

Solicited Article

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**Abstract**

This is a series of solicited articles requested by the editors of Vol. 51, emerging from a roundtable discussion held at the 2022 International Studies Association Convention. Each short contribution seeks to demonstrate the newest research of the English School of International Relations. These contributions tackle key questions including: the decline of liberal hegemony, the rise of China, the divide between solidaristic and pluralistic ethics, the engagement of the English School with Area Studies, theoretical approaches to grounding English School research and an investigation of the English School's intellectual legacy.

**Keywords**

English School, International Relations Theory, Global IR

**Section spéciale École anglaise****Résumé**

Voici une série d'articles sollicités par les éditeurs du volume 51, qui ont émergés d'une table ronde tenue lors de l'édition 2022 de la Convention de l'Association d'études internationales (International Studies Association Convention). Chaque brève contribution cherche à démontrer les dernières recherches de l'École anglaise des relations internationales. Ces contributions abordent des questions essentielles, dont : le déclin de l'hégémonie libérale ; l'essor de la Chine ; la fracture entre les éthiques solidaristes et pluralistes ; l'engagement de l'École anglaise dans les études régionales ; les approches théoriques d'ancrage de la recherche de l'École anglaise ; et une enquête et évaluation de l'héritage intellectuel de l'École anglaise.

**Mots-clés**

École anglaise, théorie des relations internationales, RI mondiales

**Sección especial de la escuela inglesa****Resumen**

Esta contribución consiste en una serie de artículos solicitados por los editores del vol. 51, a raíz de una mesa redonda celebrada en la Convención de la Asociación de Estudios Internacionales de 2022. Los diferentes aportes tratan de reflejar las investigaciones más recientes de la escuela inglesa de relaciones internacionales. Estas contribuciones abordan cuestiones clave como el declive de la hegemonía liberal, el ascenso de China, la división entre la ética solidaria y la pluralista, el involucramiento de la escuela inglesa con los estudios de área, los enfoques teóricos para fundamentar la investigación de la escuela inglesa y una investigación y evaluación del legado intelectual de la escuela inglesa.

**Palabras clave**

escuela inglesa, teoría de las relaciones internacionales, relaciones internacionales globales

both pluralist and solidarist English School theorists point to a more comprehensive ethical framework than just their shared middle-ground space.

## Why the English School Needs to Engage With Area Studies

–Filippo Costa Buranelli and Carolina Zaccato

### Introduction

The discipline and the profession of IR are undergoing a profound transformation, aimed at becoming more inclusive, more diverse and more global. This is valid in respect to both what is studied and who studies it.<sup>97</sup> It has been long argued that the English School of International Relations (ES) is ideally placed within the panorama of IR theory for being a *via media*, a synthetizer, and a compromise between the realist and the liberal traditions. At the same time, the ES has also been in a privileged position with respect to working as a *trait d'union* between IR and other cognate disciplines, such as History and Anthropology, by virtue of its classical, humanistic approach and its philosophical predisposition to interpretivism and co-constitution.<sup>98</sup> In light of this, recent contributions have argued that the ES is well placed to furthering the advancement of Global IR.<sup>99</sup> One specific way in which we believe the ES can further work towards improving on the Global IR agenda is its engagement with AS, and this synergy is what we will elaborate on in this contribution.

This piece is divided into three parts. First, we provide a brief overview of the relationship between AS and IR. Second, we elaborate on how more dialogue between AS and the ES, specifically in its research on regional international societies, can constitute a mutually beneficial enterprise, focusing on six aspects: (1) the refinement of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, as well as greater reflection on the researcher's positionality towards their object of study; (2) the study of specific forms of world society that may contribute to local orders through indigenous practices and norms; (3) the dynamics of co-constitution between the local and the global; (4) a deeper understanding of the impact of informality on and within the international society; (5) the uncovering and analysis of regional cosmologies or 'visions of order' and (6) the elaboration of a better theorization of the state within the ES. Third and lastly, we conclude by emphasizing the necessity for more engagement with AS to make the ES (and IR) more inclusive, more accurate, and more in tune with the Global IR agenda.

