

**Book Review and Notices: The Anarchical Society: A Study Order in World Politics. By Hedley Bull. (Basingstoke: Macmillan)**

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**ABSTRACT:** What is fascinating in the Bull's book titled the Anarchical Society: A Study Order in World Politics is that this book is undoubtedly one of the ways in which the field of interdisciplinary discussion and combined theories of other profits have provided. Contrary to what many may claim that his work is a classic book today that cannot be found in relatively contemporary complex theories, his book remains still, to a good extent, as a major study in the field of international order. In the first section, I tried to present and explain his arguments and his position in the field of international politics by placing his work in his own position. In the following section, an arrangement of his book has been presented in terms of conceptual framework. Then critics of his work have been discussed. In conclusion, this study argues that Hedley Bull's approach to the book of anarchic society is a blend and cannot be construed as neo-realism, neoliberalism, historical sociology, and evolutionism.

**KEYWORD:** Hedley Bull, the Anarchical Society, Realism and Liberalism

**Introduction**

One of the most important methodologies in the humanities field, in particular, sociology, political science, and international relations, in the 1980s and 1990s was the design of theories for integrating the "sub-national and national" and "systematic" macro, which was rooted in the works produced in the 1970s. In the field of international relations, Hedley Bull's book is undoubtedly one of the ways in which the field of interdisciplinary discussion and combined theories of other profits have provided, given the fact that the importance of re-publishing anarchy book in 2002 can be understood. It may be thought Bull's book has become a classic book today that cannot be found in relatively contemporary complex theories. However, the fusion of his approach prevents us to consider his work as only a specific consumption history, still, in the anarchical society some points can be found to be used or effective in the accomplishment of different theories from one hand and designing new approaches.

There is little consensus in determining the position of Bull in the theories of international relations. From a perspective, he can be regarded as one of the first developers of theories of historical sociology and even Developmentalism which belong to reflective theories, when he emphasizes the role of historical impulses in the emergence of the international community, he gets close to historical sociology and when he takes into account the element of change, as well as the genesis

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nature of developments, he tends to be Creationism. On the other hand, Bull and the book of sociology could be placed within the framework of rationalist theories, Neorealism and Neoliberalism. In the final analysis, he considers the element of power as well as the power of great powers in expanding the norms and rules of the formation of the international community and he accepts the fundamental principles of Realism and Neorealism (Ababakr & Khaddar, 2021). At the same time, the emphasis on the role of ideas, institutions, understandings, and norms in expanding the coexistence among nations places Bull among neo-liberal, and especially institutionalized neoliberalists. Ultimately Bulls' emphasis on the role of history places him among the main members of the English school in international relations because the American school or the mainstream of the theory of international relations tries to provide almost independent theories of history and international law (Barzani & Rayan Jalal Jamil, 2021). Americans are more interested in theories that, while adhering to the principle of saving, are actually operational, but the emphasis of the English school on the role of history and, more recently on norms, increase the number of variables which resulted in the theoretical complexity, on the one hand, and reducing practical reliance on theories on the other.

In spite of those issues, it seems that the classic work of Bull cannot be entirely placed within the scope of one of the existing paradigms for some reason. First, according to Bull's own logic, it can be said that his work was produced under certain special conditions of the '1970s', in a time that the hegemony of Realism rarely faces challenges, but still a new paradigm was not emerging. Based on this, it can be said that Bull's work emerged during the decline of Realism paradigm. The book of Anarchical society can be considered to have challenged the hegemony of Realism. Second, methodologically; the work of Bull is an attempt to integrate the levels of triple analysis common in international relations, and for this reason, he inevitably takes advantage of different theories. For example, the concept of society is transmitted from political science or sociology to international relations, which is a subjective concept, but its combination with the international term represents the composition of the Sub-national and transnational level, and when the international community of states is examined, actually, three level of sub-national, national and international integrated together. This is in a time that, Neorealism often considered as a systematic (in the international level) theory, and Neoliberalism counted as a theory at a sub-national level that "emphasizes the role of internal elements in shaping international politics and foreign policy."

