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European Journal of International Relations 2005 11: 137

DOI: 10.1177/1354066105050139

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Japan's Socialization into Janus-Faced European International Society

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This article joins the debate on the entry of non-European states into International Society by examining the socialization of Japan into the normative framework of European International Society during the Meiji period. Despite recent arguments that the English School has pioneered an interpretivist approach in the study of international politics, their conceptualization of the expansion of International Society has paid scant regard to non-European perspectives. As a consequence, International Society is commonly portrayed as playing a progressive role in mitigating conflict and enhancing world order. The article challenges the lopsided portrayal of how non-European states were socialized into International Society. It illustrates that Japan was socialized into a Janus-faced International Society. Finally, it argues that the English School's normative commitment to international order and exclusion of non-European perspectives is in danger of undermining its interpretivist credentials.

KEY WORDS ♦ English School ♦ Imperialism ♦ International Society ♦ Japan ♦ Meiji Restoration ♦ socialization ♦ standard of civilization

In the days when Japan was engaging in peaceful arts, the Westerners used to think of it as an uncivilised country. Since Japan started massacring thousands of people in the battlefields of Manchuria, the Westerners have called it a civilised country. (Okakura Tenshin, *Cha no hon* [The Book of Tea], 1906)¹

This article is critical of the investigations of the expansion of European International Society carried out by the key figures of the English School. It argues that conventional studies of the expansion of European International Society are characterized by a myopic and normatively driven conceptualization, which is inadequate for understanding the entry of non-European

states into European International Society and threatens to undermine the School's 'interpretivist' claims.

Conventional English School scholarship has generally characterized International Society as charged with the task of providing greater order within an anarchical international realm. According to Hedley Bull, International Society has the purpose of preserving the 'system and society of states', mutual respect of the independence of states and peace (Bull, 1995: 16–17). These goals are primarily achieved by reciprocal recognition of rules and norms among states and mutual respect for sovereign independence. Furthermore, the English School has submitted that this purpose is reasonably well served by the 'contemporary global international society of sovereign states' (Suganami, 2003: 258). Following from this, studies by the English School assume that such cooperative norms were transmitted to other (non-European) states in the course of the expansion of European International Society.

However, this experience does not hold true in the case of Japan's exposure to European International Society from the mid-19th century. The process of Japan's entry into European International Society began in 1853, when the United States forced Japan to open its ports to the West.² From that date we see Japan embark on an aggressive quest of imperialism. It sent troops to Taiwan in 1874, and went to war with China in 1894–95, followed by war with Russia in 1904–05. Taiwan was annexed in 1895, and so was Korea in 1910. Judging from the dates when Japan embarked on its expansionary policies, there is a strong correlation between the rise of Japanese imperialism and Japan's entry into European International Society. The Japanese imperialist response directly contradicts the English School conception of a 'universal' socialization of states that promotes mutual respect for independence and territorial integrity. If the expansion of European International Society did indeed contribute to Japan's imperial drive, this phenomenon may unearth some of the English School's hidden and problematic assumptions about the socialization of states into International Society.

This article is divided broadly into two parts. The first and second sections argue that the English School pays insufficient attention to the fact that the expansion of European International Society usually took place alongside imperialism, and that it assumes that the norms and goals of 'toleration' and 'coexistence' were transmitted to non-European states.

The English School's silence on European imperialism has been examined by Edward Keene (2002), who recently noted that European International Society in the 19th century was a Society for 'civilized' European empires and had two differing modes of interaction. One mode applied to intra-European relations and promoted 'toleration', while the other governed

relations between 'civilized' European states and 'uncivilized' non-European states, and primarily promoted the attainment of 'civilization'. With respect to the Japanese case, its relations with the 'civilized' European powers were not the same as those in intra-European relations, as Japan still languished in 'semi-civilized' status in the 19th century. Following on from this, if the modes of interaction which aimed for mutual tolerance did not apply to Japan, it is difficult to imagine that the Japanese saw the institutions of European International Society as serving to *reduce* uncertainty and fear. If European International Society did indeed have two different modes of interaction at this time, the question then becomes one of *how* this particular aspect of European International Society affected non-European states' socialization.

The second part of this article furthers Keene's contribution by undertaking a more nuanced examination of how European imperialism in the 19th century affected the socialization (or entry) of non-European states into European International Society. It does so by exploring how Japan's imperialist behaviour in the Meiji period was connected with its socialization into European International Society. This is not intended to be an exhaustive case study of Japanese diplomatic history but, rather, a means to engage with the English School. The coercive behaviour shown by Japan after its encounter with European International Society makes an interesting case for analysis because it contradicts the purported role this Society is supposed to play. Here, it is argued that Japan was socialized into a Janus-faced European International Society. It involved the adoption of the two different modes of interaction prevalent within European International Society at the time. On the one hand, to gain 'civilized' status the Japanese sought cordial relations with the European states by adhering to international law and engaging in European-style diplomacy. On the other hand, the Japanese saw the adoption of coercive policies towards 'uncivilized' states as an inherent part of a 'civilized' state's identity, and sought to attain such status by engaging in imperialist behaviour towards its Asian neighbours.

The article concludes by arguing that the inability of conventional English School studies to explain this phenomenon highlights the myopic, one-sided nature of their investigations. By undertaking a fresh examination of Japan's entry into European International Society, this article demonstrates that more historically sensitive, agent-centred studies of the expansion of European International Society are needed. It argues that the English School must move beyond the intellectual strait-jacket of its normative commitments if it is to remain as a viable heuristic theoretical framework for analysis.

Some qualifications must be made explicit from the outset. First, it should be noted that the term 'international society' (*kokusai shakai*) did not appear

in Japan until after the Versailles Treaty of 1919, amid considerable scepticism. In spite of this, we do see evidence of Japan's socialization into the norms of European International Society in the 19th century. Japan accepted the institutions of international law and the European diplomatic system to govern its foreign relations. It also adopted the sovereign state system, thereby 'reject[ing] the traditional East Asian concept of hierarchical relations among states and peoples' (Kim, 1980: 156). The social structures of European International Society certainly had discernible effects on Japan's foreign policy behaviour. Although *kokusai shakai* was not an ontological being until the 20th century, it can be assumed that Japan did enter and was socialized into European International Society by the late 19th century.

