

How to Problematize the Global?

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Antonia Witt

Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, Germany

Felix Anderl

Philipps-University Marburg, Germany

Amitav Acharya

American University, USA

Deepshiska Shahi

O.P. Jindal Global University, India

Isaac Kamola

Trinity College, USA

Scarlett Cornelissen

Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Abstract

International Relations (IR) has long been criticized for taking a particular (Western) experience as basis for formulating theories with claim to universal validity. In response, recent discussions have therefore centered on making IR ‘truly global’, that is, more inclusive and less parochial in its language and substance. But the concept of the global underpinning this discussion is both illusive and strongly contested. It requires problematization. But how? In this Forum, scholars discuss this question with a forward-looking agenda. Building on recent critical engagements with the question of the global as a concept in general and Global IR specifically, the authors ask how the global should be problematized in order to achieve a (more) progressive agenda for IR. They draw on different regional and disciplinary perspectives to both further the agenda of a less exclusive and racist discipline without falling into the trap of shallow inclusivity, and to discuss ways of problematizing the global without falling back into nativism or nationalism.

Keywords

global, global IR, reflexivity

Corresponding author:

Antonia Witt, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, Baseler Straße 27-31, Frankfurt am Main 60329, Germany.

Email: witt@hsfk.de

Comment problématiser la globalité ?

Résumé

On a longtemps reproché aux relations internationales (RI) d'adopter une expérience particulière (occidentale) comme base pour formuler des théories qui prétendent à une validité universelle. En réponse, des discussions récentes ont ainsi cherché à rendre les RI « véritablement globales », à savoir, plus inclusives et moins particularistes dans la forme comme dans le fond. Mais le concept de globalité qui sous-tend cette discussion est à la fois illusoire et fermement contesté. Il est indispensable de le problématiser, mais comment ? Dans ce forum, les chercheurs discutent de cette question en adoptant une perspective tournée vers l'avenir. En s'appuyant sur de récentes réflexions critiques sur la question de la globalité en tant que concept en général et au sein des RI globales en particulier, les auteurs se demandent comment la globalité devrait être problématisée afin d'aboutir à une vision (plus) progressiste pour les RI. Ils font appel à différentes perspectives régionales et disciplinaires pour, à la fois, promouvoir une discipline moins exclusive et moins raciste sans tomber dans le piège d'une inclusivité creuse, et discuter des manières de problématiser la globalité sans retomber dans l'indigénisme ni le nationalisme.

Mots-clés

globalité, relations internationales globales, réflexivité

¿Cómo problematizar lo global?

Resumen

Ya desde un tiempo a esta parte, las relaciones internacionales (RRII) han sido criticadas por adoptar una experiencia particular (la occidental) como base para formular teorías que aspiran a una validez universal. En respuesta a ello, debates recientes se han centrado en hacer que las relaciones internacionales sean «verdaderamente globales», es decir, más inclusivas y menos locales en su lenguaje y contenido. Sin embargo, el concepto de lo global subyacente esas propuestas también es ilusorio y controversial. Necesita ser problematizado. ¿Pero cómo? En este foro, los académicos debaten estas cuestiones con una agenda orientada hacia el futuro. A partir de los desarrollos críticos recientes sobre la cuestión de lo global como concepto en general y de las RRII globales en particular, los autores se preguntan cómo debería problematizarse lo global para lograr una agenda (más) progresista para las RRII. Se basan en diferentes perspectivas regionales y disciplinarias para promover la agenda de una disciplina menos excluyente y racista, sin caer en las trampas de la inclusividad superficial, y de cara a discutir formas de problematizar lo global más allá del nativismo o el nacionalismo.

Palabras clave

global, relaciones internacionales globales, reflexividad

Introduction

Antonia Witt

Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, Germany

Felix Anderl

Philipps-University Marburg, Germany

Complaining about the Eurocentrism in International Relations (IR), the discipline's lack of diversity, and imperialist trajectory has by now become a necessary commonplace. Commonplace, because the complaint has been made so often, and necessary still because its object, the exclusionary and parochial architecture of the discipline, is still very much in place. Less often do we hear concrete strategies on how to overcome these issues. Therefore one such proposal, Global IR, originally formulated by Amitav Acharya during his tenure as President of the International Studies Association (ISA), has received enormous resonance.¹ In the wake of this initiative, a growing number of scholars from different disciplinary and theoretical perspectives have been advancing the project of globalizing the study of international relations in order to make the discipline reflective of the multiplicity of the world and the contextually and locally diverse manifestations and effects of the international for different lives across the globe. This project has received wide praise, and it has already triggered changes in disciplinary structures, both regarding intellectual content and the professional structures of academic practice.

Nevertheless, it has been argued that the agenda to globalize IR hinges on a concept of 'the global' that is itself in need of problematization, because it potentially fixates a specific imaginary of 'the world' as given rather than opening public and academic usages of 'the global' to scrutiny.² Such scrutiny could uncover underlying narratives and strategies contributing to why the world has become 'global', and who bears the cost of this process, rather than taking the global as a given. This could, furthermore, uncover the contextually and locally diverse manifestations and effects of the global itself. In short, the global needs to be problematized in order to overcome the deep-seated hierarchical structures that persist in efforts to 'globalize' the study of the international. As we have argued elsewhere, failing to problematize the global risks rendering the globalization of IR into a novel, apparently benign, hegemonic project that advocates for inclusiveness, plurality and globality, but on the condition of establishing new, while glossing over old power relations, that structure how and by whom the international is studied.³

Yet, problematization as such is not enough. The global has been problematized, for instance, by right-wing extremist and xenophobic nationalists who see globalization as a conspiracy of a 'global elite' and use such narratives to advance their racist and culturalist agendas. Therefore, this Forum asks (1) *how* to problematize the global; (2) and how to do so in a way that achieves a *more progressive* agenda for the study of IR. This latter aspect is crucial given that the global could be – and currently is – problematized from regressive forces such as far-right movements, too. Furthermore, the agenda of problematizing the global should not be misunderstood as falling back into the exclusive, Eurocentric narratives that were the original targets of Global IR in the first place. Finally, it should also not be misunderstood as a call against cooperation, solidarity and transnational dialogue. On

1. Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies', *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647–59.
2. Isaac Kamola, 'IR, the Critic, and the World: From Reifying the Discipline to Decolonising the University', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 48, no. 3 (2020): 245–70; Audrey Alejandro, *Western Dominance in International Relations? The Internationalisation of IR in Brazil and India* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 78; David L. Blaney and Arlene B. Tickner, 'Worlding, Ontological Politics and the Possibility of a Decolonial IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 3 (2017): 293–311.
3. Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt, 'Problematizing the Global in Global IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 49, no. 1 (2021): 37.

the contrary, this Forum is premised on the assumption that in order to overcome exclusionary biases, the categories put in place to do so must be constantly re-evaluated and collectively reflected upon in order not to create new mechanisms of exclusion that discipline difference in the name of diversity. Building on these premises, this Forum discusses the question 'how to problematize the global' from various perspectives.

Scarlett Cornelissen opens the Forum by exploring the functioning of the global imaginary through the position of 'Africa' in IR scholarship. She notes that the study of the African continent appears to be preceded by a particular 'idea of Africa', an aberrant 'Other', which places Africa as an outsider in the global IR enterprise. This positioning of Africa, Cornelissen explains, is due to a specific 'intellectual borderwork' that defines what is to be studied in IR (and what isn't). With African states' supposed failure to meet the standards of modernity – the ill-fitting Westphalian state, compromised sovereignty and failure in development – the African continent falls outside of modernity and thus outside the benchmarks of IR's global imaginary. Transcending this imaginary requires understanding the functioning and the function of the knowledge order that underpins IR. To that end, Cornelissen proposes to study the global as lived reality, for instance through African urban spaces that are both shaped by and feed into trans-scalar connections, that is, political, social and economic globalities.

Antonia Witt and *Felix Anderl* introduce the idea of 'mapping' as a concrete strategy of problematizing the global. In so doing, they make the case for the mapping of counter-globals, which is a constant process of discovering and displaying relating and rivaling conceptions of the global. Illustrating the possibilities of mapping counter-globals, they discuss three such projects: the intellectual movement to produce a 'world of many worlds', anti-imperial globalisms of the 1920s, and current transnational feminist movements' different strategies of relating across difference in order to counter the hegemonic global model of connection that they struggle against. Based on these examples, Witt and Anderl argue that the mapping of counter-globals is not only an effective strategy to de-essentialize global imaginaries, but also a technique to reflect on the specific internal logics through which specific globalisms produce inclusion and exclusion.

Isaac Kamola is more sceptical about the need for and use of a disciplinary anchoring in IR. Instead of saving IR from its own daemons by trying to globalize it, he asks: what is the effort to globalize IR a symptom of? He answers this question by reconstructing global education as a market that is predicated on the history of neoliberal economics, particularly the WTO's liberalization of education as a tradeable service. Reconstructing how universities have globalized by way of opening up education as a global commodity, he questions whether Global IR is indeed a progressive solution. Instead, by engaging in intellectual history of global universities, he shows that the universities we inhabit today have been transformed into corporations within a 'global' market; a new set of relations designed to defeat the liberatory possibilities of anticolonial nationalism. By way of problematizing the global through this political economy lens, he highlights the need to do more than changing the content of what we teach and research.

Deepshikha Shahi then turns to Global IR specifically and confronts some of the paradoxes inherent to its concept of the global: does it derive from particular places (many), or is it an overarching theory (one)? She discusses recent publications on Global IR (inspired by a variety of Chinese, Indian, and Japanese philosophies) that envisage a world which is concurrently 'one and many'. Shahi argues that such a non-essentialist epistemology of

monism (one world) that does not compromise the ontology of pluralism (many worlds) can potentially resolve the persisting puzzles of Global IR, thereby establishing what she calls a “futuristic research programme”. These conceptualizations of ‘one and many’ can move beyond critique to fabricate a new (non-Kantian) account of the global, thereby providing a flexible but firm grip to the evolving Global IR research program.

The Forum concludes with a contribution by *Amitav Acharya*, who reflects on the evolution and futures of Global IR as an intellectual project, demonstrating how the idea of Global IR has evolved in conversation with its (friendly) critics. Arguing that neither the idea of the global nor Global IR requires a ‘common ground’ answer, Acharya proposes reading the globalization of IR as an ongoing, bottom-up process feeding on ‘dissent by scholars from around the world who find themselves excluded and alienated by the current dominance of a handful of scholars from a handful of powerful countries’. In this sense, dissent becomes a constitutive core of the Global IR enterprise.

The Forum contributions showcase the productivity of such dissent. While reflecting contradictions and controversies with regard to how to problematize the global (and what for), what glues the contributions together is a forward-looking agenda that does not shy away from robust disagreement, but does so in a way that is oriented around a shared goal: a less racist, less exclusionary, and in turn more just, diverse and interesting way of studying international politics.

Africa in/and the Global

Scarlett Cornelissen

Stellenbosch University, South Africa

At the turn of the 20th century the American historian and writer W.E.B. Du Bois asked ‘how does it feel to be a problem?’^{4,5} Du Bois’s question was in relation to the sociology of race in the United States. In later years his notion of ‘double consciousness’ – ‘this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity’⁶ – had deep impact in postcolonial thinking.

But it is the essence of Du Bois’ question – how we come to see and define something as a problem – that returns to me time and again when I reflect on the study and representation of the African continent in the international system. This is because there seems to be a persisting, commonsense notion that the continent is largely peripheral in a wider sociopolitical and economic global reality, and that it should be treated as such in scholarly accounts.⁷ More than that, in IR the study of the continent appears to be preceded by

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4. I thank Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt for inviting me to be part of this of Forum and for organising a stimulating Roundtable at the *Millennium 2021* conference. I also thank the anonymous reviewers and *Millennium* editors for their incisive and constructive feedback.
 5. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (original 1903, from edition edited by David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams; Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 37.
 6. *Ibid.*, 38.
 7. See for instance the discussion in Robert H. Bates, V. Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O’ Barr, eds., *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences*

a particular ‘idea of Africa’,⁸ one that projects the continent as an aberrant ‘Other’. In this regard, ill-fitting to mainstream IR’s ideal-form typologies, the continent tends to be left out of theory-building, rendering it largely in the margins of the field.⁹

To be sure, there has been no shortage of work on Africa’s IR. The early post-independence writing of scholars such as Mazrui, Ake and Amin, among others, gave important critique of capitalism, North-South relations and Africa’s political economy.¹⁰ This work yielded to paradigmatic and methodological shifts in IR, largely falling out of mainstream view in subsequent years.¹¹ Over the past three decades, notably, scholarship on Africa’s place in the world has burgeoned. Clapham’s 1990s discussion of Africa in the international system¹² has since been followed by a large body of work that has tried to capture various new dynamics, including shifting intra-continental¹³ and external power relations,¹⁴ the era of Afro-optimism (or ‘Africa’s rise’),¹⁵ and the impact of the arrival of Chinese state – and other Asian – capital to the African continent.¹⁶

and Humanities (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993); also Ulf Engel and Gorm Rye Olson, eds., *Africa and the North: Between Marginalisation and Globalisation* (London: Routledge, 2005).