97. Filippo Costa Buranelli and Simon F. Tauer, 'The English School and Global IR – A Research Agenda', *All Azimuth* 11, no. 1 (2022): 87–105.

98. Cornelia Navari, *Theorising International Society – English School Methods* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009); Jackson, *The Global Covenant*, 2003, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

99. Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds - A New Agenda for International Studies', *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647–59; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives On and Beyond Asia* (Taylor & Francis, 2009) London; Filippo Costa Buranelli and Simon F. Tauer, 'The English School and Global IR – A Research Agenda', *All Azimuth* 11, no. 1 (2022): 87–105.

## The Interrelations (or Lack of Thereof) Between IRs and AS – An Overview

As has been argued, the origins of AS as a discipline are intrinsically located within the racialized, geopolitical understanding of theory and foreign policy of the Cold War years, which not by chance coincided with the (beginning of the) dissolution of major Western empires.<sup>100</sup> Even before then, AS started placing roots in the European scientific community through the studies of geographies, societies, traditions and behaviours of the populations subjugated (or to be subjugated) by the imperial metropolises. At the end of World War II, Hans Morgenthau claimed that ‘Area Studies, both historically and analytically, form a part of that field of knowledge which is called international relations’.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, often seen as a mere ‘basket of data’, or a testing ground, from which to attain to get pieces of evidence to validate grand theorizing, AS has for long remained the underdog at the bottom of disciplinary, epistemic and intellectual hierarchy between itself and IR. The contingency, specificity and idiography of ‘areas’<sup>102</sup> has for several decades clashed with the reassuring formalism and predictability of much of IR theory, scientific in its outlook and universal, nomothetic in its scope. In this vein, Hurrell argues that IR was first conceived as a holistic, synthesizing field of enquiry, studying phenomena at the international/global level, therefore its ‘hostility’ towards AS.<sup>103</sup>

But how to best define AS? Here, it is interesting that already 70 years ago there were debates on this issue. As mentioned in a special issue of the *International Social Science Bulletin*, sponsored by the UNESCO, focusing on AS:

The exact meaning of the term ‘area study’, as used by American research workers, is still a little uncertain. It may be applied to any study of a particular area, at least if it is concerned with some branch of the social sciences, or it may have a much more specific meaning, an area study being a comprehensive study of a given region from several different points of view, with the object of determining its role in international life.<sup>104</sup>

Also interesting is that the state-of-the-art research on AS and IR does not usually provide clear-cut definitions of AS.<sup>105</sup> Hence, in this contribution, we adopt a minimal definition of ‘area studies’, borrowed from the Cambridge Dictionary, where the term is defined as ‘the

100. Katarzyna Kaczmarek and Stefanie Ortmann, ‘IR Theory and Area Studies: A Plea for Displaced Knowledge about International Politics’, *Journal of International Relations and Development* 24, no. 4 (2021): 820–47.
101. H. Morgenthau, ‘Area Studies and the study of International Relations’, *International Social Science Bulletin* 4, no. 4 (1952): 647–648, 647.
102. The term ‘area’ is in itself problematic. How an ‘area’ is designated and what it includes is always subject to political and normative considerations, which may be more or less conscious but nonetheless present.
103. A. Hurrell, ‘Why International Relations and Area Studies Need Each Other’, *St Antony’s International Review* 16, no. 1 (2020): 191–6.
104. UNESCO, *International Social Science Bulletin* 4, no. 4 (1952): 633. ‘Area Studies’. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000059694>.
105. P. Köllner, R. Sil and A. Ahrm, ‘Comparative Area Studies: What It Is, what It Can Do’, in *Comparative Area Studies: Methodological Rationales and Cross-Regional Applications*, eds., A. Ahrm, P. Köllner and R. Sil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3–26.

study of the history, politics, economics, and cultures of various areas of the world or of a particular area of the world', thus stressing its *interdisciplinary* and *sub-global* character.<sup>106</sup>

