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Exploring Westphalia's Blind Spots: Exceptionalism Meets the English School[1]

Laust Schouenborg

City, University of London

Abstract

The point of departure for this paper is the realisation that the regional dimensions of international society have not been conceptualised adequately by International Relations scholars. One consequence of this, I argue, is that what could have been understood as regionally-led change has been framed as revolutionary exceptions or imperialist drives for power aggregation. I attempt to develop this point by demonstrating how, for example, the EU and international fascism (in this paper mainly associated with Germany, Italy and Japan during WWII) might instead be considered as cases of regional differentiation within international society. Two things are accomplished via this analysis. First, the cases are 'normalised', making a more accurate historical description of their respective developments possible. Second, by taking these regionally-led developments seriously, the potential for fundamental change to the core institutions of international society becomes a distinct possibility and thus unsettles our whole Westphalian imagination.

Keywords: English School; regional international societies; EU; fascism; communism; French revolution; American revolution.

Introduction

This article is in an important sense an attempt to re-write the history of modern international relations, or more aptly, to reconfigure the theoretical lenses through which we view and conceptualise that history. By modern international relations, I roughly mean the period from the peace of Westphalia in 1648 and up until the present. My main concern is that this history has traditionally been told from the perspective of what I term the statist paradigm, which is based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that a state's authority is absolute and exclusive; that is, authority is hierarchically organized within the state (there is one supreme authority), and furthermore, authority is territorially isolated from any encroachment by outsiders - this is the principle of state sovereignty. The second assumption is that individuals will always, per default, be

predominantly loyal to their state (or their nation, which if not in possession of a state, must seek to establish one). In other words, it is considered natural for authority and community to be congruent (Spruyt 1994, 3; Deudney 1995, 192-3; Osiander 2007, 5; Fabbrini 2007, 87). Meanwhile, as Osiander (2007, 18-9) reminds us, these assumptions are only ideas, which originated in a specific time and place in history: the centuries following the peace of Westphalia in 1648. Most people today may share them, but there is nothing natural about them, and there is nothing to suggest that some individuals may not genuinely hold conflicting ideas.

Following on from this, the point is that these assumptions have been turned into a standard or default theoretical framework in International Relations (IR)[2] that prevents us from seeing - or at least taking seriously – historical developments that challenge one or both of these assumptions. In this article I will analyse four prominent cases of this: The American/French revolutions, international fascism/Nazism, international communism and the European Community/European Union. They are all in one way or another examples of communities of loyalty transcending the state and/or of absolute authority being made divisible either inside or across the territorial boundaries of the state.

It is very interesting to observe how traditional IR theory (the statist paradigm), as well as the cognate discipline of diplomatic history, has dealt with, or portrayed, these cases: Either they have been *exceptionalised* as something temporary and/or aberrant or they have been *normalised* as the standard pursuit of state interests in accordance with the assumptions of the statist paradigm. To give a few examples, international fascism and international communism are often portrayed as pathological exceptions, undermining international order, and the EU is described as a *sui generis* development in international relations or an UPO (unidentified political object), as one former president of the European Commission put it. At the other end of the scale, nazi expansionism or the Napoleonic conquests associated with the French revolution have been normalised as standard acts of state imperialism.[3]

However, I do not only want to suggest that the statist paradigm is misleading – this has already been accomplished by scholars such as Mansbach and Ferguson (1996), Osiander (2007) and Cerny (2010) – but also tell an alternative history of these cases from the perspective of the so-called English School of IR. All theories in a sense obscure some things while bringing other things into sharper focus, and this is also true of the English School. Nevertheless, I do believe that it is fundamentally less plagued by a set of faulty assumptions akin to the two that inform the statist paradigm, and at least to that extent does provide a more accurate history. Here I will provide a brief introduction to the English School, before moving on to some initial remarks about what the alternative story that springs from it can tell us about international relations and the broader subject of geopolitics.

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[2] I use the standard capitals to indicate the discipline of International Relations as distinct from its subject matter.

[3] Examples in the literature are too numerous to reference. However, I will touch upon some of these works in the following analysis of the individual cases.

The English School of International Relations

Although there are different strands of thinking within the English School, all adherents take as their point of departure the existence of an 'international society'. In Bull's and Watson's (1984, 1) classic formulation:

> A group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements.

Bull (1977) - mainly talking about international relations in the modern era (post-1648) - identified five such international social institutions: 1) the balance of power; 2) international law; 3) diplomacy; 4) war; and 5) the great powers. It is crucial to emphasise that these are institutions in the social sense of bundles of practices, ideas and norms/rules, and *not* institutions in the physical sense of international organisations and regimes. It should equally be stressed that there is currently no scholarly consensus on what should count as an institution and how many institutions there are in international society at any given time (Buzan 2004, ch.6; Wilson 2009). This is quite important as one of my key arguments below is that these institutions change over time and with them international society. I will explore some of the classical institutions identified by Bull, notably diplomacy, war and international law, but I will also look at less traditional institutional candidates such as trade relationships and principles of legitimacy – again as social bundles of practices, ideas and norms/rules.

Another idea that features prominently in English School debates is the distinction between 'international system' and 'international society'. This is implied in Bull's and Watson's quote above, where they distinguish the social relationships in international society from the more basic, mechanical interaction of a system of states where no social institutions or norms of behaviour have yet been established. It should be noted that only some English School scholars subscribe to the social progression idea (from international system to international society), whereas others view international system and international society as coexisting simultaneously. In the latter perspective, international system often becomes associated with statist or realist elements in international relations, whereas international society largely represents liberal aspirations for international order. On this point, however, I belong to that group of English School scholars who believe that this distinction is essentially untenable. As Buzan (2004, 99) convincingly argues, 'physical interaction without social content is, if not impossible, at least rather rare and marginal in

human affairs'. It follows that if all interactions are in some sense social, then there is no reason why they cannot be subsumed under the concept of international society.

