



Universalizing International Relations through the Genealogy of International Systems: The Historical Problem in IR Systems Thinking, the English School Solution and Southeast Asian History

John Harvey Divino Gamas

MA International Studies - European Studies (Candidate), De La Salle University
Instructor - International Studies Department, Ateneo de Davao University
jhdgamas@addu.edu.ph

Abstract: Contemporary scholars of International Relations (IR) have decried the discipline's Eurocentric parochialism and propensity to impose Westphalian notions on the past. The study of the genealogy of international systems is one of the solutions forwarded in order to transform IR into a truly universal discipline that is more inclusive of non-Western experiences and conscious of historical diversity. However, IR has a problematic approach in using history. This has plagued the development of systems theories in the field. Nevertheless the English School of IR, being more conscious of the "historical problem" presents a way out through Buzan and Little's more nuanced conception of International Systems. Furthermore bringing non-Western historical experience could also draw from studies on regions often marginalized by IR. One such region is Southeast Asia. Studies on pre-colonial Southeast Asian history made by political scientist and historians reveal latent systems thinking. Therefore the utilization of the English School's International Systems framework and the incorporation of Southeast Asian historical studies would help universalize IR as a discipline and hopefully sustain its relevance in providing analysis and solutions to present and future international issues.

Key Words: International Relations; Eurocentrism; Genealogy of International Systems; English School; Southeast Asian History

1. Introduction

Contemporary scholars of International Relations (IR) have decried the discipline's Eurocentric parochialism and propensity to impose Westphalian notions on the past. To address this problem, Amitav Acharya suggested five key areas for alternative theorizing. One of these areas is the study of the genealogy of international systems. This area emphasized a historically grounded IR theory in order to transform IR into a truly universal discipline that is more inclusive of non-Western experiences and conscious of historical diversity (Acharya, 2011: 627).

However, IR has a problematic approach in using history. The problem has plagued the development of systems theories in the field. Nevertheless the English School of IR, being more conscious of the "historical problem" presents a way out through Buzan and Little's more nuanced conception of International

Systems. Furthermore bringing non-Western historical experience could also draw from studies on regions often marginalized by IR. One such region is Southeast Asia. Studies on Southeast Asian history made by political scientist and historians reveal latent systems thinking.

Therefore the utilization of the English School's International Systems framework and the incorporation of Southeast Asian historical studies would help universalize IR as a discipline and hopefully sustain its relevance in providing analysis and solutions to present and future international issues.

2. Historical Problem in IR

Despite the frequent use of historical facts by specialist in international politics it cannot be denied that IR itself is notorious for its historical problem. According to Thomas



Smith (1999: 2) this problem is rooted in epistemology, ideology and sociology.

Although history is an indispensable component in IR epistemology, it has its own thorny dilemmas making it less of a data treasure trove and more of a problematic research partner. In using history, IR “is quickly enmeshed in lively debate over description and explanation,” and the historical data gathered turns out to be “a patchwork of often incongruous facts and more or less plausible inferences, interpretations, and impressions” (Smith, 1999: 2). Since IR has been heavily influenced by positivism, epistemological problems in historiography have been consequently glossed over by questions on method. Thus debates regarding history in IR generally revolve around issues of “how best to tease out the laws, patterns, tendencies, trends, and probabilities of political behaviour,” or “how large a sample of historical evidence is adequate to test a hypothesis, and the choice of case studies and the fit of analogies...” (Smith, 1999: 12). This methodological facade conceals crucial epistemological questions like the meaning of grounding theory in history and the autonomy of scholars to understand it. Therefore there is a tendency in IR to “build cathedrals” out of the presumed strength of the “softer stuff of history” (Smith, 1999: 4).

History in IR is also a fertile ground for ideological selection and interpretation. Interpreting history through a certain lens is unavoidable but the danger of confusing evidence with advocacy is always looming. In the process of constructing and reconstructing histories, a theorist’s effort to align inquiry with one theoretical lens by carefully ignoring others, subjects the findings to the dictation or distortion of “individual ideological or intellectual commitments” (Smith, 1999: 13). The selection bias can result from sloppy research or the deliberate attempt to promote an ideological position by avoiding unsupportive facts of history (Smith, 1999: 3). For instance, anarchophilia and state-centrism in IR, which were founded upon a selective survey of history, are being used by policy makers as theoretical givens in order to support their strategic interest.