8. V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
9. Engel and Olson, *Africa and the North*; Sophie Harman and William Brown, ‘In From the Margins? The Changing Place of Africa in International Relations’, *International Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2013): 69-87.
10. See among others, Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970); Ali A. Mazrui, *Africa’s International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependency and Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977).
11. In his penetrating discussion of Ali Mazrui’s ‘rise and decline in IR’, Seifudein Adem explains some of the factors behind this, which include mainstream IR’s adoption of positivism and the field’s variable interest in North-South issues. See Seifudein Adem, *Postcolonial Constructivism: Mazrui’s Theory of Intercultural Relations* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 2021).
12. Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Also see Timothy M. Shaw’s earlier *Towards a Political Economy for Africa: The Dialectics of Dependence* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985).
13. For example, Adekeye Adebajo, *Liberia’s Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and Regional Security* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Press, 2002); Fredrik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor, eds., *Afro-Regions: The Dynamics of Cross-Border Micro-regionalism in Africa* (Stockholm: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2008).
14. Some representative works include Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, eds., *Africa in International Politics: External Involvement on the Continent* (London: Routledge, 2004); Ulf Engel and Gorm Rye Olson, eds., *The African Exception* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Pádraig Carmody, *New Scramble for Africa* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); Dawn Nagar and Charles Mutasa, eds., *Africa and the World: Bilateral and Multilateral International Diplomacy* (New York: Palgrave, 2018).
15. Jean-Michel Severino and Oliver Ray (trans. D. Fernbach), *Africa’s Moment* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); Ian Taylor, *Africa Rising? BRICS – Diversifying Dependence* (Oxford: James Currey, 2014).
16. This is a long list. For some of the recent discussions see Arkebe Oqubay and Justin Yifu Lin, eds., *China and Africa and an Economic Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University

Included in this is a body of critical Africa IR scholarship that has sought to address the IR canon's neglect of the continent, bringing to light the multiple sites and practices of IR in Africa.¹⁷ Part of this is positioned in relation to the non-Western IR¹⁸ and Global IR¹⁹ agendas, where, in response to these intellectual movements' call for greater representativeness of world affairs in the IR discipline, scholars have recast the history and historiography of IR in Africa,²⁰ chronicling sometimes formative African contributions to world politics,²¹ and the discrete intellectual traditions of IR communities on the continent.²²

And yet, when taking stock of Africa's standing in the global IR enterprise, it still seems to be an outsider. This is both in terms of the consideration of Africa-related topics in the mainstream IR academy, and the relative lack of Africa-originated scholarship in

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- Press, 2019); Ching Kwan Lee, *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017); Takuo Iwata, ed., *New Asian Approaches to Africa: Rivalries and Collaborations* (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2020).
17. These works include, among others, Siba N. Grogovugi, 'Regimes of Sovereignty: Rethinking International Morality and the African Condition', *The European Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 3 (2002): 315–38; Kevin C. Dunn and Tim M. Shaw, eds., *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Scarlett Cornelissen, Fantu Cheru, and Tim M. Shaw, eds., *Africa and International Relations in the 21st Century*, 1st ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012); Sophie Harman and William Brown, eds., *African Agency in International Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).
 18. At the heart of the call for non-Western IR are two interlocking aims – to improve the representation in IR scholarship of features, processes, and dynamics beyond the 'centers' of the North Atlantic (and specifically North America); and to, resultantly, give stronger explanations for developments particular to the 'non-West'. It is both a scholarly and political project, centered on the goal of recognizing and acknowledging the particular and making the particular universal. See Pinar Bilgin, 'Thinking Past Western IR?', *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2008): 5–23; Giorgio Shani, "'Provincializing" Critical Theory: Islam, Sikhism and International Relations Theory', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 3 (2007): 417–33; Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Wæver, eds., *International Relations Scholarship Around the World* (London: Routledge, 2009). See also Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. Ling, *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds* (London: Routledge, 2009) on 'worldism', and Siba N. Grogovui's work that re-evaluates so-called international knowledge from the vantage point of the non-West. See Siba N. Grogovui, *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy: Memories of International Order and Institutions* (London: Palgrave, 2006).
 19. This can be characterized as a movement to broaden and diversify IR. Prominent in this is the work of Amitav Acharya. See in particular Amitav Acharya, 'Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions', *International Studies Review* 18 (2016): 4–15.
 20. Akinbode Fasakin, 'Africa and the Historiography of International Relations', *Brazilian Journal of African Studies* 3, no. 5 (2018): 9–30.
 21. Amy Niang, 'The International', in *International Relations from the Global South: Worlds of Difference*, eds. Arlene B. Tickner and Karen Smith (London: Routledge, 2020); and Peter Vale and Vineet Thakur, 'IR and the Making of the White Man's World', in Arlene B. Tickner and Karen Smith, eds., *International Relations from the Global South: Worlds of Difference* (London: Routledge, 2020).
 22. Thomas Kwasi Tieku, 'The Legon School of International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 47, no. 5 (2021): 656–71.

IR's primary journals.²³ This is not unique to the African continent. Being unrepresented within the establishment or struggling to publish in the field's top-order journals is a general complaint of IR scholars in the Global South; it is what animates the 'theories of the South' debate. Some African scholars have noted added challenges that include being based, yet marginalized, in Global North institutions,²⁴ along with the inferiorization of knowledge contributed by Africans.²⁵ Their sentiments relate to deep-seated issues around Western imagery of Africa that were set by Enlightenment narratives, where the continent's cultures were depicted as lacking a phenomenological tradition and thus as devoid of knowledge of value²⁶ – a narrative which gained repressive power with European imperialism and 'the scramble for Africa'.²⁷

Critical scholarship on the 'myth of 1919', that is, against the received idea that IR was birthed in the West, draws attention to the politics behind 'knowledge geographies'.²⁸ Claiming IR exclusively as of Anglo-Atlantic origin is part of a normalizing discourse with deep historical, intellectual and violence roots that services a discipline with very specific objectives.²⁹ Key to this is a process of intellectual borderwork – the practices and scholarship of 'envisioning, constructing, maintaining and erasing borders'³⁰ that set the parameters for what is to be studied. In this, a received view of the global obtains, one which naturalizes the state as formative political unit³¹ and regards state sovereignty as the lodestar of international order.

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23. See discussions by George M. Bob-Milliar, 'Introduction: Methodologies for researching Africa', *African Affairs* 1, no. 11 (2020): 1–11; Ulf Engel, Matthias Middell, David Simo et al, 'Forum – Africa in the Globalizing World – A Research Agenda', *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 27, no. 1 (2017): 97–110.
 24. George M. Bob-Milliar, 'Introduction: Methodologies for Researching Africa'. Also see Zack Zimbalist, 'So Many "Africanists", So Few Africans: Reshaping Our Understanding of "African Politics" Through Greater Nuance and Amplification of African Voices', *Review of African Political Economy* 47, no. 166 (2020): 621–37.
 25. Franklin Obeng-Odoom, 'The Intellectual Marginalisation of Africa', *African Identities* 17, no 3–4 (2019): 211–24.
 26. Georg Hegel described Africa as 'the land of childhood, removed from the light of self-conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantle of night', *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (original 1830, translation by H. B. Nisbet; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Also see John A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1902), 305.
 27. For critiques see V. Y Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
 28. See Vineet Thakur and Karen Smith, 'Introduction to the Special Issue: The Multiple Births of International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 47, no. 5 (2021): 571–9.
 29. Robbie Shilliam, ed., *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).
 30. Chris Rumsford, 'Introduction: Citizens and Borderwork in Europe', *Space and Polity* 12, no. 1 (2008): 1–12.
 31. John Agnew, 'The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations theory', *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): 53–80.

What implications does such intellectual borderwork – and concept of the global – have for a context like the African continent? The remainder of the discussion below engages this question, seeking to show the political as well as affective consequences of such borderwork. The argument is made that Africa constitutes a global ‘Other’. This alterity (or otherness) is of epistemological and scholarship form, as the critique of mainstream IR in the first part of the discussion highlights (also see the discussion by Isaac Kamola in this Forum), but there are also deeper-lying dimensions. IR’s construct of Africa serves a distinct disciplinary purpose: it helps maintain a necessary set of ontological truths for IR about world order, sovereignty and authority which in itself bases on a specific and partial formulation of the global. Transcending this requires understanding the functioning as well as function of the knowledge order that underpins IR and the adoption of other epistemologies that illuminate the full spectrum of world affairs.

Problematizing the Global

In a survey of international research on Africa and the contribution of such work to the broader social sciences and the humanities over time, Bates et al.³² note that the continent has been an established topic of investigation in many fields including anthropology, history, philosophy and more recently, development studies and economics. They argue that questions and processes central to the development of the continent have significantly shaped these fields – even if mostly to explore how and why the continent differs from other regions of the world.

This positing of ‘difference’ appears as leitmotif in standard IR accounts of the continent.³³ Critical Africa IR scholarship has presented a number of key critiques in this regard. The first is that the continent generally falls outside of the purview of mainstream analyses emanating from the intellectual centers of the North, on the assumption that the continent is marginal in the global political economy. Second, concepts such as sovereignty – integral to the field of IR – are assumed to ‘not easily apply to the African reality. . .’³⁴ leading to mainstream IR’s dismissal of the continent, simply because it is challenging to explain. This both leads to and justifies a general under-theorization of dynamics on the African continent and the forces of linkage to the larger international system. As a result, mainstream IR only partially explains African processes.

This has notable consequences. It sustains a distinct narrative of Africa in the world, one where the continent is perennially depicted as disconnected from the world system and where ‘much of what happens in Africa [is rendered] invisible to outsiders’.³⁵ At the same time, this has keen material and experiential import: the African condition, African subjectivities, and African experiences within the international order, are also rendered

32. Bates et al. *Africa and the Disciplines*.

33. Jean-Francois Bayart, ‘Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion’, *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 217–76.

34. Kevin C. Dunn, ‘Introduction: Africa and International Relations Theory’, in *Africa’s Challenge to International Relations Theory*, eds. Kevin C. Dunn and Tim M. Shaw (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 6.

35. Jean-Francois Bayart, ‘Africa in the World’, 229.

invisible. Significantly, it offers a partial and selective view of the globe; an exclusionary global imaginary,³⁶ which contradicts cosmopolitan ideals.

Some useful interventions have been made by Africanists and Africa-based scholars over the years in their efforts to correct mainstream IR's omission of the continent. Their work has shown how Africa is integral in the evolving global political economy,³⁷ and how, by viewing the world from the vantage point of the continent and its peoples – reversing the lens, that is, – insight is gained that is of value for IR's own intellectual resources. This work thus produces an important inversion – problematizing not Africa, but problematizing IR.³⁸ A major objective is to demonstrate how Africa is not cut off from global affairs, is worthy of theorization and of nomothetic benefit for IR.³⁹

In an important regard this work has had one overriding aim, namely to make IR 'see' Africa. It thus adds to the movement to expand and diversify IR scholarship and through that to enrich the field. There is a deeper-lying problematic that needs addressing, however. Demonstrating IR's limited engagement with the multiple realities on the African continent is a necessary step toward critiquing IR's macro-narrative. Yet such a critique further requires engaging with the question of, as eloquently put by Mudimbe, 'what it means to read oneself as a margin in narratives conceived and written by those who have discursive power',⁴⁰ or put differently, reflecting on the power structures that underpin IR as discipline.

This calls attention to foundational features of the IR corpus, specifically its knowledge order which advances a given conception of the cosmos of world politics – including its characterization of the global system – and the discursive regime that sustains and normalizes that conception. The argument is not new and works that critique these aspects of IR, including IR's fixed units and variables of analysis that take the sovereign territorial state system as the basis of global affairs, are legion⁴¹ (and see Forum

36. Manfred B. Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary: Political Ideologies from the French Revolution to the Global War on Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

37. Ulf Engel et al., 'Forum – Africa in the Globalizing World'.

38. This resonates with the work of non-Western IR and worlding discussed earlier, which itself should be considered efforts to extend critical IR at an important juncture of this line of inquiry. See note 18 and for a useful review, Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt, 'Problematizing the Global in Global IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 49, no. 1 (2020): 32–57.

39. See discussion by Rita Abrahamsen, 'Internationalists, Sovereignists, Nativists: Contending Visions of World Order in Pan-Africanism', *Review of International Studies* 46, no. 1 (2020): 56–74, and 'Research Note: Africa and International Relations: Assembling Africa, Studying the World', *African Affairs* 116, no. 462 (2017): 125–39. Siba N. Grovogui's work is also of note here. His work has shown how the idea of sovereignty is used in IR to marginalize Africa. At the same time he has shown how the continent is a site of knowledge when thinking about concepts such as human rights and freedom. See among others, Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui, *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans: Race and Self-Determination in International Law* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

40. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, xvii.

41. See for example Hendrik Spruyt, *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

discussion by Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt). The relationship between the dominant spatial and geo-analytical constructs that inform IR and their affective and material impacts – how such constructs ascribe particular, (subaltern) identities to those cast as peripheral and shape their conditions materially – is however often underemphasized.

From the vantage point of the African continent, IR's conception of the global has implications for how the continent's political actors and societies are visible – or not – in the larger grid of world politics and how their actions are legible or not. This is a conception of the global that roots in the Westphalian/Enlightenment tradition and delineates the global in terms of the constituents of territory-state-modernity-capital.⁴² IR narrates and advances an understanding of the global in which modernity stands central.⁴³ With its supposed failure to meet the standards of modernity – the ill-fitting Westphalian state, compromised sovereignty and failure in development – the African continent falls outside of modernity and thus outside the benchmarks of IR's global imaginary.

It is worth pointing out that such a framing founds on an epistemological order that has long cast Africa as 'outside history', as in the Hegelian formulation. Furthermore, relatedly, this framing pivots on a conception of outsidersness – or alterity – that has discursive as well as ontological purposes. Critique from the fields of African phenomenology and African philosophy have shown the two-sided nature of Africa's alterity in the international: First, in the Enlightenment-derived narrative of Africa's lack of logos (or systems of reasoning) which has legitimized its classification as Other. And second, in how being cast as Other 'the identity of the Same' is affirmed.⁴⁴

This dual character of alterity – of difference and sameness – seems an apt way of explaining prevailing IR discourses about Africa's ills as well as the goals behind them. By serving as the 'Other', Africa holds a particular ontological surety of the global in place, one premised on given understandings of what constitutes 'the normal condition', that is, as based on values and knowledge paradigms rooted in European modernity. This formulation draws on processes of spatial imagineering that tend to render the continent and its peoples physically and symbolically invisible in the world arena.

Re-narrating Africa's IR

A more reflective account of Africa in the global, as well as of African societies' experience of the global, is one that understands the global in its constitutive sense – as a space

42. Michael Mann, *States, War and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); John Agnew, 'Sovereignty Regimes, Territoriality and State Authority in Contemporary World Politics', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95, no. 2 (2005): 437–61. Also see Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 'Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference', *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6–23.

43. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2001).

44. The phrase comes from V. Y. Mudimbe, who in his critique of historical European representation of African culture, notes the 'ordering of otherness', where '(T)he African has become not only the Other who is everyone else except me, but rather the key to which, in its abnormal differences, specifies the identity of the Same'. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, 12. Also see Kwasi Wideru, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

and power-making exercise— and the global imaginary as a spatial-political construct (also discussed by Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt in this Forum). This construct has territorial and discursive components with tangible material and political consequences. Unpacking these requires dealing with aspects mostly neglected in standard IR narratives, that is, history, subjectivity and micro-agency, as well as the conjunctural in world politics and world society.⁴⁵ This helps to illuminate the pluriscalar nature of the African continent's involvement in the global, as well as the 'presence of the global' in Africa⁴⁶; how authority operates in several societal layers; and of the long history of Africa's IR.

This has a number of implications. First, it involves understanding African processes not only through the standard IR concepts of the state (which in mainstream IR is then evaluated as failing in the African context), sovereignty, or development (which again, are evaluated as not following the modernist path), but to recognize the varied sources of authority in their historical and current manifestations. This helps make provision for the study of the informal – which is much of the African reality – namely, informal economies, informal spaces of living – and how they are conduits of linkage to the global.⁴⁷

One key example comes from analysis centered on the urban space in Africa: At any given time various fragments of African urban society and multiplicities of political actors in urban Africa are affected by larger economic processes, in particular changes in the territorial organization of capital. Subjectivities are shaped by local as well as global processes; people orient themselves to what's happening in an imagined, larger space beyond their own reality. In this regard global capital is present affectively and discursively if not physically in the lives of ordinary citizens. But the urban space is also an aspirant space, one shaped by the allures and promises of far-away modernity and global capital.⁴⁸

Further, African cities have historically and in the contemporary era been integrated in fundamental ways with the beyond.⁴⁹ Cities provide the infrastructure for the export of Africa's extractive resources; African cities pool, collect and distribute labor to sustain those extractive industries and the external companies involved in them; African cities also are repositories or collection sites for another factor of integration in the contemporary era – migrants; movements; and mafias (i.e. illicit economies that link African and Northern capitals). Thus much insight can be gained from the nexuses of space, money, politics and urban life on the continent, how these bring the global to Africa, and conversely make Africa part of the global. But it also gives a different perspective on the

45. For an instructive discussion, see Laura Doyle, *Inter-imperiality: Vying Empires, Gendered Labor, and the Literary Arts of Alliance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

46. Achille Mbembe, 'At the Edge of the World: Boundaries, Territoriality, and Sovereignty in Africa', *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (2000): 259–84.

