Using English School Theory to Determine Legitimate Humanitarian Intervention

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ROHAN DHALIWAL, APR 24 2014

Does English School Theory Provide a Solid Basis for Determining the Legitimacy of Humanitarian Intervention?

Humanitarian intervention is a term that was continuously exclaimed and given precedent during the 1990s by academics and politicians alike. The importance of the term cannot be understated as it was used to justify operations in countries such as Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, and Kosovo for 'humanitarian' purposes. The international community saw various human rights abuses and issues that brought to the forefront the question of intervening in the affairs of other nations in order to bring peace, order, stability, and justice to the regions. Within the theoretical field of international relations, the English School does seem to provide a solid basis for determining the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. However, in actuality, and when examined in practical terms, the theory faces numerous challenges. Therefore, in order to fully analyse the English school's regard for intervention, we must also examine other theoretical positions. This essay seeks not only to analyse the English School, but also the realist, constructivist, and critical theories' positions on determining the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. In order to do so, each theory will be utilised under a thematic approach. This will be conducted under the format of analysing states' sovereignties, and the interrelated themes of Western involvement and Western states' selectivity in intervention. These ideas have been selected because of their unequivocal nature to evoke questions about intervention that can be applied to international relations theory. This approach will reveal that although, in theory, the English School does provide a solid basis for determining the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention, in practice, the English School encounters certain challenges.

International Relations Theories

In order to analyse the English School and the other chosen theories' basis for determining the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention, we must first examine the paradigmatic perspective of each theory. English School theory was first championed in the 1960s by the British Committee and is largely based on the workings of scholars such as Hedley Bull, Charles Manning, Martin Wight, Adam Watson, and R.J. Vincent (Bellamy, 2009: 4). The great figurehead of English School theory is arguably identified as Bull, and through his discourse, *The Anarchical Society*, he argues the concept of an international society. A key tenet of English School theory is that it identifies the interaction between the International System (Realist/Hobbes), International Society (Rationalist/Grotian), and World Society (Revolutionist/Kantian) (Copeland, 2003: 428). Thus, the English School theorists identify an approach that is *via media* between realism and liberalism and has been described as occupying a "middle way" (Brown, 2001: 424). The important aspects of English School thinking, with regards to humanitarian intervention, come from its tied notion of an international and world society in which the group of states in the international society share common universal/cosmopolitan human values, norms, and identities, which they seek to uphold (Bull, 2002: 13). It is important to note that within the English School, there is a divide between those known as pluralists and those known as solidarists. This dichotomy within the theory is largely seen to be a divide in understanding the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention (Wheeler, 2002: 11). The split in English School thinking occurred amidst the end of the Cold War and saw pluralists stipulating that international society must preach non-intervention to maintain order in the anarchical society. Order, it would seem, is a guiding principle of English School thought (Bellamy, 2009: 11).

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The solidarists, however, advocated humanitarian intervention because of the "growing number of common concerns, practices and institutions" within international society (Williams, 2005: 21). Therefore, this essay will seek to examine the English School's solidarist line of thinking when applying their pro-humanitarian intervention stance to issues such as the re-definition of sovereignty.

In addition, it is palpable to highlight what the other theories indicate about humanitarian intervention and, thus, how this may be applied to some of the humanitarian policies conducted by many Western countries and organisations. The realist and neorealist positions emphasize the following: the international system is anarchic, states are the main actors, and security is the main value guiding international relations (Waltz, 2000: 5). Both theories posit that states seek to maximise their power and are motivated by self-interest because the anarchical system produces a self-help system (Waltz, 2000: 33). This notion is derived from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* and his idea about the state of nature, which increases the sense of a security dilemma that states face (Buzan, 2005: 33). Waltzian neorealism differs from classical realist thought insomuch as Waltz emphasises the structural nature of international politics (Daddow, 2010: 95). Thus, the balance of power is a concept that states will often utilise to increase their position in the self-help system as they "respond to changes in the capabilities of other states" (Brown, 2001: 427). Both realism and neorealism would thus postulate that states would only intervene in the affairs of others for self-interested purposes, and not for solely humanitarian purposes (Wheeler, 2002: 31). For the purpose of this essay, the term "realism" will advance both theories' combined perspectives of the self-interested nature of states.

