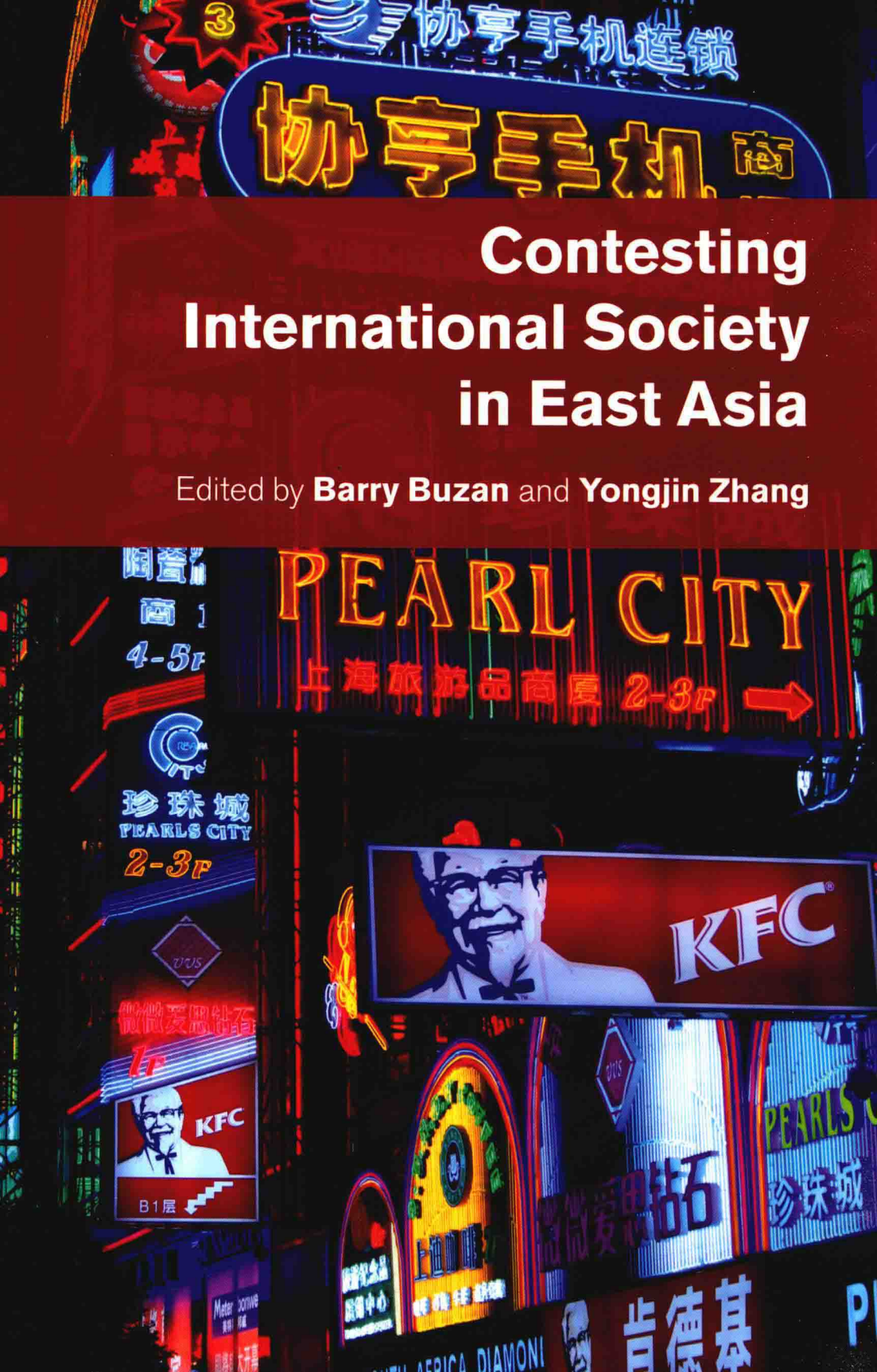




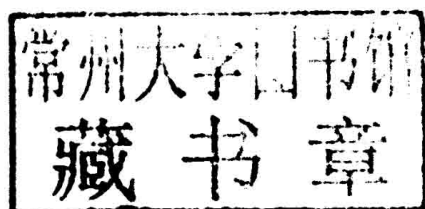
Contesting International Society in East Asia

Edited by **Barry Buzan** and **Yongjin Zhang**

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Contesting International Society in East Asia

Bringing together some of the most innovative scholars in both the English School of international relations and East Asian studies, this volume investigates whether or not significant and distinct international social structures exist at the regional level represented by 'East Asia', and what this can tell us about international society both regionally and globally. The book's main finding is that the regional dispute over how its states and peoples should relate to the Western-dominated global international society makes the existence of East Asian international society essentially contested. While this regional-global social dynamic is present in many regions, it is particularly strong in East Asia. This book will appeal to audiences interested in developing English School theory, the study of East Asian international relations and comparative regionalism.