Sociologically, it has become common in IR “to brandish easy anecdotes and analogies, pursue ahistorical, stand-alone theory, or else to

approach the ‘history’ part of the enterprise as merely a formal testing stage on the road to theory” (Smith, 1999: 3). Since a lot of debate in IR is governed by positivism it is presumed that international politics could be “scientifically verified by observing its historical manifestations.” (Smith, 1999: 3). David Puchala observed that IR behaviourist did not ignore history but “were coding it,” as well as “comparing sampled social-political reality to established, interpretable, intuitively meaningful statistical models” (Puchala, 1990: 64). An example of which is the Correlates of War project initiated by Singer and Small. Despite the project’s acknowledgement of the difficulties of “data-making, the project nevertheless proceeds on the basis of a clean set of data points which effectively conceals, but does not eliminate, the historical problem.” (Smith, 1999: 139). This could not dispel ahistoricism, as it seeks to present “historically-contingent constructs as timeless laws of politics” (Smith, 1999: 3-4). Furthermore, IR ahistoricism is aggravated by presentism. This is seen in the discipline’s overemphasis of contemporary history, fixation over current policy issues as well as the propensity to impose present views into the past.

The historical problem in IR is manifested in the development of the discipline’s systems thinking. The impetus for the development of a systems approach in IR came from the influence of the natural sciences and social science behaviouralism, both of which favoured holistic approaches to comprehending phenomena (Little, 1978: 183). Hence pioneer system theorists in IR like Kaplan (1957) and Rosecrance (1963) manifested such positivistic influence. Despite the utilization of historical facts, both Kaplan and Rosecrance’s systems analysis did not emancipate IR from charges of ahistoricism, presentism, and the Eurocentric selection bias. They merely employed historical data in the hope of confirming their theories which imposes the present into the past. Their theories were implicit prescriptions or warnings directed to Cold War fixated policy makers in order to preserve the system status quo. Furthermore their history reflected Eurocentric bias as European experience was conflated with world history.

After them came Kenneth Waltz (1959; 1979), who developed the neorealist systemic



theory. His system's theory is impressive compared to its predecessors but according to Cox (1986: 208), it is merely a problem-solving theory that exposes its ideological bias which promoted the benefits of the bipolar Cold-War order, as well as accord legitimacy on US policies that preserve it. Ashley (1986: 285) contends that neorealism's commitment to positivism limits the type of theory produced therefore failing to understand historical change and merely aims to preserve the existing structure.

IR's system theorizing was also influenced by the world-systems theory of sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1974; 1979; 1984). However critics of Wallerstein's underlying teleological conception deem that he already "had a view of the contemporary world-system in mind and projected it back into history so that it would have to end up with the system as currently constituted" (Hobden, 1998: 158). Hobden's (1998) examination of historians' studies on the 16th century exposed serious arguments against the credibility of world-systems theory. For instance Wallerstein has "exaggerated the historical evidence that suggest a close link between the world-system of the sixteenth century and the contemporary world-system" (Hobden, 1998: 159). This would mean that there can be no division of labour and no un-equal exchange hence there can be no structuring of the world-economy into different zones during the 16th century.

3. The English School and Buzan & Little's International Systems

The idea of the international system as the key to IR's universalization finds more promise in the articulation of the so called English School. The selection bias in mainstream IR theories that favoured European experience drove the English School to formulate ideas that takes account of the diversity found in world history. As a criticism to the realist assumption of a timeless states-system, the school stressed that the contemporary global system developed out of past regional international systems. This resulted in a more nuanced understanding of the international system.

In a recent study of the English School's history and theory, Linklater and Suganami (2006) described it as a cluster of like-minded IR scholars, mostly UK-based, who constitute a historically evolving intellectual movement. This school was originally formed at the London School of Economics and subsequently "extended to other academic institutions, and were also, to a large extent independently, cultivated within the exclusive British Committee on the Theory of International Politics." (Linklater & Suganami, 2006: 41). Tim Dunne argued that the English School is a "synthesis of different theories and concepts" joining "theory and history, morality and power, agency and structure" (Daddow, 2009: 102). Viotti and Kauppi (2010: 241) also see the English School as a synthesis being "an interesting blend of realist understandings of power and balance of power and the liberal perspective of the ways international law, rules, norms and institutions operate internationally." Furthermore, its methods utilize historical sociology and constructivist understanding. Instead of simply attributing the behaviour of units to the system's structure like structural realist, the English School presumes that it is essential to understand the cultural ideas behind the actions of actors in the system so as to be able "to understand the patterns of behaviour that emerge in a system" (Buzan & Little, 2000: 29). By doing so the school seeks to avoid prevailing Eurocentric bias in IR, as well as ahistoricism, presentism, anarchophilia and state-centrism (Buzan & Little, 2000: 30). Thus, unlike realism, the English School does not look at history simply as a manifestation of timeless continuities in state behaviour. It assumes that "there are significant differences in the patterns of behaviour that developed in different systems" (Buzan & Little, 2000: 30).