An interesting point that follows from this conclusion is that the standard claim - which is often put forward by followers of the statist paradigm - to the effect that the states-system will always reassert itself against idealist or transnational movements attempting to change it, is fundamentally misguided. The states-system is itself a *social* system that has been, and is, continuously evolving. Seeing the states-system as something fixed, structural and immovable in opposition to weak and ephemeral social ideas is basically untenable from this perspective.

A related point – and here it should be stressed that far from all English School scholars buy into this interpretation – is that it does not make sense to operate with an essential notion of the state. Many English School scholars no doubt recognise that states can have different identities and thus different interests and ways of behaving. Yet, they predominantly subscribe to the idea that theorising about international relations should start with the concept of *independent* political communities, as again implied in Bull and Watson's quote above. The problem here is that the idea of independence perpetuates statist assumptions of exclusive loyalties and indivisible authority (again see Mansbach and Ferguson 1996; Osiander 2007; Cerny 2010). Although admirable works of conceptual history, both Watson's (1992) *The Evolution of International Society* and Armstrong's (1993) *Revolution and World Order* appear to fall into this trap. In its stead, we should rather speak of plural and overlapping *political communities*, defined as 'individuals considering themselves and each other to share important interests across a range of issues' (Osiander 2007, 29) and/or *polities*, defined as centres of legitimised authority (Mansbach and Ferguson 1996). The state - in the sense of an independent and centralised authority - is one such polity, but only one out of many different types.

How does this framework alter the stories, and indeed histories, we narrate about international relations and geopolitics? The immediate response is obviously that the reader should move on to the case studies below and make up his or her own mind. But let me briefly pick up a few points which I will further elaborate on in the conclusion. The first point is that this framework cautions us to take seriously political movements such as, for example, international communism and international fascism and their potential to fundamentally change the international system, international society. Not just change the balance of power between leading states, but fundamentally alter how power and political communities are constituted. The point is not to overestimate the appeal of either fascism or communism, but only to recognise that they did hold some appeal as principles of legitimacy and were promoted by powerful social movements and consequently left permanent imprints on international society. A second point, and this relates particularly to the subject of geopolitics, is that international society should not be viewed as one monolithic whole. The cases I will explore below can all be thought of as sub-global or regionally-led change in international society. Geography and space in terms of the reach and spread of various international social institutions thus become a key concern. This should also be a welcome

development for those scholars who have called for more English School engagement with the idea of regions (Buzan 2004; Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez 2009).

Four cases have been singled out for analysis. These are revolutionary America/revolutionary France of the 18th and 19th centuries, the fascist regimes in Europe and Asia of the 1930s and 1940s, the communist bloc after 1917 and finally the European Community/European Union (EC/EU). They have been chosen because they are some of the most potent examples of the exceptionalism/normalisation dichotomy in the literature.

Revolutionary America/revolutionary France

Why consider the American and French revolutions one case? Historians specializing in the period often note the profound connections between the two revolutions. First, the French support for the American colonists' cause during the war of independence, and second, the wealth of revolutionary ideas carried back to France after the colonists' hard fought victory (Furet 1992, 35, 73-4; Hendrickson 2003, 175). Within IR, Mlada Bukovansky (2002) has successfully argued that they can be considered together because they were instrumental in establishing a new principle of international legitimacy. For her, their crowning achievement was the replacement of the principle of dynastic rule with that of popular sovereignty, amounting to nothing less than a systemic change in international politics. To me, this is indeed what connects the two, and in the first part of this section I will briefly try to tease out the basic elements of this change. However, other international institutions were affected by this political rupture as well, and here it is possible to observe some marked differences across the Atlantic. I will offer some observations on these in the second part of the section.

The great achievement of Bukovansky's book is her synthesis, based on the most up to date historical research, of the cultural system prevailing in Europe in the late 18th century and its partial overturn by political entrepreneurs who strategically exploited Enlightenment ideas to found a new hegemonic counter-culture. In her account, the international politics of *Ancien Régime* Europe can be described as a macrocosmic representation of the institutionalized rivalry prevailing in court politics: 'International relations was conducted by a class of people for whom prestige constituted the primary mode of self-identification and value; retaining their elite status was their primary concern; and similar rules of rivalry governed both court politics and international politics' (Bukovansky 2002, 83). Against this system, and partly growing out of it, a new culture emerged in the American colonies which negated the legitimacy of court society and instead embraced the principle of popular sovereignty. This was a complex process, with a crucial element being the reappraisal of republican discourses about the nature of society and government.

The traditional discourse (which had found a concrete expression in the British form of government) held that the ideal society was to be governed by a mixed constitution, with power being shared by society's three orders: the one (monarch); the few (aristocracy); and the many (people). For various reasons this discourse went through a transformation in the American

context, and Bukovansky (2002, 122) is hence able to conclude that 'Republicanism was essentially recast as democracy, or the politics of competing interests, where balance in politics came not from the representation of the three orders of society but rather from the checks and balances between branches of government, and between state and federal government. Society in turn became conceived of, not as a stratified organic unity, but as a plurality of individuals, all competing to further their particular interests'. Her follow-on argument is that this discourse fed back into Europe and was exploited strategically by political entrepreneurs in France. This was what allowed the Third Estate in 1789 to perform another discursive shift when it constituted itself as the National Assembly: 'the language of liberty versus despotism was overtaken by, and subsumed within, the language of equality versus privilege' (Bukovansky 2002, 185). She summarizes the systemic change entailed in this shift in the following way: 'revolutionary ideas altered the purposes of the French state and made its interests incommensurable, not just with the interests of other states (which would hardly have been novel) but with the basic structure and norms of the European international system itself. Thus the game changed from "France against Austria" (for example), to "France against Europe"' (Bukovansky 2002, 169). 'The undivided will of the people became the basis and legitimation for all policy, including foreign policy' (Bukovansky 2002, 190).