While in recent years there has been renewed engagement between AS and IR scholars,<sup>107</sup> AS scholars continue being reproached of 'horizontal ignorance', promoting and defending exceptionalisms and descriptivism as well as leaving little room for generalizability beyond the particular case under study to which researchers devote their entire life. Reversely, the main limitation of IR allegedly consists of 'vertical ignorance', failing to shed light on 'real societies and the conduct of historically situated human agents',<sup>108</sup> conveying a superficial knowledge of cases, relying on weak cultural and language skills and implicitly or even explicitly using hegemonic worldviews as a yardstick for comparison, whereas ethnographic immersion would ensure thick and context-bound accounts. Within the canons of mainstream IR, research has been generally driven by the quest for regularities transcending spatio-temporal confines, to be explained across a universe of cases. On the contrary, AS have traditionally valued the mastering of primary sources and the endeavour 'to decipher the subjective understanding actors attach to their practices and discourses within their immediate contexts'.<sup>109</sup> Interdisciplinarity, therefore, remains more of a buzzword and a lighting banner for funding and publication projects as opposed to a reflexive, meaningful category of intellectual and methodological effort to combine contributions and insights from different domains. There is little cross-fertilization between AS and IR, with different authors writing for different audiences in distinct academic outlets.<sup>110</sup> If suspicion and perceived incompatibility continue to exist between AS and IR, impacting on knowledge production, professionalization, research funding allocation and on 'scientific' validity, then how and why can the ES work in synergy with AS? Below we offer some tentative arguments, which while not exhaustive may spur further research and dialogue on the matter at hand.

106. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/area-studies>

107. M. Tessler, J. Natchwey and A. Dressel, eds., *Area Studies and Social Science: Strategies for Understanding Middle East Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); M. Valbjørn, 'Toward a 'Mesopotamian turn': Disciplinarity and the study of the international relations of the Middle East'. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 14, no. 1 (2004): 47–75; A. Teti, 'Bridging the Gap: IR, Middle East Studies and the Disciplinary Politics of the Area studies Controversy', *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2007): 117–45; Stephen Aris, 'International vs. Area? The disciplinary-politics of knowledge exchange between IR and Area Studies'. *International Theory* 13 (2021): 451–482.

108. Association of Asian Studies (AAS), 'The Future of Asian Studies', *Viewpoints* 2, no. 1–9 (1997): 2.

109. Patrick Köllner, Rudra Sil and Ariel Ahram, eds., 'Comparative Area Studies: What It Is, what It Can Do', in *Comparative Area Studies: Methodological Rationales and Cross-Regional Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3–26, 4.

110. Louise Fawcett, ed., 'Introduction', in *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–16.

### What can AS Bring to the ES?

In this piece, we contend that the English School would greatly benefit from a deeper engagement with AS, and we provide six preliminary reasons why this engagement is not only mutually beneficial but, more importantly, needed. Furthermore, we also argue that the English School is the most suitable approach to bridge AS with the broader discipline of IRs, and that this rapprochement would serve to make the latter a more inclusive and accurate field. While other theoretical approaches to IR would also benefit from engaging more meaningfully with AS, and while they may share some of the traits with the ES (for example, Constructivism also advocates the co-constitution between agents and the system they constitute), we believe that the ES is particularly well suited to act as a bridge between the discipline of IR and AS.

To begin with, the English School is a holistic approach that not only favours interdisciplinarity, but that it is *built upon* it. In this sense, we are advocating for a return to the ‘classical approach’ to the study of international politics, integrating elements from International Law, History, Political Philosophy, Sociology and Anthropology into the analysis of global – and regional – orders.<sup>111</sup> This makes the ES an adequate partner to AS, a field that is interdisciplinary by definition, as it engages with the *history, politics, economics and cultures* of different areas of the world. Furthermore, the ES is based upon the assumption that agents and structure are co-constitutive; this is to say, that any given order is the result of inter-subjective interactions between different groups of people who are, in turn, affected by the practices, norms, rules and institutions of the order they are part of, and that they create, sustain and modify, through their practices and discourses. In this sense, the ES makes room for contingency, being therefore an adequate framework for the study not only of international *order* but also of *change*.