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Preface

This project is an offshoot of Barry Buzan's interest in exploring the regional level of international society combined with his and Yongjin Zhang's interest in the evolution of East Asia into modernity. The driving question is whether or not international society exists in distinctive form at the regional level and, if it does, how it can be differentiated from, and/or related to, the more commonly discussed global international society. Cases such as the European Union suggest that clearly differentiated regional-level international societies can and do exist alongside and within the global-level one. What is much less clear at this point is how widespread such differentiation might be and what forms it might take in different places. The starting point for this book is Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez (eds.), *International Society and the Middle East* (2009b), which put these questions to that case. This book builds on what was learned there in order to explore what regional international society might or might not mean in East Asia. The aim is to refine our understanding of international society by interrogating the assumption that there is a relatively uniform global-level international society resulting from the expansion of an initially European model and its imposition on the rest of the world through processes of encounter, colonization and decolonization.

The editors would like to extend their most sincere thanks to those who made this project possible. Most obviously, our gratitude goes to our nine authors, on whose expertise, and willingness to apply it through an English School framework, this enterprise depended. Their good will and efficient co-operation made our task as editors a real pleasure. We owe a note of thanks to Erik Ringmar who read and commented on first drafts of all the chapters at the authors' workshop in Shanghai. We would also like to acknowledge generous financial support from the Chiang Chin-Kuo Foundation (CCKF) in Taiwan and from the University of Bristol's Vice Chancellor's Initiative Fund, which made it possible for us to hold the Shanghai workshop. Fudan University generously agreed to host this workshop, and we are particularly grateful to Chen Zhimin

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1 Introduction: interrogating regional international society in East Asia

Barry Buzan and Yongjin Zhang

This book is about international society at the regional level using East Asia as a case. Its main aim is to investigate whether or not significant, distinct, international social structures exist at the regional level represented by 'East Asia'. If they do, what do they look like? How are they differentiated from global-level international society? In which ways do they inform our understanding of the interactive dynamics of regional and global order? Why do they matter theoretically, with particular reference to extending the English School theory? And why do they matter empirically, with specific focus on East Asia's pursuit of regionalism and regional community-building? Putting it differently, using international society as the central analytical idea, we ask two questions: first, what, if anything, can East Asia tell us about international society at the regional level? And, second, what insights, if any, can the English School theory provide in understanding the regional order in East Asia? We address ourselves, therefore, to two main audiences, who are mainly distinct from each other: those interested in developing English School theory as an approach to the study of international relations; and those interested in the empirical study of East Asian international relations. A third audience we have in mind is those interested in comparative regionalism (Acharya and Johnston 2007b; Pempel 2005; Solingen 2013). We hope that each of these three audiences will find value in our analysis that is specific to its own concerns. But we also hope to foster greater awareness of common ground among these different groups of scholars and to encourage them to make more use of each other's insights in their own work. In explicitly engaging East Asia as an empirical case from a purposively identified theoretical perspective, this book also seeks to bridge the gap between comparative and foreign policy scholarship on East Asia and international relations (IR) theory identified by G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno (2003), and to address Alastair Iain Johnston's (2012) concern about the neglect by transatlantic IR theory of the international relations of East Asia.

For the English School audience, we have two principal aims. The first is to extend the project on comparative international societies that was

begun by Martin Wight (1977) and Adam Watson (1992) in historical mode, and has now begun to address regional differentiation in contemporary international society. More specifically, this builds on an earlier project on regional international society in the Middle East (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez 2009b) and seeks to use regionally specific knowledge about East Asia to enrich, as well as to critique, the English School theory. The second is to question the tendency among English School scholars to treat global-level international society as a rather homogeneous construction based on universal sovereign equality, by putting forward a more core-periphery view that we label *Western-global international society*. Now that we have moved beyond the expansion story, the English School needs to develop a more differentiated and nuanced view of how international society is structured and how it is developing both temporally and spatially. Focusing on international society at the regional level addresses both of these aims. East Asia is arguably now the most important region on the planet, with on-going political and economic transformation at national, regional and global levels. While realists, liberal institutionalists and constructivists have made divergent and competing theoretical claims about the region, it is as yet not much studied systematically from an English School perspective.