However, there were marked differences in how the new principle of popular sovereignty was converted into practice on each side of the Atlantic. In France, the principle was interpreted in a very 'nationalistic' and exclusive way. The National Assembly - and latterly the National Constituent Assembly (1789-1791), the Legislative Assembly (1791-1792) and the National Convention (1792-1795) - was conceptualized as the sole indivisible expression of the will of the people. Since the people could not be divided, neither could its representative assembly. Unity became the guiding political motif and any challenge to this unity (either foreign or domestic) per definition became a mortal threat to the people. As some leading scholars have pointed out, this can be seen as one of the main factors behind the emergence of the terror and the revolutionary wars (Furet 1992, ch.3; Singer 1986, ch.14).

In America, on the other hand, the idea of popular sovereignty was kept firmly within the republican discourse of the mixed constitution. As Deudney (1995, 214-6) and Hendrickson (2003) have intriguingly argued, political legitimacy in the early American states-union was never thought to be stemming from one nation. Indeed, the colonists did not consider themselves a nation; not at the state level, and certainly not at the union level. Rather, popular sovereignty was conceptualized within the framework of divisible authority, with power being exercised and kept in balance at both the state and union levels. In fact, the early American states-union challenges the traditional, statist paradigm in IR in so far as authority was neither absolute nor hierarchical; the prime example being that the constituent states maintained the right to an independent military force in the form of the citizen militia under command of the governor (Deudney 1995, 201). In line with this, it is not possible to identify a single authority as the focal point of citizens' loyalty. It, too, was divisible.

However, the point is not just that the American states-union does not conform with the two assumptions the statist paradigm in IR is based on. Rather, the point is that the American states-union constituted itself as separate international society with a new interpretation of not only sovereignty, but also a range of other international institutions, such as the balance of power, the great powers, mercantilism, diplomacy and international law. Hendrickson (2003, 14-23) has shown how the prolonged debates preceding the adoption of the constitution in 1788 were informed by what could be called a unionist 'paradigm' or 'ideology'. One prominent feature of this set of ideas was a negation of the states-system of Europe and its reliance on the balance of power as an ordering institution. The authors of the constitution were no doubt receptive to equilibrist notions of all sorts, but they were keen to avoid what they saw as the precipice of an equilibrium between sovereign states and sought instead to establish a union or 'peace pact' based on an equilibrium between several centres of authority within a states-union. Moreover, when the institution of the great powers was agreed upon at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (Osiander 1994, 232-47), as a supporting ordering institution to that of the balance of power, the Americans chose to reject it as well (at least when it came to the Western hemisphere), and eventually proceeded to proclaim the Monroe doctrine in 1823.

The American international society displayed other institutional innovations. It is not possible to dwell on them here at any length, but they included a new form of diplomacy, with diplomatic agents operating both between the constituent units and union centre and between the centre and the states of the European states-system. A fairly strong commitment to the naturalist interpretation of international law based on universal principles, as opposed to the increasingly positivist orientation prevailing in Europe. And finally, the gradual replacement of mercantilist with free-trade practices (Iriye 1977; Armstrong 1993; Deudney 1995; Bukovansky 2002; Hendrickson 2003).

If we turn our eyes to France, then it is also possible to observe a reinterpretation of several institutions. However, to fully appreciate this it is best to focus first on the several factors which led to the conflagration in Europe. One basic factor was obviously geography. Unlike the American colonies, which were at best thought to be located at the fringe of international society, the French kingdom was located in the heart of Europe and was considered a key member of international society. The challenge posed by its revolution to the prevailing principle of legitimacy in that society was therefore all the more urgent.[4] In Bukovansky's words, the game had changed from 'France against Austria' to 'France against Europe'. A second basic factor was that the zeal of the French revolutionaries, generally speaking, was of a more radical nature than, say, that of the Americans. What I mean by this is that both revolutions embodied a universalist principle: a commitment to popular rule, whether that be in the institutionalized will of a nation or in the form of a 'compound republic'. This truth was self-evident, the right of all men. However, whereas the American

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[4] It should be noted, though, that European leaders, initially, saw the revolution more as an opportunity than a challenge. It was believed that the revolution would first and foremost weaken the French kingdom, not pose a threat to the general order of Europe (Bukovansky 2002, 194-5).

decision-makers were hesitant about actively promoting this principle abroad in the aftermath of the war of independence, their French counterparts seemed quite willing to plunge their country into a war with the major powers of Europe (Bukovansky 2002, 153-62, 196-7; Hendrickson 2003, 175-6).[5]

The basic point I'm getting at is that these two factors inevitably pulled the revolution in a violent direction, and this can be viewed as both a consequence and a catalyst of institutional innovation. As I have already noted, the revolution produced a very exclusive notion of popular sovereignty within France, but also, somewhat paradoxically perhaps, a strong commitment to a universal notion of this principle which came to signify a community of mankind. In Armstrong's (1993, 85-6) words,

> In its most idealistic phase, this aspect of French revolutionary ideology took the form of a benevolent cosmopolitanism under which French citizenship was offered to 'lovers of liberty' from other lands, and vague schemes were mooted for the French Assembly to become some kind of international legislature. When the Assembly renounced all wars of conquest in 1790, it did so in part out of a conviction…that all peoples were part of one great society governed by natural law.

The wars that eventually did follow were not considered wars of conquest, but wars of liberation.