The post-positivist concept of social constructivism is driven by a "sociological perspective" and indicates that international relations is driven by social factors such as ideas, norms, perceptions, and identities (Chandler, 2012: 3). Thus, it has similarities to the English School's acknowledgement of shared norms and values, such as human rights. Social constructivism is largely seen to have been pioneered through the work of Alexander Wendt. Wendt postulated that "anarchy is what states make of it," and in doing so, he evokes the assumption that anarchy is a self-created norm (Wendt, 1992: 395). Social constructivists can be seen to align with the solidarist argument of the English School with regards to humanitarian intervention (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2010: 140). This can be argued because social constructivists advocate the shared norms and values that certain states uphold, such as defending human rights. Therefore, as many social constructivists share the core ideas of solidarist English School thinking, this line of thinking will be solely referred to as the English School in order to avoid repetition of the social constructivist ideology towards humanitarian intervention.

The concept of critical theory in international relations is increasingly hard to define because of the abundance of diverse categories of theory. However, a common theme that this theory holds is that it tries to critique the existing theories in international relations. Critical theories such as Marxism and Postcolonialism share some resemblances in that they are highly suspicious about the notion of humanitarian intervention. It is important to note that there are many variations of Marxism and no overall unified version of Postcolonialism. Nonetheless, in terms of international relations, Marxism can be seen to relate to Postcolonialism when examining the concept of humanitarian intervention. Both theories claim that humanitarian intervention is a form of imperialism, which has been conducted by Western nations in order to exert their own values and to exploit regions for their own purposes (Daddow, 2010: 168). One strand of Marxism in international relations draws upon Wallerstein's concept of World Systems Theory. This concept seeks to explain the "capitalist world economy" and places states in classifications by indicating that those in the core periphery such as the USA will exploit those in the lower peripheries (Martínez-Vela, 2001). Thus, we are left with a "structuralist account of economic exploitation in the global arena" (Daddow, 2010: 126).

In relation to this sense of exploitation, Postcolonialism (which emerged in the 1960s) tries to understand the perspective of those in the former colonies that have been oppressed by their former colonial powers. Through this, we find that the colonial history of many countries reveals that the native populations have suffered from European imperialist exploitation, particularly the "exploitation of Africa" (Bryan Ellis, 2013). Thus Postcolonialism posits that Western states assert imperialistic intentions through intervention in order to retain their power (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2010: 239). Therefore, we can see how each theory places its own emphasis on humanitarian intervention. Initially, through understanding each theory's approach, we can comprehend their basis for determining the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention or their critiques of intervention. The theories are important lenses to analyse empirical cases of humanitarian intervention—some giving us a template for possible solutions and others critiquing

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the existing order.

Humanitarian Intervention, R2P, and Just War Theory

Before we can examine humanitarian intervention's effects on sovereignty and the selectivity of intervention by Western nations, we must seek to define humanitarian intervention and investigate the importance of the UN doctrine of Responsibility to Protect, as well as Just War theory. There is no universally agreeable definition of humanitarian intervention. For some politicians and academics, such as Professor Aidan Hehir, intervention is seen as focusing solely on military force. Holzgrefe and Keohane's interpretation is that humanitarian intervention is

the threat or use of force across states borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied (Holzgrefe & Keohane, 2003: 18).

Humanitarian intervention evokes moral and ethical rationales for justifying force (Wheeler, 2002: 11). Importantly, Holzgrefe and Keohane's definition does not include intervention in terms of sanctions or the use of non-military means to administer aid. However, for the purpose of this essay, humanitarian intervention will be examined in terms of military force because of the challenges it faces and issues it raises to concepts such as re-defining states' sovereignties and exemplifying Western power. It is important to note that this essay will also use the term "West" when talking of European countries and of the United States. The terms "East" or "global south" will describe countries that wield less political, military, and economic power and that are often the countries in which humanitarian intervention occurs.

Humanitarian intervention was raised to the forefront of Western political rhetoric in the 1990s. The issue of intervention for humanitarian purposes raises many questions, such as who authorises intervention. Member states have generally accepted the UN's decision on humanitarian intervention, although there are incidents of isolated unilateral interventions. The United Nations Charter indicates in Article 2(4) that non-intervention is the general protocol except for "self defence and actions authorized by the UN Security Council" (Chesterman, 2003: 1). However, since the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty's (ICISS) creation of the doctrine Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the UN has adopted this as its framework on humanitarian intervention (United Nations, 2013). The R2P highlights six criteria for intervention: right authority, just cause, right intention, last resort, proportional means, and reasonable prospects (Yoshida, 2013). These criteria for military intervention have been adapted from Just War Theory, particularly the theory's concept of *jus ad bellum*, which is "the conditions under which the use of military force is justified" (BBC News, 2013). Just War Theory is an important concept because certain nations, such as the US, indicate that this theory is utilised in their policies (Jon Dorbolo, 2001). It is, thus, also part of the history of humanitarian intervention. R2P is also significant because many of the UN's operations have been authorised under this dogma. The concept of R2P has drawn much attention because it contests the boundaries of the sovereignty of states by appealing to moral/ethical reasons for intervention (UN). Therefore, both R2P and Just War Theory are important because organisations and states base the legitimacy of their humanitarian intervention on these doctrines.