Briefly put, the English School can be seen as a *via media* approach, that is, ‘a sum of compromises’ between agent- and structure-centric approaches, between liberal and realist assumptions, between order and change and now also between the local/regional and the global, as well as being ontologically and methodologically pluralistic.<sup>112</sup> This character is precisely what makes the ES the most suitable framework to prompt the greater, and deeper, engagement between AS and IR that we advocate for in this piece.

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111. Mark Bevir and Ian Hall, ‘The English School and the Classical Approach: Between Modernism and Interpretivism’, *Journal of International Political Theory* 16, no. 2 (2020): 153–70.
  112. Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment*, 1 edition (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

One may argue that the springboard for the synergy between the ES and AS is the recent ‘regional turn’ in IR and especially ES scholarship.<sup>113</sup> In fact, this turn is not really a turn, but rather a natural and more sophisticated development from the early research produced by members of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, especially Martin Wight, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, who studied discrete ‘systems of states’ and the ‘expansion of international society’ into other systems as well as ‘the evolution of international society’ from a series of separate societies to a uniform, global one. Yet, even if back then these research projects were indeed innovative and pioneering, for the main focus of analysis used to be on the systemic, global international order due to the profound transformations that the Cold War was ushering in in those decades, these sub-global agendas suffered from a series of setbacks. First, they were conducted with little regard for local sources and local meanings, and using the European system as the measuring bar. Second, and consequently, they resulted in a heavy transhistorianism, whereby present-day concepts and theories were applied on distant pasts and distant worlds, without much critical engagement with whether modern concepts and theories were truly applicable or sensible in those very contexts. Conversely, the contemporary regional turn within the ES is more concerned with synchronous regional orders, this is, with how different sub-global international orders constitute a global international society.<sup>114</sup>

However, the contemporary regional agenda of the ES is also characterized by an overall analytical, structural approach, where ‘markers’ of the existence of specific social facts are identified and researched using a predetermined set of concepts and theoretical tools, without questioning their meaning, applicability and legitimacy in different

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113. See for example Mohammed Ayoob, ‘From Regional System to Regional Society: Exploring Key Variables in the Construction of Regional Order’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 53, no. 3 (1999): 247–60; Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez, eds., *International Society and the Middle East: English School Theory at the Regional Level*, 2009 edition (Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Barry Buzan and Yongjin Zhang, eds., *Contesting International Society in East Asia* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Filippo Costa Buranelli, ‘The English School and Regional International Societies: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections’, in *Regions in International Society* (Brno, Czech Republic: MUNI Press, 2014); Filippo Costa Buranelli, “‘Do You Know What I Mean?’ “Not Exactly”: English School, Global International Society and the Polysemy of Institutions’, *Global Discourse* 5, no. 3 (2015): 499–514; Yannis Stivachtis, ‘Interrogating Regional International Societies, Questioning the Global International Society’, *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought* 5, no. 3 (2015) 327–340; Linda Quayle, *Southeast Asia and the English School of International Relations – A Region-Theory Dialogue* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Kilian Spandler, *Regional Organizations in International Society: ASEAN, the EU and the Politics of Normative Arguing* (Springer International Publishing, 2018).

114. Barry Buzan and Laust Schouenborg, *Global International Society: A New Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).



regional contexts.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, despite recent calls for more engagement between AS and the ES, we want to elaborate on how exactly this synergy is viable, welcome and, more importantly, needed.<sup>116</sup>

To fully appreciate how AS can contribute to the refinement of the ES, the starting point is a consideration of the fact that the ES takes as its basic proposition that order is a product of *co-constitution* between agents and structure. This is to say, normative and institutional structures are the product of inter-subjective interactions between people, who both affect and are affected by the norms, rules and institutions they themselves create through practices and discourses. Consequently, the ES does not necessarily assign ontological priority to either structure or agency, but instead considers them both as inter-operating in a single framework.<sup>117</sup> Thus, if we consider that human agency is deeply intertwined with the structures that constitute the order(s) we study, then the histories, values, meanings and local conditions present in a given order matter crucially for the development and sustainment of that very order. In other words, however obvious this may sound, social facts (and order is one of them) are not detached from the context they originate from. Therefore, we claim that an overly analytical, structural reading of international societies runs the risk of obliterating the co-constitutive, iterative relation between orders and their local contexts.

