



# **International Relations Theories and the Global Order: A Review of Selective Classic and Contemporary Texts**

Md. Ali Siddiquee<sup>^</sup>

## **Abstract**

This article reviews four writings in International Relations (IR) each of which provides an influential theoretical perspective on the global order. The first text, authored by Hedley Bull, marked a sharp departure from the dominant realist school of thought. Bull's concept of the society of states maintains an international order by common interests based on a set of primary or universal goals. He argues that the common interests among the states are the prerequisites for forming the order. The second book, authored by Alexander Wendt, offers a ground-breaking meta-theory of constructivism. Wendt contends that inter-

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<sup>^</sup> Md. Ali Siddiquee is Assistant Professor of International Relations, University of Dhaka. His email address is: [ali.ir@du.ac.bd](mailto:ali.ir@du.ac.bd).

subjectivities play a greater role in constantly shaping and reshaping the global order. The third piece is written by John Ikenberry shows how and why the nature of liberal internationalism has changed over the past two centuries. He argues that despite many challenges, liberal internationalism has the potential to promote a rules-based international order in the years to come. The fourth work, authored by Emanuel Adler proposes a theory of cognitive evolution that relies on the practices, background knowledges, and communities of practices that are constantly shaping and reshaping international social orders. His cognitive evolution theory forwards a newer way, practice-turn in IR, in a novel attempt to reconceptualise IR, global order, and the change and meta-stability within. Each of the four works is ontologically and epistemologically intriguing and provides a fresh approach to look at IR by challenging and moving beyond dominant realist framework to understand global order and its different theoretical constructs.

The article reviews four important books of theorising global order and International Relations (IR). Two of these academic pieces are classical texts, and hence their contributions seem timeless. The others reflect new thoughts but have potentials to influence theorising IR and global order. The first piece is authored by Hedley Bull, who pioneered the English School, while the second text is authored by Alexander Wendt, the pioneer of Social Constructivism. The third book is authored by John Ikenberry, a leading scholar of Liberal Internationalism. The fourth is authored by Emanuel Adler, who proposes Cognitive Evolution as a new theory of IR. The article has three parts. The first part provides a snapshot for each of the four books. The second part analyses their similarities and differences. The concluding section summarises their influence on theorising about the global order.

### **Theorising Global Order**

Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, London, by Macmillan Press, 1977, p. 329, ed. 2, ISBN: 978-1-349-24028-9 (E-book).

Hedley Bull's *The Anarchical Society* marks a sharp departure from the dominant realist school of thought in IR theory. His argument is premised on the idea that states constitute a society where the absence of governance makes it highly anarchic. This is in sharp contrast with the realists who conceive of international politics as merely characterized by power politics among the self-interested states. The society of states maintains an international order by common interests based on some primary or universal goals. Bull argues that the common interests among the states are the prerequisites for forming the order. He also discusses how the balance of power, international law, diplomacy, war, and great powers have distinctive roles in maintaining order. He rejects the alternative models to the international state system and believes the system remains relevant in maintaining international order, fostering global peace, and ensuring justice.

*The Anarchical Society* has three parts. In the first part, Bull elucidates the principal topic of the book and its scope, and mostly on the idea of order, its presence and maintenance, and its connections with justice in world politics. In the first three chapters, Bull presents his idea of the order in general, and in the international arena. He distinguishes between the international system and the international society. For him, international society fulfils three goals: "preservation of the system and society"<sup>1</sup>, maintenance of independence, and promotion of peace. He argues that the modern system of states, despite international anarchy, forms an international society based on some common rules and institutions. However, he cautions that society "is no more than one of the basic elements at work in modern international politics", and definitely not the sole or the most dominant one.<sup>2</sup>

Bull also discusses the concepts of order and justice, their interrelations and discusses the confusions of mutual incompatibilities, whether these are conflicting or reinforcing. He also analyses which of these should have priorities. He contends that the West is essentially concerned with keeping order in the society, while the Third World is primarily preoccupied with 'just change' even if it is achieved through disorder. To him, justice and order are mutually congruent and achievable in international society. He argues that international society is not hostile towards justice though there are violations and there are incompatibilities between the rules and the institutions working to maintain order and ensure justice.