Second, this article does not intend to provide an explanation for the origins of Japanese imperialism. Nor is its purpose to portray Japan either as a victim or a perpetrator of imperialism. Rather, the main purpose of this essay is to explore one facet of late 19th-century Japanese imperialism and its connection with Japan's entry into European International Society. The origins of Japanese imperialism are subject to much debate (Beasley, 1987; Inoue, 2001; Myers and Peattie, 1984; cf. Schmid, 2000). While Japan's entry into European International Society clearly had a role to play in the emergence of Meiji Japanese imperialism (Duus, 1995: 11–15), it is certainly not this article's intention to suggest that it was Japan's entry into European International Society *alone* that instigated Japan's imperialism in the Meiji era, as well as its fighting of World War II. Japanese imperialism is clearly a dynamic, multifaceted phenomenon which simply cannot be reduced to monocausal explanations.

1. The English School and the Expansion of European International Society

Conventional studies by English School scholars have claimed that the expansion of European International Society took place between the late 15th century and 19th century, often in the wake of imperialist expansion by the European powers (Watson, 1984). By the 19th century, supported by overwhelming military strength, the Western powers were able to impose their codes of diplomatic conduct, international law and standards of what constituted a legitimate 'civilized' state (known as the 'standard of civilization') on non-Western states. In addition to protecting the lives and properties of Western nationals overseas, the 'standard of civilization' was a 'response to the philosophical problem of determining which countries deserved legal recognition and legal personality in international law' and 'provided a doctrinal rationale for limiting recognition in international law

to candidate countries' (Gong, 1984b: 24). In order to qualify for the protection of the norms and institutions of European International Society, non-European states were required to pass the test laid down by the 'standard of civilization' and be deemed as 'civilized' by its member states.

Nowadays, the acceptance of the institutions of European International Society is a worldwide phenomenon, and European International Society is often portrayed as a 'universal' International Society. This point was also noted by the British Committee, whose members accordingly concentrated on exploring 'whether a common culture was a necessary condition for the existence of a states system' (Dunne, 1998: 124–5). This may also account for the fact that English School scholars devoted most of their intellectual efforts to explaining how the Society's institutions came to be accepted by 'alien' polities and led to the emergence of a 'global' Society of States, despite a lack of cultural unity. Most conventional scholarship therefore concentrated on how this European order came to be accepted throughout the world. Non-European states' adoption of the diplomatic system and international law are seen as evidence of this. As Martin Wight states:

International society . . . is manifest in the diplomatic system; in the conscious maintenance of the balance of power to preserve the independence of the member-communities; in the regular operations of international law, whose binding force is accepted over a wide though politically unimportant range of subjects; in economic, social and technical interdependence and the functional international institutions established latterly to regulate it. All these presuppose an international social consciousness, a world-wide community-sentiment. (Wight, 1966: 96–7)

Accordingly, case studies which examine non-European states' entry — or socialization — into European International Society focus primarily on the processes by which states fulfilled the 'standard of civilization' by accepting the institutions of European International Society (primarily international law and the European style of diplomacy) and reconfiguring their domestic political organizational structures along 'modern' Western lines (Gong, 1984a, 1984b; Stivachtis, 2001; Suganami, 1984; Zhang, 1991). Such processes were inextricably linked to the modernization of non-European states and, as a consequence, functionalist undertones permeate English School scholars' accounts of the acceptance of European International Society across the world. In explaining the expansion of European International Society, Barry Buzan (1993) has put forward the argument that the expansion of this Society can take place as a result of a functional necessity to introduce a degree of order in increasingly complex interactions among states (cf. Stivachtis, 2001). With regard to non-European states' adoption of Western political institutions, which took place in the wake of this

expansion, Adam Watson also adopts a functionalist explanation and states:

... the nineteenth century is notable for the creation throughout Asia, Africa, and Oceania of Europeanized or Westernized élites. The Europeans and the Americans offered the instruction, and usually met with an enthusiastic response ... The mastery of Western governmental practice and military technology enabled these élites to run a modern state. (Watson, 1984: 31)

While such accounts certainly do illuminate certain aspects of the expansion of European International Society, they are not without their problems. One of the most glaring weaknesses is one of an empirical nature — within conventional studies undertaken by English School scholars with regard to the expansion of European International Society, there is an assumption that a *single* set of norms within this Society applied equally to all its members, and that non-European states were socialized into this Society. Furthermore, this Society is often conceptualized as one which recognizes ‘the existence of different political systems and cultures in the world, and attempts to facilitate their peaceful coexistence with one another by promoting toleration. It tries to achieve this goal through the normative principle of the reciprocal recognition of sovereignty’ (Keene, 2002: 12). This approach seems to reflect closely Bull’s assertion that members of international society should consider themselves as being bound by a commitment to maintaining the ‘structure of coexistence and co-operation’ (Bull, 1984: 120).

However, this depiction of the expansion of European International Society is problematic in that it presupposes that the normative structure of the Society, with its goals of promoting cooperation and coexistence, was transmitted to the non-European states. Moreover, this account downplays the role imperialism — and violence — played in the expansion of European International Society, and thus does not stand up to historical realities (cf. Keal, 2003; Suganami, 2003).³ This is not to imply that English School scholars were unaware of the connection between power politics and European International Society. Seán Molloy (2003: 91), for instance, argues that Martin Wight was sensitive to the ‘paradoxical situation of a Grotian international structure based upon the institution of diplomacy and alliances operating a realist logic based upon the principle of competition in international anarchy’, and emphasized an ‘international anarchy and the struggle for power as the foundation of international society’.⁴ With regard to the expansion of European International Society, Hedley Bull, for his part, was keenly aware of the connection between imperialism and the expansion of the Society, stating that the trading relations between the European and non-European states prior to the age of imperialism failed to facilitate the entry of the latter into the Society. It was only in the 19th

century, when the European states were able to impose their own institutions and norms of international relations, that the expansion of European International Society came about (Bull, 1984: 118).

In conventional studies by English School scholars, the particular aspects of European International Society discussed above curiously drop out in their portrayal of the expansion of European International Society to non-European states. In most cases, the analyses give a somewhat linear, teleological impression, tending to emphasize the global spread of 'progressive' elements of European International Society that promote cooperation and toleration, particularly international law and European-style diplomacy. Moreover, these cooperative norms are argued to stem from European civilization. Martin Wight argued that the 'rationalist' or 'Grotian' tradition originated from medieval and modern European history, and that '[t]he cultivation of this middle ground, and the discovery of political morality, seem peculiarly related to Western values' (Wight, 1966: 128).

