic discipline in China emerged only when ‘Revolutionary China’ was trying to come to terms with the Chinese revolution after the mid-1970s.

Telling the story of how ideas associated with the ES travelled and took up residence in China therefore serves several purposes. It tests the global claim of the ES and highlights the limits of the ES as an intellectual movement asserting transnational influence. It helps give a preliminary glimpse at the growth of IR as an academic discipline as well as the theoretical discourse in China today. It sheds light on how China’s IR epistemic community is shaped by its engagement with global conversation on IR theories. More generally, it contributes to our understanding of the intellectual history of post-1978 China.

This essay is divided into five parts. The first part offers a brief sketch of the encounter and engagement by China’s emerging IR community with Western theories of IR in the early years. This will show how Anglo-American IR studies first came to be known in China in terms of their concepts, theories, paradigm debates and perspectives. The second part traces the long and winding road as the ES scholarship made its way into China in the 1990s. In the third part, I examine how ideas associated with the ES entered into and influenced China’s IR discourse by reviewing some recent Chinese scholarship. The fourth part offers an assessment of the achievements and limits of the ES influence. The final part highlights different approaches between the American and the British IR community in fostering an IR epistemic community in China.

**Engagement with ‘Western’ theories of IR**

From the late 1940s to 1979, China was completely shut out of the discursive interchanges about IR as a discipline and its theoretical and methodological contentions in the West. Chinese scholars were totally insulated, for example, from the first two great debates in IR (Ni and Xu 1997). The success of the communist revolution in China and the anomalous position that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) occupied in international society from 1949 to 1979 provide political and historical explanations for this aberration in scholarly
exchanges. International relations as a recognised discipline in China has real existence only in the last two decades (Li 1999, Wang 1999, Yu and Chen 1999). The opening of China to the outside world at the end of 1978 is not only politically and economically significant. The ‘intellectual open-door’ ushers in a new era in the intellectual history of post-1949 China. Immediate encounters by Chinese scholars with ‘Western’ theories of IR constitute now part of that history.

Two works published in the early 1980s stand out today in China’s initial engagement with ‘Western’ IR theories. In 1981, Chen Lemin, a research fellow at the Institute of Western European Studies of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), published ‘A brief introduction to contemporary studies of IR in the West’ in International Studies, a journal published by the Institute of International Studies, a think-tank of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his short essay, Chen offers a sweeping review of the state of the art of IR studies in the Anglo-American IR community up until the late 1970s. He notes the debates and contentions, theoretical as well as methodological, from idealism to behaviouralism and introduces such analytical concepts as national interests and interdependence. He quotes Morton Kaplan and Ole Holsti about international structures and systems and writes with interest (and a little bemusement) about simulation, games theory and prisoner’s dilemma prevalent in the analysis of international relations in the 1970s (Chen 1981). Chen Lemin’s essay is now widely regarded among China’s IR community as the first substantial piece on Western IR theory after 1978.

The second work was by Chen Hanwen entitled On the world stage: A concise introduction to contemporary IR studies in the West. It was published by Sichuan People’s Press in 1985. Chen’s introduction is brief but systematic. He starts with a discussion of the evolution of IR as an academic discipline. He analyses realism cum power, national interests and geopolitics as dynamics for state behaviour. He writes about theoretical approaches to foreign policy decision making, nuclear deterrence, as well as crisis management. The systems and structures in international relations, interdependence and integration (from functionalism to communication and integration theory) are topics of discussion in the last three chapters. Deutsch, Kaplan, Holsti,

10 It is noteworthy that Chen’s short bibliography includes E.H. Carr, Karl Deutsch, Joseph Frankel, James Rosenau, Raymond Aron, Ole Holsti, Morton Kaplan, William Coplin and Charles Kegley, and of course, Marx and Engels. Some of the works cited were published in 1979 and 1980.
Rosenau, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye are among those evoked and quoted in the book (Chen 1985).

Two stumbling blocks, however, stand in the way of broadening the engagement by Chinese scholars with ‘Western’ IR theories. One is the restricted and privileged access that very few have to the limited collection of English books, and the other is the ability and efficiency to read English. Understandably, in the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, one major thrust of China’s scholarly engagement with ‘Western’ IR theories concentrated on getting to know the state of the art in the field through translation and by making the classics of the field available to the Chinese readership. Two early efforts are particularly worth noting. In 1985, the first collection of essays on IR theory selected by Chinese scholars, Selected works from contemporary American theories of international relations was published in Shanghai, less than four years after one of its editors, Professor Ni Shixiong, returned from Harvard (Ni and Jin 1985). In 1987, the second edition of James Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff’s (1987) influential Contending theories of international relations was published by the World Affairs Press in Beijing. Some Chinese scholars argue that the 1980s was a period of ‘opening to and importing’ Western IR theories. This was followed by a period of ‘absorption and innovation’ in the 1990s (Yu and Chen 1999).