47. See discussion by William Brown, 'Africa and International Relations: A Comment on IR Theory', *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 119–43; Abiodun Alao, *A New Narrative for Africa: Voice and Agency* (London: Routledge, 2020).

48. AbdouMaliq Simone, *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Lives in Four Cities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

49. Bill Freund, *The African City: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Simon Bekker and Göran Therborn, *Capital Cities in Africa: Power and Powerlessness* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2011).

apparent states of dysfunction, disorder, and precarity in the African urban condition. Indeed, dysfunction and disorder get reframed as heuristics.⁵⁰

The further implication is to reflect differently on accounts of the continent's histories and recognizing the intersection of transnational events and local experiences across different time periods. By highlighting how the continent's history interconnects with other regions and what the influence has been of circulating values, ideas, and material cultures, it enables reinterpretation of formative processes such as the forging of polities, the rise of political movements, Afro-nationalism, and the production of social life on the continent.⁵¹

Epistemologically, this involves advancing beyond IR's omission of Africa through insights around the temporal, spatial, material, and relational, and giving historical content to the state, political co-formations, and societies on the continent. It centers, ultimately, on the interpretive study of human life within world-historical contexts, or put differently, a hermeneutic approach cast against the global, which achieves a number of things: It allows deeper understanding of complex human affairs, temporal processes, and multi-temporal scenarios; it intermingles the past with the present to give a more complete account of the relational systems that make up the international of today; and it advances insights into the materialities that underpin these relational systems.

Conclusion: Critiquing IR' Storylines

Mainstream IR provides an account of the global that does not extend particular importance to how global relations, capitalism and global power determine how life is lived by those who are at the mercy of its dictates, and how all of it came to be. This leads to a macro-narrative of the world that has largely failed to capture the complexity of the lived experience of the global in the sites beyond IR's global imaginary. Recognizing the link between disciplinary power and dominant spatial constructions, along with the actual, adverse, material, and social impacts these produce in far-flung contexts, is a step toward addressing the exclusionary ideological configurations of IR and of developing equity-oriented scholarship.⁵²

Mapping as Problematization of the Global

Antonia Witt

Peace Research Institute Frankfurt

Felix Anderl

Center for Conflict Studies, Philipps-University Marburg

Responding to the discipline's exclusive and parochial archive, scholars from different theoretical and methodological backgrounds have called for globalizing the study of IR,

50. AbdouMaliq Simone, *For the City Yet to Come*.

51. See example Isabel Hofmeyer, 'The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: Forging New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South – Literary and Cultural Perspectives', *Social Dynamics* 33, no. 2 (2007): 3–32.

52. On this point see discussion by Tiekou, 'The Legon School of International Relations', 670.

that is, making the discipline reflective of the multiplicity of the world and the contextually and locally diverse manifestations and effects of the international for different lives across the globe. While this agenda to change the way we imagine, study, teach, and publish IR is both productive and laudable, it has so far not adequately problematized one of its core assumptions: the global. What does the global mean and whose global are we thinking? With ‘the global’ we do not merely refer to a descriptive term of different content, depending on who is using it, but to an analytical-political category, a spatial-political construct, that has powerful effects for the maintenance or transformation of hierarchies and the distribution of resources (see also Cornelissen, this Forum).⁵³ It is these powerful effects that make a problematization of the global indispensable. Not only have right-wing nationalists called for a fight against the ‘globalists’,⁵⁴ contemporary right-wing ideologies have also produced their own globalisms.⁵⁵ Also, in the social sciences, a distinction between ‘somewheres’ and ‘anywheres’ has put into question the tangibility of understanding the lives of ordinary people from a ‘global’ perspective.⁵⁶ In post- and decolonial theory, prevalent usages of the global have been connected to imperialist imaginaries of Western expansion,⁵⁷ and political economists have highlighted the neoliberal underpinnings of the global imaginary.⁵⁸ Failing to problematize the global thus risks turning the globalization of IR into a novel, apparently benign, hegemonic project that advocates for inclusiveness, plurality, and globality, but on the condition of establishing new, while glossing over old power relations, that structure how and by whom the international is studied.⁵⁹ As spelt out in the introduction to this Forum, such a call for problematizing the global necessarily raises at least two questions: (1) *how* to problematize the global; (2) and how to do so in a way that achieves a *more progressive* agenda for the study of IR.

In this Forum contribution, we provide an answer to both questions through discussing a simple term: mapping. We argue that the mapping of counter-globals, that is, the constant process of discovering and displaying relating and rivaling conceptions of the global, can be an effective and ongoing strategy for IR scholars to de-essentialize and problematize the global by both multiplying different global imaginaries and reflecting on their internal logics.

53. Anderl and Witt, ‘Problematizing’.

54. Clifford Bob, *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

55. Rita Abrahamsen, Jean-François Drolet, Alexandra Gheciu et al. ‘Confronting the International Political Sociology of the New Right’, *International Political Sociology* 14, no. 1 (2020): 94–107.

56. Gennaro Ascione, ‘Decolonizing the “Global”’: The Coloniality of Method and the Problem of the Unit of Analysis’, *Cultural Sociology* 10, no. 3 (2016): 317–34.

57. Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Design: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

58. Quinn Slobodian, *The Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

59. Anderl and Witt, ‘Problematizing’, 37.

Mapping

According to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, the term mapping has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, mapping is 'the process of making a map of an area', as in the mapping of Eastern London or Lisbon city.⁶⁰ In this understanding, mapping is associated with cartography, that is, the production of maps, with the fixation and inscription of meaning into space. It is a tool of the powerful and it is heavily associated with colonial practices and the expansion of modern Western empires.⁶¹ On the other hand, mapping also is 'the process of discovery or giving information about something', as in gene mapping.⁶² Employed from a more post-positivist epistemology, 'discovery' would become 'creation' so that mapping becomes a productive process by which something new emerges. Thus, the map can function as a conceptual tool in two ways: as a means of power by fixing specific spatial constellations, or as a counterstrategy to these fixed constellations by fanning out, by showing infinite possibilities. In our proposition how to problematize the global, we are interested in this latter aspect: we want to map the ways in which different actors have produced 'globalities' in order to counter and de-essentialize given imaginaries of the global. We define our attempt at mapping as a project of permanent discovering of new possibilities and maps, by consequence, as inherently unstable.

The Problematization of the Global

The problematization of the global is not a new endeavor and there are many different ways in which scholars, activists, and intellectuals have already done so. To illustrate this, we briefly discuss three different approaches relevant for the study of international politics. A first strategy points to the non-singularity of the global through reconstructing the multiple sources and authors of globalisms. Manfred Steger's work is a particularly instructive case in point, showing the simultaneous production of global imaginaries by jihadist movements and modern capitalist thinkers as well as identifying – with the example of 'justice globalisms' – different global imaginaries underpinning what has

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60. Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 'Mapping'. Available at: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/mapping?q=mapping>. Last accessed June 16, 2022.
 61. Luis Lobo-Guerrero, 'On the Epistemology of Maps and Mapping: De la Cosa, Mercator and the Making of Spatial Imaginaries', in *Mapping and Politics in the Digital Age*, eds. Pol Bargués-Pedreny, David Chandler, and Elena Simon (London: Routledge, 2018), 20–38; Luis Lobo-Guerrero, Laura Lo Presti, and Filipe Dos Reis, eds., *Mapping, Connectivity, and the Making of European Empires* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2021); Eloisa Berman-Arévalo, 'Mapping Violent Land Orders: Armed Conflict, Moral Economies, and the Trajectories of Land Occupation and Dispossession in the Colombian Caribbean', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 48, no. 2 (2020): 349–67.
 62. Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 'Mapping'.
 63. Manfred B. Steger, *Globalisms: The Great Ideological Struggle of the Twenty-First Century*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009); Manfred B. Steger and Erin K. Wilson, 'Anti-Globalization or Alter-Globalization? Mapping the Political Ideology of the Global Justice Movement', *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2012): 439–54.

otherwise been considered a coherent counter-ideology to global market capitalism.⁶³ From a historical perspective, Or Rosenboim's reconstruction of the political imaginaries of mid-20th century political thinkers, who constructed a (particular) globalism as the defining feature of international order of that time, is another apt example of this strategy.⁶⁴ In essence, this approach – if only implicitly – problematizes the global by describing the contours of particular globalisms and rendering visible their respective internal logics and contradictions.

A second strategy aims at reconstructing the material and institutional conditions through which the production of global imaginaries is made possible, how such imaginaries are circulated, and how they become hegemonic. Problematization here works through explanation and revealing the conditions of possibility. A good example for this strategy is Isaac Kamola's work on the role of American universities as sites for the production of a specific knowledge about the world as global (see also Kamola, this Forum).⁶⁵ As Kamola shows, the global as an object of knowledge is the result of the institutional-ideational entanglements of American universities with philanthropic and international financial organizations and their transformative effects on both the (accredited) value and content of higher education. Another example for this strategy is Himadeep Muppidi's work, analyzing the politics of producing global imaginaries and how different conceptualizations of the global are reproductive of colonial politics.⁶⁶

A third strategy, finally, problematizes the global by means of reconstructing counter-globals, aptly exemplified in Adom Getachew's work on the egalitarian global imaginaries of mid-20th century Black diasporic thinkers.⁶⁷ With counter-globals, we mean empirical efforts – historical or contemporary – that mobilize ideas of the global to express an aspiration to a different kind of global imaginary. In contrast to the first strategy, the reconstruction of counter-globals does not merely reveal the plurality of globalisms, but rather sees such global imaginaries in relational perspective, in a constant struggle between domination and resistance.⁶⁸ Our approach of mapping as a strategy to problematize the global hence connects to this third strategy, but aims to use the map as a means to discovery of both substance and normative orientation.

Mapping Counter-Globals

In the following, we illustrate the different possibilities of mapping counter-globals by sketching three such projects that stem from both academic and non-academic authorship. We thereby seek to highlight that what requires problematization is not only which

64. Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

65. Isaac A. Kamola, *Making the World Global: U.S. Universities and the Production of the Global Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

66. Himadeep Muppidi, *The Politics of the Global* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

67. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

68. Paul Kramer, 'How Did the World Become Global?: Transnational History, Beyond Connection', *Reviews in American History* 49, no. 1 (2021): 119–41.

kind of but also whose globalisms we talk about, thus continuously questioning the colonially shaped system of knowledge production that defines some as the ‘knowers’ and others as the ‘knowns’.⁶⁹ First, we portray the current intellectual movement to produce a ‘world of many worlds’. Inspired by indigenous movements, and particularly the Zapatista movement, this intellectual current has criticized the poverty of the mainstream understanding of ‘the global’ and the repressive function it has for many groups around the globe. Rather, they highlight that ‘[t]he world we want is a world in which many worlds fit’.⁷⁰ As a second example, we zoom into a historical counter-global project. On the basis of Thomas Lindner’s work,⁷¹ we describe the anti-imperial globalisms of the 1920s. Preceding the concept of the ‘global city’,⁷² Mexico City was then the host to a plethora of different movements and individuals who created a counter-global by developing a transnational melting pot of ideas in one specific place, but precisely to break the global constellation that they saw as an imperialist arrangement. Thirdly, we refer to current transnational feminist movements that express an aspiration to equality, but one that does not hinge on the universality of their claims. Struggling in solidarity across the world does, for them, not entail a shared identity or sameness of struggles. Rather, they showcase that in their difference, they can establish solidarity ties that illuminate different possibilities of relationality across difference and thereby counter the global model of connection that they struggle against.

World of Many Worlds

Sketching a world of many worlds is a strategy of opposing the imposition of one possible world that has been defined by colonial powers onto other people. ‘In the world of the powerful there is room only for the big and their helpers. In the world we want, everybody fits. The world we want is a world in which many worlds fit’.⁷³ It is a positive project, for it sketches the plurality of possible worlds rather than only criticizing what is wrong about the given one. It is an attempt to ‘move beyond one-dimensional solutions to diverse problems and the imposition of universalist claims about the very nature of humanity toward the construction of the pluriverse’⁷⁴ (see also Acharya, this Forum).

69. We thank one of our anonymous reviewers for pointing us to this important clarification. On the distinction between ‘the knowers’ and ‘the known’, see Robbie Shilliam, “‘Open the Gates Mek We Repatriate’: Caribbean Slavery, Constructivism, and Hermeneutic Tensions”, *International Theory* 6, no. 2 (2014): 349–72.

70. Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, *Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle* (quoted after Mario Blaser and Marisol de la Cadena; 2018), 1.

71. Thomas K. Lindner, *A City against Empire: Transnational Anti-Imperialism in Mexico City, 1920–30* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2023).

72. Saskia Sassen, ‘The Global City: Introducing a Concept’, *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11, no. 2 (2005): 27–43.

73. Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, *Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle*.

74. Bernd Reiter, ‘Introduction’, in *Constructing the Pluriverse: The Geopolitics of Knowledge*, ed. Bernd Reiter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 10. For a discussion of the ‘pluriverse’ in IR see for instance Amaya Querejazu, ‘Cosmopraxis: Relational Methods for a Pluriversal IR’, *Review of International Studies* 48 (2022): 875–90.

This attention to radical difference as opposed to conceiving of the world as a unitary (if diverse) place has strong scholarly and political repercussions. Diversity is not enough from such a vantage point because this would assume that these different worlds can be subsumed under one whole ('unity in diversity'). To 'disagree in one shared language',⁷⁵ as has been suggested for Global IR, does not work, then, because there is a limit to what can be understood about the worlds other than one's own. The differences are *ontological*, not only epistemological.⁷⁶ Different worlds are thought to possess their own essence, which is why these approaches have been criticized for essentializing culture.⁷⁷ There has been a fierce debate on whether studies on particular worlds associated with the ontological turn indeed capture a different essence, or 'merely the familiar old idea that different peoples have different theories about the world'.⁷⁸

Our reading of this debate is that the staging and distinguishing of different worlds mobilizes difference not as a call against connection (or against globality as such) but as a different way of relating to each other across difference. Whether this difference is an ontological fact or 'merely' a different experience of the world is a philosophical question that does not concern us here, because importantly there *is* difference and the necessity to relate across said difference becomes tangible when people(s) from these different worlds articulate the fact that 'the global' as currently conceptualized does not represent them.⁷⁹

The proponents of the 'world of many worlds' approach represent a productive counter-global that is important to map for our project of problematizing the global, because they do not suggest, based on their analysis, that we should stop relating across difference. But to organize these relationships, from this view, it is a prerequisite to acknowledge that we do indeed live in a world of many worlds. On that basis, we can start imagining different political arrangements, for instance forms of 'pluriversal governance' that acknowledge not only diversity but the multiplicity of worlds that are therefore not governable from a (fictitious) center.⁸⁰ Numerous problems remain on the horizon if

75. Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Diversity and Empathy', *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 151–3.