At the heart of the English School are three concepts: the international system, international society, and world society. The school's essential question deals with how order is maintained in the international system despite anarchy. The English School's answer is the concept of international society. In *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World-Politics*, Hedley Bull (1977) distinguished international society with the international system. He argued that the international system or a,

“system of states... is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another’s decisions to cause them to behave – at least in some measure – as parts of a whole” (Bull, 1977: 9-10).

For Bull (1977: 12) it is simply a “particular kind of international constellation.” It has no distinct existence since it is merely a description of a specific shape of state relations at a certain time. For Bull the international system has no analytical existence of its own as a system exists upon states awareness of each other and the consideration of other states’ actions in their decision making. On the other hand, international society or the society of states

“exists when a group of states conscious of certain common interest and common values form a society in the sense that they conceive of themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and share in the workings of common institutions” (Bull, 1977: 13).

The anarchy of the international system is mitigated by the acceptance of common rules which govern behaviour and the operation of common institutions. Bull argued that international society is not the only element working in the international system. Hobbesian, Kantian and Grotian traditions are simultaneously at play in the international system as Bull affirms the existence of “the element of war and struggle for power among states [Hobbesian], the element of transnational solidarity and conflict, cutting across the division among states [Kantian], and the element of co-operation and regulated intercourse among states [Grotian]” (Bull, 1977: 46) The problem here is the possibility of combining all three together. Did Bull mean that when relations are more violent, relations are more systemic and less like a society? This was left unanswered with Bull’s untimely demise but his approach was picked up by Adam Watson.

Watson and Bull collaborated as editors in *The Expansion of International Society* (1984), a collection of essays which explored pre-Westphalian systems while mindful of the complexity of historical variation. Nevertheless, Watson furthered Bull’s *Anarchical Society* by examining the historical evolution of international society. His most important

contribution is the idea of an international system that falls along a notional spectrum. Along the spectrum are four broad relationship categories: independence, hegemony, dominion and empire (Watson, 1992: 14-16). The movement from one category to another is motivated by either the desire for autonomy or order. The opportunity cost of the former is economic stability and military security, while the latter’s trade off is constraints to freedom. The movement is thus compared to that of a pendulum oscillating from one position to another (Watson, 1992: 17). Watson’s emphasis of a greater degree of international coherence explains his conflation of the terms system with society. He defined the system as “political entities sufficiently involved with one another” already implied a degree of organization, hence a society (Watson, 1992: 14). Watson’s system always denotes the existence of a certain degree of norms created by the interaction of actors. He argued that “whenever a number of states... were held together by a web of economic and strategic interests and pressures, they evolved some set of rules and conventions to regulate their intercourse” (Watson, 1992: 120).

Buzan synthesized the triad of English School concepts by elucidating the concept of world society. Following Bull’s elements, Buzan equated the idea of international system with the Hobbesian tradition, international society with the Grotian tradition and world society with the Kantian tradition (Buzan, 2005: 7). World society “takes individuals, non-state organisations and ultimately the global population as a whole as the focus of global societal identities and arrangements, and puts transcendence of the states-system at the centre of IR theory” (Buzan, 2005: 7). It is similar to transnationalism however it “has a much more foundational link to normative political theory” (Buzan, 2005: 7). It shuns an ontology based on states, but its transnationalism also means that it does not rest wholly on individuals. In a “Wightian mode it is more about historically operating alternative images of the international system as a whole than it is about capturing the non-state aspects of the system” (Buzan, 2005: 8). With the three concepts Buzan re-iterates the theoretical pluralism characteristic of the English School. He declared that this position takes the focus away from the oppositional either/or approaches of



much IR theory... and moves it towards a holistic, synthesising approach that features the patterns of strength and interplay amongst the three pillars” (Buzan, 2005: 10).