Protect Sovereignty or Responsibility to Protect?

The impact of humanitarian intervention into the territory of states' evokes the question of the legitimacy of intruding on states' sovereignties. The solidarist camp of the English School advocates the use of humanitarian intervention on the lines of the shared norms and values the international society upholds. Thus, the English School thinking seeks a re-definition of sovereignty. By intervening in other countries, the Peace of Westphalia (1648) is undermined. This historic treaty set about defining the importance of sovereignty, which has, "for the past several centuries, been the foundation of interstate relations and world order" (Weiss, 2012: 15). The importance of the treaty was to avoid mass scale wars and retain international order. It declared, "All intervention is illegitimate," except against forces aiming to overthrow the international order (Buzan, 2001: 487). Humanitarian interventions into countries such as Kosovo and Somalia, for instance, have undermined the concept of respecting a nation's sovereignty. This can be very problematic because it can lead to a pre-Westphalian system, in which countries will invade others and, thus,

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diminish the respect for a nation's sovereignty. Nonetheless, in both Kosovo and Somalia, the international community saw mass humanitarian violations and declared that they proceeded on a moral/ethical basis for legitimising intervention. The case of Kosovo (1999) saw "open conflict between Serbian military and police forces and Kosovar Albanian forces that resulted in the deaths of over 1,500 Kosovar Albanians and forced 400,000 people from their homes" (NATO, 1999). NATO intervention was deemed necessary to end the human rights violations, and the respect for states' sovereignty was challenged because of the appeal to humanitarian concerns. Although the English School's advocation for humanitarian intervention may seem morally and ethically plausible, in practice, the concept of respecting states' sovereignties is diminished. This may cause many problems for international society to overcome and heightens the complexity of comprehending international law. This is evident as trying to re-define sovereignty is and will be an arduous process. Nonetheless, the English school's advocation of humanitarian intervention along the shared moral/ethical norms that the international society holds does seem to provoke the need to address the concept of sovereignty.

A realist account for humanitarian intervention would always highlight the self-interested nature of states. It is indicative that

Morgenthau was of the mind that humanitarian intervention would always rest upon controversial commitments, and for that (reason) will lead to conflict between states that do not share these commitments (Fiott, 2013: 768).

This can be seen in the case of Syria from 2012 onwards. Syria has seen vast human rights violations by the Assad government on his people, and has caused fighting between pro-government forces and rebels (Human Rights Watch, 2013). The notable US and UK antagonism towards the Syrian government has conflicted with Russian and Iranian support for Assad (Human Rights Watch, 2013). This has led to some tensions between these countries and a lack of military action by Western powers. Thus, realism's interpretation of humanitarian intervention is not ideal because states cannot agree on moral or ethical grounds and, thus, state sovereignty should be respected. Critical theories such as Marxism and Postcolonialism would declare that humanitarian intervention is illegitimate because it is a form of Western imperialism. In this way, these critical theories would indicate that we must preserve the idea of sovereignty and let individual nations conduct their own affairs accordingly; otherwise we seek to re-define the existing order which can lead to an increase in tension and hostility in the world arena. The UN General Assembly reiterates this point of retaining sovereignty because it is in accordance with the UN Charter (CFR, 2013). However, in cases such as the current crisis in Syria, in which we see thousands of civilians being killed at the hands of the Assad government, the international community has not authorised military force. We are simply left to witness and speculate on these on-going human rights atrocities. The critical theories would agree with the premise of non-intervention, but the moral/ethical obligation to intervene can be seen to be in accordance with international law, such as the Responsibility to Protect. Intervening in countries may evoke the question of re-defining sovereignty, but this is a price that may have to be paid in order to stop such horrifying human rights violations.