This reconceptualization had important consequences for other international institutions. In the case of diplomacy, the French started to address themselves directly to the people of foreign countries, what could be termed one of the first instances of 'public diplomacy'. The famous propaganda decree of November 1792 promised 'fraternity and aid to all peoples who wish to recover their liberty', and when the French threatened to appeal directly to the British people to prevent that country from entering the war, it prompted George III to declare that 'this nation...will never have with foreign powers connexion or correspondence, except through the organ of its King' (Armstrong 1993, 85, 245). The very character of war was also transformed when France instituted the *levée en masse.* Its scale changed dramatically, and so did its organization, the purposes it was fought for and the impact it had on the societies involved.

While one could argue that reaction set in with the Napoleon's rise to power in the late 1790s in terms of a return to some form of monarchical rule, scholars like George Rudé (1964, 220-2), Jeremy Black (2002, 220, 249) and Bukovansky (2002, 213-4) nevertheless emphasise that there was no return to an *ancien regime* system of international relations in Europe. The

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[5] The outbreak of the wars has been the object of a heated debate among historians. Were the wars premised on a clash of ideologies or the pursuit of the national interest? Most of the resulting works are prime examples of the influence of the second assumption of the statist paradigm. Although they recognize the importance of ideology, the bottom line is that the main factor was 'reason of state', since the decision-makers were ultimately loyal to their respective nation-states. For good reviews, see Bukovansky (2002, 192-202) and Armstrong (1993, 79-84).

game, so to speak, had fundamentally changed, and from that point on the popular will, most often expressed in the idea of a nation, was a force to reckoned with, and was appealed to by republican and dynastic leaders alike. It was only in France that a full-blown revolution took place, but in the rest of Europe, as well as in France, the ideas of the Enlightenment, the permanent legislation of the revolutionary assemblies and the liberal principles of the 'spirit of 1789' lived on (Rudé 1964, 221), and so did many of the institutional changes wrought by the revolution.

To me, this evidence suggests that the French revolution was not so much an imperial drive towards the attainment of European hegemony, and that the American revolution had little to do with the formation of a new state. Rather, they seemed to be examples of regionally-led change within international society, and in the American case, almost an attempt to create a separate and independent international society. Admittedly, the French revolution did not succeed in creating a lasting community of mankind, and following the civil war America did start to conform to the European state model and the norms of Westphalian international society. However, we remain blind to some of the enduring institutional changes elaborated above if we persist in our adherence to the statist paradigm.

A fascist international society?

For many people the very idea of a fascist international society will sound as an oxymoron. First, there are those who contend that fascism cannot be abstracted into a wider phenomenon. For them, what is termed 'forms of fascism' are in fact highly unique hypernationalist movements which it would prove inherently misleading to compare. Second, there are those who see an irreconcilable contradiction between fascism (again, as an extreme form of nationalism) and anything international. To simply state the possibility of a fascist international society, even before the meaning of this concept has been spelled out, would be considered a logical impossibility (Morgan 2003, 159-60).[6] In this section I shall argue otherwise. Specifically, and similar to the argument in the preceding section, I shall contend that fascism can also be understood as a set of ideas heralding a new principle of international legitimacy, namely that of a world divided into racial regions. I will show how it came to be institutionalized in the tripartite pact between Germany, Italy and Japan and how it interacted with other international institutions.

For the purpose of establishing the existence fascism as an international principle of legitimacy it would be enough to show that a number of polities adhered to this principle in their practices and their norms/rules. It would not be necessary to establish any active cooperation between them in support of this principle. However, the striking thing about the period from the early 1920s to the mid 1940s, seen in the light of the fascism (nationalism)/internationalism dichotomy, is exactly the widespread cooperation in support of the principle internationally. First,

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[6] I suspect, but cannot prove, that this has something to do with not being able to recognize the fascist regimes as anything but unique instances of pure evil rather than 'normal' social phenomena. And second, the statist paradigm, which will only allow the Axis campaigns of World War II to be interpreted as familiar cases of imperialism.

between the fascist regime in Italy and the many fascist movements throughout Europe, then from the early 1930s, between Italy and Germany, and from the mid 1930s, between Italy, Germany and Japan.[7] This cooperation was no doubt riddled with conflicts over various issues, some having to do with ideology and some having do with matters of political expediency, but it is nevertheless possible to discern a prevailing consensus around a new principle of legitimacy, one grounded in the idea of the regeneration of regional civilizations, which gradually came to be defined in racial terms.

Italian fascism was mainly based on the two principles of corporatism and the totalitarian state. The Nazi regime certainly paid respect to the totalitarian principle and embraced a form of corporatism, but was also much more committed to the idea of racial purity. However, what the two regimes shared with the rest of the fascist movements on the continent was a wider belief in the threat posed to European civilization by the degenerate ideologies of liberalism, capitalism and Bolshevism. They were united in the joint project of restoring European civilization, however much they might disagree about the details and about who should be the leading element, or vanguard nation, in this regeneration (De Grand 1995; Morgan 2003, 167-72).

Similar ideas were attracting followers in Asia, and in particular Japan. In his recent study of the politics of anti-Westernism in Asia, Cemil Aydin (2007, 161-89) convincingly shows how by the early 1930s, after the Manchurian incident and the withdrawal from the League of Nations, larger and larger sections of Japanese society were turning towards an ideology of pan-Asianism. To be sure, pan-Asianism was nothing new. Taken to mean the idea of an Asian identity standing in opposition to that of the West, it had been present since at least the great Western imperialist drive of the late nineteenth-century, and had received a major boost by the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905. What had changed by the 1930s was the close to wholesale abandonment of Western international society by the dominant strata of Japanese society, and the vision, increasingly couched in racial terms[8], of creating a new order in East Asia, separate from the West.