Engagement with ‘Western’ IR theories, even in its first decade, highlighted the dearth of theory in China’s international studies and the importance of theory in building IR as an academic discipline in China. In 1986, an article appeared in World Economics and Politics Internal Reference, calling for the establishment of China’s own IR theoretical framework (Wang et al 1986). The first explicit call for a co-ordinated national effort to construct China’s IR theory came in 1987 at the Shanghai IR Theory Conference, the first of its kind held in China. The conference was an important milestone

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11 Chen Hanwen’s book is said to have sold 100,000 copies over the years (Interview, May 2000).
12 Ni was one of the first Chinese visiting scholars to Harvard that engaged in international studies. Fourteen American IR theorists are represented in this collection: Quincy Wright, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, Arnold Wolfers, Karl Deutsch, Morton Kaplan, David Singer, Kenneth Waltz, Stanley Hoffman, Inis Claude, John Spanier, Joseph Nye, Robert Keohane and Joan Spero.
13 Significantly, this was just two years after the publication of Holsti’s (1985) The dividing discipline: Hegemony and diversity in international theory.
for the growth of IR as an academic discipline in China. It recommended a comprehensive agenda for the disciplinary building of IR and heralded the emergence of an epistemic community of IR scholars and practitioners in China.

Interestingly, it also provided impetus for China’s own ‘inter-paradigm’ debates in its emerging IR community. These debates were between the two paradigms of the ‘Western’ theories vis-à-vis Marxist-Leninist theories and Mao Zedong thought in IR, and between IR theory with ‘Chinese’ vis-à-vis IR theory universal. While the former debates have all but dissipated, the latter debates still bedevil IR as a discipline in China today (Zi 1998). It was not until 1989 that Zhang Jiliang, a senior scholar from the Foreign Affairs College, produced what is now claimed to be the first textbook on the Chinese perspectives of IR theory.

Broad engagement with ‘Western’ IR theories in the 1990s continues to enlighten Chinese IR scholars of the horizons of theorisation of IR. By the time the Second Shanghai Conference on IR Theories was held in 1998, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the gap between the IR epistemic community in China and that of the West had been substantially narrowed (Lu Yi et al 1999). Chinese scholars are writing about and critiquing the positivist and post-positivist debates, the neo-realism and neo-liberalism duel, and the neo-neo synthesis, observing and remarking on, not without bemusement, the post-modern, feminist opening of the traditional IR research agenda, and embracing

14 The conference papers, however, were not published until 1991.
15 Huan Xiang, probably the most respected IR scholar in China at the time and Director of the newly established International Studies Centre directly under the State Council, made the call at the conference to establish an IR theory ‘with Chinese characteristics’. See Shanghai International Studies Association 1991.
16 The claim was made in the preface to the reprint of the book in 1997. It is worth noting that a number of younger scholars were involved in drafting the book.
17 Two other important conferences on the growth of IR as an academic discipline in China were also held. One was an international conference on Trans-Centurial Challenges: The Development of International Relations as an Academic Discipline in China, organised by the Institute of International Relations, Peking University, Beijing, 1991. The other was a national seminar on China’s studies of IR theory that took place in Yantai in 1993.

Chinese scholars’ engagement with what Holsti calls ‘a British-American intellectual condominium’ in IR (Holsti 1985: 103), however, is mainly American, from Morgenthau’s analytical concepts of power and national interests and Deutsch’s foreign policy analysis models, to Kaplan, Holsti and occasionally were John Burton, E.H. Carr, and Joseph Frankel mentioned. The translated works are overwhelmingly American, too. IR as the preserve of ‘an American social science’, however, has not entirely escaped the notice of Chinese scholars and has already evoked criticisms (Yu and Chen 1999). The predominance of the American influence in China’s burgeoning IR studies may seem natural, given the American intellectual hegemony in the discipline. This seemingly ‘natural’ phenomenon, however, has been conscientiously promoted and studiously built up by a condominium of American foundations and IR scholarly communities, as will be suggested later.