### **Sociopolitical and Intellectual Background of the Author**

Hedley Bull was born in Sydney in 1932. He graduated from the University of Sydney in 1952 with a high degree in Philosophy and Law. At this time, the Australian philosopher John Anderson was one of the greatest influences on his thought. Anderson for his students created the courage of critical care with the same amount of attention to the great social and political life issues that only one could recognize with respect to their historical context. Bull went to Oxford in 1953 and he graduated with a bachelor degree in political science from the University and then worked as an assistant lecture at the London School of Economics. In addition, there he participated in the famous Martin White speeches to the students of international relations. He learned from White that the history of ideas in the study of international relations can be seen in the continuous eye of vision among realists, the revolutionaries of arrogant and wise (Miller, 2007).

The legacy of Martin White was rooted in the fact that he provided "three schools of thought" to Bull, who later identified the rival ideas about the nature and value of international order and the international community. Contrary to White, who used his own categories for educational purposes and fought against one of them, Hedley Bull obviously sought to conceal wisdom, the theory and practice of international relations, clearly introduce and defend it. In 1958, Bull joined the Committee

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of the Theory of International Politics of the United Kingdom, who earned a living in the United States for a while, and saw the growth of this field at universities such as Harvard and Chicago, and he also contributed to it. In the United States, he was attracted to nuclear strategy issues, and after returning to Britain and working for the Institute for Strategic Studies, published his book on controlling the arms race (1961). The publication of this book led him to work for the Arms Control and Disarmament Research Unit at the Foreign Ministry of England. He returned to Australia in 1966 and became a professor of international relations at the National University of Australia. In 1977, he returned to Oxford for Montag Burton post in International Relations, and stayed there until his sudden death due to cancer in 1985. When Bull published his book in 1977, the debate in international relations was between classical realism and neoliberalism, realism was challenged by critics because of the role of international institutions and new theories in the field. clearly, this intellectual atmosphere had impacts on his thoughts and ideas, that's why he tried to take elements from international relations' approaches at that time. This is the reason why many researchers consider his work as a combination of other theories (Vincent, 1988).

### **The Conceptual Framework of Bull and the book of Anarchic Society**

To understand the Hadley Bull's conceptual framework, it's better to begin from the contradictory title of the book. The "society" in the political sciences makes it clear that there is a kind of functional order that guarantees the survival of the social bond. Therefore, the anarchy of the society lacks sense. In other words, anarchy is an obstacle to the existence of society. But how does Bull combine these two? First, let's start with the concept of society. Bull transmits this term from the political and sociological sciences and transported it from national level to the international one, Similar to what Waltz had done in his valuable contribution to the "theory of international politics." So here, again, we are faced with the social theory of international politics, which is important in Bull's terms, because he wants to show that, historically, the transfer of the concepts of political science (and, in particular, Hobbes's views on the natural state) to the international level has not been without problems. States, unlike the people of the community, have the power to endure a degree of disorder, because their vulnerability is less than that of individuals (Wheeler & Dunne, 1996).

Hobbes says that in a natural state, man is a wolf of a man and that the poor person from the bottom of society can kill a very rich person from the upper class of society. But the level of international relations among states is not necessarily the same, because we are faced with weaker and stronger states. The result is that states can endure the level of anarchy in the international system (Manning, 1975). So the combination of anarchic society (combining political science with international relations) is not inconsistent, although it has its own limitations. States can form the community same as individuals, but this community has less order and its anarchy to some extent. It seems that Bull assumes, based on the principle of uncertainty that the increasing of the anarchy in the international system cannot lead to the disappearance of order. In other words, when anarchy is maximized, order is minimized, for that reason, in the international system, there is always the potential for increasing order through reaching common norms (Suganami, 2016).

By accepting the principle that there is always a degree of order in the international system, the question is how did this order increase and even the possibility of the emergence of the international community or, in the words of today, global civil society increase? In response, it should be noted that the existence of a minimum of order means the existence of an international community based on a set of common rules and norms even on the principles of war.

Bull notes that the reason for the desire of the states to create the international community is that, first, this society can reduce the vulnerability of states in international relations, and second, even in

times of war, respect to norms, even if they pretend to stick on them is better than non-existence adherence to any common rule and norm. Hence, an international community, in which countries to achieve their goals adhere instrumentally to some norms and laws (even to deceive internal public opinion) is better than an international community in which states do not stick themselves on any laws or norms. Furthermore, one of the functions of the international community is to help maintain the survival of states through the generalization of the principle of respect for sovereignty (Bull, 1977).

It seems that here Bull accepts the effectiveness of Talcott Parsons's thoughts of functionalism, and going through this theory, natural rights apply to functionalism in the explanation of the international community (which it considers natural to be), joined to functionalism (Sato, 2011). To the extent that states tend to respect common norms enlarge, there is more scope for the international community to strengthen and grow. But how does this happen? Do the mere increase in the importance of international law and common norms mean the strengthening of the international community, in which states respect the mutual rights of each other?