It is against this background that one should see the tripartite pact of 1940 between Italy, Germany and Japan. Historians often dismiss the treaty as nothing but an instrumental compact designed to further the imperialist interests of each state. Furthermore, they add that it proved highly ineffectual when it came to concerted action against, especially, the Soviet Union.[9] However, these issues are beside the point. What is important is that it can be seen as cementing the principle of a world divided into regions of different civilizations and races. In line with the discourses of civilizational regeneration, the preamble to the treaty read:

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[7] This list is not exhaustive. Cooperation with the fascist type states of Spain and Argentina, most notably, could be included as well. However, for simplicity's sake, the discussion will be limited to the former three states.

[8] Like the Nazis, the Japanese also developed a distinct East Asian racial hierarchy with the 'Yamato Race' at its zenith (Martin 1995, 227; Lebra 1975, 118-21).

[9] For a good example, see Bernd Martin (1995, ch.7). However, in a later chapter he concedes the point that 'fashioning the world according to fascist-folkish basic principles, overcoming what was regarded as demoralising individualism, and the corresponding liberal democratic economic order were the common goals of the three signatory states' (Martin 1995, 248).

The governments of Germany, Italy and Japan, considering it as a condition precedent of any lasting peace that all nations of the world be given each its own proper place, have decided to stand by and co-operate with one another in regard to their efforts in greater East Asia and regions of Europe respectively wherein it is their prime purpose to establish and maintain a new order of things calculated to promote the mutual prosperity and welfare of the peoples concerned' (The Avalon Project 2008).

The principle was reiterated in the first article of the treaty: 'Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in establishment of a new order in Europe'. And in the second article: 'Germany and Italy recognize and respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in greater East Asia'. It may be that the three signatory states did not do much to honour the provisions for military and technical aid, which were also a part of the treaty, and that they in the long run might not be inclined to respect each others 'leadership', but they did certainly 'walk the walk'. In their policies and practices, all three of them did set out to reshape/regenerate the order of the regions they belonged to.

These regional projects also had a profound impact on perceptions of trade. In traditional historiography, there are two standard narratives regarding trade relations within and between the fascist new orders. One narrative is about the strictly instrumental trade cooperation between Germany and Japan. In this account, trade relations lacked any real substance, and cooperation in this sphere is essentially deemed a propaganda ploy. The second narrative portrays the economic system within each region as standard imperialist exploitation. In Martin's (1995, 272-3) words, with reference to the Japanese domain, 'a "Greater East Asia Robbery Sphere"'. However, when an explanation for this situation is on offer, it seems to be intimately tied to the new fascist principle of international legitimacy.

Mistrust, envy, and even treachery, together with and outspoken feeling of racial superiority, were characteristic of German-Japanese trade relations, especially for the period of combined warfare…The New Order of East Asia was to be dominated politically and economically by Japan. Tokyo planned to become the hub of closed economic sphere where no Western nation, not even the befriended Germans, would be granted special privileges (Martin 1995, 272-3).

Aydin (2007, 164-5) corroborates this point. According to him, the 'neomercantilist' policy of Japan was part of a global ideological move away from Western laissez-faire capitalism. What the Nazis tried to establish with their new economic order in Europe was broadly similar to the policy of

Japan (Mazower 2008, 260-3). It therefore seems quite plausible to make a causal link between the new fascist principle of international legitimacy and transformations in the perception of trade.

War was another institution which was reinterpreted within the context of the emergence of the fascist regimes and World War II. One can point to qualitative changes in doctrine (mobile warfare, strategic bombing) and organization (economies and civil societies geared towards total war).[10] However, the most striking innovation was probably the legitimation of wars of extermination. To simplify, in *Ancien Régime* Europe war was considered a legitimate way of settling differences between dynastic rulers. In post-1789 Europe, war became a legitimate way of liberating peoples from corrupt rule. In fascist international society, war became a legitimate means of establishing, and indeed demonstrating, racial superiority through the annihilation or enslavement of inferior competitors. As Morgan (2003, 181-2) has argued, the ideology and practises of the Nazis were geared towards securing the 'future of the Germanic race, in its endless struggle for supremacy with other global racial blocs'. On this point, the ideologies of the Japanese and Italian regimes were no less explicit. Germany no doubt went farthest in its practices with the adoption of the 'final solution', but racial and civilizational 'triumph' as a legitimate goal of war (Weinberg 2005, 47-50, 72-5; Mazower 2008, 340-5), and even political existence as such, was obviously a common denominator among the fascist regimes and movements of the 1920s, 30s and 40s.[11]

Thus to sum up, what could first be construed as simple imperialism, on a closer examination instead appears to be coalescence around a new principle of legitimacy. Surely this principle implied a great deal of overt violence and domination, but it also entailed the forging of new regional blocs aspiring to make nation-state allegiance and supreme authority irrelevant. And in this process, the meaning of institutions such as war and trade was significantly altered.

The socialist commonwealth

The communist bloc after 1917, or what has been termed the socialist commonwealth, can probably be considered the most sustained attempt to create a regional international society with the potential of replacing the dominant global Westphalian international society. The fascist challenge lasted no more than some 20 years, and the American and French revolutions were relatively quickly socialized into the dominant international society by that society's gradual embrace of the principle of popular will as expressed in the idea of nationalism and the American states-union's abandonment of divisible sovereignty to the benefit of the central government,

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[10] It should be noted that some of these doctrinal and organisational changes were also taking place in countries like Britain and France.