The coming of the ‘English School’

Acknowledging that the American dominance of IR is reflected in China’s emerging IR discourse begs a series of interesting questions. Where is the ES as a peripheral voice in the studies of IR in China? How did Chinese scholars

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18 A glimpse of this can be gained by reading the last twelve issues of World Economics and Politics, a journal published by the Institute of World Economics and Politics of CASS. The momentum of the assault of IR theories is such that the translation of all these -isms into Chinese has caused miserable confusion. One PhD student at Peking University confided in me that he simply could not know the differences in Chinese between ‘structuralism’ and ‘deconstructivism’, as both are translated as jiegou zhuyi (the first ‘jie’ means ‘construct’, the second ‘dismantle’). He was also puzzled about the difference in Chinese between ‘jiangou zhuyi’ and ‘goujian zhuyi’, both of which are the translation of

19 ‘American’ here refers to those working on IR and IR theories in America, rather than either American-born or American in citizenship.

20 For a recent critical assessment of this hegemony, see Waever 1998.
get to know the ES in the first place and through what media? How did the ES as a self-conscious school of thought come to China?

In short, the ES has travelled to China through a long and winding road.

Individual British scholars such as Carr and Frankel had already made their way into China’s IR discourse at a very early stage. In general, however, very little British scholarship in teaching and research in IR was known to Chinese academics until the mid-1980s. As late as 1986, Professor Wang Shengzu of Nanjing University, an Oxford graduate in the 1930s, ‘discovered’, not without excitement, that in 1979–1980, 58 undergraduate courses in IR were offered at the London School of Economics (LSE), most of which were interdisciplinary (Wang 1986).21 In 1987, Qian Xuefeng wrote in the *Journal of Foreign Affairs College* of how teachings of IR at the graduate level were conducted in Oxford. This was perhaps the first time that Hedley Bull and his *Anarchical society* were made known to the limited circles of the Chinese IR community (Qian 1987).22

Bull and Wight only became widely known in the Chinese IR community in the 1990s. Since the mid-1990s, Wight, Bull and Carr have frequently been mentioned as master thinkers of Western IR theory (xifang guoji guanxi lilun dashi).23 Bull (1977) and Wight’s (1991) works have become major references in a number of theoretical essays in China. This is significant because none of Bull or Wight’s works are available in Chinese. In an ironic way, part of Bull and Wight’s scholarship has been re-exported to China via North America. For example, it is through *International theory: Critical investigations* edited by James Der Derian (1995) that Wight’s earlier work ‘Why is there no international theory?’ and that of Bull ‘The theory of international politics,

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21 Wang read this in a mimeoed copy of LSE course syllabus deposited in a CASS library. At the time, Wand was the President of the Chinese Association of International Relations History.

22 Qian had just returned from Oxford where he attended some MPhil courses in International Relations under a programme sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His article includes a brief description of the structure of MPhil courses and an annotated reading list for MPhil students.

23 This is my impression after a quick survey of available literature to the author. No quantitative proof can be offered.

Until very recently, the individual scholarship of Carr, Wight and Bull25 was not necessarily grouped together as belonging to the same tradition under the brand name of the ES. Neither are they looked upon as key figures of the same identifiable school of thought. This should not come as a surprise. For all intents and purposes, the ES acquired its brand name only in 1981 through Roy Jones, who strongly advocated its closure (Jones 1981). The ES identity was yet to be consolidated in the late 1980s and the early 1990s.26 An added difficulty for Chinese scholars and students lies in distinguishing between British IR scholars and the English School. The confusion is ever more intense as a stream of British IR scholars—Steve Smith, Barry Buzan, Margot Light, A.J.R. Groom, Philip Reynolds and James Mayall—are cited from time to time in the Chinese discourse.27

The idea that there exists a coherent school of thought on international relations, or a conscious intellectual movement called the ES, and that Carr, Wight and Bull are key proponents of this school was transplanted into China much later than the individual scholarship of the key ES figures. Three ways through which the ES as a brand name (with its content) travelled to China are worth discussing.

Adam Roberts was probably the first person to bring the ES as a brand name to China’s IR community. Speaking at an international conference on

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24 Neither Diplomatic investigations nor the Aberystwyth papers seem to be available in Chinese libraries.
25 John Vincent seems to be known in China only within discussions of human rights in international relations discourse.
26 Even when Dunne (1998) attempted to write a definitive history of the ES, he felt compelled to define the insiders and outsiders of the ES. His exclusion of Charles Manning and inclusion of Carr continues to be controversial.
27 Simply stated, not all British scholars belong to the ES, and not all ES scholars are British. Many Chinese scholars find this difficult to understand. An example of this utter confusion can be seen in a recent publication, where one Chinese scholar, writing about ‘the Blair doctrine’, simply claims that the ‘Third Way’ owes its intellectual debt to the ES (Cui 2000)!
The Trans-Centurial Challenges: The Development of International Relations as an Academic Discipline in China in 1991 in Beijing.\textsuperscript{28} Roberts stated that:

Some people say that there is something called an English, or a British, school of international relations. I am not so sure, for four reasons. First, many of the most noted scholars in the field in Britain have in fact come from overseas. Second, British scholars in this broad subject-area have very varied interests, and employ many different methods of analysis and exposition. … Third, British scholars' approaches to the subject have changed and developed over time. … Fourth, there is a worldwide community of international relations scholars, among whom ideas circulate impressively: the main divisions within that community do not necessarily follow national lines (Roberts 1991: 2–3).\textsuperscript{29}

Roberts conceded, however, that ‘[I]f there is a specifically British approach to the subject of International Relations, it is characterized by the features listed below’, namely, a strong historical sense, a focus on the history of ideas, a resistance to universalism, and a degree of scepticism about the idea of sudden change as the key to progress in international relations. Further, he introduced Martin Wight as representing ‘the main features of a British school of international relations’, particularly, his three Rs tradition (Roberts 1991: 34, 1992).\textsuperscript{30}

Second, Barry Buzan’s essay ‘From international system to international society’ (1993) seems to have helped smuggle the ES into China through North America. It is through this essay that some Chinese IR students and scholars

\textsuperscript{28} Among the American participants at the conference were Kenneth Waltz, Robert Gilpin, Miles Kahler, George Quester, Robert Scalapino, Allen Whiting and Harry Harding.

\textsuperscript{29} Roberts also noted that Bull, although an Australian, was representative of the English School, and his Anarchical society ‘can be seen as one classic exposition of the English School of International Relations’ (Roberts 1991: 6). My particular thanks to Professor Roberts for digging up the English version of this article from his archives and making a copy available to me.

\textsuperscript{30} Roberts’ paper reached a much wider Chinese IR community through the publication of two Chinese versions of his paper, both in 1992. One was in Western European Studies and the other in Yuan 1992. It is interesting to note that while Roberts’ arguments of ‘national perspectives’ on international relations are picked up immediately in the editorial preface by Yuan Ming, the ES remains invisible in her brief description of the inter-paradigm debates from realism to behaviouralism and then to neoliberalism (Yuan 1992: 7–13).
learned about not just the brand name of the ES, but its contentions with and connections to American theories (Interview, Shanghai, May 2000). Buzan’s essay is obviously also the inspiration for Peng Zhaochang’s (1999) essay on ‘The English School and the studies of international institutions’. Once again, the ES travels to China via North America. This is also true of two other introductory essays on the ES. Wang Yizhou’s *Studies of international politics in the West: History and theory*, which contains a chapter on the ES, was written during his stay at Harvard in 1996–1997 as a visiting scholar.\(^{31}\) Ni Shixiong’s forthcoming book, *The evolution of international studies in the West: Theories, interparadigm debates and schools of thought*, has a short section where he situates discussions of the ES together with what he calls the ‘Northern European School’ in IR.\(^{32}\)

Finally, a number of essays specifically aimed at introducing the ES to China’s IR community and written by Chinese scholars appeared in academic journals in the second half of the 1990s. Pang Zhongyin’s (1996) essay ‘The theory of international society and the English School in international relations’, Peng’s (1999) essay, and Wang Yizhou’s chapter (1998) mentioned earlier, contributed to inducing a greater awareness of the existence of and keener interest in the ES as a contending theory and approach among a wider Chinese IR community. They also enable Chinese scholars to associate Carr, Bull and Wight with a particular tradition. Almost a decade after Adam Roberts first introduced the brand name to a small Chinese audience, the ES seems to have been entrenched in China today. As one recent Fudan University doctorate claimed, ‘without an adequate understanding of the “English School”, one won’t have a reasonable grasp of contemporary Western theories.

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\(^{31}\) Wang’s chapter, spanning 26 pages, is probably the most elaborate account of the ES in Chinese.

\(^{32}\) Ni is now the director of the American Studies Centre at Fudan University in Shanghai. He was among the first Chinese students to be exposed to IR theories at Harvard in the early 1980s and has remained engaged in theoretical enquiries. As he candidly admitted in an interview, however, his readings of IR literature are largely confined to those published in America (Interview, Shanghai, May 2000).
The ‘English School’ in China’s IR theory discourse

If the ES has indeed arrived and can now be considered entrenched in China, that is at best only half of the story. What do Chinese scholars’ make of the ES? Is there anyone in China who is working within the tradition of the ES, and how? Is it possible to identify the influence of the ES in China’s ongoing theoretical enquiries about international relations, and where? A brief examination of recent Chinese scholarship in this regard is in order.