The development of the concept of international system came fully through the efforts of Buzan and Little (1993; 1994; 1996; 2000). Contrary to Bull’s view, the international system gained an analytical existence in the articulations of Buzan and his collaborators, Jones and Little. They did this by infusing the English School with their rectified version of the Waltzian systemic theory. This almost decade long project of modifying Waltzian theory follows the platform of the book *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (Buzan, Jones, Little, 1993). In this book the authors took a four-pronged approach to modification. First they argued for the application of a sectoral approach to international system. The political analysis of the international system must not solely focus on the military-political sector but must also take account of economic and societal factors. The difficulty with regard the combination of sectors must be resolved through the application of a horizontal division of the system between levels of analysis and a vertical division between sectors. This allows us to

“consider levels of analysis either in terms of the international system as a whole (by dissolving the sectoral distinctions) or in terms of specific sectoral subdivisions (by defining the levels in terms that are bounded by one or more sectoral subdivisions, e.g. international political system, or international political economy)” (Buzan, Jones & Little, 1993: 33).

Second point of modification required a deeper analysis of the second level of Waltzian structure, the nature of units. Waltz contends that in an anarchical system all the units have to be functionally undifferentiated. Buzan, Jones and Little (1993) though acknowledging the propensity of units to have similar functions under anarchy, also wanted to introduce the possibility of change. They believe that change is possible between functionally differentiated and functionally undifferentiated units (Buzan, Jones & Little, 1993: 37-46). This idea of change was elucidated further in *International Systems in World History* (Buzan and Little, 2000). Here they located the source of change from the units

and not from the structure. They insist that “the really big changes that define transformations are the changes in the nature of the dominant units whose actions largely define the international system” (Buzan & Little, 2000: 374-375).

Third part of modification is to elucidate the notion of power in the third level of structure, the distribution of capabilities. Buzan, Jones and Little contend that Waltz’s understanding of power to include all notions of capabilities was inflexible. Power for them must be disaggregated into military capability, economic capability, political cohesion and ideology (Buzan, Jones & Little, 1993: 64). This would allow more flexibility in developing hypothesis and opening a wider range of analysis of conditions in the international system.

The fourth element of modification is the inclusion of interaction capacity in Waltz’s idea of structure. They argued that the two features of interaction, technological capabilities and common norms and organizations, cannot be confined to the unit level. This is because these two are systemic as they occur all throughout the system, and “because they profoundly condition the significance of structure and the meaning of the term system itself” (Buzan, Jones & Little, 1993: 72). All of the points of the four-pronged approach to modification were further developed in *International Systems in World History* (Buzan and Little, 2000). In this book Buzan and Little provided analytical tools in order to study the concept of international systems which takes account of the diversity of experience in world history.

Aside from a theoretical framework that is open to diversity, universalizing IR would also mean integrating the historical record of regions that has been relegated in the discipline’s periphery. One such region is Southeast Asia.

4. Systems Thinking in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asian History

Bringing Southeast Asian historical experience into IR theory through systems thinking is not a work from scratch. Studies done by historians and political scientist on the region’s pre-colonial historiography possess an

underlying idea of a system of interactions. This could provide a starting point in order to integrate non-Western and pre-Westphalian conceptions into IR theory. In general historians and political scientist's pre-colonial idea of the region's system emphasizes the deep historical interaction between India and Southeast Asia; China and Southeast Asia; or the deep linkages among units within Southeast Asia itself.

Most historians of pre-colonial Southeast Asia emphasized its interaction with India. The focus here is the spread of Indian civilization to Southeast Asia, which in a way reduces the region into an extension of the subcontinent, as exemplified by the terms "Greater India" and "Farther India" (Coedes, 1968: xvii & xv). This emphasis is often expressed through the concept of Indianization or the

"expansion of an organized culture that was founded upon the Indian conception of royalty, was characterized by Hinduist or Buddhist cults, the mythology of the *Puranas*, and the observance of the *Dharmasastras*, and expressed itself in the Sanskrit language" (Coedes, 1968: 15-16).