76. David L. Blaney and Arlene B. Tickner, 'Worlding, Ontological Politics and the Possibility of a Decolonial IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 3 (2017): 293–311; Meera Sabaratnam, 'IR in Dialogue. . . But Can We Change the Subjects? A Typology of Decolonising Strategies for the Study of World Politics', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (2011): 781–803.

77. Henrik E. Vigh and David B. Sausdahl, 'From Essence Back to Existence: Anthropology Beyond the Ontological Turn', *Anthropological Theory* 14, no. 1 (2014): 49–73.

78. James Laidlaw and Paulo Heywood, 'One More Turn and You're There'. *Anthropology of This Century*, no. 7, 2013. Available at: <http://aotcpres.com/articles/turn/>. Last accessed November 16, 2021.

79. But see Morten Axel Pedersen, 'Common Nonsense: A Review of Certain Recent Reviews of the "Ontological Turn"', *Anthropology of This Century*, no. 5, 2013. Available at: http://aotcpres.com/articles/common_nonsense/. Last accessed November 16, 2021.

80. Arturo Escobar, 'Civilizational Transitions', in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, eds. Asish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar et al. (New Delhi: Tulica Books, 2018), 123.

we take up such a perspective. Most pressingly, we need to ask how one can still ‘formulate political utopias and agendas if we must not speak for others and thus prescribe how *the world* we want to live in has to look’.⁸¹

Anti-Imperial Globalisms in the 1920s

Mapping the different possibilities of counter-globals should not be restricted to academic projects. More importantly, we should ask whether and how such counter-globals have had traction in real tangible movements and what difference their difference made. Considering global history may be a useful tool for identifying such empirical episodes. While there are evident parallels between global history and global IR, the former has quickly developed into a self-reflexive discipline that considers the unique characteristics of the places through which the global is anticipated, interpreted, and shaped. Rather than accepting the global as a given, historians speak of ‘global moments’ in particular circumstances, highlighting that globalizing history does not simply mean expanding the object of study, but focusing on the entanglements and competing visions underlying and producing what is interpreted as ‘the global’.⁸² The term ‘global moment’ describes the often simultaneous, yet ideologically divergent, even contradictory, interpretations of landmark events around the world that ‘coalesced around the notion of an interconnected future’.⁸³ Such interpretations are the result of concrete lived experiences of ‘the global’ (see also Cornelissen, this Forum).

One such global moment occurred in Mexico City during the 1920s.⁸⁴ Lindner has shown how, in a few years, Mexico City developed into a multinational metropolis and a cosmopolitan city of avant-garde artists, but also into a laboratory for radical internationalism. The city saw an unprecedented proliferation of internationalism in institutions, ideas, and globally oriented movements. However, this development was not shaped by enthusiastic ‘globalists’ but rather by anti-imperialists who expressed their opposition to the current world order and elevated this concern into a central part of their political identity. Anti-imperialism became such an important master-frame to which different groups related in order to express their concerns. Communists who criticized capitalism, progressives who defended the Mexican Constitution of 1917, and Mexican presidents who wanted to nationalize oil companies did so in a language of anti-imperialism. But anti-imperialism was not just a negative, reactive movement against empire. Anti-imperialist movements created their own agendas and linked their fights to other discourses, like self-determination, nation-building, international solidarity, and a just

81. Aram Ziai, ‘Internationalism and Speaking for Others: What Struggling Against Neoliberal Globalization Has Taught Me About Epistemology’, in *Constructing the Pluriverse: The Geopolitics of Knowledge*, ed. Bernd Reiter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 121. Our emphasis.

82. Anderl and Witt, ‘Problematizing’, 38.

83. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, ‘Introduction: Competing Visions of World Order - Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s’, in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s*, eds. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 181–212.

84. The following draws on Lindner, *A City*.

international order. Opposing empire was a way of searching for an alternative modernity beyond the mere imitation of Western models of development, that is, it constituted a counter-global.⁸⁵

Mexican anti-imperialists in the 1920s were aware of their position within a global movement of anti-imperialism. Although in postcolonial Latin America, a long tradition of *continental*, not global, thought influenced anti-imperialists during the 1920s, their activism was strongly connected to the history of the eventual emergence of the Third World and the roots of decolonization. Lindner shows that the idea of tricontinental solidarity was neither the product of events like the Bandung Conference of 1955, or the Cuban Tricontinental Conference of 1966, nor were they first envisioned within a Cold War context. Rather, the seeds of tricontinental solidarity were already visible in Latin American societies of the 1920s – specifically in anti-imperialist thinking. Anti-imperialists in Latin America claimed that their continent occupied a similar position to Africa and Asia in a global system of imperialist oppression. For instance, the view that sovereignty necessarily included economic independence, not just the mere existence of a nation-state, was common in the 1920s.⁸⁶

Mexico City experienced its anti-imperialist moment between the summer of 1925 and the summer of 1927. This moment was local in terms of its practices but global in terms of its aspiration and far-reaching in its resonance. The conditions of possibility for this were specific to this timeframe. Apart from socialism, radical nationalism offered an alternative to the existing order, as it became clear that nation-states, not empires, would become the organizing principle of international politics. Anti-imperialism integrated these two dominating poles of global thought: in its various forms, it was compatible with the transnational discourse on self-determination and nationalism, but also with the internationalist visions of socialism. Therefore, even though the scale of this phenomenon was local (one city), the intricate relation between global, continental, national, and local factors for the development of anti-imperialist networks in Mexico City in the 1920s cannot be adequately represented by focusing on one context only. In addition to the transnational composition of actors (many of them immigrants), Lindner underlines how anti-imperialists permanently adapted their framework to fit into the national and local context, while retaining its global impulse. This contradictory nature of anti-imperialism is thus a good example of a counter-global, rejecting the imperial global order and by so doing creating alternative imaginaries of what the global could be.

Current Transnational Feminist Counter-Globals

The transnational feminist movement around the Millennium strongly bought into and supported a global approach. Heavily influenced by the 1995 UN World Women's Conference in Beijing, and particularly the World Social Forum events, there was considerable euphoria around global solutions against discrimination and the power of

85. See also Nicola Miller, *Reinventing Modernity in Latin America: Intellectuals Imagine the Future, 1900–1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 16–18; Getachew, *Worldmaking*; Abrahamsen, 'Internationalists, Sovereignists, Nativists'.

86. See also Getachew, *Worldmaking*.

global feminist advocacy. A good example is the World March of Women, a transnational feminist movement that proclaimed to speak with one, global, voice at the World Social Forum in 2004.⁸⁷ Today, many feminist movements are far more sceptical regarding a global framing of their grievances. This is because within these supposedly global spaces, many of their specific issues were ignored, and particular groups, their grievances and cultural repertoires were not taken seriously.⁸⁸ Critics found contradictory practices at the ‘open space’ methodologies of the Global Justice Movement, where everyone was said to be an equal part of the global solidarity project while gender and colonial difference continued to determine whose agency mattered. Indigenous women specifically complained that the idea of global justice did little for them while legitimating practices for their counterparts in the North.⁸⁹

These feminist movements from the South problematized the global in global feminism. Yet importantly, most of these movements did not conclude from their complaints that the global should be abandoned. Instead, they constructed counter-global projects, establishing new ways of reaching across difference. These are necessarily more complex than assuming the universality of women’s struggles. Starting from the assumption of deep positionality and difference of feminist struggles in their particular sociohistorical trajectory, the processes establishing trust and exchange are far lengthier and politically more charged than they used to be around the Millennium. Importantly, the conflation of solidarity with transnationalization, that is, the ‘making, deepening, and stretching of linkages between previously unconnected struggles’ has widely been acknowledged as insufficient for establishing cross-border solidarities.⁹⁰

Instead of this expansive connotation of global solidarity, current feminist movements often start from a deep and systematic introspective into their place. For instance, Johanna Leinius has shown how the *Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe* has changed since the beginnings of feminist regional encounters that have taken place in Latin America since the 1980s. Clearly distancing their work from simple declarations of solidarity based on mutuality of global struggles, participants’ ‘ability to critically reflect on power relations and one’s own positionality within them is put forward as the political consciousness needed to strengthen the Latin American feminist movement’.⁹¹ Similarly, in Southeast Asia, the above-mentioned World March of Women has abandoned calls for a global unity of struggles toward emphasizing difference within the transnational feminist movements.⁹²

87. Felix Anderl, ‘Global or Local Solidarity? That’s the Wrong Question: Relationality, Aspiration and the In-Between of Feminist Activism in Southeast Asia’, *Globalizations* 19, no. 1 (2022): 1–16.

88. Janet Conway, *Edges of Global Justice: The World Social Forum and Its ‘Others’* (London: Routledge, 2013).

89. Nikita Dhawan, ‘Coercive Cosmopolitanism and Impossible Solidarities’, *Qui Parle* 22, no. 1 (2013): 139–66.

90. Janet Conway, Pascale Dufour, and Domminique Masson, *Cross-Border Solidarities in Twenty First Century Contexts: Feminist Perspectives and Activist Practices* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2021), ix.

91. Johanna Leinius, ‘Constructing Solidarity Across Difference in Feminist Encounters’, *Open Gender Journal*, no. 4 (2020): 12.

92. Anderl, ‘Global or Local Solidarity’.

What unites these struggles is a shared scepticism toward ‘global solidarity’ as a framework for emancipatory feminism. But based on problematizing the global, these movements construct alternative political aspirations. They formulate counter-globals in which the global is not present as a shared condition. Rather, their solidarity builds on place-based relationality and ‘cosmopolitics’.⁹³ Leinius refers to a threefold reorientation in feminist struggles that describes the expectations informing their counter-global: the recognition of the intersectionality of struggles, the acknowledgment of ‘unmapped common ground’ as a shared basis for working together, and imagination as a mode for bridging the gap between oneself and the Other.⁹⁴

Our project is to map counter-globals as a constant process of discovering and displaying rivaling conceptions of the global, in order to de-essentialize and problematize the current global. These feminist movements problematize the global by highlighting the need for intersectionality instead of assuming unity of struggle. They explicitly refer to the common ground as something to be established rather than a given. They consider their own practices as a form of mapping of alternative imaginaries. To learn from their discoveries and to map the ways in which they continuously produce ‘globalities’ in their ‘unmapped common ground’ is a promising way to counter and de-essentialize given imaginaries of the global.

We contend that to map these counter-globals is a good way of showing that the ways in which we understand the global is a matter of discovery and imagination, and it is essentially political. Mapping, as a permanent process of discovering, relating, and multiplying is a key strategy to address the otherwise given danger of building on and reproducing unquestioned globalisms. And it provides an instrument to not only demonstrate empirical multiplicity, but to also understand the internal logics through which specific globalisms produce inclusion and exclusion. By this, mapping as a technique may also provide an answer to the question of how to achieve a more progressive agenda for IR through the problematization of the global.

From Globalizing IR to Anti-Imperial Worldmaking

Isaac Kamola

Trinity College⁹⁵

Efforts to make the discipline of IR less Eurocentric and more ‘global’ offer a much-needed intervention into our discipline. This is especially true giving that the discipline

93. Johanna Leinius, ‘The Cosmopolitical Challenge of Building Border-Crossing Feminist Solidarities’, in *Cross-Border Solidarities in Twenty First Century Contexts*, eds. Janet Conway, Dominique Masson, and Pascale Dufour (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield), 101–16.
94. Leinius, ‘Constructing Solidarity’.
95. I would like to thank Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt for their careful editorial work and generous invitation. In addition, many thanks go out to three anonymous reviewers as well as the panelist, audience and lively conversation at the *Millennium* conference where this paper was presented. And greatest thanks to Serena Laws who, as always, made the paper better by walking me back from the dangerous cliffs and convoluted paths that this piece would have otherwise been doomed to follow.

in which we work was originally created, and largely continues to function, to maintain and justify imperialism, American superpower, and a hierarchical world order organized around racialized difference.⁹⁶ Efforts to globalize IR have made important interventions, seeking to challenge the ‘Western and American dominance of the discipline’⁹⁷ and demonstrating that ‘the main theories of IR are too deeply rooted in, and beholden to, the history, intellectual traditions, and agency claims of the West’.⁹⁸

The call to globalize IR, however, raises two important analytical questions: First, why frame our efforts to develop more capacious ‘global’ understandings of the world in disciplinary terms and as disciplinary interventions? Or, in short, ‘Why IR?’ And, secondly, what does the ‘Global’ in the particular articulation of ‘Global IR’ actually mean? I have argued elsewhere that focusing our interventions on something called IR risks unintentionally constraining and reifying our work for a small intellectual community, at the expense of cultivating texts, concepts, and analyses that more freely travel among potential intellectual allies and accomplices, including those inhabiting intellectual and political spaces across and beyond our discipline.⁹⁹ I argue that we should be writing in ways that are of interest to those across the academy (and broader publics) who are also doing the critical, decolonial, and ‘global’ intellectual and political work, but are not likely interested in whether or not our parochial discipline is sufficiently ‘global’. Writing for, about, and to ‘IR’, in other words, seems to only narrow – rather than expand – our potential interlocuters and the potential worldly effects our work can have.

The second question – about the nature of the ‘global’ in ‘Global IR’ – has already been raised by a number of largely sympathetic scholars who have expressed concern that what is meant by ‘global’ remains largely under-interrogated. Anderl and Witt, for example, argue that Global IR embodies the deep-seeded assumption that ‘[d]espite its recognition of plurality and difference, true IR knowledge is thus still singular and measured in terms of its proven/assumed universal validity’.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Blaney and Tickner conclude that, ‘[a]lthough promising, the Global IR project too readily slips back into a “one-world world” by recognising a multiplicity of worldviews but not the existence of many *reals*’.¹⁰¹ In other words, the ‘global’ of Global IR remains imagined as a single world, albeit one more heterogenous and inclusive of difference than most IR scholarship appreciates.

I want to take this line of inquiry in a slightly different direction, however, by asking: What is the effort to globalize IR a symptom of? In doing so I demonstrate that efforts to

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96. For example: Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2015); Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*.
97. Amitav Acharya, ‘Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions’, *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 5.
98. Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds’, 649. See also: Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, ‘Why Is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory?: An Introduction’, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 3 (2007): 287–312.
99. Kamola, ‘IR, the Critic, and the World’.
100. Anderl and Witt, ‘Problematising’, 36.
101. David L. Blaney and Arlene B. Tickner, ‘Worlding, Ontological Politics and the Possibility of a Decolonial IR’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 3 (2017): 310.

globalize our discipline remain profoundly shaped by a rapidly changing political economy of higher education. As Acharya notes, in recent decades ‘IR schools, departments, institutes, and conventions have mushroomed around the world’.¹⁰² For example, in recent decades Latin American and Caribbean universities have witnessed a ‘fantastic growth’ of IR, ‘as measured by the number of academic programmes, both undergraduate and graduate, students, research institutions, conferences, and publications’.¹⁰³ Similar trends can be found in regions and countries around the world. However, despite this rapid expansion, the discipline has yet ‘to overcome a central challenge related to its British and North American roots’.¹⁰⁴ The discipline’s Eurocentric foundations has only become more evident as the discipline of IR is taken up in more and more locations around the world.