Pang Zhongyin’s essay was aimed at ‘drawing the attention of [China’s] academic circles’ to the theory of international society and the ES (1996: 32). It starts by establishing a firm association of the ES with its key analytical concept of international society. In Pang’s words, ‘studies of international society are IR with English characteristics’ (1996: 34). Pang notes that the question ‘what is international society’ is the starting point for both Wight and Bull in their theorisation about IR. In arguing for the existence of international society, he incorporates the ideas of John Burton, Alan James, Evan Luard and James Mayall, in addition to Wight and Bull, on international norms, rules, principles, ethics and international law. He asserts that ‘the key to the idea of international society is the connection between the existence of society and that of order’ (1996: 36). Pang locates the theory of international society, and by the same token, the ES, in the rationalist camp, one that is ‘between realism and liberalism’ (1996: 38).

On the evolution of international society, Pang sees three images, one leading to another. First is the traditional international society (also called pre-international society) with only states as its membership, lacking transnational relations between state and non-state actors and among non-state actors themselves. Second is the standard international society (also called complex international society) which is seen in the current form with nation-states still as the primary actors but with increasing complex interactions among state and non-state actors in international economy and world politics. And third, it is the post-international society (also called global or world society), which approximates Bull’s idea of a world society. With political and economic integration seen in the post-Cold War period, he claims that ‘we are entering the post-international society’ (1996: 39).

Pang clearly sees the ES as an alternative approach to IR theorising. In his words, ‘the theory of international society shows that even in Europe and America, there exist not just two schools of thought: liberalism and realism’. The important contribution of the ES, he argues, is ‘the introduction of the idea of society into international studies’, as ‘the relationship between state and
society is an important question in international thought’. The idea of international society, therefore, ‘helps to overcome the simplistic state centrism [in IR]’, which continues to lead Chinese scholars into the cul-de-sac of the poverty of international theory (1996: 39–40).

If Pang’s essay on the ES and the international society is mostly introductory and panoramic, Peng Zhaochang’s 1999 essay addresses a specific question: how can the ES, as a school of thought that ‘develops independently outside of the American influence’, ‘provide additional insights into the studies of international regimes dominated by the American thinking’ (1999: 11)? Peng is parsimonious in discussing general features of the ES, but does note that its genealogical line runs from Carr, Manning through to Vincent, and that it is strongly influenced by the Grotian tradition in international thought, characterised by philosophical speculation on IR with society and order as its main subjects.

Peng’s major interest is in how the ES may enhance the studies of international regimes. In Peng’s view, the ES’s enhancing role can be seen in at least three aspects. First, the ES’s understanding of international institutions such as diplomacy, balance of power, the role of great powers and international law as well as their roles in the pursuit of international order differs significantly from earlier regime theories. He sees however increasing influence of the ES thinking in the evolution of regime theories from Oran Young to Robert Keohane. Rather than seeking to provide ready answers to such conventional questions as where international regimes come from, and how international institutions affect the motives of certain states, ‘institutionalised international order’ as an analytical concept, he argues, embodies main ideas of both the ES and the regime theories and provides an alternative analytical framework within which more interesting questions can be asked.

Second, Peng sees the ES as a useful bridge in connecting regime theories and other theories in IR. He invokes Buzan’s arguments about the ES in bridging structural realism and the regime theories. He quotes Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall on different methodologies employed by neo-institutionalism and rational choice and by the ES. He notes the critiques of Wendt and Duvall on the traditional American approach as inadequate and argues that their critiques have narrowed the methodological differences between neo-realism and neo-institutionalism. He emphasises the differences between the ES approach and the two neos.
Third, Peng argues that the ES brings in the question of culture to the discussion of international institutions. He cites the cultural attributes in our understanding of sovereignty today and Buzan’s image of a concentric circle of international society during the Gulf War as important examples. The studies of international institutions would get nowhere, in his words, ‘if we only look at the relationship of political power and economic interest with international institutions without consideration of culture and identity’ (1999: 12). The ES therefore facilitates the return of culture, particularly in the renewed discussions of norms, identity, and civilisation, not only to the studies of international institutions, but also to IR in general. Peng notes the emphasis of the ES on ideational influence in contrast to the emphasis on material considerations in the American approach to regime studies. He asks whether this is a reflection of a dichotomy between ‘objective idealism’ vs ‘mechanical

Peng shows a greater awareness of the existing literature about the ES, both in his references and text. His essay certainly demonstrates a greater appreciation of the ES in the theoretical contentions of IR studies in a wider context. Both Pang and Peng have shown how ideas associated with the ES have provoked and enriched IR theoretical debates in China. The works of Shi Yinhong, arguably one of the most influential IR theorists in China today, on the other hand, can be located squarely in the ES tradition. In a short conversation with him, he declared to me that ‘My stuff, you see, is inspired by the ES, but I also go beyond the ES’ (Interview, Beijing, April 2000).