The second part of *The Anarchical Society* highlights the methods of promoting order in global politics. To put forward his arguments, he discusses the merits of the balance of power (BOP) and terror, international law, diplomacy and war, and great power stabilisation in details. He distinguishes between general and local BOP, elaborates the functions and relevance of BOP, and elucidates five misperceptions about the complex nature of the current BOP. He also explains how BOP is different from mutual nuclear deterrence, and the challenges the latter poses to maintaining order.

In the last part, Bull deals with the feasibility of alternative options to the state system in maintaining world order. He examines possible changes the state system may experience. These changes may come in the forms of complete disarmament, the solidarity of states, the plurality of nuclear powers, and ideological homogeneity. Bull views that other systems such as a world government or the rise of new medievalism may have the potentials to alter the state system more fundamentally. He argues that while these options are theoretically viable, these will fail to ensure greater global order.

Bull is optimistic about the state system to provide order in the coming future. Yet, he notes that some challenges to the state system may make the system dysfunctional or obsolete in

future. States can address these challenges through a better understanding of common interests, rules and institutions to fulfil their goals. He also examines few possible reforms to address the dysfunctionalities of the state system. These include the Kissinger model on “concert of great powers,”<sup>3</sup> the radical salvationist model on “centralised direction of global affairs,”<sup>4</sup> the third world model on “wider role for regional organisations”<sup>5</sup>, and the Marxist model on “universal proletarian revolution.”<sup>6</sup>

Critics suggest that the deterministic nature of international society as suggested by Bull is problematic. Despite such criticism, one may note that Bull addresses certain basic questions on nature and the functions of international order within the society of states, what makes his work easy to understand the complex nature of world politics. The first three chapters on ideas of order, its existence and maintenance are the unique contributions, where Bull relies on the works of Martin Wight’s *Power Politics*; and in subsequent chapters he offers detailed analyses of the international order focusing on the short-lived works of the thinkers of his time.<sup>7</sup>

Bull admits that *The Anarchical Society* lacks “refined theoretical technique or of any particularly recondite historical research.”<sup>8</sup> Despite this limitation, Bull relies on politics, history and philosophy to draw upon his unique ideas, principles, explanations, and potentials in advancing core philosophy behind the book. Ian Hall is of the opinion that Bull’s contribution to the contemporary English School is a “diminishing one.”<sup>9</sup> He further notes that the book is “hastily-written, the argument is seriously thin, and parts of it are horribly dated.” Hall also criticizes the book for having only a few notes and citations.<sup>10</sup> The book, despite its criticisms and limitations, remains one of the classic texts in IR. Some of Bull’s arguments are still relevant, the way he examines the international system is useful, and the book has contributed to the evolution of later IR theories.

Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 429, ISBN 051102166 6 (E-book)

In his seminal work *Social Theory of International Politics*, Alexander, Wendt offers a meta-theory of global order by challenging the rationalist and material understanding of national interests. For Wendt, state identities and interests are not exogenously formed, rather constructed and reconstructed, and this experience is essentially shaped by the international culture of a certain time.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the neo-realists and neo-liberals, who champion the material distribution of power in the international system, Wendt focuses on the ideational power of states. In his view, the material distribution of power and wealth are not the defining features of international politics. Rather, the social context in which states relate to and identify with each other matters the most. The interactions in the social domain results in the creation of normative and ideational structure in which the states form their respective identities and thus shaping their interests. At the core of Wendt's theory is an interaction between agency and the structure of the state system<sup>12</sup>.

Wendt argues that states interpret the international system in different ways across time because of three different versions of international anarchy shaping their experiences: Hobbesian, Lockeian and Kantian.<sup>13</sup> In his view, anarchy does not follow a deterministic logic of self-help and interest maximisation; rather it follows different logics subjected to the socialisation processes.<sup>14</sup> What the state thinks of itself (role identity) is influenced by four interests: survival, autonomy, economic wellbeing, and collective self-esteem. Collective identity checks what others think about the role identity of the state.<sup>15</sup> The state sets its course of action based on the interaction between these two identities. State's action follows a four-step socialisation process between Ego and Alter: Ego sets a course of action and informs Alter about the role it should assume, then Alter interprets it and responds with its own action for Ego to

respond.<sup>16</sup> Through this process, the state assumes its identity and corresponding interests. Wendt also proposes that States have a propensity to follow a Kantian position due to the presence of certain conditions in the current international politics.