[11] Here it should likewise be stressed that racial and social Darwinist ideas also had many followers in non-fascist states and were often tied to practices of colonialism. However, they were never elevated to a core principle of legitimacy, as was the case in the fascist regimes.

especially after the civil war. In the socialist commonwealth, on the other hand, new international institutions were fashioned which at one and the same time heralded both a fundamental challenge to Westphalian international society and an attempt to temporarily accommodate it until this challenge could be effected. Key among these were the institutions of 'proletarian internationalism' and 'peaceful coexistence'. In what follows I will in the usual fashion unpack the meaning of these and explore their relationship with other international institutions.

As Armstrong (1993, 120) perceptively notes, the successful faction in the Russian revolution had to immediately face, and indeed protect, a doctrinal paradox: 'a revolution based upon an ideology that represented itself as the antithesis of the state had taken the concrete form of a state'. What he means by this is that the communist ideology was based on an ontology where the transnational proletariat was considered to be the only legitimate actor in politics; hence it was the antithesis of the state. At the same time, in the early 1920s, the Russian revolutionaries found themselves in a position where they were in possession of a state and were surrounded by a hostile society of states which certainly did not recognize the legitimacy of the revolution, but would grudgingly accept Soviet Russia as a member on the basis of its claim to statehood. The two key institutions of the socialist commonwealth were a natural outgrowth of this paradox. They came to be known as proletarian internationalism and peaceful coexistence, and respectively defined relations between states or countries within the socialist commonwealth and between the socialist commonwealth and Westphalian international society.

Both institutions, however, went through various transformations over their 70 years lifespan. The initial policy of peaceful coexistence[12] was informed by Lenin's instrumental view of the necessity of having relations with capitalist states. 'The announcement and practice of peaceful coexistence would reassure the capitalist world that Bolshevik Russia was essentially peaceable. Thus war would be prevented and the urgent task of reconstructing the Russian economy could proceed' (Light 1988, 28). In this view, the inevitability of conflict between the socialist and capitalist systems was by no means negated. However, a breathing space was urgently needed before the revolution would spread to the rest of the industrialized West. With Stalin's rise to power, the policy was maintained, although with a slight twist. Peaceful coexistence was no longer pursued to keep the Russian revolution afloat while holding out for the eventual world revolution. Rather, it was the other way around. The survival of the Russian revolution would aid the latter (world revolution) through supporting proletarian movements in other countries and thus hastening the eventual demise of capitalism (Light 1988, 32). This is in turn meant that the Russian state became the vanguard of world revolution.

That point is crucial for understanding the institution of proletarian internationalism. As I have already noted, the baseline of the communist ideology was that the transnational proletariat was the only legitimate actor in politics. However, in the Bolshevik interpretation, Soviet Russia

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[12] I term it a policy here because, at this point, it had obviously not obtained the status of an institution yet, as in durable and recognised patterns of shared practices.

was cast as the leading element, which necessarily implied a hierarchy between the socialist movement of Russia and other socialist movements, and eventually between the Soviet state and other socialist states. As Stalin expressed it in 1927, 'An internationalist is one who is ready to defend the USSR without reservation, without wavering, unconditionally; for the USSR is the base of the world revolutionary movement, and this revolutionary movement cannot be defended and promoted unless the USSR is defended' (quoted in Light 1988, 157). Meanwhile, by the early 1930s Soviet Russia, in its pursuit of peaceful co-existence, had embraced the Westphalian institution of sovereignty and its guiding norms of equality, territorial integrity and non-intervention. In the aftermath of the World War II, and with the rise of number of socialist states in Eastern Europe and South East Asia, these norms were incorporated into the institution of proletarian internationalism. In this scheme, relations between socialist states were conceptualized as voluntary unity, concerted action and mutual aid in support of world revolution based on the equal status of national detachments of the working class. As Light (1988, 180) has noted, the two principles of revolutionary hierarchy and national equality could be reconciled as long the pursuit of unity was *voluntary.* Yet, when it was not, conflicts were bound to arise. This was exactly what happened in the late 1940s and 1950s. Schisms broke out between especially the Soviet Union and China and Yugoslavia concerning the role of the Soviet vanguard in the world revolutionary movement and about how accommodating the movement should be with respect to the capitalist West, i.e. which policies were legitimate in the pursuit of peaceful coexistence (Light 1988, 170-88). This tension within the institution of proletarian internationalism persisted all the way up to the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and was also at the heart of the debates about the controversial interventions in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Afghanistan (1979). In these instances, proletarian internationalism came to imply a right to intervention or what some authors have termed the idea of 'limited sovereignty' (Jones 1990).

The two institutions of proletarian internationalism and peaceful coexistence interacted with other primary institutions in a number of ways. In the early days of the revolution, the Bolsheviks were adamant that all forms of traditional diplomacy should be abandoned, as evinced in the famous statement ascribed to Trotsky about his intentions when he took up the office of People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs: '[to] issue a few revolutionary proclamations and shut up shop' (quoted in Armstrong 1993, 131-2). However, with the gradual realization that Soviet Russia had to endure in a society of states, traditional forms of diplomacy had to be embraced. The corollary of this development was a perceived need to qualitatively differentiate the institutionalization of foreign relations with other contingents of the international working class. This need was met with the creation of the Communist International (Comintern) and it successor organizations, where Soviet Russia always played a leading role (Armstrong 1993, 131-40).

The institution of war also went through various transformations. Perhaps the greatest novelty was that war was reinterpreted as both inherently legitimate and inevitable. The impersonal forces of history would by default provoke a violent clash between the socialist and capitalist

systems. This view was never abandoned, but it was continuously modified within the context of the institution of peaceful coexistence; not least with the invention of the atom bomb, which all but excluded large-scale warfare as a viable policy-option. The result was the well-known Cold War tactics of low-intensity conflict (limited warfare), ideological subversion and support for anti-colonial movements in the Third World.