The case of Rwanda (1994) highlighted the need for intervention despite the debate about re-defining sovereignty. Rwanda saw "Hutu extremists launching their plans to destroy the entire Tutsi civilian population" with an estimated "800,000 men, women, and children perishing in the Rwandan genocide" (United Human Rights Council, 2013). The lack of a timely response from the international community has been widely documented, with commentators such as Paul Kennedy declaring it "as the single worst decision the United Nations ever made" (Hehir, 2012: 30). The case of Rwanda highlighted that the concept of re-defining sovereignty was small in contrast to the mass amount of human lives lost. This is emphasised as solidarist's are bound by "the assumption that sovereign boundaries are moral constructions that are not immutable" (Wheeler, 2002: 39). Although the common values the English School's international society should have been applied to the case of Rwanda, their advancement for intervention can seem plausible. The ironic statement by Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General, Edward Luck, that "standing by in the face of unfolding mass atrocities" is not morally or politically acceptable (considering the case of Rwanda) does indeed strengthen solidarist English School thought (UN). The case of Rwanda may highlight the confusing and conflicting nature of international law and, thus, a more divisive framework for states, regional bodies, and international organisations along the lines of R2P could be constructed.

Western Intervention, a Western Concept?

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The concept of humanitarian intervention sheds light on the notion that intervention is a Western concept. Since the end of the Second World War, Western countries have undoubtedly conducted more humanitarian interventions than those in the Middle and Far-East have. Countries such as the US and the UK, as well as organisations such as NATO, have implemented military force into countries like Iraq and Libya, in order to alleviate humanitarian crises. There are only marginal examples when those in the Global South have intervened, such as Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia (1978) and Tanzania's in Uganda (1978) (Wheeler, 2002: 38). The extent to which these campaigns were conducted on the premise of Just War theory, or for humanitarian reasons, is controversial (Hehir, 2013: 67). Whilst humanitarian intervention is a general Western concept, international relations theories are also akin to Western thought. Therefore, the theories utilised in this essay declare a naturally Western perspective. We can comprehend how each theory seeks to explain international relations and their position on humanitarian intervention. We must ask the following: what makes those nations in the West adopt the sentiment that they must intervene in the Global South? Edward Said's *Orientalism* provides a Postcolonial critique of the West's perception of those in the East. Said's use of binaries indicated that those in the West (the Occident) inherently believed that those in the East (the Occident) were subordinate and needed to be inflicted with Western morals, principles, and systems of order (Danielle Sered, 2012).

Edward Said's theory coincides with the Marxist and Postcolonial thought that Western nations sought to exert a form of imperialism through invasions which have been conducted under the premise of humanitarian interventions. These critical theories indicate that it is the countries in the West that may be guided by Orientalist thinking. Although today, those in the West may not explicitly believe that they are far superior to those in the East, there is still an underlying sentiment that those in the West feel the need to help those in the East who cannot be helped by their own government. Said posits that this is particularly the case with the West's perception of Arab states (Danielle Sered, 2012). On the basis that it is those in the West that mainly intervene in the affairs of others, solidarist English School thinking may seem to present an imperialistic perception of the West. This Postcolonial critique of the English School is evident in the case of Libya in 2011. Libya highlighted a grave amount of violence that occurred between government forces, headed under Gaddafi and rebel forces. It is highlighted that

in 2011 the UN Security Council invoked the "responsibility to protect" doctrine and adopted Resolution 1973, endorsing a no-fly zone over Libya and authorizing member states to "take all necessary measures" to protect civilians under attack from Muammar al-Qaddafi's government (CFR, 2013).

The utilisation of the Responsibility to Protect by the UN highlights the West's use of power to deal with affairs in the Global South. It is has been further speculated that "the intervention was a Western imperialist project" (Al Jazeera, 2011). Nonetheless, the horrifying acts of violence in Libya deemed intervention on humanitarian grounds to be legitimate. This further highlights that solidarist English School thinking can explain certain empirical cases and conveys that the norm of protecting human values is often maintained amongst the international society. This is further conveyed by Wheeler, who postulates that "a key premise of solidarism is that governments are responsible not only for protecting human rights at home but also for defending them abroad" (Wheeler, 2002: 39).

Western Selectivity in Intervention

The idea that humanitarian intervention is, by and large, a Western concept interrelates intervention to the theme of selectivity. The West's implementation of force for humanitarian purposes has often been selective. Solidarist English School thinking would assert that states would advocate humanitarian intervention because it is in accordance with the common norms and values the international society shares. For the most part, international society has intervened in many cases where there have been humanitarian violations. There have been successes in putting an end to gross human rights violations (Tom Perriello, 2012). However, the realist critique of the English School would declare that they have only intervened for self-interested purposes (Noriega, 2013). This may explain the selectivity of intervention that has occurred. For instance, Western states intervened in the cases of Somalia, Rwanda, Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya. Some cases of humanitarian intervention may have been for self-interested purposes, such as in Iraq or Libya.