Efforts to globalize IR, however, commonly take the discipline – as well as the academic institutions that make it possible – as already given, focusing critical attention instead on disciplinary content. The goal of globalizing IR, in other words, is to change the content of something called IR, which is now studied as such in a great diversity of locations. A symptomatic reading,¹⁰⁵ in contrast, starts with a slightly different question: What are the conditions of possibility that give rise to the ‘mushrooming’ of our discipline around the world? And, how does this recent transformation shape what it means to ‘globalize’ our discipline.

A symptomatic reading does not offer a singular cause, but rather teases out a complex set of overdetermined relations and their culminating effects. After all, the massive expansion of universities around the world, and the corresponding growth in IR departments, has many causes. One could examine, for example, state investments in national strategic interests, growing student interest in the topic, and shifts in corporate and philanthropic priorities and funding. However, in this short piece I want to examine one pivotal, or conjunctural, moment in the changing relations of academic knowledge production: namely, the WTO’s reclassification of education as a trade service during the 1990s. This seemingly minor change in trade policy not only ushered in a massive expansion of higher education around the world, but helped create the material conditions in which governments, university administrators, scholars, and students came to see their education as a commodity bought and sold on a ‘global’ market.

The classification of higher education as a trade service in the 1990s did not single-handedly transform universities around the world, nor solely determine the material conditions in which our discipline is currently practiced. However, a symptomatic analysis examines the relations that went into this change, and the overdetermined effects that followed from it – starting from the observation that such a change does not happen spontaneously. The world does not just become global, but is made such. Likewise, the incorporation of education into the ‘global’ service economy was an effect of decades of groundwork, including that of highly organized and committed neoliberal intellectuals

102. Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds’, 647.

103. Arlene B. Tickner, ‘Latin America: Still Policy Dependent After All These Years?’, in *International Relations Scholarship Around the World*, eds. Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Wæver (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 37.

104. Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds’, 647.

105. For an overview of my approach to symptomatic reading, see: Isaac Kamola, ‘Reading the Global in the Absence of Africa’, in *Thinking International Relations Differently*, eds. Arlene B. Tickner and David L. Blaney (London: Routledge, 2012), 22.

who first advocated, and then built, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and later the WTO. While this story has many characters, this paper focuses on the well-organized group of Austrian economists centered in Switzerland who became the vanguard of neoliberal global capitalism, building international institutions explicitly designed to ‘protect’ free-market capitalism against the democratizing demands of anti-colonial nationalism.

Examining this cadre of free-market scholars and institutional operatives demonstrates the degree to which GATT was itself a capitalist response to the perceived threat of Third World economic power. This contrasts with the tendency to see the parochial (non-‘global’) nature of IR as an obvious mistake, a deeper epistemic blindness, or the legacy of an imperial past, all of which might be corrected if scholars incorporate more ‘global’ content into the discipline. However, what the Geneva School, and their success at transforming higher education into a ‘global commodity’, demonstrates is that the social relations that give rise to Global IR are themselves symptomatic of those social relations that also actively organized to defeat the Third World political and economic project. As John Hobson demonstrates, the Eurocentrism constructed under imperialism lives on, in different forms, within Western-liberalism and the global hierarchies it enforces.¹⁰⁶

How does this story unfold? Following World War II, members of the Geneva School expressed concern that newly independent countries were attempting to reorganize their domestic and regional economic policies along the lines of the New International Economic Order (NIEO). As with other advocates of free-market policy reforms, the Geneva School saw the waning of empire as jeopardizing the political structures that had, up to that point, facilitated the free flow of capital around the world. In this context they imaged international trade organizations, such as GATT, as offering the best option for successfully ‘encasing’ these newly independent countries within a ‘global’ market. In GATT they saw international institutions as creating the political infrastructure capitalism needed, and which had previously been provided by imperial governance. Decades later, the Geneva School would expand upon their successes and help facilitate the transition from GATT to the WTO, further stripping Global South countries from the ability to shape their economic futures. The transformation of education into a trade service bought and sold on a ‘global’ market was one outcome of these ‘reforms’.

In other words, the construction of a ‘global’ economy of higher education was one effect of a broader political project aimed at constraining the possibilities of anticolonial nationalism.¹⁰⁷ This free-market counter-revolution was organized, in large part, by an international group of Austrian economists who, self-consciously working as a community of thought and action, used their considerable intellectual and organizational skills to imagine, debate, advocate, and ultimately construct the institutions needed to shape the world we inhabit today. They examined the existing organization of force – the conjuncture – and used their arguments and political maneuvering to intervene upon it. Drawing inspiration from what Getachew calls ‘anti-imperial worldmaking’, I conclude

106. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, 285–344.

107. I explore other conjunctural moments in this struggle, focusing instead on how universities produce knowledge about globalization, in: Kamola, *Making the World Global*.

with the suggestion that, rather than setting a narrow focus on changing the content of our discipline, we might instead focus on cultivating those knowledges, intellectual communities, and institutions needed to imagine the world anew.¹⁰⁸

Constructing Higher Education as a ‘Global’ Commodity

Numerous conditions created the conjuncture in which the WTO came to classify education an export service. One important group intervening in this political moment was a free-market intellectual group located in post-war Geneva. Like their intellectual brethren comprising the Chicago school of economics and other bastions of neoliberal policy-making, the Geneva School¹⁰⁹ also had its roots in Vienna prior to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Austria, this group of scholars inhabited a common world of salons, academic centers, think tanks, and governmental research positions. They attracted corporate funders and state patrons who understood their brand of free-market ideology as a particularly useful tool for defeating the growing prominence of Keynesian and socialist economic policies.¹¹⁰

After the war, these intellectuals dispersed around Western Europe and the United States where they continued to create academic centers and institutions, again with the intent of radically transforming the world economy in their image of a ‘global’ market. The Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) remains the best known of these projects. Created in 1947, and funded by wealthy anti-New Deal business leaders,¹¹¹ the MPS served as the crucible for ‘the neoliberal movement’ – a term coined by Hayek.¹¹² In the United States, Austrian intellectuals received considerable funding from foundations such as the Volker Fund, which paid for Hayek’s position at the University of Chicago and placed Ludwig von Mises at NYU.¹¹³

108. I take the idea of cultivating knowledge from: Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 24–25.

109. For Slobodian, the Geneva School includes ‘thinkers who held academic positions in Geneva, Switzerland, among them Wilhelm Röpke, Ludwig von Mises, and Michael Heilperin; those who pursued or presented key research there, including Hayek, Lionel Robbins, and Gottfried Haberler; and those who worked at the GATT, such as Jan Tumlir, Frieder Roessler, and [Ernst-Ulrich] Petermann’. Slobodian, *Globalists*, 8.

110. Janek Wasserman, *The Marginal Revolutionaries: How Austrian Economists Fought the War of Ideas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

111. Early funders of the MPS included Jasper Crane (Du Pont), Pierre Goodrich, J. Howard Pew (Sun Oil), Sterling Morton (Morton Salt), Irene Du Pont, as well as the Relm and Volker foundations. *Ibid.*, 202.

112. Slobodian, *Globalists*, 24–26.

113. Ralph Wilson and Isaac Kamola, *Free Speech and Koch Money: Manufacturing a Campus Culture War* (London: Pluto Press, 2021). When the Volker Fund closed its doors, Charles Koch became one of the major funders of Austrian economics in the United States. Between 2005 and 2019, for example, the Koch Foundation has spent US\$458 million on creating academic centers and programmes that advance a preferred hard-right libertarian agenda, under the guise of academic legitimacy. UnKoch My Campus, ‘Increased Funding, Increased Influence: Koch University Funding Update, May 2005–2019’, (Washington, DC: UnKoch My Campus, 2021); S. Douglas Beets, ‘The Charles Koch Foundation and Contracted Universities: Evidence from Disclosed Agreements’, *Journal*

Another group of Austrian intellectuals – similarly empowered by strong connections to corporate interests and political networks – ended up in Geneva, where they actively engaged in the intellectual and political project of constraining the democratic demands for economic redistribution then being made by anticolonial movements. During the 1950s, development economists, including Hans Singer, Raul Prebisch, Walter Rodney, Samir Amin, and others powerfully demonstrated that international trade greatly favors industrialized economies at the expense of developing countries.¹¹⁴ This intellectual work became the cornerstone for numerous economic proposals originating from the Third World, including those put forward by the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77, including the NIEO. One important element of the development agenda advanced by anticolonial nationalists was a massive expansion of higher education, including creating institutions capable of supplying the experts and trained workers needed to transform colonial economies, still organized from the metropole, into industrial economies capable of advancing national and regional interests.¹¹⁵

The scholars and activists organized around the Geneva School, however, feared that, in a world after empire, policies advanced by anticolonial nationalists would threaten the unimpeded movement of transnational capital.¹¹⁶ To address this concern, they engaged in the intellectual work needed to conceptualize and justify the creation of ‘supranational judiciary bodies’ that could ‘encase’ the economies of newly independent nations within a neoliberal economic and legal order. This political vision was exemplified in GATT.¹¹⁷

As an organized intellectual community, the Geneva School helped to pioneer the counterattack against development economists, deploying neoclassical economics to justify and naturalize trade differentials between North and South (and, therefore, offering expanded free trade as the best solution to trade imbalances). The highly influential Haberler Report, commissioned by GATT, laid out this argument. While acknowledging the existence of trade imbalances between wealthy industrial and poorer agricultural economies, the report nonetheless blamed inequality on protectionist policies and government spending. The proposed solution, therefore, was to greatly expand free trade policies and capital flows, allowing for more accurate pricing within a ‘global’ market.

It is important to note that Haberler and others in the Geneva School did not conceptualize these arguments about the relationship between law and free markets as contributions to a discipline. Rather, the ideas were always connected to a project of neoliberal worldmaking. They enjoyed considerable ‘organizational abilities and intellectual connections’, and therefore saw their neoliberal ideas and policies spread widely outside the

of Academic Ethics 17, no. 3 (2019): 219–43; Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* (New York: Viking, 2017).

114. Hans W. Singer, ‘Economic Progress in Underdeveloped Countries’, *Social Research* 16 (1949): 1–11; Raul Prebisch, *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems*, Economic Bulletin for Latin America (New York: United Nations, 1962); Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982).

115. Kamola, *Making the World Global*, 70–75.

116. Slobodian, *Globalists*, 9.

117. *Ibid.*, 12–13.

academy. Haberler, for example, was a fellow at the libertarian American Enterprise Institute, and his arguments circulated through the MPS, the Heritage Foundation, and the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA).¹¹⁸ Through this dense network of intellectuals and political institutions, scholars connected through the Geneva School not only marshal an intellectual response to Third Worldist, Marxist, Keynesian, and development approaches to economic order but simultaneously collaborated in the building of those institutions that would lock-in their neoliberal economic vision.¹¹⁹

In the decades since its creation, GATT became a particularly powerful tool (or weapon) for defeating the economic policies advanced by the Third World project. However, during the 1970s, former colonies had successfully negotiated a number of small victories – including the Lomé Convention – that allowed former colonies some protected access to domestic markets. The organized power of Global South countries had fought for a number of carve-outs to GATT, at the same time that finance and the service sector were growing much more rapidly than traditional manufacturing. Within GATT, a group of Hayek's former students, and widely considered the direct heirs to the Geneva School, worked to 'creat[e] a rule-based system for the world economy' that would further lock-in free-market principles to this evolving world economy.¹²⁰ While GATT had enabled an 'atmosphere of pragmatism and compromise' between Global North and Global South countries, this group of neoliberal thinkers sought to 'restore the coherence of a liberal order that had been eroding continually since the granting of preferences to colonial and later postcolonial states'.¹²¹ Pointing to the NIEO, Roessler, who became the director of GATT's Division of Legal Affairs in 1989, expressed his concern that 'the Global South [w]as the chief obstacle to a more rational organization of the world trading system'.¹²² Likewise, Ernst-Ulrich Petersmann warned that "Neoliberal international economic law". . . was being replaced by principles of redistribution and solidarity, scaling up the welfare state and "economic and social human rights" to the global level'. He expressed concern that countries in the Global South 'were "demanding a total revolutionary revision of traditional international economy law"'.¹²³

To reverse the minor diplomatic successes won by Third World countries, scholars affiliated with the Geneva School began to lay the groundwork needed to replace GATT with a more robust legal institution, one which offered greater institutional power, expanded reach, and further limited the possibility for making political concessions to the Global South. Those economists working on a replacement for GATT, many with connections to the Geneva School, envisioned the WTO as an 'apparatus[e] of juridical power to encase markets beyond democratic accountability'.¹²⁴ In other words, they saw

118. The IEA is a neoliberal think tank founded by a Hayek disciple, Antony Fisher, and widely credited with laying the groundwork for rise of Thatcher. Wilson and Kamola, *Free Speech and Koch Money*, Chapter 8.

119. Wasserman, *The Marginal Revolutionaries*, 225–7.

120. Slobodian, *Globalists*, 245.

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Ibid.*, 246.

123. *Ibid.*, 247.

124. *Ibid.*, 266.

the WTO as a more robust legal structure able to lock-in neoliberal free-market capitalism, even against the protests of Global South countries.

Negotiated during the end of the Uruguay Rounds (1986–1993), the WTO's first major agreements encased new swaths of the world economy within 'global' free-market principles. While the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement provided 'global' trade protections to intellectual property, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) extended free trade principles to education, as well as business services, communications, engineering, distribution, financial services, healthcare, tourism, transportation, culture, and sport.¹²⁵

The inclusion of higher education in GATS would profoundly transform higher education around the world. With education as a protected trade service, universities are now able more easily offer classes, protect their brands, ward-off regulation, and make capital investments overseas.¹²⁶ As a result, since the Uruguay Round, many countries have turned to education as an important area of market growth, driving the increased numbers of students studying abroad, the expanded international academic linkages, and the construction of branch campuses.¹²⁷ Cuts in public investments in education also means that academic institutions have increasingly come to depend upon partnerships with private business and fee-paying foreign students.¹²⁸

From Globalizing IR to Anticolonial Worldmaking

In the decades since the WTO redefined education as a protected trade service, the world has witnessed a massive expansion of post-secondary education at a planetary scale. There are now 260 million students studying in 20,000 universities around the world.¹²⁹ Across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the population of 25–34 years old with college degrees now stands at 45.6%, compared with just 29.1% of those aged 55–64 (up 16.5 percentage points). These changes are particularly dramatic in South Korea (up 47.4 percentage points, to a staggering 69.9%), Turkey (up 24.3%), and Chile (up 17.7%). In contrast, in the United States, the expansion of higher education remains much more limited, with 50.4% of Americans aged 25–34 having college degrees, compared to 43.4% of the population three decades their senior.¹³⁰ During this time, especially dramatic gains have been made in China, India, and

125. Antoni Verger, *WTO/GATS and the Global Politics of Higher Education* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 27.

126. Andrew Ross, 'Global U', in *The University Against Itself: The NYU Strike and the Future of the Academic Workplace*, ed. Monika Krause, Mary Nolan, Michael Palm et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 211–23.