As a consequence, the English School approach seems torn between its sensitivity to historical realities and the assumed 'aspects of the universalization of the West's identity . . . [which exercises] a progressive influence over the broader history of mankind' (O'Hagan, 2002: 126; cf. Suganami, 2003). Conventional English School analyses of non-European states' entry into European International Society place heavy emphasis on the acceptance of 'progressive' cooperative institutions. Hedley Bull's conceptualization of the expansion of European International Society has been described succinctly by Jacinta O'Hagan (2002: 129), who notes that '[u]niversalist overtones surface in Bull's discussion of international society. While there is no strong thread of progressive history in Bull's work . . . he does imply that development and progress have been linked to the expansion of the European system'.⁵

2. Japan's Entry into European International Society

Moving from the universal to the particular, previous works which examine Japan's entry into European International Society generally do not depart radically from the conceptualization discussed above.

The most important work examining Japan's introduction to European International Society is Hidemi Suganami's contribution to a collection, by two founders of the English School, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*. The work reflects the English School scholars' normative commitments to International Society, as well as their interest in exploring how this Society spread across the globe despite the lack of a common, unifying culture. Accordingly, the metamorphosis within Japan is examined almost exclusively in terms of the adoption of European

diplomatic practices and international law, as well as Japan's participation in international conferences (Suganami, 1984).

Gerrit W. Gong provides further explanations for this focus on cooperative institutions of European International Society in his work on the 'standard of civilization'. He argues that treaties between European and non-European states evolved into a 'standard' which could 'define the legal requirements necessary for a non-European country . . . to gain full and "civilized" status in "civilized" international society' (Gong, 1984a: 179). The 'standard of civilization' was heavily imbued with cooperative norms. It stipulated that in order to be considered 'civilized' and gain entry into European International Society, states were required to 'guarantee the life, liberty, and property of foreign nationals; to demonstrate a suitable governmental organization; to adhere to the accepted diplomatic practices; and to abide by the principles of international law' (Gong, 1984a: 179). In this sense, it is argued that the point at which non-European states were deemed by the Western powers to have satisfied the 'standard of civilization' was considered the point at which they gained entry into the Society. Accordingly, both Gong's and Suganami's accounts of non-European states' entry into European International Society depict the modernization of Japan. These efforts were eventually to gain the Western states' recognition of Japan as a 'civilized' state, able to adequately protect foreign property in Japan and assert effective governance over its territory. As a result, the Japanese were able to bring about the abrogation of the unequal treaties which Japan was forced to sign in the 19th century, and this marked Japan's entry as a full member into European International Society.

As regards Japan's imperialistic behaviour after its encounter with European International Society, Suganami does mention that Japan's interaction with its neighbours (China and Korea)

. . . in form, was based on treaty obligations; in substance, it was an exercise in power politics . . . Japan's foreign relations [with neighbouring Asian states] is one in which she began to apply what she had learnt from the West in her external affairs . . . [By 1911, when Japan recovered its tariff autonomy], Japan had begun to behave like a Great Power. (Suganami, 1984: 192)

But Suganami offers little explanation on what exactly Japan 'learnt from the West', which resulted in increased conflict with China and Korea. Nor does he explain adequately what the role of a 'Great Power', which the Japanese sought to emulate, was in 19th-century European International Society.

Gong's work, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, is more sensitive to the discrepancies between the goals of European International Society and Japan's behaviour after its incorporation. He argues that the Western powers' reluctance to accept Japan as an equal partner in

European International Society ultimately led the Japanese to rebel against this international order. In particular, Gong mentions the Western powers' reluctance to abrogate the unequal treaties with Japan and the 'Triple Intervention' of 1895, where Russia, France and Germany coerced Japan to return the Liaodong peninsula (which the latter had acquired following the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95) to China, only to then demand territorial concessions from the Chinese themselves. The latter episode aroused particular bitterness among the Japanese, who, '[a]fter conforming wholeheartedly to the spirit and letter of international law and diplomacy . . . conclude[d] that, in the end, only force mattered in international relations' (Gong, 1984b: 196). Gong concludes:

If anything, Japan took the standard [of civilization] too seriously and naively, on face value, not understanding that even 'civilized' international society was characterised by anarchy (the absence of a monopoly of legitimate violence) and hierarchy (because without civil society, rights depend largely on might). (Gong, 1984b: 165)

Two criticisms can be offered here. First, I am not convinced that the events that Gong offers — particularly the Triple Intervention of 1895 — mark the turning point at which the Japanese decided that power was all that mattered in European International Society. In fact, the roots of such perceptions are deeper, dating back to the time before Japan was forced at gunpoint to open its doors to European International Society in 1853 with the arrival of United States Commodore Matthew C. Perry and his 'Black Ships' (*kurofune*). Furthermore, the Japanese were less naïve in their perception of the 'standard of civilization' than Gong thinks. An examination of primary sources by the Japanese political elite in the mid-19th century suggests that perceptions of European International Society as a realm in which power politics reigned supreme were already present. Prior to Perry's arrival there were increasing numbers of European and American ships entering Japan's shores. Furthermore, reports of China's defeat in the Opium War (1840–42) impressed upon the Japanese the threat that European powers could potentially pose (Wakabayashi, 1992; Iwashita, 1999). In 1825, prior to Perry's arrival, Aizawa Seishisai compared the international order outside the vicinity of East Asia to that of the *Realpolitik*-dominated 'so-called seven states of the end of the Zhou dynasty', in which each state vied with each other for hegemony, and wars, alliances and diplomatic intrigues flourished (Aizawa, 1953: 93).⁶ Similar views prevailed among Japan's political elite after Perry's arrival. Kuroda Narihiro commented in 1853 that warfare was 'a constant state of affairs in foreign countries [i.e. the West]' (Kuroda, 1976: 34), while Matsudaira Yoshinaga stated that the international situation that Japan now found itself in was a

place where 'fights take place between those who conquer and who are conquered' (cited in Satô, 1974: 15). Hotta Masayoshi's memorial to the shogunate in 1857 also stated that 'The current international situation resembles that of China's Spring and Autumn period and the last years of Ashikaga rule in Japan' (Hotta, 1976: 69, cf. Satô, 1974: 14–15).⁷ Furthermore, despite the different political context, during the Meiji period Japan's political elite consolidated rather than radically changed their understanding of the use of coercion within European International Society, which was carried over from the Tokugawa period. Deep suspicions towards European International Society persisted and, consequently, the Japanese political leadership continued to see their international environment as a highly insecure one (Banno, 1982: 10–20; Duus, 1995: 15–18; Satô, 1974: 28).