For the East Asian specialists, we offer a different and certainly, for most, a less familiar theoretical perspective on their region – largely absent from the study of contemporary East Asia except for the odd passing reference, for example, in synoptic works on the region such as Muthiah Alagappa (1998: 613, 644; 2003a: 584–7). The familiar realist take on East Asia focuses analytically on the changing distribution of structural power and hegemonic transition, with special interest in great power rivalries, security dilemmas and military conflicts (Friedberg 1993–4, 2011; Glaser 2011). The liberal approach also takes hegemony seriously, but looks more to the ameliorative effects of the logics of absolute gains and emphasizes the role of economic interdependence, and of inter-governmental regimes and international institutions, in promoting regional co-operation, stability and prosperity (Dent 2008; Mansfield and Milner 1999; Stubbs 2002). More recent constructivist intervention has challenged the structural and material understanding of the East Asian order, highlighting the mediating role of culture, civilization, identity and socialization (Berger 2003; Johnston 2003; Kang 2003; Katzenstein 2012).

The English School approach is closest to constructivism in that it focuses mainly on discourse, practice and social structure. We agree with Thomas Diez and Richard Whitman (2002: 48) that all forms of society are manifestations of discourse because ‘society does not have an

essence beyond discourse'. There is certainly a discourse around and about the social construction of 'East Asia', but this discourse does not necessarily make clear either what type of region East Asia is, or how it is differentiated from Western-global international society or neighbouring regional international societies. It is also important to note that power plays an important role in the discursive construction of a region. 'The power to name and shape the identity and boundaries of a region matters a great deal' (Hurrell 2007a: 243). As we will show, this discourse is as much about contestation over the designation and constitution of 'East Asia' as it is about constructing a specific structure. The English School offers a much more finely tuned and historically rooted conception of social structure than generally found in constructivism. With its concept of *primary institutions* – sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, balance of power, international law, nationalism, human equality and suchlike – the English School sets out detailed criteria with which both to characterize types of international society, and to differentiate regional international societies from each other and the Western-global one. This analytical framework is also what we offer to those interested in comparative regionalism generally, and the eight empirical chapters that follow will all in their various ways focus on East Asia through the lens of primary institutions. Bringing in East Asia in this way, therefore, may reinforce or destabilize some generic theoretical assumptions of the English School about international society, particularly where the theoretical contentions are only tentative. This is more than a trivial benefit for the ES theorizing.

The central focus of this book is therefore on regional international society, both theoretically and in relation to the particular case of East Asia. For the regional level of international society to be meaningful, there have to be ways of differentiating regions in this sense both from the Western-global level and from neighbouring regions. If all states were of a similar type, shared the same set of primary institutions and interpreted them through similar practices, there would be no regional level of international society. To the extent that they exist, all contemporary regional international societies can therefore be characterized in terms of four general attributes: their degree of differentiation from the Western-global core, their degree of differentiation from neighbouring regional international societies, their degree of internal homogeneity and integration, and their placement on a pluralist-solidarist spectrum (is the principal governing logic of the region power political, coexistence, co-operation or convergence? See glossary of terms). Identifying these four general characteristics as they mark out East Asia as a region is therefore key to understanding whether or not a meaningful regional international society exists in East Asia today. This is what has prompted our authors,

all specialists on the region, in their enquiries in individual chapters of this volume. This means that, collectively, we need to look specifically at the patterns and configurations of primary institutions in the region. Is East Asia differentiated from Western-global international society and from neighbouring regional international societies and, if so, in terms of which institutions and practices, and how strongly or weakly differentiated? What does the nature of this differentiation in terms of primary institutions suggest about how East Asia will relate both to its neighbours and to Western-global international society? If East Asia can be understood as a regional international society in terms of its profile of primary institutions, how homogeneous is it and how closely is it integrated? And given its profile of primary institutions, how can it be characterized as a type of regional international society: power political, coexistence, co-operative, convergence? We are interested in, to paraphrase John Ruggie (1998), not only what makes East Asia hang together, but also what makes East Asia hang together differently from the Western-global international society as well as from other regions?

We will return to these questions in the final chapter as a framing within which to summarize our findings. In the rest of this introductory chapter, we provide first the English School conceptualization of international society at the regional level and the way in which the East Asian case helps extend or destabilize basic assumptions about regional international society. This is followed by an elaboration of how studies of East Asian international relations can be enriched by engaging in the English School approach. The final section gives brief chapter summaries for the rest of the book.