127. Verger, *WTO/GATS and the Global Politics of Higher Education*, 34.

128. Ibid.

129. Hans de Wit and Philip G. Altbach, 'Internationalization in Higher Education: Global Trends and Recommendations for Its Future', *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 32.

130. OECD. 'Population with Tertiary Education'. Available at: <https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm>. Last accessed September 10, 2021.

Latin America, where enrollment ratios now near levels on par with European and North American countries.¹³¹ The WTO's classification of higher education as a trade service has also made it easier to cross international borders to attend university, as seen in the increase from 1.3 million international students in 1990 to 3.4 million in 2009.¹³² Sub-Saharan Africa, which still lags far behind other regions in terms of total percentage of college-aged students enrolled in higher education, has nonetheless averaged 8.4% annual growth in enrollments over the last 40 years.¹³³

The same trends taking place in the newly 'global' market for higher education are also playing out within our own discipline. As Acharya points out:

The study of International Relations is growing rapidly all over the world. IR students in Western universities are an increasingly multicultural lot, drawn from many different parts of the world. There is also a proliferation of IR departments and programmes in universities outside the West, especially in large countries such as China, India, Turkey, Brazil and Indonesia.¹³⁴

The massification of higher education, which includes an increasingly mobile population of students and academics from around the world, has occurred alongside considerable market pressures for universities to offer increased 'isomorphism in learning objectives and outcomes'.¹³⁵ To be competitive in a global market, universities often adopt the disciplining logics of 'global' ranking schemes and international accreditation practices. They often create academic programmes that 'veer toward resemblance in degree requirements, credit-transfer systems, literature assigned, the definition of faculty positions, and even course titles'.¹³⁶

However, competition within the global higher education market remains profoundly unequal, as many institutions experience limited capacities to fundraise, attract talent, recruit international students, access materials, or adapt to the primacy of English in 'global' research and teaching.¹³⁷ Today, the global market for higher education is highly stratified.¹³⁸ Many of the hierarchies and Eurocentrisms created through colonialism, and

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131. de Wit and Altbach, 'Internationalization in Higher Education: Global Trends and Recommendations for Its Future', 32.
132. Chiao-Ling Chien and Felly Chiteng, *New Patterns in Student Mobility in the Southern African Development*, UIS Information Bulletin (UNESCO, 2011), 1.
133. Ibid., 2.
134. Amitav Acharya, 'Towards a Global International Relations?', e-IR, 2017. Available at: https://www.e-ir.info/2017/12/10/towards-a-global-international-relations/#google_vignette.
135. James H. Mittelman, *Implausible Dream: The World-Class University and Repurposing Higher Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 6; David John Frank and Jay Gabler, *Reconstructing the University: Worldwide Shifts in Academia in the 20th Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).
136. Mittelman, *Implausible Dream*, 6.
137. de Wit and Altbach, 'Internationalization in Higher Education: Global Trends and Recommendations for Its Future', 36; Kamola, *Making the World Global*; Mittelman, *Implausible Dream*.
138. Tobia Schulze-Cleven, Tilman Reitz, Jens Maesse et al., 'The New Political Economy of Higher Education: Between Distributional Conflicts and Discursive Stratification', *Higher Education* 73 (2017): 795–812.

resisted by anticolonial nationalists, continue today embedded within a highly asymmetrical global economy; one which now also includes the buying and selling of higher education on a 'global' market.

The fact that so many universities now understand themselves as firms operating within a global market is a testament to the success of a decades-long effort to radically remake capitalist markets, international law, and higher education. We are living in a world the Geneva School helped to build. In this world, universities look increasingly the same, are governed by corporate logics, and reproduce widely replicable disciplinary content. Within our discipline this takes the form of students around the world expected to learn a delimited and Western version of IR.

In this context, current efforts to globalize our discipline are profoundly important. However, seeking to greatly expand what should be 'brought into' IR does not address the underlying structural and material logics that transformed education into a global commodity. If Geneva School intellectuals helped create a world in which higher education exists as an export service within a highly stratified global market, one might ask: What kind of institutions of higher learning might exist today had the various Third World economic projects succeeded? What would universities look like if anticolonial struggles had been allowed to construct a more 'egalitarian global economy'?¹³⁹ What would the discipline of IR look like in those universities?

Given that intellectual communities of neoliberal economists used their intellectual talents and labor to first imagine – and then create – GATT and later the WTO, it is worth asking what other counter-practices of worldmaking might be necessary to create a world that rejects the supplication of democracy to capitalism. What intellectual and political projects are needed to further the promise of anticolonial nationalism, what Getachew calls 'postcolonial cosmopolitanism'? For Getachew the lesson from the anticolonial struggles – and their demands for sovereignty and self-determination, including economic independence and self-sufficiency – opens up a space to think the anticolonial project not limited to national independence but rather as a broader worldmaking project that expands outward and into the present. Such a project would, as a starting point, 'look back toward the anti-imperial efforts to remake the international order', and to see in anti-imperial struggle examples of 'how to justify robust demands for redistribution across borders'.¹⁴⁰

Projects that draw from such an inspiration are likely less interested in simply changing the content of what counts as IR, or making this particular discipline 'more global'. Instead, such intellectual projects would also entail actively constructing the alternative knowledges and communities necessary to reimage, and remake, the worlds in which we live and work. If the universities we inhabit today have been transformed into corporations within a 'global' market – a new set of relations designed to defeat the liberatory possibilities of anticolonial nationalism – then the project of making our discipline differently must also involve more than changing the content of what we teach and research.

139. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 160.

140. *Ibid.*, 36.

We might instead focus on the postcolonial cosmopolitan project of developing the knowledges, organizations, and institutions necessary to not only change the content of our discipline but to also confront those underlying relations of empire and capital that make Global IR necessary in the first place.

‘One and Many’: A Futuristic Foundation of the Global IR Research Programme

Deepshikha Shahi

O.P. Jindal Global University

The swelling body of literature on Global IR confirms its arrival as a viable research agenda. Yet, its hazy theoretical grounding generates some puzzles. For instance, is Global IR wedded to a specialized theoretical base? Or is it a device to diversify the previously existing theories of Western IR or non-Western IR? Besides, is Global IR theoretically devoted to depict the particularist local-pictures of ‘somewhere/s’ or universalist global-pictures of ‘anywhere/s’? And if Global IR represents both local- and global-pictures, then how does it rationally reconcile the particularity of local-pictures (many separated worlds) with the universality of global-pictures (one connected world)? The mainstream theories answer the question of one-and-many-ness of the world in an either-or way: either we live in one world of globalizing capitalism centered on a single hegemonic power (US/China?), or we live in many worlds with many voices, including the anti-hegemonic voices of indigenous people often relegated to the sphere of myths or beliefs. In contrast to this either-or answer, the recent texts on Global IR (inspired by a variety of Chinese-Indian-Japanese philosophies) envisage a world which is concurrently ‘one and many’. This article aims to clarify how these texts – pushing a non-essentialist epistemology of monism (one world) without compromising with the ontology of pluralism (many worlds) – resolve the persisting puzzles of Global IR, thereby establishing it as a futuristic research programme. The article is divided into three sections. The first section sheds light on the theoretical trajectory of Global IR. It argues that this trajectory obeys the principles of a Lakatosian research programme (where multiple auxiliary theories with shared hard-core assumptions corroborate their findings), not a Kuhnian paradigm (where one theory claims superiority over and incommensurability with rival theories). It announces that the multiple auxiliary theories of the Global IR research programme share hard-core assumptions about the need to reconcile the ‘West–non-West binaries’. The second section discusses the ontological, methodological, and epistemological inclinations of the Global IR research programme. It recounts how these inclinations, despite making progressive moves to reconcile the West–non-West binaries, remain fraught with two supposed shortcomings: that is, ‘inability to move beyond critique’ and ‘failure to furnish a new account of globalism’. Finally, the third section demonstrates how several contemporary conceptualizations of ‘one and many’ move beyond critique to fabricate a new (or say, a non-Kantian) account of globalism, thereby granting a firm foothold to the evolving Global IR research programme.

Global IR: A Paradigm? No, a Research Programme

IR theorizing has come a long way in the process of grappling with myriad mysteries, such as ‘why is there no international theory?’,¹⁴¹ ‘why there is international theory now?’,¹⁴² and ‘why is there no Non-Western IR theory?’¹⁴³ When the post-Cold War Kantian politics overtook the Cold War Hobbesian politics, the inhibition in recognizing the normative potential of IR got diluted. Once this inhibition got diluted, the thinly theorized realm of ‘the international’ became thickly theorized¹⁴⁴. Often, this thickly theorized realm was explained in terms of Kuhn’s notion of ‘paradigm shift’: that is, ‘why certain theories are legitimised. . .the process that takes place when theories are no longer relevant and new theories emerge. . .and [how] the former way of thinking is replaced with a new one’¹⁴⁵. The seemingly rival theories of realism, pluralism, (post-) structuralism, etc. claimed to enhance ‘pluralism’ in IR. But it was soon realized that this pluralism exclusively encapsulated the theoretical narratives of the West, not the non-West. The Western-centric narratives – in varied historical-contextual, ideological, and residual forms – managed to dominate the Cold War and post-Cold War phases of global politics.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the uncertainty caused by the 2007 financial crisis and the ensuing decline in the US hegemony called for a shift in attention to the non-West.¹⁴⁷ And this shift in attention to the non-West – the objective to ‘bring the non-West in’ – became the focal point of Global IR.

As per the discipline’s tradition, it was expected that Global IR would create its own specialized theoretical base, a base that would replace the old paradigms with a new one. However, contrary to these expectations, the theoretical credentials of Global IR became a subject of heated debate. When it was declared that Global IR was not meant to be a theory, but a perspective.¹⁴⁸ it was held that Global IR’s ‘project of turning Hoffman’s ‘American science’ into something more sensitive to alternative, subaltern approaches [was a general cry] . . .translating this general cry into real theoretical proposals [was] far more difficult’.¹⁴⁹ When it was proposed that Global IR aimed ‘to develop

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141. Martin Wight, ‘Why Is There No International Theory?’ *International Relations* 2, no. 1 (1960): 35.
 142. Duncan Snidal and Alexander Wendt. ‘Why there is International Theory Now?’ *International Theory* 1, no. 1 (2009): 1.
 143. Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan. ‘Why Is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? Ten Years On’. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 17, no. 3 (2017): 341.
 144. Kostiantyn Gorobets, ‘The International Rule of Law and the Idea of Normative Authority’. *Hague Journal on the Rule Law* 12 (2020): 227–49.
 145. Dana Gold and Stephen McGlinchey, ‘International Relations Theory’, e-IR, 2017. Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/09/international-relations-theory/>.
 146. John M. Hobson. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760–2010* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 326.
 147. Florent Frasson-Quenoz. ‘Latin American Thinking in International Relations Reloaded’. *OASIS* 23 (2016): 54.
 148. Amitav Acharya, ‘Developing Global International Relations: What, Who, and How?’, *TRAFO*, 2016. Available at: <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/4873>.
 149. Jordi Q. Arias, ‘Towards a Truly Global IR Theory?: The Middle East and the Upcoming Debate’. *Insight Turkey* 18, no. 2 (2016): 184.

concepts. . .from non-Western contexts on their own terms and to apply them not only locally. . .but also to the larger global canvas',¹⁵⁰ it was warned that if Global IR made a demand for 'national traditions',¹⁵¹ it could become a chore to use theories from 'the own' tradition such as Gandhian theory for Indian scholars and Fanonian theory for French scholars, which would be a flirt with 'nativism' and 'ethnicism'.¹⁵² And when it was asserted that Global IR was not a theory in itself that merely needed to be applied to different world-contexts but a scheme to subsume IR's hitherto established theories by enriching it with the 'infusion of ideas and practices from the non-Western world',¹⁵³ it was speculated that Global IR lacked an intellectual core of its own; since Global IR did not seek to discard/displace the hitherto established theories, it was a loose platform to support the normative concerns of the existing Western and/or non-Western theories.¹⁵⁴

On the one hand, the debate on Global IR was gaining momentum. And on the other hand, the contested character of IR theorizing was attaining a more refined subtext. Within this subtext, IR theorizing thrived upon the interrogatives of ontology, methodology, and epistemology. While ontology probed *what exists* and methodology enquired *how to know what exists*, epistemology – as a theory of knowledge – tested *how we know what we know of what exists*. A ground-breaking study of any of these interrogatives assured the promotion of theoretical pluralism. But it became arguable if this theoretical pluralism – existing inside/outside the Western IR – was valuable, because it ran the risk of reinforcing 'UK–US divide' (when counter-claims were made on greater pluralism in the United Kingdom than in the United States) and 'West–non-West divide' (when the internationalism of the West was pitted against the alleged nationalism of the non-West). Presently, it is anticipated that an excessive theoretical pluralism might make it difficult, if not impossible, for knowledge to accumulate in the discipline. It is, therefore, preferred to cultivate a spirit of 'integrative pluralism' that seeks to assimilate various Western–non-Western theoretical inputs as IR's substantive knowledge-base.¹⁵⁵

Keeping this spirit of integrative pluralism in mind, Global IR has amplified its theoretical mission. Along with its preliminary goal of 'bringing the non-West in', it has rigorously redirected its endeavor toward 'reconciling the West–non-West binaries'. Furthermore, this endeavor toward reconciling the West–non-West binaries is executed via multiple theoretical pathways. After a growing number of non-Western and Western scholars have begun to cooperatively explore multiple theoretical pathways for reconciling the West–non-West binaries,¹⁵⁶ it has become obvious that Global IR is a research

150. Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds', 650.

151. Audrey Alejandro, *Western Dominance in International Relations?: The Internationalisation of IR in Brazil and India* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 119.

152. *Ibid*, 182.

153. Amitav Acharya, 'Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions'. *International Studies Review* 18 (2016): 6.

154. Michael N. Barnett, 'Global IR Dialogues', 25 February 2021. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5v0PbJfjGE>.

155. Colin Wight, 'Bringing the Outside In: The Limits of Theoretical Fragmentation and Pluralism in IR Theory'. *Politics* 39, no. 1 (2019): 64–81.

156. Deepshikha Shahi and Gennaro Ascione, 'Rethinking the Absence of Post-Western International Relations Theory in India: "Advaitic Monism" as an Alternative Epistemological Resource'. *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 2 (2016): 313–34; Atsuko Watanabe and Felix Röscher, *Modern Japanese Political Thought and*

programme, not a paradigm. Unlike a Kuhnian view where ‘not all theories are paradigm theories’,¹⁵⁷ the Lakatosian research programme contains a ‘protective belt of [multiple] auxiliary theories’ with shared hard-core assumptions¹⁵⁸: here, the auxiliary theories work together to add fresh findings to the research programme, and the research programme readjusts in the light of fresh findings; however, even when the research programme readjusts, the shared hard-core assumptions of its auxiliary theories remain unchanged. Presently, the auxiliary theories of Global IR research programme share hard-core assumptions about the need to reconcile the West–non-West binaries. Thus, Global IR works as a single research programme with multiple auxiliary theories: its ‘singularity’ is reflected in the overarching framework of shared hard-core assumptions, and its ‘plurality’ flows from the multiple theoretical pathways that grow along those shared hard-core assumptions. As the Global IR research programme strives to reconcile the West–non-West binaries, it follows the tactic of ‘de-centering’ so as to surpass the geo-centric divides between somewhere/s and anywhere/s.