Second, the view that the expansion of European International Society brought an element of order and peace into foreign relations within East Asia (and perhaps in other non-European areas) is deeply naïve, and demonstrates an inability to depart from the orthodox conceptualization of European International Society. Many non-European states entered into European International Society as a result of 'gunboat diplomacy' by the Western powers, sometimes after some military clashes had taken place between them. The very fact that 19th-century European International Society was a hierarchical one in which states were differentiated in terms of their attainment of 'civilization' suggests that there may have existed different modes of interaction towards 'uncivilized' states. However, apart from Gong's passing acknowledgement of hypocrisy and highly differential treatment of European states by the Western powers (Gong, 1984b: 172), neither Suganami nor Gong offer us many clues.

How, then, can we fruitfully conceptualize Japan's entry into European International Society? Furthermore, if European International Society is supposed to have the effect of mitigating global disorder by promoting the mutual respect of sovereign independence, why did disorder — namely increased war or imperialism — take place *after* Japan's encounter with this Society? A better explanation of these questions obliges us to look beyond the intellectual constraints of conventional English School scholarship discussed above.

3. Beyond the Expansion of International Society

As we have seen, the English School has traditionally assumed that the norms of coexistence within European International Society were transmitted to non-European states. Such an assumption blinds us from seeing Japan's Janus-faced socialization into European International Society. In a similar vein, the English School also presumes that an almost homogenous

interpretation of the institutions and norms of European International Society took place among non-European states. This perhaps is a result of the English School's agenda of demonstrating that a degree of order and morality can be maintained under anarchical structures (Dunne, 1998: 54). As Chris Brown has noted,

[English School] theory characteristically uses the same terminology of rules and norms to describe both the ways in which states *actually* behave (a matter for empirical observation) and the way in which they *ought* to behave (the product of a moral discourse) . . . norms are assumed to be both the product of the interaction of states and regulative of those interactions. (Brown, 2001: 438)

In so doing, conventional studies by English School scholars have focused exclusively on relations between European states and have failed to adequately conceptualize how European International Society governed relations between European and non-European states. As Edward Keene (2002) has demonstrated recently in *Beyond the Anarchical Society*, the moral purpose of European International Society was not necessarily that of promoting 'toleration' and 'coexistence', and he points to the existence of two very different modes of interaction. On the one hand, European International Society 'was supposed to provide for peaceful coexistence in an anarchic and plural world by encouraging toleration' giving rise to norms such as 'reciprocal recognition of each state's equality and independence with regard to its territorial sovereignty', at least within 'civilized' Europe (Keene, 2002: 147). On the other hand, beyond Europe, European International Society promoted the goal of introducing civilization into 'backward' states and held 'that some of the sovereign prerogatives of indigenous rulers ought to be held by more advanced Europeans in order to introduce the economic, political and judicial benefits of civilized life' (Keene, 2002: 147).

Keene's work has two important implications for the English School. First, it demonstrates that the normative character of relations within European International Society was a far more complex (and indeed intolerant) one than has been assumed. Many non-European states which were incorporated into European International Society in the course of European imperialism did not only witness the norms of 'toleration' and 'coexistence'. They also witnessed the European International Society which often aggressively intervened in their land in order to bring them closer to 'civilization'. These findings point to the possibility that a simplistic transfer of the cooperative norms of European International Society may not have taken place.

Second, Keene's work also highlights the need for more agent-centred studies in furthering our understanding of the expansion of European

International Society. While Keene has made an important contribution to filling this gap, it is important to consolidate and build upon his arguments. As the entry of non-European states was a far more complex process one than has been assumed, it would be disingenuous to presume that non-European states would commit themselves to the cooperative norms of European International Society in such a short period of time.

This lack of agency ascribed to the non-European states appears to be the result of two factors. The first is the British Committee's interest in demonstrating that an International Society was potentially possible without a common culture.⁸ However, while this question was indeed an interesting and perfectly legitimate one, it did mean that any subtle differences in non-European states' perceptions and acceptance of the norms and institutions of European International Society would be downplayed. The second is perhaps a result of legal positivism adopted by scholars such as Wight or Bull, who believe that entry into European International Society implies an almost automatic and reciprocal commitment to its institutions and practices (Cutler, 1991: 49–58). However, to attain a greater understanding of the acceptance of the norms of the Society by non-European states, we must move beyond the narrow confines of legal positivism. While it is probably correct that even improvised rules, 'if and when they are observed for long enough, come to be reflected in common "modes of thought, patterns of behaviour and preferred norms and values"' (Bull, 2000: 184), this can take longer than generally assumed by English School scholars. The signing of treaties alone does not necessarily constitute an acceptance of the culture and norms of European International Society. Moreover, they can even be reinterpreted, quite often because of the very way in which these states were incorporated into European International Society. The outlook of many non-European states on international politics and the reconfigurations of their domestic structures were likely to have reflected the different norms which governed their relations with European powers, as well as their *own* interpretations, rather than simply reflecting 'the dominant European standard of "civilization" ' (Gong, 1984a: 172).

Can these findings help us understand the rise of Japanese imperialism in the Meiji period following Japan's entry into European International Society? While conventional studies by English School scholars are silent on this matter, this does not mean that Meiji Japanese imperialism cannot be explained through an English School theoretical framework. The remainder of this article is thus devoted to demonstrating a more historically sensitive account of a non-European state's entry into European International Society, and how the English School can still be effective as a framework of analysis. I build upon Keene's recent contribution, which points to the possibility that the socialization of Japan into European International

Society was not a simple transmission of the fundamental normative goals of the Society — understood by Hedley Bull (1995: 16–18) as the ‘preservation of the system and society of states’, ‘maintaining the independence or external sovereignty of individual states’, ‘peace’, and ‘limitation of violence resulting in death or bodily harm’. The Japanese had the chance to know and observe how European International Society governed relations among European states. They were also aware of the possibility that they could be (at least legally) accorded similar treatment to that given to European states, provided they adhered to the ‘standard of civilization’ and were recognized as ‘civilized’. As a ‘semi-civilized’ state, however, they had also witnessed, and experienced first-hand, the imperialist side of European International Society. The simple acceptance of the norms of ‘toleration’ and ‘coexistence’ of European International Society did not take place within Japan, and neither were the institutions of the Society necessarily seen as playing a role in facilitating this. Furthermore, in the process of their entry into European International Society, the Japanese were to learn two different modes of interaction — the mode of interaction among ‘civilized’ states and another mode of interaction towards ‘uncivilized’ states.