However, understanding Indianization has been the subject of a contentious debate among historians. There were those who saw Indian influence in Southeast Asia as colonization by India. D.G.E. Hall (1968: 16-17) identified the *Greater India Society* to be the main proponent of this idea since they supposed that there existed Indian colonies in pre-colonial Southeast Asia which were formed due to large scale migrations brought about by disturbed conditions in India. R.C. Majumdar (1940), the most prominent advocate of the thesis, further explained that Indian colonization is not necessarily tantamount to Indian imperialism hence it is different from European colonization. He maintained that,

"The Hindus did not regard their colonies as mainly an outlet for their excessive population and an exclusive market for their growing trade. These characteristics of modern colonization were perhaps not altogether absent, but they were not the dominant notes of the colonial policy in ancient India" (Majumdar, 1940: 42).

D.G.E. Hall (1968) also gathered from other historians different modes of thinking regarding the spread of Indian culture to Southeast Asia. First is the *khsatriya* or warrior

theory. This theory alleged that Indian warrior immigrants propagated Indian culture through the conquest and colonization of the region (Hall, 1968: 18). Second is the *vaisya* or merchant theory, which highlighted how Indian merchants disseminated Indian culture by marrying native women (Hall, 1968: 18). All these ideas were rejected by scholars of revisionist historiography.

Rather than simply locate pre-colonial Southeast Asians at the receiving end of Indianization, revisionist scholars argued for indigenous initiative. Most notable among them was J.C. Van Leur (1955) who discredited the *khstariya* and *vaisaya* theories. Aside from the *khstariya* theory's lack of evidence, Van Leur also believed that the transmission of Indian culture to Southeast Asia was largely peaceful. Furthermore, for him despite intensive trade relations, the spread of complex Hindu ideas through the largely uneducated merchant class is simply absurd. Thus he concluded that Indian ideas were transmitted through *Brahmin* priest (Van Leur, 1955: 375). As a matter of fact, Southeast Asian rulers actively sought *Brahmins* in order to enhance their legitimacy and authority (Van Leur, 1955: 103-104). Hence George Coedes (1968: 16) was right that the "Indian civilization of Southeast Asia was the civilization of an elite and not that of the whole population." D.G.E. Hall corroborates this as he situates Indian influence in the royal residence, where it was blended with local culture.

O.W. Wolters (1999) called this blending of Indian influence with local culture as "localization" which means that

"The materials, be they words, sounds of words, books, or artifacts had to be localized in different ways before they could fit into various complexes of religious, social and political systems and belong to new cultural 'wholes'" (Wolters, 1999: 55).

This concept brings greater awareness of indigenous initiative and response. Rather than simply attribute the development of states in Southeast Asia to outside stimulus especially coming from India, there is now a greater emphasis on local agency. Kenneth Hall (2011: ix) in contrast to previous historiography, where Southeast Asia was treated merely as an extension of Indian civilization, "reconstructed social and economic history and attempted to balance the picture of outside forces by



addressing indigenous responses.” Amitav Archarya (2013: 2-3) affirmed that the “proactive and selective borrowing by local rulers seeking to legitimize and empower themselves...” resulted in the “amplification of local beliefs and practices while producing significant but evolutionary historical change in domestic politics and inter-state relations.” From this discussion we can surmise the integral interaction of actors from both South Asia and Southeast Asia in pre-colonial times as well as the possibility of them constituting a system.

Another underlying idea of systemic interaction found among political scientists and historians is that which existed between Imperial China and a number of Southeast Asian polities. Pre-colonial Vietnam is often treated as an integral part of the East Asian international system, while the Indianized and later Islamic states of Southeast Asia are seen as peripheral tributary units. Unlike other areas in Southeast Asia, Vietnam experienced early and deep penetrating Chinese cultural influence. Thus the country is often grouped together with Korea and Japan as Sinicized societies, defined by the Confucian principles of government. Studying the work of various historians, political scientist David Kang (2010) observed that around the fourteenth century, the East Asian international system was governed by the idea of tribute. According to him,

“...these Sinicized states, had evolved a set of international rules and institutions known as the “tribute system,” with China clearly the hegemon and operating under the presumption of inequality, which resulted in a clear hierarchy and lasting peace” (Kang, 2010: 2).