Global IR: A Glimpse of Somewhere? No, of Anywhere

In order to surpass the geo-centric divides between somewhere/s and anywhere/s, Global IR escapes the closed compartments of Western IR and non-Western IR by skillfully engaging with the notions of ‘synthesis’, ‘relationality’, ‘hybridity’, ‘dialectics’, ‘dialog’, ‘eclecticism’, ‘connectivities’, etc. that operate at different levels of ontology, methodology, and epistemology. When Western IR propels the visions of how the world ‘is’ or ‘ought-to-be’, thereby endorsing the perception that politics is *ontology* (‘*what exists*’),¹⁵⁹ some strands of non-Western IR (e.g. post-/decolonial IR) procure the same perception and contend that the Western ontological imaginations are disconnected from non-Western existential experiences and, thus, they cannot grasp the non-Western worlds.¹⁶⁰ Just like Western science and Western IR convey the traits of Western Christendom and Western history, non-Western IR must release its own metaphysical and historical characteristics, for example, IR with Chinese, Japanese, and East Asian characteristics. From a decolonial position, there exists a pluriversity of knowledge-forms that de-links with the two key Eurocentric narratives, that is, capitalism and communism¹⁶¹; as such, this pluriversity fortifies West–non-West divides. Given these divides, a synthesized

International Relations (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018); Hitomi Koyama and Barry Buzan, ‘Rethinking Japan in Mainstream International Relations’. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 2 (2019): 185–212.

157. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 61.
158. Imre Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), 41.
159. Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 26.
160. Sanjay Seth, *Postcolonial Theory and International Relations: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2013), 73.
161. Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), 53.

narrative offering a holistic view of IR can emerge from Edward Said's postcolonial contrapuntal reading which inserts the 'missing tales of/from the colonized' into the 'provincialized tales of/from the colonizing', thereby cementing the cracks in Western IR.¹⁶² Nevertheless, even if the post-/decolonial venture to register the missing tales forges ahead, Global IR senses that a fully relational model of the West, in which the non-West shapes and inflects the West as much as vice versa, is downplayed, thereby undermining global connectivities.¹⁶³ While the postcolonial/decolonial efforts to inculcate hybridity in Western and non-Western ontological identities remain an unfinished project,¹⁶⁴ Global IR warns that the scholarly strategy to segregate Western and non-Western ontological identities leads to ethnocentrism or self-marginalization within the Global South.¹⁶⁵

From the viewpoint of *methodology* ('*how to know what exists*'), Western IR oscillates between positivist 'methodological unity' and post-positivist 'methodological pluralism'. The positivist theories display methodological unity in pursuing Popperian science of finding 'subject-object correspondence', whereby they relate mental representations of a subject to the innate properties of an object. And the post-positivist theories, moved by Frankfurt School's criticism of Popperian disregard for social conditions under which science is formed, maintain methodological plurality in 'calibrating intersubjectivity', whereby they compare differing perspectives of the subjects with regard to an object. The positivist methodology supports deductive studies (e.g. neorealism/neoliberalism). And the post-positivist methodology promotes inductive studies (e.g. constructivism). The inductive studies – sponsored by Wendt's constructivism – nurtured diverse shades of non-Western IR: 'Japanese constructivist theory' in Japan,¹⁶⁶ 'relational theory' in China,¹⁶⁷ and 'eclectic theory' in India.¹⁶⁸ Still, Global IR laments that though constructivism, with its focus on culture and identity, conquers its initial privileging of Western norms, it ignores the issues of race and pre-Westphalian civilizations in Asia and elsewhere that might bring original insights¹⁶⁹ and foster dialectical-dialogical interactions.¹⁷⁰

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162. Raymond Duvall and Latha Varadarajan. 'Traveling in Paradox: Edward Said and Critical International Relations'. *Millennium* 36, no. 1 (2007), 83.
163. John M. Hobson and Alena Sajed, 'Navigating Beyond the Eurofetishist Frontier of Critical IR Theory: Exploring the Complex Landscapes of Non-Western Agency'. *International Studies Review* 19 (2017): 547.
164. Louiza Odysseos, 'Prolegomena to Any Future Decolonial Ethics: Coloniality, Poetics and "Being Human as Praxis"'. *Millennium* 45, no. 3 (2017): 447.
165. Amitav Acharya, 'An IR for the Global South or a Global IR?', e-IR, 2015. Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/10/21/an-ir-for-the-global-south-or-a-global-ir/>.
166. Graham G. Ong, 'Building an IR Theory With "Japanese Characteristics": Nishida Kitaro and "Emptiness"'. *Millennium* 33, no. 1 (2004): 35.
167. Qin Yaqing, *A Relational Theory of World Politics* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018), 105.
168. Deepshikha Shahi, *Kautilya and Non-Western IR Theory* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 95.
169. Acharya, 'An IR for the Global South'.
170. Lily H. M. Ling, *The Dao of World Politics: Towards a Post-Westphalian, Worldist International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 91.

Noticeably, the non-Western intervention in dialogical interactions often produces ‘sameness’: this happens when non-Western IR reads a local reality differently but squeezes its readings into the (post-)positivist modes of Western IR. In this scenario, even if non-Western IR successfully launches national IR schools, it spreads a ‘derivative discourse’ of Western IR.¹⁷¹ And if other offshoots of non-Western IR (e.g. post-/decolonial IR) reframe the ‘coloniality of IR’ as a methodological problem with a view to implant post-/decolonial thinking, they initiate an ‘exceptionalist discourse’ which breeds regional inwardness,¹⁷² thereby reproducing the very parochialism that one intends to subvert. Alternatively, Global IR skips the West–non-West bifurcation and propagates ‘methodological eclecticism’: in accordance with its urge to exploit the knowledge-forms that ‘adjoin science and spirituality’,¹⁷³ the Sufi Global IR activates the concept of *baqā’ wa fanā* (i.e. subsistence and annihilation): *baqā’* implies imperfect subsistence of the subject into the consciousness of plural world (object), and *fanā’* means annihilation of the subject by passing away into the consciousness of singular world (object). Here, ‘*baqā’* (with diversified consciousness of plural world) resembles Western IR and defends subject-object separation, and *fanā’* (with uniform consciousness of singular world) exceeds Western IR and dissolves subject-object separation. Together, *baqā’* and *fanā’* blend rationalist and reflectivist methodological options (e.g. logic, interpretation, speech, repetition, emotionalism, silence, etc.) to inspect a gamut of plural and singular forms of reality whose origins or applications cannot be restricted to a specific spatiotemporal center of situated knowledge-forms; so, the Sufi Global IR achieves a non-centric outlook¹⁷⁴.

A parallel commitment to de-center the plural threads of Western and non-Western IR is detectable at the level of *epistemology* (‘*how we know what we know of what exists*’). At first, the Western/non-Western usage of epistemological pluralism for the making of many worlds (worlding) is appreciated as a ‘healthier’ attribute of IR.¹⁷⁵ But, afterward, it is seen as a source of the problem of ‘epistemological relativism’: ‘[w]orlding entails not only processes by which the world is made intelligible and by which “we” determine who we are in relation to “others”, but also how such sense-making exercises. . .constitute the worlds that we inhabit. . .While pluralizing the discipline is highly desirable, a few dilemmas emerge. . .how to avoid falling into the spiral of epistemological relativism, how to encourage diversity along with some sense of unity. . .and how perhaps to create a middle path’.¹⁷⁶ Since Global IR traverses the thresholds of Western and non-Western worlds, it delivers a venue to crush geo-epistemological divides and carve that

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171. Ching-Chang Chen, ‘The Absence of Non-Western IR Theory in Asia Reconsidered’. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11, no. 1 (2011): 4.
 172. Yong-Soo Eun, *Going Beyond Parochialism and Fragmentation in the Study of International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2020), i.
 173. Amitav Acharya, ‘Dialogue and Discovery: In Search of International Relations Theories Beyond the West’. *Millennium* 39, no. 3 (2011): 633.
 174. Deepshikha Shahi, *Sufism: A Theoretical Intervention in Global International Relations* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020), 215.
 175. Beate Jahn, ‘Theorizing the Political Relevance of International Relations Theory’. *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2017): 72.
 176. Cristina Inoue and Arlene B. Tickner, ‘Many Worlds, Many Theories?’ *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 59, no. 2 (2016): 2.

middle path. The fervor to forego geo-epistemological divides – under the aegis of Global IR – animates both Western and non-Western worlds: scholarly attempts have been made to curtail Western-centrism by unraveling the realist avenues to Global IR¹⁷⁷ and Copenhagen school's tryst with Global IR¹⁷⁸; and to curb non-Western-centrism (or alleged nativism/ethnicism) by suggesting the ways to save national IR schools from exceptionalism.¹⁷⁹

Though these ontological-methodological-epistemological routes underline the importance of reconciling the 'West–non-West binaries' – that is, the foundational factor that characterizes Global IR research programme – they remain criticized for two supposed shortcomings. First, the Global IR research programme does not amply move beyond critique: it does not express how the alternative, subaltern knowledge-forms can improve the usual understandings of IR.¹⁸⁰ Second, the Global IR research programme does not activate the alternative knowledge-forms to fabricate a new account of globalism, a new account that more rewardingly arranges the particularist local-pictures and universalist global-pictures: since Global IR indisputably retains 'long-established globalisms', it takes no interest in subjecting the results of these globalisms to empirical scrutiny.¹⁸¹ Strikingly, the recent auxiliary theories of Global IR research programme, revolving around the idea of 'one and many', offer an innovative explanation of globalism to improve the usual understandings of IR, thereby overcoming the aforementioned shortcomings of Global IR research agenda.

Global IR: An Agenda of One or Many? No, of One and Many

The auxiliary theories of Global IR research programme, stirred by the Chinese-Indian-Japanese philosophies of 'one and many', presuppose that we concurrently live in one and many worlds; the unity of one world lies beneath the diversity of many worlds! The Tianxia IR theory based on the Chinese relatedness of *Tian* (heaven) and *xia* (under) argues that the oneness of the world, insinuated as all-under-heaven, shows itself in all its diversity. In an all-under-heaven condition, the self-existence cannot be secured at the expense of other-existence; the self- and other- (or West and non-West) existence are interdependent.¹⁸² The Advaita IR theory arising from the Indian philosophy of *Advaita* (non-duality) asserts that the world is a fusion of phenomena (world-in-appearance with

177. Michiel Foulon and Gustav Meibauer, 'Realist Avenues to Global International Relations'. *European Journal of International Relations* 26, no. 4 (2020): 1203.

178. Saloni Kapur and Simon Mabon, 'The Copenhagen School Goes Global: Scuritisation in the Non-West'. *Global Discourse* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1.

179. Xiaoting Li, 'Saving National IR from Exceptionalism: The Dialogic Spirit and Self-Reflection in Chinese IR Theory'. *International Studies Review*, 2021. doi: 10.1093/isr/viab012

180. Andrew Hurrell, 'Beyond Critique: How to Study Global IR?' *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 149.

181. Anderl and Witt, 'Problematising the Global in Global IR', 35.

182. Li, 'Saving National IR', 13.

visible distinctions) and noumena (world-in-itself with invisible oneness). The subjective many-ness of phenomena and objective oneness of noumena are not divided existential zones, but continual cognitive zones of the same time-space-indivisibility that underpins global connectedness. In this state of global (or West–non-West) connectedness, the self/other located at a passing moment does not bear permanent selfhood/otherhood. Rather, the self and other remain varyingly yet continually subsumed in each other via a third dimension, that is, noumena; thus, the self-other pluralities are to be seen as non-binary interlinked categories.¹⁸³ And Japanese IR theory, in all its miscellany, informs that there are various ways of explaining the self-other/local-global/West–non-West relations. These binary relations become political only if studied in an exact time-space juncture; it is only by accepting the unseen amorphousness of these binary relations and subtlety of our differences that we can make borders that separate us (or West and non-West) less salient and ensure that we are different and simultaneously the same.¹⁸⁴ While adding fresh clauses to Global IR research programme, these auxiliary theories supply an unorthodox (or a non-Kantian) approach to time-space. It is this unorthodox approach to time-space that permits these theories to offer an innovative explanation of globalism.

In customary (neo-)Kantian IR, time and space are treated as a priori intuitions that provide the knowledge of the world only in so far as the world is perceived as an appearance: a partition is built between phenomenal world-in-appearance and noumenal world-in-itself; and human beings are tied up to phenomenal world-in-appearance where they cannot experience an absence of time-space. It is pronounced that human beings do not *experience time-space*; rather, they *experience in time-space*; and, therefore, the time-space bounded categories of nations, cultures, regions (e.g. Global North/Global South), etc. become obligatory for assigning human identities. Against this backdrop, the globalism manifests when the time-space bounded categories of nations, cultures, regions, etc. skip the territorial trap and decode their entwined historical roles in making the anarchic/hierarchic world-system.¹⁸⁵ Here, the agenda of moving Global IR forward means ‘how to go local’, and then, ‘how to make the local global’¹⁸⁶: for example, how to read the ignored local Northern/Southern realities, and then, how to re-read these local realities as something capable of affecting the entire globe. But the problem with such a theoretical progression is this – so long as the local-global scale remains time-space bounded, the globalism is best defined as ‘compression of time-space’ or ‘annihilation of space by time’. However, this technologically mediated compression/annihilation is not enough to enable the human condition to completely break free from the territorial trap. Rather, the human condition finds itself struggling with the ‘territorial trap of the

183. Deepshikha Shahi, *Advaita as a Global International Relations Theory* (London: Routledge, 2018), 72.

184. Watanabe and Rösch, *Modern Japanese Political Thought*, 249.

185. Michael N. Barnett and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘From International Relations to Global Society’, in *Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 62–83.

186. Maiken Gelardi, ‘Moving Global IR Forward: A Road Map’. *International Studies Review* 22, no. 4 (2020): 830.

territorial trap'¹⁸⁷ – even if a state's territory (geographical area) is not taken as a political ideal, the trap of understanding territory as the 'physical substratum' of the sovereign state persists. Thus, a sort of re-territorialization transpires, whereby the Global North and Global South come 'to be seen as [time-space] bounded [categories]. . .with their own internally generated authenticities, and defined by their difference from the other places which lay outside. . .their borders'.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, 'the Kantian possibilities of knowledge are grounded on an analytic of human finitude. . .Only thinking beyond these [Kantian limits to] human condition can allow us to fully appreciate history as becoming'.¹⁸⁹ One method of thinking beyond these Kantian limits is to redefine time-space so that the phenomenal-noumenal partition is removed. And this method is made available by the auxiliary theories of Global IR research programme that approve the worldview of 'one and many'.