Three ontological claims can summarise Wendt's theoretical strength in the book. Firstly, Wendt claims that the normative and the ideational structures are of the same importance as ascribed to the material structures by rationalists.<sup>17</sup> Material resources are only meaningful if we understand the action of the actors through the underlying shared structures of knowledge, values and norms. To clarify, for instance, the United States, Israel and Iran exist in the same international system, though a materialistic balance of power cannot explain why the nuclear ambition of Iran is less desirable for the United States while it does not deny Israel of acquiring nuclear weapons. Wendt's theory argues the concept of identity, the role of ideology and narratives of friend and enemy are useful in analysing why the nuclear ambitions of Iran and Israel have entirely different appeal for the United States.

Secondly, Wendt has argued that the ways states' interests formed are essentially linked with the social identities of states.<sup>18</sup> How actors conceive their interests can explain a lot about the international politics of a certain era. To return to the previous example, having nuclear capabilities comes with arrays of interests, for instance, maintaining peace and stability in the system, sustaining the authoritarian regime, like in the case of North Korea having nuclear ambitions. The way the US-Israel relations are socialised can explain why both consider Iran or North Korea as an existential threat.

Lastly, Wendt has posited that the agents and structures are mutually constructed and aiding each other in their reproduction according to the particular pattern of interaction.<sup>19</sup> Mutual symbiotic relations exist between the practices of the actors and normative and ideational structures. This implies agents create, influence, and recreate the

structures and vice versa, and therefore, Wendt's approach is both causal and constitutive.

Moving away from the materialist interests, Wendt shows intersubjectivity constitutes the basis of actions and interactions among the states.<sup>20</sup> He argues how states act will depend upon two factors: their identities and interests, and how others will respond to a certain action.<sup>21</sup> The strength of this theory is it goes beyond the materialist notion of reality and includes the utility of values, ideas and beliefs. In essence, Wendt focuses on the primacy of the normative and ideational structure in the theoretical understanding of international politics and global order.<sup>22</sup> The idea of reality in international politics, to Wendt, is not a static condition rather subject to constant construction and reconstruction.

Wendt concentrates on the third image perspective of the neo-realists, which puts more emphasis on states as unitary actors.<sup>23</sup> Treatment of the state as an essential international agent follows the same problem encountered by Waltzian neo-realism. Wendt's contribution is useful in explaining the systemic version of constructivism. While Wendt has put emphasis on the systemic level to understand states' interaction with each other through the interplay of identity and norms at both the domestic and international levels, his thesis ignores the interplay of domestic and internal norms within a state, making it a major limitation of his theory.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, he takes a modernist position when he ignores the role of religion as an influencing factor in determining state policies—both internally and externally.

He holds that the identity of the state determines its interests and eventually sets its actions. He has distinguished between two types of state identities: social and corporate. International society ascribes roles, status and personality on the states and thus, forms the social identity of states. In contrast, corporate identity comes from domestic human, ideological, cultural or material factors from within a state.<sup>25</sup> A weakness in Wendt's theory is that he places sole emphasis on social identity by



bracketing the corporate identity of the state, although the latter has strong potential for influencing the identity formation process. He has emphasised on how a state's identity is shaped and reshaped through systemic processes, structural contexts and strategic practices, and by doing so, the domestic-internal factors are neglected in his analysis. The interaction between the Ego and the Alter seems too simplistic in the identity formation of a state. Another limitation with Wendt's theory is that it becomes narrow in explaining how fundamental changes take place in the natures of state and the international system. He fails to take into consideration the domestic-internal factors that constitute the part of normative and ideational forces, and therefore, have strong roles in explaining structural changes.