Thus, if contextual meanings and practices matter, then AS becomes the necessary partner to study the formation and development of order in different parts of the world. More specifically, there are several ways in which we believe that AS and ES can work together to provide scholars and analysts with more fine-grained, complex and meaningful depictions and understandings of regional orders, privileging *both* structural *and* agentic dynamics, while remaining faithful to the interpretivist goal of offering Geertzian ‘thick descriptions’ of social contexts.<sup>118</sup>

Firstly, AS can serve to prompt ES scholars *to both specify and refine their ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions*, by critically engaging in discussions such as what is ‘a society?’, and how can it be ‘observed’ and ‘appraised’, particularly so in those contexts where specific understandings of ‘the good life’ might differ from those of the researcher. Closely related to this latter point is the question of whether the researcher is (or can/should become) part of the context they study, or if they are forever condemned to being an outsider of the society they try to appraise. In other

115. Filippo Costa Buranelli, ‘Global International Society, Regional International Societies and Regional International Organizations: A Dataset of Primary Institutions’, in *International Organisations in the Anarchical Society*, eds. Tonny Brems Knudsen and Cornelia Navari (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 233–63.

116. Filippo Costa Buranelli, ‘The Heartland of IR Theory? Central Asia as an “International Society” Between Realism and Liberalism’, in *Theorizing Central Asian Politics: The State, Ideology and Power*, eds. Rico Isaacs and Alessandro Frigerio, *International Political Theory* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 237–61; Hurrell, ‘Why International Relations and Area Studies Need Each Other’, 191–196.

117. Cornelia Navari, ‘Agents versus Structures in English School Theory: Is Co-Constitution the Answer?’, *Journal of International Political Theory* 16, no. 2 (2020): 249–67.

118. Clifford Geertz, ed., ‘Thick Description: Toward an interpretive Theory of Culture’, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 3–32.



words, a greater engagement with AS would allow ES scholars to be more self-aware and reflexive on their own positionality towards their research topic, and of their stance on the mind-world monism/dualism debate.<sup>119</sup> With it, AS would also bring to the forefront of ES studies the epistemic and normative consequences of adopting a particular research strategy, which would, in turn, bring to the fore of discussion, if not straightforwardly challenge, the Western/Euro-centric character of some deep-seated ES assumptions.

Secondly, AS can be particularly useful *to study specific forms of world society which may contribute to local orders through indigenous practices and norms*. Order, coexistence, reciprocity and predictability may not necessarily be ensured exclusively by states and governments, but in fact may be underpinned by indigenous, community-driven (as opposed to state-enforced) mechanisms and practices, the legitimacy of which resides in mutual understandings rooted in shared history and philosophies, such as council of elders, joint festivals and religious events. With respect to specific institutions, and taking the example of the market economy, recent research in Central Asia has highlighted how a counter-institutionalization of direct, personal, kin-based economy in bazaars is working in parallel with state capitalism,<sup>120</sup> with important repercussions on how ‘development’ is localized.<sup>121</sup> This move would, in turn, grant more saliency and agency to the element of world society, which has been, up to date, quite neglected in the ES triad, and would also expand the nascent research on institutions of (regional) world societies,<sup>122</sup> thus making the conceptual and analytical boundaries between international and world society more porous. Furthermore, it would serve to acknowledge local dynamics of socialization and endorsement of practices and norms, but also of creation, innovation, challenge and resistance.

Thirdly, AS can serve to *uncover the dynamics of co-constitution between the local and the global*. In other words, not only can AS aid the researcher to better understand how regional/local orders are socialized into (and challenge) global practices and norms, but also to trace how these local orders can impact and modify their global counterpart. In this sense, a greater engagement by the ES – and by IR writ large – with AS would serve to undermine some of the deep-rooted assumptions built into the language of the global and the local where “‘the global’ carries with it a reference to some motor or energy that drives history forward and gives it its logic, its principle of expansion, and its trajectory’ while ‘the local’ is seen as ‘secondary, reactive, and nonoriginal’, and read as resisting the global but not being in itself a source of historical movement. Instead, an alternative approach would deny the global its singular logic and ‘insist on the contingent nature of global phenomena, exploring the ways in which their global reach has been achieved only through constant interaction with [local] groups, relations, and social

119. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations : Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2010).