33 Peng also offers critiques of the ES, particularly its neglect of transnational economic relations in the discussions of international society. He also questions whether and how justice can be accommodated in the structure of order in Bull’s conception.

34 He cites, for example, publications from Millennium and also from Wendt and Ruggie.

35 I also came across a recent MA thesis on the ES at Peking University. Sun Bohong’s thesis, ‘Hedley Bull’s idea of international society’, can claim little originality. It is however perhaps the first systematic discussion of Bull’s idea in Chinese. This is significant in two senses. One is that it is an indication of the influence that the ES begins to exert at the graduate research level in China. The other is the increasing importance attached by Chinese students to the study of the history of ideas. In her talks with me, Sun, for example, was scathingly critical of the lack of studies of history of ideas in China’s discourse on IR theory (Interview, Beijing, May June 2000).
Shi, a historian by training, specialising in the history of Sino-American relations, is currently President of the China Association of the Studies of American History. He turned to theoretical writings on IR in the early 1990s. In this sense, Shi seems to tread a similar path of Carr and Wight of the ES. That probably also explains Shi’s keen interest in the ES and in the history of ideas. In contrast to Pang and Peng, Shi does not write about the ES. Instead, his essays address questions explored in the ES literature.

‘Nationalism and the proliferation of nation-states: Some ethical considerations’, was published in 1994 (Shi 1994), well before Pang’s (1996) introductory essay on the ES. It traces the origins of the idea of nation and nationalism in the history of Western political theory, and establishes the dynamic role of nationalism in the proliferation of nation-states in the process of the expansion of the European international system into a global one. It discusses what he sees as ‘irrationality’ inherent in nationalism and violence associated with various faces of nationalism, from the anti-colonial nationalist movement to the break-up of former Yugoslavia. It invokes Grotius’ arguments about reason and attraction to and desire for society in his discussion of ethics in the principle of national self-determination. He uses Bull to highlight the tension between justice and order in the implementation of the national self-determination principle.

In ‘Realism, rationalism and revolutionism: Traditions in international thought and their contemporary expressions’ (Shi and Ye 1995), Shi explores Wight’s idea of three Rs in the Western philosophical tradition and in natural law and finds them powerful in critiquing Morgenthau and Waltz, in explaining international co-operation and integration, and in understanding a range of IPE issues from the Third World demand for a new international economic order to Richard Falk’s advocacy of future worlds.

Shi’s ‘On the question of justice in world politics’ (1996) borrowed heavily from Bull in conceptually dividing justice into international justice,

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36 He first came across Bull’s *Anarchical society* in the late 1980s. He liked it so much that he read it three times in a month (Personal communication with Shi, August 2000).
37 This essay was also published in the collection edited by Zi Zhongyun (1998: 29–53).
38 At this time, however, Shi was clearly not aware of James Mayall’s study, *Nationalism and international society*, published in 1990, as no reference was made to Mayall.
individual justice and cosmopolitan justice; and further into proportionate justice, communicative justice, and so on. He criticises at the same time what he sees as Bull’s neglect of consequentialism in his discussion of justice in *Anarchical society*. Shi incorporates Bodin, Kant, John Rawls and Terry Nardin, among others, and cites frequently from Brierly’s (1928) *The law of nations*.

Finally and most recently, in ‘Common values in modern international society—From the Christian international society to contemporary global international society’ (2000), Shi considers the normative shifts in international society over the last five centuries. He sees a gradual decline in the idea of natural law associated with *civitas maxima* and *jus gentium* in governing international relations after Westphalia. He observes that in the late eighteenth century, ‘It was widely regarded that the sources of international norms did not include the natural law. Instead, they came from [European] state practices in international relations and from the consensus among states as embodied in treaties and international customs’ (2000: 5). Against this background, the standard of ‘civilization’ was codified in international law to regulate the relations between the European international society and the non-European political entities. He argues that the shifts of normative basis of international society in the twentieth century have seen a ‘partial return to history’ (2000: 6), that is the reassertion of natural law as seen in the application and implementation of national self-determination and growing global concerns with the environment. The normative shifts in the twentieth century, he believes, are towards emphasising the priority of justice over order in international society.