Furthermore, the realist assertions of self-interest and maximisation of power are evident in the case of the 2003 Iraq

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War. The justification for the use of force in Iraq was largely seen as a result of Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction programmes, "the threat Saddam posed to the Middle East; Iraq's links to al Qaeda; Saddam's harsh treatment of the Iraqi people; Iraq's lack of democracy" (CFR, 2003). The Iraq War saw unilateral military action, headed by the United States with some support from Britain. The invasion was widely documented, with critics and analysts asserting that US military action was directed in realist terms and that the US sought to extract oil and resources from Iraq (CNN, 2013). The realist claim that Western countries are selective in their interventions, because they will only intervene if it is to maximise their own position, can be seen in the case of Kosovo. NATO's inherent unilateral action, which was conducted under the guise of the US, emphasises this (The Guardian, 1999). English School thinking would declare the realist position as morally/ethically wrong as "the practice of unilateral humanitarian intervention continues to be treated with great suspicion by international society" (Wheeler, 2002: 16). Nonetheless, the solidarist faction of the English School, which is based on common values, is further undermined. Yoshida highlights that in the invasion,

the purpose of the intervention was to ensure the credibility of NATO in Europe… Because NATO has played a critical role in maintaining US hegemony in Europe, continued existence of NATO as an effective institution was imperative for the US to continue its dominance in the region (Yoshida, 2013).

This augments the importance of realist thought that states are selective in their interventions because of self-interested reasons. In practice, this realist claim can undermine solidarist English School thought, which conveys that the international society holds shared norms, such as the maintenance of human rights.

Both the Marxist and Postcolonialist claim that Western powers use humanitarian interventions to assert imperialistic goals can draw a parallel to the realist claim of maximising power. It is emphasised that "imperialism has always been motivated by economic gain" (Anghie, 2007: 141). Thus, World Systems Theory would indicate that the US (located in the core periphery) through invading Iraq (periphery) in 2003 tried to gain some control of the country and, as a result, augmented the American economy. This is further reinforced as "American troops were detailed to secure oil facilities" in the hope to bolster US power (Independent, 2007). Postcolonialism would assert that Western states would only intervene if there were clear opportunities to assert Western values and norms into a country. For instance, in the case of Iraq in 2003, the US conducted a complete "regime change" by toppling the authoritarian government (Kinzer, 2006: 1). Instead of working with Iraqi forces, the US sought to "install a more accountable form of government" (Foreign Policy, 2013). This Western democratic system has been duly unsuccessful and a problem for a number of reasons, such as the amount of "people displaced by the on-going sectarian violence" (Gilbert Burnham, 2006). Therefore, both Marxism and Postcolonialism's indication that Western states are selective in their choice of intervention, because of imperialistic purposes, also undermines the English School's advocation for humanitarian intervention on its moral duties.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the division of the English School into pluralists and solidarists has had profound effects on the concept of humanitarian intervention. Theoretically, the solidarist faction of the School does provide a solid basis for determining the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. This legitimacy is based upon common norms and values that the international society shares. The main norm and value regarding humanitarian intervention is the appeal to intervene on moral/ethical lines. This has been the case in many instances of intervention, such as Libya in 2011. The adaptation of the Responsibility to Protect as a legal doctrine for the United Nations highlights the importance of norms and values of the English School's solidarists. Nonetheless, the critiques of the English School can be deemed to be plausible to a certain extent. Realists assertions that states are self-interested are evident in claims of the selectivity of Western intervention. The United States will, more often than not, only intervene in countries where it can maximise its own security or economy. This is most notable in the case of the 2003 Iraq War. Marxist and Postcolonial critiques of the English School are most credible in their assertion that intervention is a process for imperialism to occur. This is explained through the Marxist World Systems Theory of economic exploitation and Edward Said's Orientalism, which conveys the binary notions of the West towards the East. One of the biggest challenges to solidarist English School thinking has been the assumption that intervention constrains states' sovereignties, which has been an important function of international order.

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Nonetheless, wars and conflicts will continue to occur while the concept of humanitarian intervention will always be recurrent. In the face of mass human rights violations, the international community has more often than not intervened. Although there are notable examples where the international community has been found ignoring such violations, as in Rwanda (1994), the problem may belong to the often confusing and complex nature of international law. This lack of rapid action can also be seen as the result of a lack decisiveness among regional organisations, as well as intergovernmental organisations. Yet the assumption that English School solidarism is based upon common norms and values is agreeable. This is something that should be continued to be strengthened amongst the international society. Although the English School does face some challenges, it does ultimately provide a solid basis for determining humanitarian intervention.

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Written by: Rohan Dhaliwal
Written at: Loughborough University
Written for: Dr. Chris Zebrowski
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