4. Japanese Interpretations of International Society

As briefly discussed above, Japanese leaders’ understanding of European International Society was not one of stability and order, but of insecurity. This is not particularly difficult to imagine if one considers the coercive conditions under which Japan was incorporated into the Society. Any attempts to resist the European powers (particularly through anti-foreign movements) were often met by military retaliation, and the Japanese were made painfully aware of the power of the European states and their inability to counter the ‘foreign’ threat. As a ‘semi-civilized’ state, Japan was coerced into signing unequal treaties and stripped of its sovereign prerogatives. Furthermore, Japanese sent abroad had the chance to observe first-hand the fate of those states that had been labelled ‘barbarous’ or ‘uncivilized’. The secretary of the famous Iwakura delegation, which toured the United States and Europe between 1871 and 1873, recorded: ‘The flesh of the weak is eaten by the strong. Ever since the Europeans began sailing to faraway lands, the weaker states of the tropics have been devoured by them’ (‘Inoue Kaoru kô denki hensan kai’, 1934: 907–8; cf. Iwakura, 1968, v. II: 697; Kume, 1982: 307; Yamagata, 1966: 91).

Japanese perceptions of the institution of war require the least explanation. The Japanese did not believe that ‘[p]eace is the norm, and war the violation or exception; peace is logically prior to war’ and ‘war is a necessary evil, to be minimized as far as possible. It is necessary, because it is the only

means of justice when there is no political superior' (Wight, 1991: 206–7). The Western powers themselves did not show a strong interest in colonizing Japan and, consequently, 'the view of imminent war in which Japan's very survival was at stake' receded after the Meiji Restoration (Satô, 1974: 28). However, this did not mean that the Meiji leadership ceased to see their international environment as an insecure one. Indeed, they often compared the international realm to the anarchic and dangerous 'Warring States' periods of both China and Japan. As Satô Seizaburô states,

... even when the direct threats of war had faded away, 'wars' such as 'economic wars' or 'diplomatic wars' were constantly on the minds of [the Japanese]. Therefore, the 'Warring States' analogy, while taking a different form, remained and returned as the framework of analysis for international affairs whenever an international crisis broke out. (Satô, 1974: 28)

In such a dangerous world, the great powers were most certainly not seen as playing the role of maintaining the cooperative norms of European International Society. At least not within Asia. Here, it is possible to see the effects of Japan's interaction with the norms of European International Society which governed relations between 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' states. Rather than play a special role in maintaining the sovereign independence of Japan and other non-European states, the Western great powers took it upon themselves to 'encourage economic progress and stamp out the barbarism, corruption, despotism and incompetence that they believed to be characteristic of most indigenous regimes' (Keene, 2002: 98–9). They intervened in non-European states for this purpose. Consequently, the Meiji Japanese leadership continued to look upon the great powers — the very states that had forced the unequal treaties upon them — with the utmost suspicion and regarded them as the biggest threat to the survival of the Japanese state (Yamagata, 1966: 91).

Could the institution of the balance of power protect the Japanese from the threat of the expanding Western powers? There was no guarantee of that either. It was certainly realized that among the Western powers, the balance of power appeared to function in such a way as to allow weaker states to survive. It was acknowledged that within the West the great powers also played a crucial role in maintaining this balance of power. The Iwakura Mission's records indicate that the members noted that 'the states of Europe all differ in size and strength, and their independence is maintained because the five great powers maintain a balance of power' (Kume, 1980: 106; Satô, 1974: 20–1). The balance of power did, as Tôyama Shigeki (1973: 131) argues, also prevent outright European expansion into East Asia at the time of early Meiji Japan. However, this did not stop the great powers from stripping Japan of its sovereign prerogatives. In fact, the Western powers

joined up to force Japan to sign unequal treaties and, through the most favoured nation clause, made sure any economic benefits to be derived from trading with Japan would be equally enjoyed by all powers.

In conventional works by English School scholars, international law and diplomacy have usually been subject to much attention, as they provide the strongest evidence of non-European states' adoption of cooperative institutions which give international politics a degree of order and certainty. However, both institutions could also serve as handmaidens for imperialism (Keal, 1995, 2003). The Meiji leaders were keenly aware of this, and remained somewhat non-committal as to the role these institutions played.

With regard to the adoption of the Western diplomatic system,⁹ some Japanese appear to have recognized that this could bring Japan some advantages. Iwakura Tomomi, for instance, argued that the sending of diplomatic missions could help Japan collect valuable information about the European states (Yasuoka, 1969: 7–8). However, Japan's seemingly eager participation in the diplomatic system should not be taken as a sign of commitment to the 'Grotian' ideal of diplomacy (as defined by Martin Wight) in European International Society, which sees diplomacy as 'the ability to deal on even terms, the possibility of give and take, where either side can make concessions while leaving the substance of its interests intact' (Wight, 1991: 181). Although the diplomatic system of exchanging envoys itself gained increasing acceptance in the Meiji period, Western diplomacy and its diplomats were seen somewhat differently. Some members of the Meiji elite had witnessed European 'gunboat diplomacy' for themselves (Beasley, 1989), and recognized that diplomacy by European states could be threatening. Diplomacy was seen as an arena in which 'exchanges of favours, threats, and secret treaties of war' are played out (Itô, 1936: 167). Without 'extreme bravery and deep knowledge of European diplomacy', Japanese diplomats 'could fall under the tricks of European diplomats and leave unspeakable national difficulties in the future' (Itô, 1936: 167).

This ambivalence as regards the cooperative elements of European International Society persisted in Japanese views of international law, which was perceived by the Japanese leadership as an important institution. Indeed, one of the first announcements of Meiji Japan's desire to participate in European International Society was couched in terms of participation in 'the [international] order of "the law of nations"' (Hosono, 1979: 84–5; Sakamoto, 1996: 82). However, despite this agreement over the importance of international law, there appears to have been some division over the interpretations of international law among the Meiji elite. Hirosawa Saneomi,¹⁰ who became councillor in the *dajōkan* government, acknowledged the role international law played in protecting the sovereignty of states, claiming that 'small states rely on this [international law] for their

preservation, compelling the larger states to refrain from using threats and force' (Cited in Yasuoka, 1983: 194). Similarly, Sanjō Sanetomi stated in his memorial to Iwakura Tomomi in 1871 that '[i]nternational law exists to preserve states' independence, the balance of power and the benefits of diplomacy and allow states to enjoy the benefits of trade. It controls imbalances of power . . . and assists the norms of heaven and humanity' (Iwakura, 1968, v. II: 927).

