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## ABOUT WAR AND PEACE IN THE APPROACH OF THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Gheorghe Onișoru, Ph.D.,  
Professor at „Ștefan cel Mare” University, Suceava,  
Senior researcher at the Romanian Academy, National Institute for Study of Totalitarianism,  
Bucharest, Romania  
E-mail: gh\_onis@yahoo.com

### Abstract

Our study follows the way in which the issue of peace and war is reflected by the English School through the work of its main representatives. Thus, we reviewed the contributions of English school coryphaeus. We referred to John Vincent, Terry Nardin, Martin Wight and Michael Walzer. In particular, we insisted not only on the theoretical aspects related to the theory of international relations, but we insisted on the ethical aspects raised by the wars considered as just or in-just.

**Key words:** war, peace, international relations, English School, Michael Walzer, Terry Nardin, John Vincent

During the second half of the last century, against the backdrop of the last years of the Cold War, we witnessed an interesting theoretical debate on the issue of using war as a means of settling disputes on the international scene. In this context I recall here the theoretical developments belonging to the *English School*. Although its roots can be placed in the interwar period in both major trends of international relations, realism and liberalism, it has been forced into the theoretical discussion of this sphere after the Second World War<sup>1</sup>.

Into the *English School*<sup>2</sup> the central concepts are:

- International society;
- International order;
- International justice.

The scholars of the English school start from the social nature of international relations, which is why they have been dissociated from the beginning realists in terms of political power, but also liberals in regard to radical international transformations. Today, this trend is developing relationships and concepts in relation to other schools of thought, such as constructivism, globalism, identity and European integration.

The English School maintains that through dialogue states can establish common rules and institutions to build an international society based on shared values and interests. Thus, at the level and in the interest of the international society, the order that results from the common understanding can be imposed on basic principles such as:

- Mutual respect for sovereignty;
- Non-intervention;
- Compliance with the obligations and responsibilities provided for in the Treaties.

These principles can be assumed through fundamental institutions such as:

<sup>1</sup> See Gheorghe Onișoru, *Relații Internaționale*, București, 2007.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199604456-e-034>

- Power balance;
- Diplomacy;
- International law.

In the view of the English School, international order and international society also refer to what, in generic terms, we call global governance. It includes some basic elements, such as:

- Human rights;
- Non-governmental organizations;
- Public opinion.

The merit of the English School lies, however, also in the great problems that have been raised, two of which have been drawn to the attention:

1. How can states and other actors in international politics reconcile their interests through:
  - to our own citizens (what we call *raison d'état*);
  - by maintaining international order, peace and security;
  - the standard of humanity (*raison du système*);
  - the earth as a whole (*raison de justice*).
2. How can the pluralist international order, based on respect for sovereignty, non-intervention and political freedom of states, be reconciled with the solidarity order based on international organization, human rights and international law<sup>3</sup>.

As can be seen from these general observations, the English school is well anchored in today's realities and provides a strong basis for debating precisely in the theory of international society through discussions on the pluralist and the solidarity module that characterizes it. This debate may include dilemmas such as:

- Power versus Morality;
- Order versus Justice;
- Sovereignty versus Human rights;
- Intervention versus World order.

Therefore, in this chapter the English School proposes themes of broad respiration and maximum interest, among which we mention only:

- the policy of great powers;
- humanitarian intervention;
- international legitimacy;
- international protection;
- international life;
- nationalism and national self-determination;
- global governance.

According to the opinion of the specialists in this field, one of the coryphaeus of the English school is Martin Wight (1917 - 1972), who played an important role in setting up the British Commission for International Policy Theory. Analyzing the theoretical evolution of discipline, Professor Wight<sup>4</sup> notes that there is no corpus of international theory - according to the expression used by Martin Griffiths<sup>5</sup> - but instead distinguishes three historical traditions of thought, or the three R:

- Realism;
- Rationalism;
- Revolutionism.

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<sup>3</sup> Onișoru, *op.cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, Leicester University Press, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Griffiths, *Relații internaționale: școli, curente, gânditori*, București, 2003.

Interesting in Wight's case is that his work was posthumously published through the care of his wife, to whom we owe *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, which appeared in London in 1991<sup>6</sup>.

Perhaps on the same coordinates it can be placed the teachers from the famous *London Schools of Economics*, Terry Nardin<sup>7</sup> și John Vincent<sup>8</sup>.