Wendt's theory challenges the previous idea of ontological atomism and epistemological positivism held as the Bible of IR by the neo-liberal and neo-realist IR theories. The *Social Theory of International Politics* positions Wendt's theoretical contribution between agent centrism and structural analysis, between state centrism and international cultural analysis, and between postmodernism and rationalism.<sup>26</sup> The book synthesises the previous approaches by taking them into consideration and incorporating their criticisms. This attempt has led us to rethink from a middle ground on how international politics works, going beyond dominant critical and rationalist understanding. The theory helps understand that cooperation and conflict are not characterized by only material benefits rather by normative and ideational structures through which states come to identify with each other through an interactive process. The holistic approach undertaken by Wendt has enabled us to think about international politics and world order from a different and richer perspective.

G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020, p. 432, ISBN 978-0-300-23098-7 (Hardcover).

In *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order*, Ikenberry analyses why and how the nature of liberal international order (LIO) has changed over the past two centuries. The book primarily addressed the ontological aspects of LIO, the epistemological impacts it has on international relations and its prospects in the coming days. Ikenberry raises concerns that the western-led liberal order is currently facing an existential crisis. He looks at the evolution and challenges of LIO, and contends that the liberal international project of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has built-in dangers and vulnerabilities of modernity and interdependence. He terms the LIO as a non-utopian end characterized by pragmatism, opportunism, and a reform-based outlook in understanding the world filled with intolerance, tyranny, and brutality. He informed us about the diversity among the liberal internationalists and the flexibility of being practical in their thoughts and projects. To him, modernity has a "split personality" since it ushered in a global order with enormous possibility of both development and destruction at the same time, which was also warranted by the realists, the greatest ideological rivals of liberal internationalists. For the political realists, the global order is shaped and reshaped by the rise and fall of powerful actors. The liberal internationalists, however, think that the order is an Enlightenment project having the possibilities of both creation and destruction.

In chapter one, Ikenberry conceptualizes liberal internationalism as a collection of thoughts and ideas on how to create a world order by way of guarding the gains of modernity from its built-in dangers.<sup>27</sup> He warns that the liberal order faces challenges from both liberal and illiberal powers as evident in BREXIT and the ascendancy of Trump in power. The doubts are also cast from Russia, China, and other authoritarian powers which are making rules-based international order more troubled than ever.<sup>28</sup> For Ikenberry, LIO has gone through "disruptions and downturns before" but the recent crisis runs much deeper in its two-century history.<sup>29</sup> He puts forward three sets of core arguments. Firstly, liberal internationalism is a set

of ideas that determines “how the world works.”<sup>30</sup> These ideas focus on the sources of global order, and the problems which need to be resolved. Secondly, Ikenberry proposes that LIO is conceived of “as a political project” in its essence to understand how its adherents designed agendas and carried out the programmes in the past two centuries.<sup>31</sup> Lastly, he focuses on the recent crisis coming from parochial nationalism in both sides of the Atlantic. To look for solutions, he argues that one needs to find the “intellectual and political foundations” that erected the LIO as we know it today.<sup>32</sup> Chapter one sets out the premise of LIO in the simplest yet detailed manner. It shows how LIO has evolved over time and is essentially “shaped by organizational structures and agreements”.<sup>33</sup>

Ikenberry emphasised the roles of inter-subjective elements in defining LIO as a contractual and normative phenomenon. One can identify a close resemblance with Wendt’s inter-subjectivity in the conceptualisation of LIO. He also puts forward some critical concerns associated with the liberal world order. Such concerns raise questions about whether the LIO is based on illiberal foundations, coexistence with illiberal orders, and its fragmented and hierarchical nature. They also bring forth LIO’s nexus with illiberal orders based on illiberal characteristics, its changing nature of social purposes, and tensions in different versions. He acknowledges that liberal internationalism is not a pure and uncontested framework for analysing the world order. *A World Safe for Democracy* has a meta-narrative nature, as Ikenberry notes, liberal internationalism to be “equally contested and conceptually unstable”.<sup>34</sup> He also pointed that it has self-contradictory postures in understanding how democracy, trade, institutions, society, and progress define liberal values. The contradictions are well evident in the facts that the West has practised both democracy and imperialism.