Attempts were also made at transforming trade relations within the socialist commonwealth. In line with the ideas underpinning proletarian internationalism, a new international socialist division of labour was pursued, where the exchange of goods was meant to promote the economic progress of the socialist bloc as a whole. The Council of mutual Economic Aid (CMEA) was created in 1949 to further this objective and various initiatives throughout the 1950s and early 1960s sought to institutionalize supra-national economic planning. However, these initiatives were in large measure defeated by the strength of the national idea. When Khrushchev in 1962 proposed the establishment of a supranational planning authority, most socialist republics in Eastern Europe opposed it on the basis of the perceived loss of national sovereignty (Light 1988, 188-94).

In the academic literature, as well as in the public debate, the Soviet Union has invariably been referred to as an empire. Reagan's 'evil empire' speech stands out as the emblematic designation, and the familiar academic narrative of the break-up of the Soviet Union is cast as the fated revolt of long-suppressed national minorities.[13] It is no doubt true that the national idea had a strong following both within the Soviet Union and the various other states making up the bloc, and that coercion and incentives were often put to good use to make the supposed detachments of the international working class respect the international institutions of the socialist commonwealth, but there are no grounds for the claim that the commonwealth was solely based on a Russian nation's desire to dominate the world. In Kolakowski's words, 'it is simply untrue to say that communist rule, from the very beginning, had nothing at its disposal except pistols, prisons, and concentration camps or that ideology was nothing but a necessary though inert decoration' (quoted in Tarifa 1997, 447). The national idea, or principle of legitimacy, was in a contest with that of the transnational proletariat. The outcome of this contest was never a given. Nevertheless, as I have already stated, it is indisputable that the Bolsheviks promoted their agenda with the help of coercive measures, both within and outside the Soviet Union. The history of the interventions in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan alone is a clear testimony to this fact.

A European international society?

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[13] For a good example, see Susanne Birgerson (2002): *After the Break-up of a Multi-Ethnic Empire*. As she states in chapter 1, page 4, 'The point of departure for this study is that political systems break up largely as the result of demands for sovereignty from minorities. The creation of smaller states that have as their basis a nationalist ideology is a familiar, typical outcome.'

The claim that it is possible to observe a European regional international society, at first, seems to be an odd one. Is not European international society to be equated with what I have called Westphalian international society? As far as one by European international society mean the society based on the international institution of sovereign and equal statehood, then yes. Yet, this is not what I am getting at here. What I am getting at is the European *regional* international society which developed after the end of World War II and which is now referred to as the EU. What I intend to show is that the institutional arrangements entailed in this political project have heralded a new principle of legitimacy, that of divisible sovereignty. Or actually, it is not that new. As Fabbrini (2007) has demonstrated, it bears a striking resemblance to the principle of divisible sovereignty in the American states-union. Following this, I will again discuss how this principle of legitimacy relates to other international institutions.

The EU has always been considered a strange object of analysis in the disciplines of IR and comparative politics. The premise of most disciplinary debates on the topic is that it is something unique, something in between a state and an intergovernmental organization, whereas the substance is whether it is more of the former or the latter (Wallace 1999, 518-9; Diez and Whitman 2002, 43-5; Hill and Smith 2005, 4-5). This may also be why European studies has managed to establish itself as a separate branch of knowledge, often with its own institutes, centres and departments. The dominant explanatory narrative sustaining this division tells us that the member-states are 'pooling' their sovereignty with the effect of creating a completely novel political organizational form. Yet, despite this claim of novelty, the debate on the EU still seems to be trapped inside the statist paradigm's first assumption, which holds that authority must be hierarchical and exclusive. In other words, if the member-states are not fully sovereign and independent, this must necessarily imply that they are pooling some of their sovereignty to create a higher, supranational authority. Deudney's (1995, 193) explanation for why IR theorists have failed to comprehend the true quality of the American states-union appears to be equally relevant to the EU: 'Ever since Jean Bodin and Samuel Pufendorf struggled to make sense of Switzerland and the German Empire, realist theorists have insisted that entities are either federal states or interstate confederations, but never anything in between'. To sum up, the ontological status of the EU is established with the help of either an exceptionalist argument or with reference to the statist paradigm's first assumption.

Yet, as I have already alluded to, a less strained argument would hold that the EU has come to embody the principle of divisible sovereignty, not unlike that found in the early American states-union. Some powers (or 'competencies' in EU jargon), notably those relating to trade policy, have been exclusively delegated to the union centre, whereas other powers, for example the monopoly on violence, remain the prerogative of the member-states (although strong political forces are trying to transfer these to the union centre via the common foreign and security policy (CFSP)) . This is not to claim that this principle of divisible sovereignty has been accepted (internalized) as a matter of belief by the broader European public, but it has certainly been

institutionalized in the form of an intricate set of durable and recognised patterns of shared practices over the past 50 years or so.

This has had a profound impact on a number of other international institutions. War, for example, is now deemed virtually unthinkable within the EU. It has become a security community, to use Deutsch et al.'s (1957) old concept.[14] Whether it was the security community that made divisible sovereignty possible or whether it was the other way around, is besides the point. Few scholars would dispute that the two emerged together and in various ways co-constituted each other. It should also be noted that the institution of war has only been abandoned *inside* the EU. It is very much alive in the union's external relations, as well as those of individual member-states. The same goes for the balance of power. It, too, has been abandoned inside the EU, while still featuring in its external relations.

