THE ENGLISH SCHOOL

IR Theory is a mainly American field. The most important advocates of both Realism and Liberalism came from North America and it was normal in the Cold War environment. However, with the Détente in the 1960s, a very important school of thought emerged in Britain as an alternative to both American scholars of International Relations and to Realist and Liberal schools of international relations. This group of social scientists working on IR Theory were grouped around the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics and were therefore named the English School but many of its members are not British. The English School has important followers in Britain, in Continental Europe, and in English-speaking countries including Canada, Australia, and India.

The English School is a mixture of different ideas and may be said to be in the middle of the political spectrum among the theories of international relations, because the English School tries to find a balance between state egotism and conflict on the one hand and human goodwill and cooperation on the other hand. It tries to offer an account of international relations which combines theory and history, morality and power, and agency and structure, therefore neither rejects nor adopts realism and/or liberalism. However, just because of this, the boundaries of the English School are not clear.

The English School in IR theory is generally associated with the notion of international society. It is most commonly associated with Hedley Bull’s *Anarchical Society*, where Bull contrasted British approaches to international relations with those American and realist approaches where states are driven solely by power politics and egoistic materialism, the only laws being “the laws of the jungle”. Bull argued that although the international realm could be regarded as anarchical, in the sense of lacking an overarching authority to define and enforce rules, it did not mean that international politics were anarchic or chaotic. Contrary to the billiard-ball metaphor of international politics, states are not just individual elements in a system. In practice, there is a substantial institutionalization of shared values, mutual understandings, and common interests; hence, the “anarchical society”. Indeed, he argued that even ethics were an integral part of world politics, and that prudence and morality were not mutually exclusive.

There are several distinct focuses of the English School approach. Hidemi Suganami, who first suggested the title “British Institutionalists” for the School, has pointed to its concern with *institutions* in the sense of operative principles, such as diplomacy, international law, the balance of power and state sovereignty. A second cut is that of Robert Jackson, who has identified the English School’s subject more broadly as *codes of conduct*. His focus is not directly with institutions, but with the practices of *statespersons*.