In the second chapter Ikenberry offers detailed discussions of the fundamental ideas of “democratic solidarity; cooperative security; and progressive change”, along with the “projects, and political foundations” of LIO.<sup>35</sup> He also discusses four core forces and movements in shaping and reshaping the thoughts

and projects of LIO. These are the start and expansion of liberal democracy, the transformation of a world of empires into nation-states, “cascades of economic and security interdependence”, and rise and fall of “British and American hegemony.”<sup>36</sup>

In the subsequent chapters, Ikenberry analyses how different versions of internationalism have come to set an agenda to reshape a global order characterised by open trade, international norms and rules, judicial and arbitral mechanisms, or to simply put global regimes and institutional framework to guide mutual interdependence among states.<sup>37</sup> Ikenberry discusses how the Wilsonian democracy has come to reshape the post-war international order; what were the logics behind it; and how it was connected with ideas like modernity, progress, institutions, and liberal democracy.

He also takes a critical look to interrogate why the liberal project has failed to promote democracy and good governance around the world.<sup>38</sup> He argues that this failure has resulted in questioning the sustainability of the Western democratic system and the future of modern industrial society.<sup>39</sup> He notes that modernity empowered both liberal and illiberal states thereby creating more complex global problems and challenges for liberal internationalists in the 1930s and 40s. This eventually necessitated the new liberal internationalism to become more pragmatic and global in its scope and objectives for sustaining liberal democracies. This conviction influenced the thoughts of liberal internationalists to recreate a new international order characterised by the US hegemony and leadership as the container to protect the mutual interests of security and economic wellbeing of the Western liberal democracies.<sup>40</sup> This came to be known as Rooseveltian internationalism, which is more activist in nature and based on socio-political rights in the Cold War, which was qualitatively different from the previous Wilsonian one based on international order and enforced by “public opinion and moral sanction”.<sup>41</sup>

Ikenberry shows that the post-WWII global order was neither a single nor a liberal one, the era had different projects and agendas and was characterized by some dualistic tendencies.<sup>42</sup> He argues that, for instance, imperialist and liberal character was evident, the order was hierarchical, it was based on both reciprocal relations and rules-based institutions to secure trade-offs between many competing values and interests. The post-war liberal hegemonic order provided avenues for cooperation and fulfilling social purposes.

Ikenberry also looks two major critics of liberal internationalism: the realists and the revisionists.<sup>43</sup> The realists criticize liberalism for being a failed project due to the anarchic nature of global politics. It is at best an ephemeral system and at worst case an expansionist and self-destructive type of ideology and regime. The revisionist left criticizes the project as being “racist, imperial, and militarist”. Ikenberry notes that despite their differences both these schools are aligned in their criticisms as they see the project as essentially an American hegemony with global military interventionism and is failing due to low regards for social justice. He acknowledged that the 20<sup>th</sup> century internationalism was a remnant of European imperialism. It did not have a glorious past, but it severed the ties from empires and imperialism due to some forces: geopolitical, normative, conceptual, legal and international regimes. These have helped LI to part ways from western imperialism. The push and pull factors ushered in a post-imperial global system based on “rules and institutions of multilateral and intergovernmental cooperation”.<sup>44</sup> He noted that the problem of liberal interventionism persists that led the political realists and revisionist lefts to ask the uneasy question “Are liberal states inherently revisionist?”.<sup>45</sup> While the answer to this question is yes, Ikenberry argues that does not imply liberal internationalism is imperial in its core. LI has mechanisms to restrain and resist imperialism by learning from the previous mistakes.

In the closing chapters, Ikenberry argues that the present crisis of liberal order is of “Polanyi crisis” not “Carr crisis” in nature.

This precisely means the challenges stem from modernity and capitalism-market-interdependence nexus, and not from anarchy and return of geopolitical conflicts.<sup>46</sup> He furthered the discussion by analysing how the liberal order expanded in the post-Cold war period, and how the political and institutional bases of the order are weakened, and its social purposes lost their appeals. The internal source of the current crisis is attributed to the diminishing domestic support bases of embedded liberalism across the Western liberal democracies.<sup>47</sup> On the external front, he identifies the Russian and Chinese challenges to the globalized liberal.<sup>48</sup> Then he sheds lights on the factors that made the order stable and resilient. The globalized liberal order has different layers and fragmented realms, these enabled illiberal states like Russia and China to approach and engage the order selectively. This fragmentation, Ikenberry argues, is like a double-edged sword creating both opportunities and challenges for the liberal order.