The recognition and degree of acceptance of international law as an institution to help preserve a state's sovereignty in Japan comes, in part, as a result of Chinese influences in Japan's learning of international law. One of Japan's earliest introductions to international law was via the Chinese translation of Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law*, titled *Wanguo gongfa* (*Bankoku kôhō* in Japanese). The Chinese translation itself uses Chinese terms of philosophy and ethics such as *tianfa*, the 'heavenly laws' to explain legal obligations, and places emphasis on natural law (Sumiyoshi, 1972: 34–5, 56). As a result, some early Japanese thinkers tended to view international law as a form of natural law similar to Confucian ethics that was applicable to all nations, and this facilitated their acceptance of it (Tanaka, 1987: 396). However, this view of international law does not seem to have gained much support among the Meiji leadership. The introduction of positive international law (such as *Bankoku kôhō* by Nishi Amane, who studied in the Netherlands under Simon Vissering) increased the awareness that international law was selective (in the sense that it originated from and had traditionally only governed intra-European relations), and only those who were deemed 'civilized' could enjoy the protection of international law (Kôzai, 1975: 38; Sumiyoshi, 1972: 40–1; Taoka, 1972: 1–57). Iwakura Tomomi, for his part, claimed in a memorial in 1875 that great powers 'do not take part in international law, (Iwakura, 1968, v. III: 233), while Kido Takayoshi also confessed in his diary his mistrust of international law, stating:

I am forced to believe that the military power of the Empire [Japan] must be great enough to deal with the great powers of the West as potential enemies. One cannot depend on international law without having a well-prepared military force. Many countries use the cloak of international law to seek their own interest in dealing with weaker nations. This is one of the reasons that I call international law a mere tool for depriving a weak nation of its rights. (Kido, 1983, v. I: 148)

Such views of international law were naturally a result of the coercive nature in which Japan was incorporated into European International Society. Despite the fact that states were supposed to be guaranteed their sovereignty, the Japanese found their sovereignty limited by the Treaty Port system. The realities of international law as stipulated in Western works

seemed to have little resemblance to Japan's reality. Moreover, the fact that Chinese translations of international law tended to emphasize the role of natural law only served to highlight the disparities between the ideals ('heaven') and realities ('humanity') of an international order supposedly regulated by international law, and reduced its legitimacy (Tanaka, 1987: 396).

Consequently, the Japanese leadership quickly became aware of the position of international law within the dualistic modes of interaction of European International Society. On the one hand, the Japanese noted that international law could be used successfully by the 'civilized' states to justify their coercive policies towards 'uncivilized' states. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that those who were deemed to have more Westernized political systems — or 'civilized' ones — were more likely to be afforded the protection of international law. This was, of course, the result of the emergence of the 'standard of civilization', which had appeared by the time Japan was incorporated into European International Society and had the effect of placing those states labelled as 'uncivilized' beyond the pale of the protection of international law ostensibly afforded to European states.

5. International Society and the Rise of Japanese Imperialism

The way in which Japan interpreted European International Society had consequences that undermined its supposed purpose. One of these was a rise in imperialist behaviour, which was deeply intertwined with Japan's socialization into the Society. It is, of course, possible to argue that the rise of Japanese imperialism and militarization was simply a result of the pressures brought upon them by the Western powers' encroachment; that Japan learnt that within an anarchical system it must adapt to Western practices or suffer like China. We could expect much the same from Kenneth Waltz's understanding of how states are socialized within an anarchical international system. But the problem here is that the Japanese state did not simply aim to become a functional 'lean, mean competitor' (Finnemore, 1996: 332), but sought to reconfigure its own identity and create a domestic society in which Japanese civilization was on a par, or surpassed, that of European powers'. In the case of Japan, we see the elites undertake a complete overhaul of their state's domestic political structures and identity to conform with Western models. Such deep socialization is not recognized by realist or functionalist accounts, which emphasize the learning of *Realpolitik* behaviour (Waltz, 1979: 127–8; cf. Wendt and Barnett, 1993: 336).

This then begs the question — if Japan was indeed engaged in a process of socialization into European International Society, why was its behavioural outcome so different from that conceptualized by previous English School

scholars? The key to this answer lies in the dual modes of interaction within European International Society in the 19th century, to which Japan was exposed. As the Japanese elite noticed themselves, states that were deemed 'civilized' by the Great Powers were indeed often accorded the protection of the norms and institutions of European International Society, which aimed for some form of coexistence among states. However, the situation for 'civilized' states with regard to their behaviour vis-a-vis the 'uncivilized' states was different. At a time when imperialism was frequently seen as a mission of civilizing those deemed to be barbarous, imperialism and a strong military to support this was also regarded as an integral part of a 'civilized' state's identity (Iriye, 1995: 312; cf. McNeill, 1982: 256). Rather than respecting their 'sovereignty', the Western powers frequently invoked international law to invade and colonize many Asian and African states. They respected the balance of power with each other, and this even extended to their imperialistic expansions, where each state carved up a 'sphere of influence' for itself.

Japan's socialization into European International Society did not necessarily entail a deep commitment to preserving the sovereign independence of other states, particularly weaker ones. Imperialism was an integral part of the modes of interaction within European International Society in the 19th century, and it is no surprise that the Japanese adopted these features in the course of their socialization. On the one hand, as has been stated in previous works by English School scholars, Japan made concerted efforts to adhere to the norms of European International Society which applied to 'civilized' states to show its 'progress' towards attaining 'civilized' status (Gong, 1984b; Suganami, 1984). On the other hand, the Japanese elites also decided that Japan should become a strong, imperialist power like the European powers.