Conceptualizing international society in East Asia

One of the purposes of this book is to extend the English School project on comparative international societies into the present day. It asks whether and to what extent there has emerged a distinctive East Asian regional international society. It puts this question into a long-term historical perspective, and it attempts to establish that some degree of regional differentiation exists from the Western-global core. If such differentiation is marked enough, this is interesting and significant in itself because it re-opens the scope for comparative international societies that was lost when the expansion of Western international society overrode older international societies. It also raises important questions for how we understand what international society at the global level actually means. How homogeneous is it, and what is the significance of the ways in which it is internally differentiated? To study regional international societies in contemporary terms is thus about a lot more in English School terms than

just regions. The empirical study of primary institutions should tell us both whether there is regional differentiation from the global level and, if there is, in what form and to what degree.

It is easy to get the impression from the classical English School literature that there is a relatively homogeneous, if fairly thin, global international society based on universalization of the Western model of the sovereign, territorial state, and its accompanying set of Westphalian institutions (in Hedley Bull's 1977 classic rendering: balance of power, international law, great power management, diplomacy and war). In this view, decolonization generated a society of states that was relatively uniform in terms of being composed of sovereign equal states, though not in terms of power and level of development. There was concern about the revolt against the West arising from decolonization, but this was mainly in relation to the stability of global-level international society. Neither regional international societies nor the complex and differentiated structure of primary institutions was given much thought. In its expansion of international society story (Bull and Watson 1984a; Buzan 2010b; Buzan and Little 2010; Gong 1984; Watson 1992), the English School makes a quite powerful case for the way in which the West imposed its own 'standard of civilization' on other states and peoples, in the process creating a global-level international society composed of like (sovereign) states with a significant set of shared Westphalian primary institutions. The on-going influence of the Western-global core has continued to extend this process, and a number of key primary institutions have been naturalized across nearly all of international society.

But the concept of 'global-level international society' is not as straightforward as this story might make it appear. Global-level international society is more accurately understood as a core-periphery structure in which the West projects its own values as global, and this projection encounters varying degrees of acceptance and resistance in the periphery: thus our label of *Western-global international society*. At some risk of oversimplifying, there are two general interpretations of what global-level international society is, and therefore of how the global and regional levels of it relate to each other:

- What might be called the *globalization view*, which sees international society as fairly evenly, if thinly, spread at the global level. Here the assumption is that the global level will tend to get stronger in relation to the regional one, and international society becomes more homogenized as a result of the operation of global economic, cultural and political forces (a.k.a. capitalism). This view sees either a triumph of liberal Western hegemony, or a kind of compromise in which some non-Western elements are woven into the Western framing.

- What might be called the *post-colonial view*, which sees international society as an uneven core-periphery structure in which the West still has a privileged, but partly contested, hegemonic role, and non-Western regions are in varying degrees subordinate to Western power and values. Here the assumption is that, as the Western vanguard declines relative to the rise of non-Western powers, the global level of international society will weaken. Anti-hegemonism will add to this weakening and will reinforce a relative strengthening of regional international societies as non-Western cultures seek to reassert their own values and resist (at least some of) those coming from the Western core.

The idea of a global-level international society clearly has considerable substance in terms of shared commitments to a range of key primary institutions, several of which have become effectively naturalized across many populations. Even values that were originally carried outwards by the force of Western military superiority during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have, over time, become internalized by those states and, up to a point, by peoples on whom they were originally imposed. At the level of state elites, sovereignty, territoriality, non-intervention, diplomacy, international law, great power management, nationalism, self-determination (not all versions), popular sovereignty, progress, equality of people(s) and in some measure the market (more for trade and production than finance) are all fairly deeply internalized and not contested as principles. Particular instances or applications may excite controversy, but the basic institutions of a pluralist, coexistence, inter-state society have wide support among states and reasonably wide support among peoples and transnational actors. Most liberation movements seek sovereignty. Most peoples feel comfortable with nationalism, territoriality, sovereignty and the idea of progress. Most transnational actors want and need a stable legal framework. Even as Western power declines, it does not seem unreasonable to think that most of these pluralist institutions will remain in place, as too might the modest, and (it is to be hoped) increasing, level of commitment to environmental stewardship. A mixture of coercion, copying and persuasion meant that Western institutions became widespread, running in close parallel to Kenneth Waltz's (1979: 74-7) idea that anarchy generates 'like units' through processes of 'socialization and competition'. That said, the picture is, of course, mixed in terms of how these primary institutions are held in place. According to Alexander Wendt (1999), institutions can be held in place either mainly by consent (i.e. they are internalized to a logic of appropriateness), mainly by calculation (a logic of consequences) or mainly by coercion (a logic of compellence). Some primary institutions, most obviously sovereignty and nationalism, are broadly consensual. Others,