In the last chapter of *A World Safe for Democracy*, Ikenberry notes that LIO has been both successes and failures.<sup>49</sup> It is like a phoenix that experienced destruction but managed to revive itself repeatedly. LIO is a never-ending work in progress that has cohabited with other grand political projects and does not seek to master the forces of or address the challenges of modernity completely. LIO offers institutions and relationships to adapt the abruptions of modernity. The logic and nature of LIO have changed over time, making it often paradoxical and self-contradictory.

Ikenberry is sanguine, despite the criticisms, that liberal internationalism is pragmatic and has a reform-oriented outlook, which has been trying to maintain “a global architecture of rules and institutions necessary to protect liberal democracy and realize basic human interests”.<sup>50</sup> He contends that we need more liberal internationalism than ever not just to protect the liberal democracies but for the whole planet to address the challenges that modernity unleashed. He suggests that the liberal internationalists need to reunite with progressive nationalism, and reinvest in reviving embedded

liberalism based on common social purposes.<sup>51</sup> To Ikenberry, the most important task for liberals is to rebuild its political and intellectual bases to tackle the ever-changing interdependence between economics and security for the survival of the planet.<sup>52</sup>

Emanuel Adler, *World Ordering: A Social Theory of Cognitive Evolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 378, ISBN: 978-1-108-41267-4 (Paperback).

In *World Ordering: A Social Theory of Cognitive Evolution*, Emanuel Adler offers a new systemic theory of global order that defines global politics as continued dynamic processes of multiple social orders, and how these orders are evolved and substituted. Social orders are at the heart of his cognitive evolution theory. He hypothesises social orders “as configurations of practices that organise social life”.<sup>53</sup> His theory proposes that world order is composed of the “processes and mechanisms” that determine and explain the creation, development, and replacement of one social order with another.<sup>54</sup> His theory has two facets: analytical and normative. The analytical part explains “the creative variation and selective retention” of certain social practices over others.<sup>55</sup> The normative framework proposes ways to think about better practices and social orders as the world is passing a very difficult time, a concern shared by Ikenberry in *A World Safe for Democracy*. The analytical and normative frameworks are interconnected as they aim to explain how and why improved practices and orders can be understood, developed and reserved.

The ontological and epistemological aspects of the theory are unique since it attempts to study IR and world order neither from the perspectives of state and non-state actors. At first, the ontological and epistemological claims seem to be difficult to grasp for a reader who is hardwired to think about IR and global order in those manners. The novelty of thinking in this way is that he focuses more extensively on the underlying communities of practice, different practices and knowledge that

make the global social orders evolve or stays dynamically metastable.<sup>56</sup> Cognitive evolution theory has interdisciplinary roots in different branches of knowledge including philosophy, sociology, IR. It aims to study socio-cultural evolutions, making its epistemological and ontological foundations very eclectic. The communities of practices advance these socio-cultural evolutions as the theory claimed.

Adler's approach does not seek to replace any grand theories of IR or debates related to them. Rather, it follows a relational and evolutionary path, and one must not confuse the approach to have close connections with natural evolutionary studies. Rather, it follows a meta-narrative path or an evolutionary ontology that explains substances ('being') to be the result of social relations and processes ('becoming'). Cognitive evolution is essentially a distinct part of evolutionary constructivism that puts main attention on communities of practices. One may find close relevance of inter-subjectivity that Wendt uses in his theorising of social constructivism. However, as one goes through the book, the distinction between Wendt's constructivist framework and Adler's cognitive evolution becomes clearer. The approach does not follow the mainstream routes of either materialistic-utilitarianism or holistic-normative theories. His approach may be termed as 'practice-turn', a different one from the grand debates of the IR theories. Adler goes beyond traditional relativist and positivist approaches of IR. His social-evolutionary alternative is an advanced and dynamic one to the rationalist, functionalist, and constructivist approach of IR.

