

INTRODUCTION

Bull seeks answers to three basic questions: 1) what is order in world politics? 2) how is order maintained within the present system of sovereign states? 3) does the system of sovereign states still provide a viable path to world order? The basic elements in his approach to this subject is the following: First, he is concerned with one element of world politics—order—not the whole of it. Order is a quality that may or may not obtain in international politics. Second, order is defined as an actual or possible situation or state of affairs, not as a value, goal or objective. It lacks a normative dimension: it is not assumed to be desirable or overriding. Third, Bull confines his inquiry to enduring issues of human political structure or institutions and avoids consideration of the substantive issues of world politics. Fourth, his approach to order does not place primary emphasis on international law or international organization; order exists independently of both.

CHAPTER 1: THE CONCEPT OF ORDER IN WORLD POLITICS

Order in Social Life

Order implies that a number of things contain some discernible principle. More specifically, a pattern that leads to a particular result, an arrangement of social life that it promotes certain goals or values (functional/purposive). What the pattern is good for is subjective. Bull identifies, however, three underlying and unifying societal goals: All societies seek to ensure 1) that life will be in some measure secure against violence resulting in death or bodily harm 2) that promises, once made, will be kept, or that agreements, once undertaken, will be carried out 3) the possession of things will remain stable to some degree, and will not be subject to challenges that are constant and without limit. These goals are elementary in that they make a “society.” They are primary because other goals presuppose realization of these; They are universal in that all societies take account of them. But these goals are not paramount or mandatory. These goals are also independent of rules and are valuable because they give predictability to human life.

International Order

- International order: a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states (international society).
- State: independent political community that possesses a government and asserts sovereignty (internal and external) in relation to a particular portion of the earth’s surface and a particular segment of the human population
- System of states (international system): two or more states that have sufficient contact (and direct or indirect interaction) between them and have sufficient impact on one another’s decisions, to cause them to behave—at least in some measure—as parts of a whole (international (sovereign) states system versus suzerain-state system, in which one state asserts and maintains paramountcy or supremacy over the rest; primary states system composed of states versus secondary states system composed of systems of (often suzerain-state) systems)
- Society of states (international society): group of states conscious of certain common interests and common values, conceiving themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and sharing in the working of common institutions; international society presupposes international system but not vice versa; Historical international societies were all founded upon a common culture or civilization (language, understanding of the universe, religion, etc.)
- Goals of the international society: 1) preservation of the system and society of states itself 2) goal of maintaining the independence or external sovereignty of individual states (subordinate to the first goal) 3) goal of peace—absence of war among member states of international society as the normal condition of their relationship (subordinate to the first and the second goal) 4) goals common to all social life (see above)

World Order

- World order: patterns or dispositions of human activity that sustain the elementary or primary goals of social life among mankind as a whole. This is wider than international order (includes wider world political system of which the states system is only part); more fundamental and primordial (ultimate units of the great society of all mankind are not states but individual human beings); morally prior to international order (in hierarchy of human values, if international order does have value, this can only be because it is instrumental to the goal of order in human society as a whole)

CHAPTER 2: DOES ORDER EXIST IN WORLD POLITICS?

Bull argues that order is part of the historical record of international relations: modern states have formed and continue to form not only an international system but also an international society. 1) There has always been an idea of international society 2) this idea is reflected in international reality 3) but there are limits of the idea of international society.

The Idea of International Society

Philosophically three strands of views on international system exist: Hobbesian realist tradition; Kantian universalist tradition; and Grotian internationalist tradition. Hobbesian view is state of war against all with zero-sum game in moral and legal vacuum; Kantian view is cooperative community of mankind with non-zero-sum game and moral imperatives to replace state system with a cosmopolitan society; Grotian view stands between the first two with sovereign states as the principal reality in international politics and the game is partly distributive and partly productive, with both rules of prudence and expediency and imperatives of morality and law binding the game.

Bull precedes to trace three historical developments in the thought of international society, which I only briefly summarize here:

- 1) Christian International society of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries: Christian values underlying the society, no clear membership of the society (individuals as the ultimate bearer of rights and duties), primacy given to natural law over positive international law, inchoate rules of coexistence (but war for just cause and by just means; *pacta sunt servanda*), no definite set of institutions deriving from international cooperation (diplomacy developing)

Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Introduction and Chapters 1 – 2

2) European International Society of the 18th and 19th centuries: Western Christendom disappears from theory and practice of international politics, states fully articulated, natural law gave place to positive international law, member of the society as states or nations with reciprocal rights and obligations, rules and institutions of international society deriving from states' consent, international legitimacy ceased to be dynastic and became national/popular; rules of violence formulated: resort to legitimate violence as monopoly of the state, treaties concluded by a government binding upon its successors, sovereignty as an attribute of all states and exchange of recognition thereof as a basic rule of coexistence; rise of institutions of international cooperation: international law as distinct body of rules, diplomatic system, balance of power

3) World international Society of the 20th century: Hobbesian view of the world fed by the two wars, paralleled by Kantian view emerging from the efforts to transcend the states system; international society grew beyond Europe to world wide; doctrine that this society rest upon a specific culture or civilization generally rejected; culture of modernity dominates; states as the bearers of rights and duties joined by international organizations, NGOs, and individuals; return to natural law principles; attempts to prohibit "aggressive" war and doctrine of collective security.

The Reality of International Society

Now, do these thoughts conform to reality?

1) The Element of Society: The modern international system reflects all three of the elements singled out, respectively, by the Hobbesian, the Kantian and the Grotian tradition: the element of war and struggle for power among states; the element of transnational solidarity and conflict, and the element of cooperation and regulated intercourse among states. In historical and geographical theaters of the states system, and in the policies of different states and statesmen, one of these elements may predominate over the others. Most states at most times pay some respect to the basic rules of coexistence in international society, reflected in the mutual respect for sovereignty, the forms and procedures of international law, the system of diplomatic representation, etc. Historically, groups seeking basis of a negotiated peace or drawing attention to the common interests existed (e.g. during the Second World War, the Cold War, Spanish Conquistadors and the Aztecs, Christian Europe and Islam, Grotian just war)

The Anarchical Society

Argument exists that anarchy (absence of government rule) on the international level precludes the possibility of international society. This argument mainly draws on the Hobbesian domestic view of state of nature. Bull points out three weaknesses in the argument: 1) modern international system does not entirely resemble Hobbesian state of nature. Whereas in the Hobbesian society all strength is channeled into providing security for the individual, precluding the possibility of industry, agriculture, trade, etc., on the international level states do not exhaust their strength in providing security against others. Moreover notions of right and wrong in international behavior have always held a central place. 2) The argument is based on the false premises about the conditions of order among individuals and groups other than the state. 3) States are very unlike human individuals

The Limitations of International Society

International society is no more than one element at work at any given time, always in competition with the other two (see above). The order provided within modern international society is precarious and imperfect.