It is precisely this aspect of Japan's socialization into European International Society that has been subject to much neglect by the English School. The Japanese elite concluded that to become a full 'civilized' member of the Society, in addition to observing meticulously the 'standard of civilization', they would have to construct a strong, imperialistic state and take on the identity of a powerful 'civilized' state. To this end, they emulated the modes of interaction which were applied to relations between 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' states to demarcate themselves from the 'uncivilized' states. Being a powerful imperialist power would not only militarily protect Japan, it would also help Japan be recognized as a full member of the 'civilized' society of states and be accorded its protection. After all, the great 'civilized' powers were at the same time the most militarily powerful and possessed vast colonies to further their mission of 'civilizing' the 'uncivilized' states. This viewpoint is visible in Inoue Kaoru's memorial. After giving an overview of

an increasingly precarious East Asia, Inoue claims that the only way for Japan to survive this is 'to transform our empire and its people into a state and people like Europe. I emphasise that the only way [for Japan to ensure its independence] is to create a new, European-styled empire in the Orient' ('Inoue Kaoru kô denki hensan kai', v. III, 1934: 913).

In the course of Japan's adoption of the mode of interaction used by the European powers vis-a-vis the 'uncivilized' states, Asia often became the 'uncivilized "other"' where the Japanese reaffirmed their 'civilized' identity by labelling other political entities and its peoples as 'barbarous' (cf. Neumann and Welsh, 1991: 327–48; Yamamuro, 2001: 42–7). In an article written in 1898, shortly after the Sino-Japanese War, Sakue Takahashi also elucidated Japan's 'civilized' wartime behaviour by juxtaposing it with an 'uncivilized' China that had not even entered international conventions (Takahashi, 1898: 2).

Japan also engaged in coercive diplomacy towards their now 'uncivilized' Asian neighbours. Like Perry had done to them in 1853, the Japanese took it upon themselves to establish Western-style diplomatic relations with their unwilling neighbours (Conroy, 1974; Kim, 1980).¹¹ On the basis of their observance of the special role 'civilized' great powers were accorded in 'civilizing' other non-European states, the Japanese sent expeditions to areas they labelled 'uncivilized', thereby demonstrating their own identity as a 'civilized' state and 'eliminating the middle ground [i.e. semi-civilized status] between civilization and savagery that might trap Japan in an inferior status to the West' (Eskildsen, 2002: 393). In striking similarity to the Western powers' behaviour vis-a-vis non-Western states, it was claimed that imperialism had a civilizing element (Iriye, 1995: 312). The indications of Japan's contact with the dual modes of interaction in European International Society are also visible in its use of the oft-cited cooperative institutions.

The Japanese also began to use international law in a dualistic manner to demonstrate Japan's attainment of 'civilization'. In their relations with the European powers, apart from undertaking concerted efforts in observing international law and modernizing in accordance with the 'standard of civilization' (Iwakura, 1968, v. II: 929), the Japanese also began to utilize international law as a tool to protect Japanese interests from the West. During a dispute with the British Minister to Japan, Sir Harry Parkes, over the Meiji government's punishment of Christians, Ōkuma Shigenobu invoked the laws of domestic sovereignty claiming that 'foreign countries had no right to interfere with Japan punishing its own people in accordance with its own laws' (Ōkuma and Enjōji, 1980: 285).¹² At the same time, the Japanese emulated the European powers' use of international law vis-a-vis the 'uncivilized' states, which again reflected their desire to adopt the

identity of a civilized state. Towards its weaker neighbours, Japan fully utilized international law to justify any aggression. Japan claimed the right to send an expeditionary force to Taiwan by arguing that the island was not effectively ruled by China, even though the latter claimed territorial possession. This, of course, was exactly the same logic used by the West to interfere in or colonize those ‘uncivilized’ states, and was an integral aspect of the mode of interaction European International Society adopted in its dealings with ‘uncivilized’ states.

Conclusion

Two key points emerge from this inquiry into the study of the expansion of European International Society.

First, it is necessary to fully acknowledge that International Society does not have a single, cooperative feature as has been previously portrayed. European International Society in the 19th century was Janus-faced — its different modes of interaction shaped Europeans’ behaviour between themselves and with non-European states and peoples. To be fair to English School scholars, this point has been suggested but not substantiated. Wight (1977: 128) stated that there ‘is an outer circle that embraces all mankind, under natural law, and an inner circle, the *corpus Christianorum* bound by the laws of Christ. The inner circle is unique.’ Bull (1984: 122), for his part, argues that it was almost inevitable that International Society was dualistic, as ‘it could hardly have been expected that European states could have extended the full benefits of membership of the society of states to political entities that were in no position to enter into relationships on a basis of reciprocity’.

However, the main focus of the study of European International Society has primarily been on the relations between its constitutive members, where there exist ‘common interests, practices, rules and institutions’ (Cutler, 1991: 59).¹³ Scholars working within the International Society tradition have not adequately conceptualized the constitutive norms and institutions of European International Society as applied to non-members, and the actions and viewpoints of constituent members towards these states.¹⁴ While recent writings by scholars working within the English School tradition (Keene, 2002; Suganami, 2003) have both acknowledged and attempted to move beyond the myopic and Eurocentric conceptualizations of European International Society, much work still needs to be done.

This leads to the second, more important, point — while the English School’s normative commitment to demonstrating how states do and ‘ought to behave’ is certainly laudable, it comes at the price of reducing its heuristic value. Recent debates have noted the possibility of fruitfully utilizing

interpretivist approaches to understanding International Society (Buzan, 2001; Dunne, 1995; Little, 2000). For instance, Timothy Dunne asserted in the pages of this journal that '[International] society is what states have made of it' (Dunne, 1995: 376). Dunne's assertion refers to a seminal article by Alexander Wendt (1992), which argues for a more sociological inquiry in understanding state behaviour. However, many English School scholars have not departed radically from the aforementioned question posed by the British Committee, and have concentrated on explaining how the narrowly defined institutions of the Society came to be accepted by non-European states. Because of their inability to move 'beyond' the narrow conceptualization of European International Society, conventional accounts can hardly capture the complex, nuanced nature of non-European states' socialization into this Society.

This one-sided debate renders the English School approach unable to explain why the Japanese framed their national interests and goals in militaristic/imperialistic terms, rather than cooperative terms. Neither can the English School demonstrate why the Janus-faced nature of European International Society was reproduced by the Japanese, who defined membership of the society of states in terms of imperialist behaviour and used its institutions accordingly to attain this goal. Japan's dualistic use of international law, on the one hand to protect itself from Western encroachment while, on the other, utilizing the very same law to gain territories at the expense of other 'uncivilized' Asian states, mirrored that of Western powers' behaviour in East Asia and is a case in point.