Nardin was heavily influenced by the work of the philosopher and English political scientist Michael Oakeshott (1901 – 1990)<sup>9</sup>, professor of political science at the famous *London Schools of Economics*. This is especially evident in Terry Nardin's work published in 1983, *Law, Morality and the Relation of States*. It should be stressed that Nardin will then revise his views, expressing his consent for a possible armed intervention aimed at protecting human rights after failing more peaceful solutions.

Speaking about the ethical tradition in international affairs, Terry Nardin wrote:

„Ethical concerns have already been part on international relations. *I will grant the Ammonites no reprieve. Because in their greed for land they invaded the ploughlands of Gilead*, the Lord says in Amos 1:13, and his anger is perfect intelligible to us. There are times when such judgements are out of fashion, but disdain for them is never permanent. Current judgements of the rights and wrongs of foreign policy are affected by past effort to articulate the legitimate claims of political communities, to lay down rules for civilized diplomacy, to distinguish just and unjust wars, and to establish procedures for the peaceful settlement on international disputes. Even the issue of distributive justice, though new for the international agenda, has a long history in political thought. When we argue on international affairs we draw directly or indirectly on established tradition of ethical discourse”<sup>10</sup>.

John Vincent (1943 - 1990) is a graduate of the First University with a department of international relations at Aberystwyth. Although he died just 47 years old, Vincent managed to publish a number of important works for the theory of international relations, including the *Non-intervention and the International Order*, Princeton University Press, 1974, *Human Rights and International Relations*, Cambridge, 1986, followed in the same year and at the same publishing house by *Foreign Policy and Human Rights: Issues and Responses*.

Vincent gave an important place in his research to the issues of realistic current trends and the legacy on which he relied. In a study on the impact of Hobbes' views on international relations in the twentieth century published in 1981, also quoted by Martin Griffiths, the English scholar shows:

„Carr's realistic critique is followed by a chapter about the limits of realism. Realist Martin Wight of *Power Politics* is different from rationalist Martin Wight in *Western Values in International Relations*. Morgenthau's assessment of international politics as a struggle for power includes an analysis of the balance of power as a stabilizing factor in state policy and even the importance of the moral consensus on which ultimately the stability of a system depends.”<sup>11</sup>

Writing in the context of the cold war, John Vincent emphasized justice and international order. For this reason, he arrives at the right conclusion, which will be

<sup>6</sup> „Wight explores the debate between three groups of thinkers - Machiavellians, Grotians and Kantians. He examined the distinctive doctrines each offered concerning war, diplomacy, power, national interest, the obligation of treaties, the obligation of an individual to bear arms, and the conduct of foreign policy”, <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/14769902-international-theory>

<sup>7</sup> Terry Nardin, *Law, Morality and the Relation of States*, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> John Vincent, *Nonintervention and International Order*, Princeton, 1974; Idem, *Human Rights and International Relations*, Cambridge, 1986; Idem, *Foreign Policy and Human Rights: Issues and Responses*, Cambridge, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, Londra, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> [www.nyu.edu/classes/gmoran/NARDIN.pdf](http://www.nyu.edu/classes/gmoran/NARDIN.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Griffiths, *op.cit.*

confirmed by the political evolutions, that there can be no middle way between realism and revolutionism.

An important theoretical contribution is also found in the *Just and Injust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, published in a first edition in 1977 by Michael Walzer. The author started from the contemporary experience of the Vietnam War, and he was already known in scientific circles for his debut on studying the history of political thought during the English Revolution, as well as the phenomenon of Puritanism as a radical form of expression.

Walzer<sup>12</sup> speaks of a set of principles that should be the *legalistic paradigm* for member states of international society. These are six main assertions (conditions):

1. there is an international society of sovereign states;
2. this international society has laws that establish the rights of its members - above all, the rights of territorial integrity and political sovereignty;
3. the use in any way of the imminent force or threat with the use of force by a state against another's political sovereignty constitutes aggression and constitutes a criminal act;
4. aggression justifies two types of violent retaliation: a war of self-defense on the part of the victim and a law enforcement war by the victim or by another member of the international society;
5. only aggression can justify war and nothing else;
6. after the aggressor has been defeated from the military point of view, it may be punished.

Michael Walzer's concepts of *fair war* have given rise to heated controversy, the most important chance being made by the Gulf War triggered by Saddam Hussein's aggression on Kuwait in August 1990. And that not to mention the situation created after the New York attacks of September 11, 2001.

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Injust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, ediția II, New York, 1992.