120. Regine A. Spector, *Order at the Bazaar: Power and Trade in Central Asia*, Electronic book (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

121. Aikokol Arzieva, ‘Understanding Normative Implications of Development as Perceived and Experienced by People in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan: Conflicting Value Systems’ (PhD dissertation, Graduate Institute Geneva, 2020).

122. Barry Buzan, ‘Revisiting World Society’, *International Politics* 55 (2018): 1–16.

forces that helped constitute them'.<sup>123</sup> Latin America offers a few telling examples of this co-constitutive dynamic between the regional and the global, particularly so in the domain of international law. One example is the regional defence of the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs of states, forged against the European and American legal stances that foreign powers retained the right to military intervention and occupation to force a country to honour its debts, as well as retaining legal jurisdiction over their citizens living on foreign soil.<sup>124</sup> This regional understanding of non-intervention was first formally institutionalized in the regional Montevideo Convention (1933), and later diffused into the global international society via its incorporation in the Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, which bans the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any given country.<sup>125</sup> Another key Latin American innovation in the realm of international law is the doctrine of *uti possidetis juris*, by which the previous imperial administrative boundaries were turned into international borders to manage relations between the newly independent Latin American states and prevent that the emergence of unclaimed territories (*terra nullius*) sparked conflicts and new colonization attempts. This legal principle was later applied to administrate the demise of the European empires in Africa and Asia, becoming a cornerstone of the decolonization process, as well as being used for the political reorganization of the Eurasian territories following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.<sup>126</sup> These examples prompt us to enquiry about the role that states from outside the 'core' of the global international society play in bringing upon substantive changes to global norms, practices and institutions. Currently, the dynamics of rulemaking of the so-called Third World and their broader impact upon the global international society remain largely under-theorized.<sup>127</sup> Instead, regions such as Latin America are usually depicted as 'rule taker' actors.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, a closer, and deeper, engagement with regional developments, particularly by resorting

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123. Tim Mitchell, 'Deterritorialization and the Crisis of Social Science', in *Localizing Knowledge in a Globalizing World*, eds. A. Mirsepassi, A. Nasu and F. Weaver (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 148–70, 170.
124. Juan Pablo Scarfi, 'Denaturalizing the Monroe Doctrine: The Rise of Latin American Legal Anti-Imperialism in the Face of the Modern US and Hemispheric Redefinition of the Monroe Doctrine', *Leiden Journal of International Law* 33, no. 3 (2020): 1–15.
125. United Nations. *United Nations Charter*, 1945. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>. Last accessed 6 May 2022.
126. Jorge Domínguez, *Boundary Disputes in Latin America* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2003); Álvaro Mendez and Mariano Turzi, eds., 'Latin America: Both Agent and Patient', in *The Political Economy of China-Latin America Relations: The AIIB Membership* (2020), 51–67. New York. Publisher: Palgrave Pivot.
127. Amitav Acharya, 'Norm Subsidiarity and Regional Orders: Sovereignty, Regionalism, and Rule-Making in the Third World', *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2011): 95–123.
128. See for example Lazlo Bruszt and Gerald McDermott, 'Integrating Rule Takers: Transnational Integration Regimes Shaping Institutional Change in Emerging Market Democracies', *Review of International Political Economy* 19, no. 5 (2012): 742–78; Jean Grugel, Pia Riggirozzi and Ben Thirkell-White, 'Beyond the Washington Consensus? Asia and Latin America in search of more autonomous development', *International Affairs* 84, no. 3 (2008): 499–517; Robert Keohane, 'Between Vision and Reality: Variables', in *Latin America in the New International System*, eds., Joseph Tulchin and Robert Espach (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001) 207–214.

to the context-specific and locally situated knowledge that can be produced through AS, can shed light on regions as ‘rule makers’ and rule innovators, therefore retracing how ‘global’ norms became globalized, and acknowledging the different regional ‘imprints’ that they carry.