In contrast to the Westphalian order, the tribute system was “explicit and formally unequal,” however “it was also informally equal” (Kang, 2010: 2). This is because “secondary states were not allowed to call themselves nor did they believe themselves equal with China, yet they had substantial latitude in their actual behavior” (Kang, 2010: 2). State formation in Vietnam, specifically, could be explained through Chinese colonization and subsequent Vietnamese assertion of independence. Vietnam’s close identification with China did not prevent it from closely

interacting with its Southeast Asian neighbours. As a matter of fact the succession of Vietnamese dynasties was engaged in diplomacy, wars and alliances, with the Indianized kingdoms of the south. Vietnam was mainly involved with the Chams and the Khmers, who also had their respective dealings with the imperial Chinese capital.

Vietnam’s interaction with its southern neighbours also tells us something about the expanse of the tribute system beyond the Sinicized states. In *History without Borders*, Geoffrey Gunn’s (2011: 3) analysis of the interdependence and interaction in East Asia led him to describe it “as a super-region with China as the center of an interstate system bringing into play, besides Southeast Asia, Inner Asia and Northeast Asia.” This super-region was a system defined in terms of hierarchy. Kang (2010: 54) noted that “status as much as power defined one’s place in the hierarchy: China sat highest, and secondary states were ranked by how culturally similar they were to China—not by their relative power.” Hence Korea and Vietnam, though not as strong as Japan “were ranked more highly by virtue of their relations to China and their more thorough adoption of Chinese ideas” (Kang, 2010: 57). Japan was more discriminating in their borrowing of Chinese culture and ideas, as a result the Chinese gave it a lower rank, at par with the “Ryukyus, Siam, the Burmese kingdoms, and the other political units that engaged in tribute relations with China” (Kang, 2010: 59). A lower rank meant that though these “kingdoms were allowed to trade and interact with” the Middle Kingdom, they however “received fewer benefits and had less access to China than did those ranked more highly” (Kang, 2010: 59). One such benefit was the frequency of diplomatic missions, as such the lesser the rank in the hierarchy the fewer the number of missions permitted. On the whole, David Kang’s idea of the Sino-centric East Asian international system consigns Southeast Asia, with the exception of Vietnam, to the periphery of the system. While Kang barely mentioned Southeast Asia in his book, Geoffrey Gunn on the other hand made the region central to his discussion. Despite the centrality of China in the tributary trade system, Gunn (2011: 2) sought to position Southeast Asia “as both a globally connected



and temporally correlated 'world region.'" Far from a peripheral region, Southeast Asia played an integral role in the tributary system.

Still, a number of scholars stressed the distinct character of a Southeast Asian system. Notable among them is Anthony Reid (1988) and O.W. Wolters (1999). Not discounting relations with India or China, Reid believed that the region had a common social and cultural identity founded upon maritime interaction. He argued that,

"Maritime intercourse continued to link the peoples of Southeast Asia more tightly to one another than to outside influence down to the 17th century. The fact that Chinese and Indian influences came to most of the region by maritime trade, not by conquest or colonization, appeared to ensure that Southeast Asia retained its distinctiveness even while borrowing numerous elements from these larger centres"(Reid, 1988: 6).

Reid's focus was mainly on the region's economic system.

O.W. Wolters (1999) alternatively, provides us with a political framework of a pre-colonial inter-state system in Southeast Asia. He articulated a regional pattern of statehood known as *mandalas* or "circle of kings." A *mandala* was ruled by an overlord who having "identified with divine and universal authority" could claim "personal hegemony" over other rulers who become "in theory his obedient allies and vassals" (Wolters, 1999: 27). But the overlord's power was rarely direct and absolute because in a *mandala*, central authority gradually fades into the distance. Contrary to

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the Westphalian conception of nation-states, *mandalas* do not have fixed territorial boundaries and can even overlap with each other (Wolters, 1999: 27). Due to its loose central authority and weak territoriality, *mandalas*' "would expand and contract in an almost continuous manner as vassals and tributary rulers shifted their loyalties from ruler to ruler as opportunity presented itself" (Acharya, 2012: 61). Wolters provided examples of these *mandalas* from the seventh down to the fourteenth centuries. As a whole, both Reid and Wolters stressed the distinct character of pre-colonial Southeast Asian economic and political systems.

5. Conclusion

The English School's conception of the international system provides us with the essential tools which may advance the study of International Relations into a truly universal discipline, more inclusive of non-Western experience and conscious of historical pitfalls. The integration of Southeast Asian history in IR theory, in particular, would give the discipline opportunities to avoid Eurocentrism and dismantle the notion of a static Westphalian model. This would allow IR greater accuracy in explaining not only history but also contemporary and future regional and global dynamics.

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