In response, it should be noted that Bull was more interested in the processes through which understanding of common interests would change over time or complete but this future is not merely the laws (as Huge Grotius says) or the economic (as the liberals say) or the strong power base (the way neorealist claim), but a combination of them that, in certain historical circumstances, they could be investigated (Bull, 41). Therefore, he examines the international community from two analytical and historical perspectives. On the one hand, Bull tries to make sense with the pure thinking about the elements inherently necessary for the formation of a community of states. But on the other hand, he emphasizes that this thought as logical as it is, it be confronted with those groups of historical and cultural elements that shape social consciousness at a specific time and control the perception of common values and goals (Ibid, 42-51).

Thus, in the stage of analysis or pure thinking, a relatively ideal example of the society of states is created, and at the historical stage, this model and pattern are adapted to existing historical facts (both material and non-material) that have shaped consciousness. The result of this fact is the overcoming of one of three attitudes of Hobbes, Kant, and Grotius in international relations. Hobbes's philosophy is the same as Realism, Kant's philosophy is the same Idealism, and Grotius's philosophy is the same as relented to a comprehensive international community. In this way, Bull approached a kind of historical history, and he claims that the works of classical realists such as Morgenthau and further work reflected the particular historical and temporal context in which the philosophy of Hobbes prevailed, and the thinking of the Kant and Grotius were marginalized. As a result: one of the three of Hobbes or Kant or Grotius models in the international arena will prevailed "current situation", in particular, historical circumstances, forces enter to the stage "historical attitude", there are powerful elements of the international community "minimalistic attitude" (Hoffman, 1986).

It seems that the second stage of the Bull's intellectual framework is the most important and complex stage. In other words, this is the stage that determines how the status quo should be. The suggestion of alternative models for world order in the third part of the book also assumes that if historical conditions and interactions change, perhaps the world order may also change, and a world government or medieval era will emerge. But what are the special circumstances of history and its forces?

The examination of the general context of Bull's thinking shows that he gave more credit to material forces than non-material ones in historical transformations, and this fact brings him to the rationalist materialistic school (neo-realism and neoliberalism). Hence his attitude tends to realism and

materialism, rather than to the idealistic and non-materialist ontology. Therefore, he cannot offer a new ontology and will eventually become closer to the ontology of realism (De Souza, 2008).

Although, in his combined view, the place of the idealist elements in the historical context is also considered, but the ultimate determining factor is the material forces. Bull's attention to the role of the great powers in advancing the international community underscores this claim. In the introduction of the book, Bull rejects the idea that international relations can be understood only by the common understanding, without interaction between social and material reality. According to him, ideas are important when powerful governments are attracted to them, and therefore the influence of specific norms and institutions is directly linked to the distribution of physical power. It is natural that Bull's philosophical realism is far from postmodernism and Reflectionism (Bull, 1977, pp. 277-281).

The greater importance of the ontological and epistemological middle of realism, in contrast to the idealism in the book of the Anarchical Society, led to the fact that in the integrated theory of Bull, the non-realist elements appear less than realist elements. In other words, Bull cannot take the middle ground from realism to another school. Contrary to what seems to appear, therefore, it is closer to realism and neorealism, than to the English school or the historic congress, although it maintains its distance between them. For example, we can see such a mindset about the subject of continuity and change. Realists, and even liberals, generally emphasize the element of continuity and stability in the international system, and especially neo-realists consider change as an exceptional or casual one. But in historical sociology and developmentalism, change is of paramount importance, so much so that Stefan Walt, from the passionate theorists of realism, the most important criterion of creativity is its emphasis on the element of change (Williams, 2010).

So, the expectation is that Bull also takes the "change" into account more, but he is very strict in accepting real changes. This is rooted in the history-based approach that believes, old archetypes are somewhat rare to happen in a new community. In perspective of Bull, you should not simply think that a change has occurred. Many of the contemporary trends that look fresh and original are not so novel from the historical perspective. Here he differs from Walt's evolutionism and the concept of change (both in the form of interaction between the structure-agent and in the symbolic reciprocal delegation), and his accuracy and obsession make it eventually change the weight of the element of change less than what is expected. So Bull did not care about the overall change, and he believed in changing the legal and international ties of the international community. The strengthening of the international community and the norms of the tradition of Grotius's fiction will be the product of such a change (Allain, 2014).