*World Ordering* has two parts split into ten chapters. The book is filled with myriad thought-provoking examples. The first part lays the ontological foundations of cognitive evolution theory. The rest puts forward an epistemological explanation of the theory. In the beginning, Adler talks about what cognitive evolution theory is about and not about. He shows the the nexus among the theoretical constructs like practices, background



knowledge, communities of practices, international social orders, and the related dynamics of subjectivities and inter-subjectivities within these constructs. Various socio-structural processes and agential mechanisms are widely held responsible for the evolution of international social orders, which are essential to understand the theory.

Adler relies on Putnam's 'Pragmatic Realist' framework to set the epistemological and ontological foundations of the theory. He insists that the importance should be on process ontology to understand the foundations. A wide range of works of scholars and philosophers are consulted to set the foundations to understand how the theory aims at explaining simultaneous stability and change in the social realms. The idea of evolutionary epistemology and its emergence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are explained. Adler discusses different theoretical constructs, for instance, background, knowledge, practices, habit, performative and performative power, the community of practices, and cognition to give nuances. He also sheds lights on why American pragmatism is relevant in his theorising.

Adler argues that the idea of international social orders is distinct from international regimes and global governance studies. The idea of the decentred, diffused, and plurality of fluid international social orders, also discussed by Ikenberry, is elaborated in refining current approaches to understand global order's stability and change simultaneously. The international social orders, where practices are inseparable from rules and norms, are different in terms of practical and epistemic differentiations. The differences in sets of practices, background knowledge, and communities of practices within these international social orders signify the nuances in qualities and quantities, their resilience, fluctuations, and what intersubjective epistemic factors trigger their evolution, change, or demise, and the speed and spread of these developments. The global order that we see today is composed of these plural international social orders, distinguishable from each other on the basis of the communities of practices that composed these orders.

In the latter part of the book, Adler draws on the complexity theory to analyse how meta-stability and change occur simultaneously in the international social orders.<sup>57</sup> The socio-structural mechanisms of cognitive evolution are also discussed. Adler also juxtaposes the theory of cognitive evolution with Giddens's structuration theory and Elster's rational choice theory to go beyond the limitations of functionalism.<sup>58</sup> Adler suggests how to reconceptualize "variation, diffusion, selection, retention, and institutionalization processes".<sup>59</sup> Ikenberry's concern of losing faith in liberal internationalism by post-truth politics, populism, and authoritarian nationalism also are reverberated in the closing chapters of *World Ordering*. Adler talks about a normative framework for selective retention and institutionalization of ethical practices for maintaining better practice and achieving progress.

The book is based on numerous philosophical references. Without prior exposure to those philosophies, one may find cognitive evolution theory too complex to understand. On top of that, Adler does not elaborate on how stability and change coexist in the global social order. Adler acknowledges these criticisms and recognises that he embarks on an ambitious, synthetic, and relatively underexplored area of evolutionary theory to explain international social orders. Despite the criticisms, *World Ordering* has the potential to pave the way for new empirical research in the field of cognitive evolution theory.

### **Comparative Analysis**

The core arguments in the four books go beyond the traditional realist framework and put forward alternative explanations to approach global order and IR. They look at IR going beyond the materialist-rationalist explanations. Bull's works have influenced the journey of English School as a grand theory of IR, however, Buzan and others' works have revived its lost status of being a grand theory of IR. Hence, Bull's contribution through the *The Anarchical Society*, is instrumental. The works of Wendt

and Ikenberry also contribute to two other grand theories of IR, namely Constructivism and Liberalism. However, Adler refuses to categorise his work a grand theory and contends that it does not seek to replace any grand theory or their narratives, rather provides an alternative ontological and epistemological way of looking at the global order.

In terms of methodologies, Bull's work is not based on a profound one when we compare with other three books. His work, as critics called out, is largely based on Wight's work. Wendt, Ikenberry and Adler, on the other hand, have strong philosophical bases and are flexible and pragmatic. The latter three scholars rely extensively on other contrasting philosophical traditions in IR. For instance, Adler relies on Putnam's 'Pragmatic Realist' framework, to base his core arguments.