**Whither the ‘English School’ in China today?**

It could be argued that by going to China, the ES has contributed in its own fashion to bringing China’s IR community into global communication about and consumption of theoretical debates of IR. The methodological and ontological pluralism embodied in the ES approach, as Richard Little (2000) has so eloquently contended recently, has enriched theoretical enquiries in China by introducing not only contending theories, but also competing images of world politics to Chinese scholars. Normative concerns, the importance of ideas, the presence of society in international relations, and ethical considerations are now embedded in China’s IR discourse, largely thanks to the ES. In the 1990s, a social world of international life that is different from and beyond neo-realist and neo-liberal institutionalist ones has been introduced
to the Chinese IR community as an ontological alternative to speculate on. The presence of contending theories in China’s IR discourse helps to reshape a Chinese worldview, and to reconstitute their knowledge of what IR is all about. In this sense, the travelogue of the ES has become part of the larger story of the disciplinary growth in China.

Clearly, the ES appeals to the Chinese IR community for at least two additional reasons. Intellectually, the ES’ emphasis on the continuity of international history and the history of ideas and law contrasts sharply with more materialistic and positivist approaches adopted by many American scholars. The argument that historicism embodied in the ES approach is inherently congenial to the tradition of Chinese academic enquiry may not be just a moot point (Chan 1998). The ES also highlights the advantages as well as limits of national perspectives on IR. This is especially instructive for Chinese scholars in trumping up their own IR theories. Structurally, Chinese IR scholars are increasingly aware of both the ‘hegemony and paroc as Richardson (1991) observes, of the American approaches to IR and their dominance in China. The ES offers an attractive and readily available alternative and wider horizon.39 With the dawning realisation of the poverty of IR theory in China after 20 years engagement, particularly among younger scholars (see in particular Su and Peng 1999), China’s IR community is keenly receptive to the ES ideas.

How does the influence of the ES in China stand as a test to the global claim of the ES advanced by Buzan? In general, the Chinese case provides convincing supporting evidence for Buzan’s claim. The ES as a brand name has indeed travelled far beyond the trans-Atlantic community and beyond Europe. The ES has made substantial inroads into IR studies in China, particularly in the 1990s. A greater awareness of the ES as a school of thought has been created among the Chinese IR community. A small but increasing number of individual scholars have engaged the ES in their research and produced serious scholarship. As China’s IR scholarship moves towards its second generation more exposed to the global dialogue of IR, it is likely that more scholars will be working within the tradition of the ES, consciously or

39 The ES has perhaps another attraction. In my interviews, one Beijing MA graduate stated that Bull’s writings, particularly The anarchical society ‘reads aristocratic’ and one young Shanghai PhD said that ‘you can sense a kind of beauty in reading the ES literature’ (Interviews, Beijing and Shanghai, May 2000).
unconsciously. For a marginalised approach in IR like the ES, the substantive influence it has achieved so far in such a marginalised IR community as China is encouraging.

There are however more reasons to reflect on than to celebrate the achievement of the ES in China so far. The ES is still invisible in the teaching of IR in China. None of the IR textbooks in China that I have come across, for example, have any discussions of the ES. The limited influence of the ES in teaching indicates that the engagement of the ES in China remains largely ‘elitist’, restricted only to the lucky few who have been luckily exposed to the School and who are engaged specifically in theorisation of IR in China.

It is also possible to suggest a series of existing constraints on further expanding the influence of the ES in China. Key journals published in Britain such as the *Review of International Studies* and *Millennium* are not generally available in key teaching institutions like Peking University, nor in research institutes such as the Institute of World Economics and Politics of CASS. The *European Journal of International Relations*, as a major European forum on IR studies, was unheard of, even among some working at the frontier of China’s IR theory discourse (Interview, June 2000). It is small wonder that the ES has to be from time to time a re-export from the US!

Curiously and almost inexplicably, none of the major works of the ES as identified by Buzan and Dunne have been translated into Chinese. The only exception is R.J. Vincent’s (1986) *Human rights and international relations*. But it is published only recently and in the context of China’s human rights debates, rather than IR theory discourse. Bull’s *Anarchical society*, though cited frequently, is still not available in Chinese. The lack of a Chinese text

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40 My two talks at Peking University on the ES in April and May 2000, one to a graduate class and the other to an undergraduate class and one in English and the other in Chinese, also informed me of the limited awareness among the audience, prior to my talk, of the ES either as an approach to or a tradition in IR theories.

41 Carr’s *The twenty years crisis* is said to be translated into Chinese. So far, I have not seen the translated publication.

42 The translator and the publisher have mistaken Vincent as an American!

43 It has even now been translated into Bulgarian (Personal communication with Adam Roberts)!
of major works of the ES is undoubtedly a hindrance to an understanding and appreciation of the ES by a wider community of Chinese scholars.\textsuperscript{44}

Structurally, international relations is rigidly separate from philosophy and political science in key teaching institutions such as Peking University and Fudan University\textsuperscript{45} and in the institutional landscape of the CASS. Practically, teaching and research on philosophy, political theory, sociology and economics as well as European history in China are conceptually still very much outside the domain of IR. Such separation is certainly not conducive to the critical evolution of IR as a discipline in China, and is particularly hampering to the influence of the ES.