Fourthly, and closely related to the two preceding points, a closer rapport between AS and the ES would serve *to facilitate a deeper understanding of the impact of informality on and within international society*. On this, it could be argued that informality is already very much present in the ES literature, given that the primary institutions of the society of states are informal, as opposed to the more formalized secondary institutions (i.e. international organizations). However, what we mean by informality here is that, through AS, researchers can become acquainted with the locality of meanings, rituals and normative compounds that inform and sustain specific practices of international politics, and hence with the performative and telic aspects of certain primary institutions. For example, if one thinks of Central Asian or ASEAN diplomacy, the literature has often portrayed them as talk-shops and empty words, and the same can be said about Latin American regionalism, which has been characterized as ‘declaratory’ at best<sup>129</sup> and ‘inconsequential’<sup>130</sup> at worst. We claim that this is a consequence of adopting a Western analytical prism, which prioritizes formal, tangible ‘outputs’ and ‘goals’ as the measuring bar of ‘successful’ multilateralism. However, if local norms and meanings are brought back into the picture (e.g. seniority, consensus, deference, collectivism, super-presidentialism), the researcher may appreciate how different, yet nonetheless valid, conceptions of order and social life are at play in these.<sup>131</sup> These conceptions may not rely on formalized and visible outcomes but are nonetheless understood and practiced by the majority of the social compact. The same is valid at the world society level. As noted above, a closer dialogue with AS can help ES-driven researchers appreciate the role of non-state actors in fostering processes of order-making through practices that are informal in character (e.g. meetings of village elders, or shared games and competitions), precisely where the state is either unable or unwilling to engage. Quite tellingly, some of the best work on border areas and peace-making in Central Asia does not come from IR but from Anthropology, History and Political Geography.<sup>132</sup> In sum, AS would allow the ES a deeper level of understanding of how order is maintained and reproduced, by elevating

129. Nicole Jenne and Francisco Urdinez, ‘Of words and deeds: Latin American declaratory regionalism, 1994-2014’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 30, nos. 2–3 (2017): 195–215; Nicole Jenne and Luis Schenoni, ‘Latin American Declaratory Regionalism: An Analysis of Presidential Discourse (1994-2014)’, *European University Institute Working Papers*, RSCAS 2015/53, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Global Governance Programme-177 (2015), 1–16.

130. Andrés Malamud, ‘Latin American Regionalism and EU-Studies’, *Journal of European Integration* 32, no. 6 (2010): 637–57, 643.

131. Filippo Costa Buranelli, ‘Informality and International Order – A Conceptual Approach’ (ISA Annual General Meeting, San Francisco, CA, USA, 2018).

132. Madeleine Reeves, ed., *Movement, Power and Place in Central Asia and Beyond: Contested Trajectories*, 1 edition (London: Routledge, 2012); Nick Megoran, *Nationalism in Central Asia: A Biography of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Boundary* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017).

the agency of regional actors, making room for non-state actors, bringing informality back into the picture, enhancing the emic (as opposed to the etic) character of the analysis and, as a result of this, sharpening the interpretivist endeavour of the researcher.

Fifthly, by engaging with how values, traditions, histories and notions of 'the good' vary across societies and cultures, the ES can advance its understanding of social orders not only by focusing on which norms and institutions are practised and endorsed in a given region, but also, and especially, by *uncovering the deep-rooted assumptions that sustain a specific practice or a specific interpretation of a certain institution in that area*. Ultimately, this would uncover not just 'orders' but 'visions of order' (or 'meta-orders'), with the potential of fostering future research on comparative *cosmologies*.<sup>133</sup> In turn, this move would incorporate elements of authentic 'theory-building' from below (Taeuber in this forum), in line with Wilson's call for a 'grounded' theorization of the ES.<sup>134</sup> In order to achieve this, ES scholars would need to engage in meaningful research collaboration with colleagues from the disciplines of Anthropology, Sociology, History and (political) Philosophy with expertise in the area(s) studied, so as to fully grasp the origins and salience of indigenous codes of conduct and behaviours that impact on 'universal' understandings of norms and institutions. In other words, we argue that if world order is indeed entering a phase of 'embedded pluralism' then an engagement with the sources of its embeddedness, i.e. its desirability, has unavoidably to rest on the support of AS research.<sup>135</sup> Crucially, embedded pluralism does not mean the erasure of social and economic globalization, but it still means that spaces for alternatives, resistance and subsidiarity will become more prominent and legitimate (Friedner Parrat and Bottelier in this forum). A look not just at regional orders, but at their cosmologies, understood as their fundamental normative and ethical components rooted in indigenous values, practices and histories becomes fundamental to grasp the significance of current changes in international society and its alternative possibilities.