Another methodological aspect is that these theorists have statist biases, they considered states to be the most relevant actors to explain global orders and their maintenance. In addition to this statist perspective, all of them except Adler, accepts the presence of global anarchy and devotes a significant portion of their books analysing it. Ikenberry, however, rejects anarchy as the roots of current demise of liberal internationalist order, and characterizes the crisis coming from the nexus of modernity and capitalism-market-interdependence nexus. Additionally, all of them see global order and IR from the systemic level of analysis. Or, to put in other words, their methodologies concentrate on the 'third-image-analysis' perspective of IR. Bull examines the international system and explained how society of states maintain order and stability in the system despite the presence of anarchy in international system. Wendt's work is based on three versions of anarchy and how these shape the identity and culture of the states across time and space. He provides a systemic explanation that the agents and structures are mutually constitutive and influence each other. Thus, Wendt's book advances a theory having meta-narrative characteristics. Adler's work also analyses meta-

stability and changes within the international social orders, and thus his book offers a meta-theory of world order.

The four scholars also converge on the issue of plurality and fluidity of global order. Bull notes that, there could be other international orders but the statist one is best suited to provide international peace and stability. Wendt's work also acknowledges the flexibility of multiple orders as being constructed and reconstructed based on the shared culture and identities or inter-subjectivities among the states.

Ikenberry also highlighted that the multiplicity of other illiberal orders coexisted simultaneously with liberal international ones, and the LIO had to often sacrifice its core normative values for survival and revival. In a similar vein, Adler points to the multiplicity of global orders a process of cognition.

Despite these similarities, the works of Bull, Wendt, Ikenberry, and Adler as analysed in this paper, diverge on several grounds as they represent philosophical trends of their times. Their principal area of divergence concerns the explicit reference to inter-subjectivities for theorising global order and IR. Bull does not mention the term global order but suggests that the society of states maintain international system on the basis of some common interests. On the other hand, Wendt's work explicitly refers to inter-subjective understanding of state identity and interest in shaping the global order and bases his core arguments on it. Ikenberry does not mention it, but his analysis of internationalism clearly refers to a global order based on liberal values. Ikenberry also suggests inter-subjectivities between the liberal and illiberal states in shaping the world order. Adler's work also focuses on how inter-subjectivities shape practices, background knowledge, and communities of practices can explain change and meta-stability simultaneously.

## **Conclusions**

The four influential books provide alternative systemic explanations to realist understandings on IR and global order.

They not only offer epistemological diversities rather produce a richer and newer avenue for researching global order, particularly from a systemic level. Bull's work and his influence might be diminishing one but it has provided the foundations for English School, which has been revived by other scholars of our time making it relevance once again. Wendt's work for the first time has hypothesises inter-subjectivities and thus opened up opportunities for other potential analytical and normative theories, like the cognitive evolution theory of Adler. Ikenberry's contribution on LIO is also novel although its lineage can be traced back to the earlier works of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye who wrote on complex interdependence among states. Adler's analytical work has concentrated on the systemic level by placing emphasis on social factors that make international social orders. All of these works are ground-breaking and provoke critical discussions when different crises have engulfed the global order. Students of IR thus find them useful in analysing the rise of right-wing populist politics, post-truth politics, violent extremism, and pandemic, all of which pose challenges to the global order. When we combine classical and contemporary texts and draw on their methodological plurality and theoretical diversity, they promise a rigorous analysis of the global order and the crisis it confronts.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics: Vol. 4th ed.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274

<sup>7</sup> Ian Hall, "Taming the Anarchical Society", 2020. <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/07/05/taming-the-the-anarchical-society/>, accessed on 13 March 2022.

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- <sup>8</sup> Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, p. XIII.
- <sup>9</sup> Hall, "Taming the Anarchical Society".
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 37-38.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-30.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 246-312.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 318-336.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 227-245.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 328-365
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 19, 23, 139-145.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165-184.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-30.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160-164.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-190.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-145.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-156.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 246.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 230-245.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-14.
- <sup>27</sup> G. John. Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020, pp. 20-39.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-22.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 55-72.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82-99.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-135.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-167.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168-196.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-232.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 234-259.

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- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 254-259.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 260-280.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 39.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 262.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 277-280.
- <sup>53</sup> Emanuel Adler, *World Ordering: A Social Theory of Cognitive Evolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 295.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 295.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 295.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 10.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 190-197.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 213-218.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 44.