**Transplanting ideas: The American way?**

The travelogue of the ES above is revealing about the asymmetrical influence of British and American studies of IR in China. Clearly, the American intellectual hegemony, and accordingly the marginalisation of the ES, have been reproduced in China’s emerging IR discourse. It is unimportant and even uninteresting just to observe that Chinese IR scholars also ‘follow the American debates, teach American theories’. After all, this is what many other national IR communities do (Waever 1998: 723). You can hardly expect the emerging Chinese IR community to do otherwise. The interesting question is why, how and under what special circumstances has this happened in China’s context.

I offer here a partial explanation of this puzzle by looking briefly at how American studies of IR have been promoted in China by a condominium of American foundations and IR scholars in the last 20 years. From the very beginning of its normalisation of scholarly relations with China in 1979, the

\textsuperscript{44} Language remains a formidable stumbling block in the mutual engagement between the Chinese IR scholarship and that of the global IR community even more than twenty years after China’s opening!

\textsuperscript{45} The undergraduate syllabus of the School of International Relations of Peking University, for example, offers little of political theory, as the political science department is located outside the School. Owing to historical circumstances, however, the School of International Relations in the People’s University is able to retain its political science department. One of the strengths of the IR courses in the People’s University, Professor Song Xinning boasted to me, is its incorporation of political science papers in its undergraduate syllabus (Interview, May 2000).
American IR community and various foundations have invested heavily in promoting international studies in China. As early as 1979, the Ford Foundation identified IR as one of the three areas (the other two being economics and law) that it would support in scholarly exchanges between the United States and China (China Exchange News, 13, 2, 1985: 1). The Committee on International Relations Studies with the People’s Republic of China (CIRSPRC) was established in Spring 1984 to help strengthen research, training and policy analysis in Chinese institutions and to promote collaborative research among Chinese and American scholars. In the same year, the National Science Foundation sent Harold Jacobson, Michel Oksenberg, Robert Keohane, James Rosenau, and Bruce Russett, among others, to participate in a joint seminar with CASS. Over the years, the Ford, Asia, Luce and MacArthur Foundations have provided and continue to provide generous financial assistance to international studies programmes in elite Chinese universities, social science academies and government research institutions. The Fulbright programme has not only sent American faculty to teach in Chinese universities and research institutes, but also brought Chinese scholars to study in the United States (Harding 1992a and 1992b).

More importantly, leading influential thinkers in the American IR community, from Kenneth Waltz, Robert Gilpin, Robert Scalapino, Stephen Krasner, Robert Keohane, to most recently Peter Katzenstein, keep travelling to China to attend conferences, offer seminars, and even teach special courses running for months, bringing cutting edge American debates about IR theory to China. Institutional links have been fostered and flourish. Not only have Peking University and Fudan University become the favourite stopping places for visiting American IR scholars, but some prominent IR-oriented China scholars in America today, Iain Johnston, Thomas Christensen and David Shambaugh, to name but a few, have had extensive educational experience in Chinese universities, such as Peking University.

In sharp contrast, few institutional links oriented towards teaching and research of IR exist between British and Chinese universities and research institutes. Visits to China by leading British IR scholars for academic exchange are embarrassingly few in comparison. None of the key figures of the ES as identified by Buzan and Dunne made their trips to China in their academic capacity. As most of them in what Buzan calls the mark 1 and mark 2 of the

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Hedley Bull was probably the only one who made his way physically to China. He visited China in the mid-1970s as a member of a delegation from
ES are now dead, taking the ES directly to the Chinese IR community has to be done now by those in the mark 3 of the ES. The personal presence of leading scholars can and does make a difference as shown in the case of Adam Roberts’ visit in 1991. If the American experience is anything to go by, institutional links between the ES and the Chinese IR community have to be nurtured. There is evidence that Chinese IR students who have returned from British universities have contributed to the awareness of the ES in China. But that number is too small and their voices, too, are marginalised. They have done far less than the Chinese students who have returned from America in taking the American IR studies to China.

The moral of this story is simple. To paraphrase Risse-Kappen (1994), ideas do not just flow freely. They have to be promoted, if not propagated, and efforts need to be made when transplanting them to a foreign soil. The ES has to reach out and actively engage national IR communities (particularly the marginalised ones) beyond the Anglo-American divide and Europe, if ‘the ES is to successfully promote its claim to be one of the major approaches to the study of IR, and especially if it is to do so in a world still heavily dominated by US-based theories and debates’ (Buzan 1999: 14).

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