This hardly does any justice to the English School's self-proclaimed interpretivist approach. An examination of non-European perspectives on the Society sheds much light on these questions, and it seems necessary to take up Buzan's call 'for more country studies' (Buzan, 2001: 485) as part of this endeavour to deepen our understanding of the historical evolution of the international order. In one such study that responds to this call, Yongjin Zhang noted in his work on China's socialization into European International Society that '[t]he process of mutual adaptation and accommodation [between China and European International Society] is undoubtedly a lengthy and sometimes an agonising one' (Zhang, 1998: 246). Undoubtedly, more cross-disciplinary studies which combine the findings of area studies and International Relations theory will yield fruitful results in understanding this 'agonizing' process. If European International Society is 'what states have made of it', it is imperative that these stories of non-European states are also told in light of the Janus-faced character of the Society. If this shortcoming is not corrected, the English School risks losing its utility as a theoretical framework. English School scholars need to escape

the intellectual strait-jacket of conventional accounts of European International Society by separating the empirical and normative context in their analyses of European International Society. Failure to do so puts blinkers on interpretative analysis, permitting us to view only one side of the face of International Society.

Notes

Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Institute of Oriental Culture at the University of Tokyo in January 2003, and at the International Studies Association conference in Portland, Oregon, in February 2003. I should like to thank all the participants for their comments. The research for this article was carried out in both Australia and Japan, and I am indebted to many people and institutions in both countries. For their help during my time in Japan, I am grateful to C.W. Braddick, Fujimori Hideyo, Fujimori Sadayoshi, Tanaka Akihiko, Yamamoto Kazuya, and the staff of the University of Tokyo and Musashi University. Back home in Australia, I received much-needed help from Tomoko Akami, Michelle Burgis, Malcolm Cook, Miwa Hirono, Paul Keal, Kathy Morton, Joel Quirk, Christian Reus-Smit, Leonard Seabrooke and Yongjin Zhang. I should also like to thank the anonymous reviewers whose comments have assisted greatly in sharpening my arguments. Japanese personal names throughout this paper are presented in Japanese form, with family name followed by given name. Exceptions are made in the case of Japanese authors writing in English who choose to write their name in accordance with the English convention. Macrons (for words such as *rôjû*) indicate long vowels. Macrons have not been used for well-known names such as Tokyo. Chinese names and words follow the *pinyin* Romanization system.

1. Okakura, (1968: 122).
2. By European International Society, I also include the United States. It may be objected that the United States, in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, did not fully participate in European politics at this time and cannot be considered to have been a member of European International Society. However, while it did partially isolate itself from European politics, the United States did accept and adhere to the institutional procedures of European International Society. Neither did it attempt to establish alternative institutional arrangements that would govern its relations with other states. In so doing, the United States can be considered to have participated in the maintenance of a society of states.
3. Note, however, that Keal is primarily concerned with the plight of indigenous peoples who were deprived of their human rights in the course of the expansion of international society, and is highly critical of the statist bias of the English School approach.
4. I do not agree, however, with Molloy's assertion that the balance of power as conceptualized by Wight is necessarily a product of the logic of anarchy — in 'Western Values in International Relations', Martin Wight refers to the balance of power as something more '*conscious*' which serves 'to preserve the independ-

- ence of the member-communities'. Here the balance of power is seen rather as a *social* product which enjoys some legitimacy within international society as a guiding norm. It is not necessarily a fortuitous product of anarchy (Wight, 1966: 96, emphasis added).
5. O'Hagan (2002: 129) also contends that Wight did not share Bull's somewhat teleological vision, rather seeing international politics as repetitious. However, he did 'admit limited possibilities for change, as is demonstrated by his faith in the existence of international society as a set of institutions and norms which can help to modify international conflict'.
 6. The 'seven states' is a description of the Spring and Autumn and Warring State periods in Chinese history. During this time, seven major city-states fought with each other for the unification of China. It is seen as a classic period in which *realpolitik* — such as alliances, wars and diplomatic intrigues — flourished.
 7. Hotta Masayoshi was the *rôjû* at the time of the signing of the 1858 trading treaty between the US and Japan. The end of Ashikaga rule is known as Japan's own 'Warring States Period' (*sengoku jidai*). During this time, many local warlords vied for the unification of Japan. It should also be noted that while Hotta is certainly expressing his views of the European-dominated international order as coercive, the quoted passage is also concerned with maintaining the Tokugawa shogunate. The Ashikaga shogunate was weak and ineffective during the Japanese 'Warring States Period', and Hotta's reference to the Ashikaga also serves as a warning against the Tokugawa shogunate weakening and plunging Japan into civil war. For this point, I am indebted to the anonymous reviewer for the *European Journal of International Relations*.
 8. This by no means implies that there were no disagreements among members of the British Committee over whether or not a common culture was necessary for an International Society (Dunne, 1998: 124–9).
 9. By 'diplomatic system' I follow Hedley Bull's definition in which the diplomatic system is defined as '[t]he conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics *by official agents and by peaceful means*' undertaken by 'professional diplomatists' (Bull, 1995: 156, emphasis added). It is not meant to mean 'diplomacy' in the broadest term of political relations between states.
 10. Hirosawa Saneomi (1833–71) was a samurai from the Chôshû fiefdom. He held important appointments in the dajôkan government, including that of Imperial Councillor (*Sangi*).
 11. Other features of this policy also included the annexation of the Ryûkyû kingdom into Japan in 1879, which terminated the kingdom's status as a tributary state to China and Japan. Given the fact that Japan had long established de facto control over the kingdom, whether or not this act can be classified as 'imperialism' is somewhat ambiguous. However, we should take note that this 'was an expansionist act in that it was asserted in complete disregard of the views of the Liu-ch'üan [Ryûkyûan] people and their authorities' (Kim, 1980: 202).

12. Ôkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922) was a middle-ranking samurai from the Hizen fiefdom. He held cabinet posts in finance and foreign affairs. He was prime minister in 1898 and 1914–16. He also founded a political party, the *Rikken kaishintô* and Waseda University.
13. Cutler argues that this is particularly the case with scholars such as Wight and Bull who adopt a legal positivist view.
14. Some exceptions to this include Edward Keene (2002); Martin Wight's chapter on colonialism in Wight (1991); Timothy Dunne (1997); and Paul Keal (1995).

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