### **The Arrangement of the Chapters in the Book**

The intellectual framework discussed in the previous section is described in thirteen chapters and three general sections. In the first section, (pp. 3-94), the concept of order in world politics is examined in terms of the existence of the international community. In that sense, the order within this international community finds its meaning and its amount is determined by the same society within its material and immaterial elements. This section shows that order in world politics exists and also the way how it is preserved (Bull, 1977).

In the second part of the book, (pp. 95-222), the subject of the order in the contemporary state system is the focus of attention in terms of the continued importance of traditional rules and institutions of the state community. Because the international community is not a unique phenomenon of the twentieth century, and in the ages of the twentieth century we have witnessed the formation of the Christian and European international community. Therefore, the international community of the twentieth century should be considered the continuation of the same international community. In the

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chapters of this section, how to maintain order in the international community through a balance of power, international law, diplomacy, war, and great powers are examined in detail (Ibid, 1977).

Finally, in the third part of the book, (pp. 223-305), it is argued that, despite the existence of alternatives to the state system, there are no signs of a decline in the state system, or at least this is not in the interest of the primitive human goals. At the same time, Bow concludes that the international community is also declining in the 1970s. In this section, he claims that the ideas presented about the decline of the state system are not convincing, but at the same time, they must be re-evaluated (Ibid, 1977).

Bull notes in the book's conclusion (pp. 307-308), that the reader should not suppose that his ultimate goal is to affirm the community of existing governments and its rules and institutions, which means he is opposing the change of the system. First, according to the book's claim, the international community is only an element of global political elements, and not all of it, and this element is associated with elements such as war and conflict (realist) and human society (idealist). As a result, the functioning of the international community should be considered in relation to the other two elements, because they are also active and affect the international community and even limit it. The second point is that global order is not only wider and of international order or the order of the state, but also more fundamental than the order of the international community, and is morally superior to it. The system of governments must always be measured in relation to the objectives of the international order. Therefore, a global order can restrict the order of the international community. Third, the order in world politics conflicts with the goal of international justice, humanity and the world, thus as long as there is a feeling that the order of justice is preferred and priority is given to order with the problems. Accordingly, in the study of order, we must also study justice (Ibid, 1977).

#### 4. Critics of the Book

A Comprehensive study of Bull's work as a textbook is still required for most international relations students. But as an argument, it is less convincing. In spite of Bull's attention to the detail and precision of the analytic distinctions, this book shows both the strength and weakness of the influences that have led to its writing, and the footprint of these influences can be found in Bull's personal and intellectual history.

In the Hedley Bowl book, it seems that two distinct points are worth mentioning directly or indirectly about the concept and purpose of the international community and the distinction between the concept and the international system .First, Hedley Bowl's account of the international community is heavily European; second, the value-added to the international community located in Europe is seen in other international organizations outside of Europe. In the meantime, what is more and more important is the extraordinary inspiration from Bull's view of the international community to scholars who are inspired by theoretical writing in non-Western regions and non-Western countries. Within this framework, the two axes of the Hedley Bull's study of the concept of the international community, more and more have the talent of this European movement. The first research axis that requires a kind of historical genealogy is to look at non-obtrusive critical argumentation about how the international community is expanding. And the second research axis that requires a kind of futuristic theoretical study is related to the possibility of the transformation of the current international community.

#### Conclusion

Hedley Bull's approach to the book of anarchic society is a blend and cannot be construed as neo-realism, neoliberalism, historical sociology, and evolutionism. This approach takes into account far broader issues and trends, which makes it possible to attribute it to different approaches. In the final

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analysis, Bull does not present a new ontology in international relations and, in his approach; he became closer to the materialistic ontology in the rationalist theories. Epistemologically, the book has always adhered to the principles of science, and methodology is also a method of historical-analytical use, which, here too is prevailed over the other methods of analyzing the historical method. The charm and value of Hadley Bull's work in his fusion, which makes its' importance sustainable. Still, from his point of view, we can deduce some innovative points in various theorizing. The way he chooses in the theory of thought has its own problems and complexities, some of which still remain unanswered, such as determining the degree of (acceptable and consensual) change in the international system or the ratio of the effect of material forces or how the interaction of different levels of analysis. In this way, we should not imagine that Bull's weaknesses, in theory, can easily be solved.

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