Sixthly, and lastly, AS can provide the ES with the tools to *elaborate a better theorization of 'the state'*, a key aspect that is still missing from this theoretical approach. In current ES research, the state is often seen as an exogenous product brought from 'Europe' to the rest of the world. If this was previously read as a form of 'expansion' of international society,<sup>136</sup> recent scholarship has reassessed the 'expansion' story through the prisms of colonization, Eurocentrism and globalization.<sup>137</sup> Yet, we find that there is still a

133. Filippo Costa Buranelli, *Comparative Cosmology: An English School approach to comparative regionalism*, paper presented at ISA Nashville 2022.

134. Peter Wilson, 'The English School Meets the Chicago School: The Case for a Grounded Theory of International Institutions', *International Studies Review* 14, no. 4 (2012): 567–90.

135. Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 58, Issue 4, 647–659 (2014). Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

136. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, *The Expansion of International Society* (Clarendon Press, 1984).

137. Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit, eds., *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

disconnection between the role that the state plays in the theorization of international society and the theorization of the state itself in ES research, which does not take into sufficient account the ways in which different postcolonial state-formation trajectories have affected the localization and the interpretation of the institutions of international society.<sup>138</sup> Both the ‘hardware’ (e.g. borders, administrations, cadres, resources) and the ‘software’ (political legitimacy, histories of struggle and independence, cultural priors) do matter when the global and the local meet. As has been aptly noted, assuming linearity in socialization, and that all states have the same capacity to accommodate the binding power of institutions (let alone to accept a single meaning of them), hides and perpetuates hierarchical and exclusionary dynamics, often with important repercussions on policy-making as well.<sup>139</sup>

### *Conclusions: AS, ES, and Global IR*

In this forum contribution, we argued that the ES needs to engage with AS for six different reasons, which were justified above. Crucially, all these six reasons do not come from nowhere but are very much in line with what re-aligning the ES with a classical approach would entail, resting on its in-built methodological pluralism, analytical holism and interdisciplinarity. In this respect, the ES and AS are natural partners, especially when it comes to the regional level of analysis.

Most importantly, we stress the ‘need’ to favour this rapprochement due to the current changes in IR, as a discipline and as a professional field. Bringing together the ES and AS would not deny the existence of ‘the global’ as a level of analysis but would allow researchers to think of ‘the global’ ‘from somewhere’. The presence of the global does not mean the absence of the local. Rather, recognizing this means to accept that the global is not transcendental but becomes compresent with local dynamics, leading to meso-theorization.

Doing this, the reader should mind, is not easy. Bridging AS and the ES (and IR writ large) entails rolling up one’s sleeves by learning languages, reading other literatures, engaging in fieldwork activities and, when necessary, consulting archives to situate the ‘area’ material within the broader ‘IR’ theorizing, making it more refined, meaningful and authentic. A link between AS and ES would also favour dialogue, synergy and partnership with scholars from different, yet compatible, fields and with collaborators from all over the world. This would foster epistemic justice and inclusivity, and level up the field by acknowledging its diversity and complexity.

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138. Robert Yates, ‘The English School and Postcolonial State Agency: Social Roles and Order Management in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific’, *International Theory* (2020) Vol 13, Issue 1: 1–29.

139. Charlotte Epstein, ed., *Against International Relations Norms: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 1st edition (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).