Diplomacy is also being transformed within the EU, with certain functions converging at the union level and some being retained at the state level. The recently adopted Lisbon Treaty includes provisions for an EU foreign minister and a corresponding union-level diplomatic corps in the form of the External Action Service (EEAS). Some of these institutional arrangements seem to have been pioneered by political entrepreneurs keen on making the EU into a federal state, but this should not detract from the point that they can also be viewed as a way of rethinking diplomacy within the context of divisible sovereignty (Keukeleire 2003; Hocking and Spence 2005; Bátora 2005). Similarly, the 'internal market' can be thought of as a federalist project, but equally as a regional institution of trade that is markedly different from trade regimes in other regions and the global trade regime governed by the World Trade Organization.

It is true that the nation-state remains the central focus of Europeans' identity. Eurobarometer polls consistently show that Europeans identify more with their countries or local regions than they do with Europe, and to the extent that they do identify with Europe, it is a comparatively 'thin' existential community (Schmidt 2004, 981; Smith 1992). This is also reflected in the fact that individual member states have often approached European integration from the perspective of furthering specific national interests: in the case of France, to regain a leading role in Europe, and in the case of Denmark, to secure continued access to export markets. As Laffan (1996, 87) puts it, 'the "European project" has been embraced by many states as a means of strengthening their existing state identities and as an arena within which to project their state identities'. This is probably also why EU officials since the 1980s have increasingly deployed traditional nation-building strategies such as promoting an EU flag and an EU passport, together with a European anthem and host of pan-European cultural and sporting events (Laffan 1996, 97). Rarely is the EU discussed as an alternative to the nation-state, and when it is, this is often done critically. As Schmidt (2004, 990) argues:

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[14] See also Ole Waever (1998).

while EU-related changes in policy are generally the subject of much national discourse, with national leaders often using the EU as blame-shifting device to ensure public acceptance, EU-related changes in the 'polity', that is, in the traditional workings of national democracy, have mainly been a matter of institutional creep, and are mostly passed over in silence – except, of course, during referendums and parliamentary debates about treaty ratification and in the UK under Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

Divisible sovereignty, with all its practical manifestations, does not appear to be on par with nationalism as a principle of legitimacy in the European imagination. However, it is still there and does guide political practices in numerous areas, some of which I have outlined above.

The familiar story of how the EU emerged holds that a number of European states, and in particular France and Germany, agreed to create a supranational authority regulating the production of coal and steel for the explicit purpose of mutually shackling the main means of war. The declared aim was to make war 'not only unthinkable but also materially impossible' (Schuman 1950). The European project has since come a long way since then, and its international institutions have evolved quite far beyond this initial purpose. At the moment, it does not seem to be a new state or empire in the making, but rather a multifaceted regional international society, influencing and being influenced by the Westphalian international society from which it originally emerged.

Conclusion: blind spots revisited

This article has fundamentally been an exercise in freeing up our minds. Its premise was that the two assumptions of the statist paradigm were wrong, plain and simple, as universal statements about political organisation. There was no intention of proving of them wrong. Instead, the idea has been to show how an alternative story can be told about the cases above if we adopt an English School approach, one that sees them as examples of regionally-led change in international society. Here the focus is on the institutions of international society and specifically new principles of legitimacy which seem to imply communities of loyalty and organisation of authority transcending the boundaries of formally established states. Rather than seeing the EU and the American states-union as new states in the making, a case has been made for conceptualising them as examples of divisible sovereignty or plural authorities. And the French revolution, international fascism and international communism have been presented as examples of transnational loyalty rooted in new principles of legitimacy.

While the reader may be convinced of the correctness of these assessments, s/he may however still object that some of these phenomena, in particular the French revolution and international fascism, were relatively short-lived. In this sense, they could still be viewed as

exceptions. My answer to this is that it is true that their concrete manifestation in particular states such as revolutionary France and nazi Germany was indeed very brief. Yet, as Armstrong (1993) has convincingly demonstrated, they left a lasting mark on international society and its institutions. In his words, 'Major revolutions appear to force established states to rediscover and redefine both their social identities as members of a society of states and the normative and juridical principles upon which that society is based' (Armstrong 1993, 243). Thus, following the French revolution, it became increasingly hard to govern a state without some semblance of deference to the amorphous entity called the 'popular will'. And in the course of the defeat of nazi Germany, the institution of colonialism was decisively de-legitimated by that state's decision to apply it within Europe as opposed to reserving it for the 'savages' outside. It therefore seems to me that Armstrong is right when he talks about a process of socialisation and counter-socialisation whereby the revolutionary state experiences pressures to conform to the prevailing norms of international society while at the same time challenging and changing these very norms.

In my view, however, the idea of regionally-led change in international society should not be restricted to what we usually consider revolutionary-type developments. Change is obviously most evident in these events – this is what the very concept of revolution implies – but that does not necessarily mean that subtle change does not occur in-between them. For example, elsewhere I have analysed the emergence of the welfare state as a distinct principle of legitimacy in international society and how it has impacted those states' adhering to it positions vis-à-vis trade, war and diplomacy (Author 2010). Usually this is not considered a revolutionary development, but it has certainly changed the way international relations are conducted in some parts of international society, most notably Scandinavia. Looking at regionally-led change thus implies a very expansive research agenda, one that we are only now starting to see the contours of (see also Buzan 2004; Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez 2009) . This involves first of all accepting the idea that international society is not a monolithic whole, and that different regions can form distinct social complexes. However, institutional differentiation does not have to be restricted to one geographical region; it can certainly also be present in several non-contiguous territories, as I described in relation to international fascism. In our present globalized world, where distance has shrunk and the exchange of goods as well as ideas have hugely increased, we are probably going to see much more complex constellations of institutional practices, where some are restricted to certain geographical regions and yet others will be shared in a number of different localities across the globe. The story in this article has mainly been about the past, but I hope it will equally serve as a compelling template for exploring international relations of the present as well as the future.

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