The Tianxia IR theory refers to the cosmic movements that unfold in the time-space between heaven and earth: the abstract forms of *bi* (round heaven) and *cong* (square earth) are deployed as ideational tools to forge links between the human and supra-human worlds, or phenomenal and noumenal worlds.¹⁹⁰ The Advaita IR theory projects time-space as compulsory means to know the phenomenal world. But it presumes that whatever is known (or not known) in the phenomenal world is a fragmented reflection of the noumenal world, an all-pervasive oneness¹⁹¹; thus, time-space acquires limitless extension across phenomenal and noumenal worlds. And the Japanese IR theory, influenced by Nishida Kitaro's spatial and temporal expressions of 'nothingness' and 'eternal present' respectively, views noumena as the unifying power of reality and phenomena as the state of conflict in reality's progress through differentiation.¹⁹² From this stance, the phenomena-noumena divide is a misrepresentation of the real unity of phenomenal and noumenal worlds. Evidently, these theories refute the Kantian limits by setting human beings free to overstep the phenomenal-time-space-matrix and to employ their scientific-spiritual skills to realize the indivisibility of 'phenomenal-territorial-self' and 'noumenal-de-territorial-self'. And to realize the indivisibility of phenomenal-territorial-self and noumenal-de-territorial-self is to realize the alternative actuality of 'perpetual globalism' – that is, the globalism that need not await a technologically mediated time-space compression/annihilation to skip the territorial trap, the globalism that knows that the territorial trap is a political trap made for governmental purposes. While this political trap imposes the binaries of here/there, before/after, etc. upon which stable governance is

187. Nisha Shah, 'The Territorial Trap of the Territorial Trap: Global Transformation and the Problem of the State's Two Territories'. *International Political Sociology* 6, no. 1 (2012): 57.

188. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 64.

189. Damian Popolo, *A New Science of International Relations: Modernity, Complexity and the Kosovo Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2016), 28–29.

190. Wang Mingming, 'All Under Heaven (Tianxia): Cosmological Perspectives and Political Ontologies in Pre-modern China'. *HAU* 2, no. 1 (2012): 337.

191. Geeta Goswami, 'Space and Time: A Comparative Study of Kant and Sankara' (PhD diss., Gauhati University, 1995), 264–5.

192. Kosuke Shimizu, 'Do Time and Language Matter in IR?: Nishida Kitaro's Non-Western Discourse of Philosophy and Politics'. *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 16, no. 1 (2018): 103.

founded, the auxiliary theories of Global IR research programme congregate to revive the innate phenomenal-noumenal expanse of human consciousness, thereby restoring an invisible (yet indubitable) connectedness between the de-territorialized self, other/s, and nature that otherwise subsist in a territorialized globe.

Practically, this perpetual globalism improves the usual understandings of IR by revisiting the particularity and universality of human subsistence in one and many worlds. The conventional (neo-)Kantian globalism, ridden with a hesitation to recognize the noumenal world, assumes that the self can conquer the separately lying other/s and nature. Here, the start with the conception of separately lying self, other/s, and nature is predisposed to deepen differences over similarities, which, in turn, is prone to provoke particularist identitarian frictions in plural monoculturalist surroundings.¹⁹³ By contrast, the perpetual globalism maintains that the start with the conception of separately lying self, other/s, and nature is a ‘no wise axiomatic’.¹⁹⁴ It, therefore, starts with the assumption that the self can merge with the other/s and nature. This assumption is more apt as it stresses the primacy of similarities over differences,¹⁹⁵ thereby mobilizing the self to reach out to the other/s and nature with an intent to align, not to conquer. The self carries the intent to align because it cannot suppress the knowledge that the phenomenal world (with visible many-ness) is correlated to the noumenal world (with invisible oneness). In this ‘one and many’ situation, the self (as subject) can never harm the other/s or nature (as object): harm only truly becomes harm if it is the result of human beings who see other/s or nature as an object to be harmed and suffer from that harm.¹⁹⁶ But if the self knows that the act of harming the other/s and nature is an act of harming the self – as in a ‘one and many’ situation, there is no rigid self-other/West–non-West separation – then the self’s genuine Global spirit comes to the surface. It is this Global spirit that calls human beings back into themselves, where they once more meet guilt about the past and anxiety about the future. Any theories of Global IR research programme that are not braced by these universalist mannerisms of the human condition are insufficient.

What is ‘Global’ in Global IR? A Reflective View

Amitav Acharya

UNESCO Chair in Transnational Challenges and Governance, American University

I do not accept global as a priori or as a given. It is not a geographic notion. Global is socially constructed. Global is what people and other actors make of it. Global is not ‘international’. Indeed, many textbooks on the subject already prefer the term ‘Global

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193. Christopher Hill, ‘Bringing War Home: Foreign Policy-Making in Multicultural Societies’. *International Relations* 21, no. 3 (2007): 263.
 194. C. Lloyd Morgan, ‘Three Aspects of Monism’. *The Monist* 4, no. 3 (1894): 321–2.
 195. Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 18.
 196. Paul Ott, ‘World and Earth: Hannah Arendt and the Human Relationship to Nature’. *Ethics, Place & Environment* 12, no. 1 (2009): 1–14.

Politics’ or ‘World Politics’ to ‘International Relations’, while others keep IR,¹⁹⁷, perhaps as a ‘heritage’ term to maintain consistency and provoke debate.

But to me a more crucial distinction is that global is not the same as ‘universal’, not at least in the Enlightenment sense. Indeed, my idea of global in Global IR was originally inspired by Robert Cox. As Cox put it, ‘In the Enlightenment meaning universal meant true for all time and space—the perspective of a homogenous reality’. Rejecting this, Cox offered an alternative conception of universalism, which rests on ‘comprehending and respecting diversity in an ever-changing world’.¹⁹⁸

In my 2014 Presidential Address to the ISA, I adapted and added to Cox’s formulations by differentiating between ‘particularistic’ (or ‘monistic’) and ‘pluralistic’ universalism.¹⁹⁹ In the latter, there is no one knowledge claim or construct that applies to all. Instead, the ‘global’ in Global IR aims not only at ‘comprehending and respecting diversity’, as Cox put it, but also searches for common ground where available.

Global in this sense may seem like an idealistic or normative project. This it certainly is. But Global IR also aspires to more analytical force. By drawing upon the cultural, political, and agentic diversity that really exist in our world, Global IR is better able to help an understanding of world politics in all its complexity and dynamism that theories derived from Europe or the United States are simply unable to comprehend or explain – such as the futility of applying EU-derived regional integration theories to study regionalism in the non-Western world – not the least because they were developed during the past centuries of Western dominance, which has dissipated in recent decades (see also the Cornelissen, this Forum).

Global IR recognizes and draws upon this pluralistic universalism. ‘There are multiple pathways to “doing” Global IR. No single way can be imposed’, as I had argued before. There is now a growing body of literature on Global IR, embracing diverse perspectives and approaches, ranging from sympathetic to friendly criticism to critical and rejectionist.²⁰⁰ Some of these approaches have developed through reflections and

197. One of the most popular texts is John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, *The Globalisation of World Politics*, 8th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). On the other hand, texts keep IR when focusing specifically on theories. See: Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, ed., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 5th ed. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020).

198. Robert W. Cox, ‘Universality in International Studies’, in *Critical Perspectives in International Studies*, eds. Michael Brecher and Frank Harvey (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 530.

199. Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds’, 651.

200. Due to lack of space, a selective listing of the variety of approaches to Global IR can be found in: Antje Wiener, *Contestation and Constitution of Norms in Global International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Karin M. Fierke and Vivienne Jabri, ‘Global Conversations: Relationality, Embodiment and Power in the Move Towards a Global IR’, *Global Constitutionalism* 8, no. 3 (2019): 506–35; Yong-Soo Eun, ‘Global IR Through Dialogue’, *The Pacific Review* 32, no. 3 (2019): 1–19; Maiken Gelardi, ‘Moving Global IR Forward: A Road Map’; Giovanni Barbieri, ‘Regionalism, Globalism and Complexity: A Stimulus Towards Global IR?’ *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 4, no. 6 (2019): 424–41; Audrey Alejandro, *Western Dominance in International Relations: The Internationalization of IR in Brazil and India* (London: Routledge, 2019); Katerina Dalacoura, ‘Global IR, Global Modernity and Civilization in Turkish Islamist Thought: A

critiques by individual scholars based in the West. Others have emerged through regional and national dialogs in Asia, in Latin America, China, Africa, and the Middle East (see also contribution by Shahi, this Forum).²⁰¹ Such varied efforts at studying and problematizing Global IR are inevitable and healthy; their common goal is to challenge and redefine the scope of traditional IR theories and narratives.

Global IR was not born in an intellectual vacuum. It carries much debt to the writings of scholars who were increasingly frustrated and dissatisfied with the way the ‘discipline’ of IR (which I call traditional IR) was operating both as an intellectual project but more importantly as a ‘disciplining’ device in suppressing the voices of scholars outside of its Western core (acknowledging there were/are many scholars in the West, with roots in non-Western countries as well as those who are originally from the West, who shared this frustration). The initial inspiration behind my own work on Global IR were a number of scholars: the most important among them being Mohammed Ayoob, Arlene Tickner, Randolph Persaud, Navnita Behera, L.H.M. Ling, and Pinar Bilgin (the last two co-chaired the ISA Convention in New Orleans in 2015 under my Presidency). The fact that they work in or originally came from the Global South is no coincidence. Barry Buzan has been a major inspiration as I begun developing the idea of Non-Western IR Theory, which fed into the Global IR idea. Later, I have been much inspired by the work of a younger generation of scholars, which includes contributors to the Roundtable at the 2021 Millennium Conference from which this Forum originates.

The influence of postcolonialism is especially important to me. But there are some differences between Global IR and Postcolonialism which should be noted. First, postcolonialism often focuses on the beginning of the European colonial period when the European powers started expanding and colonizing the rest of the world. Global IR by contrast starts from a much earlier point of history, looking at ancient civilizations and empires. A second difference is about the type of agency. Postcolonialism until recently has been really preoccupied with challenging Western dominance or dominance of

Critique of Culturalism in International Relations’, *International Politics* 58 (2021): 131–47; Thierry Balzacq, Jérémie Cornut, and Frédéric Ramel, ‘Global International Relations as Alternative to the American Mainstream: The Case of International Relations in France’, *Critique Internationale* 74, no. 1 (2017): 69–93; Morten Valbjørn, ‘Global/Regional IR and Changes in Global/Regional Structures of Middle East International Relations’, in *Pomeps Studies* 34 (2019); Pinar Bilgin, ‘A Global International Relations Take on the “Immigrant Crisis”’, *TRAFO—Blog for Transregional Research*, 2017. Available at: <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/5699>; Deepshikha Shahi, *Advaita as a Global International Relations Theory*; Anderl and Witt, ‘Problematizing the Global in Global IR’; Ersel Aydinli and Onur Erpul, ‘The False Promise of Global IR: Exposing the Paradox of Dependent Development’, *International Theory* 14 (2022): 419–459; Kamola, ‘IR, the Critic, and the World’.

201. See for example, Paul-Henri Bischoff, Kwesi Aning, and Amitav Acharya, eds., *Africa in Global International Relations: Emerging Approaches in Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2015); Yaqing Qin, ed., *Globalizing IR Theory: Critical Engagement* (London: Routledge, 2020); Amitav Acharya, Melisa Deciancio, and Diana Tussie, eds., *Latin America in Global International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022). Also interesting for its potential contribution is the newly formed Global IR Brazil Research Group, https://twitter.com/BRaS_Studies/status/1459473958298865665.

traditional IR theories. And it offered perhaps the most powerful critique of Western dominance. But in this process, it looked less at how the postcolonial states have been active agents in constructing elements of the present global order. Global IR has a much more comprehensive theory of agency: encompassing not only resistance and critique but also the proactive and positive construction of the norms and institutions of the contemporary world order.

The scope of the global in Global IR is important to clarify, since this has been misunderstood. The main elements of a Global IR approach as I saw it initially include, aside from the pluralistic universalism discussed above, drawing on world history; accepting theoretical pluralism to the extent that existing IR theories are called to account for the agency of non-Western and other marginalized actors, recognizing multiple forms of agency – material and ideational – of non-Western actors and avoiding cultural exceptionalism. A Global IR research agenda also calls on scholars to analyze changes in the distribution of power and ideas after centuries of Western imperial dominance; engage with subjects and methods that require deep and substantive integration of disciplinary and area studies knowledge; examine how ideas and norms circulate between global and local levels; and investigate the mutual learning among civilizations, rather than focus selectively on the ‘clash of civilizations’.²⁰² Of course, as I then acknowledged, this was not meant to be an exhaustive list, and not cast in stone. Other possible sources of Global IR – again not exhaustive – could be the writings of contemporary scholars (including those who do not necessarily draw on culture or history); the practices and patterns of interactions in different parts of the world, indigenous histories, classical philosophy and religious traditions, the ideas of anticolonial leaders, the writings of scholars from the Global South, the foreign policy practices of modern states, and the norms and process dynamics of regional interactions (such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations).²⁰³

The relationship between ‘global’ and ‘local’ is problematic and controversial. ‘Local’ is always an important component of the ‘global’. But Global IR is not a matter of ‘regional diversification’.²⁰⁴ While the study of regions and regionalisms is a crucial element, Global IR does consider the global and the local as mutually constitutive. As with the ‘regionalism’ versus ‘universalism’ debate about world order,²⁰⁵ ‘local’ can be a ‘building bloc, rather than stumbling bloc’, to dialogue and interaction in IR.

Following from the above, let me address two criticisms and potential dangers of Global IR’s discursive and research agenda. The first is its alleged ‘culturalism’ or civilizationalism. Global IR calls for the full recognition of hitherto marginalized or dismissed voices, which include indigenous voices within the West. To this end, it welcomes work by scholars – whether by Global North or the Global South – that draws on indigenous histories, ideas, and identities. Such work when carried out by Global South

202. Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds’.

203. Acharya and Buzan, ‘Why is there no Non-Western International Relations Theory? An Introduction’, 301–9. This essay appeared earlier, but informed the ‘Global IR’ concept.

204. Meera Sabaratnam, ‘Is IR Theory White? Racialised Subject-Positioning in Three Canonical Texts’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 49, no. 1 (2020), 5.

205. Philippe De Lombaerde, Fredrik Söderbaum, Luk Van Langenhove, and Francis Baert, ‘The Problem of Comparison in Comparative Regionalism’, in *Regionalism*, eds. Philippe De Lombaerde and Fredrik Söderbaum (London and New Delhi: SAGE, 2013), 279–303.

scholars often represents an avenue for their own intervention in IR debates, especially when they are unable to draw on Western ideas and texts (not the least because many sources are not available to them due to resource constraints), or are simply unwilling to do so because they see it as accepting Western epistemic dominance.

To be sure, there are some dangers here. Work based on indigenous history and identity, especially when it privileges certain ideas over others from the same civilizations, can end up ‘essentializing’ culture. This danger must be acknowledged by anyone who seriously considers ‘doing’ Global IR.²⁰⁶ But it should not also be exaggerated and used as an excuse for limiting the pluralization of the IR field as Global IR seeks to do. Labeling such work as ‘civilizationalist’ or ‘ethnicist’ is a fundamental mischaracterization and downgrading of work of anticolonial or Global South writers and thinkers. In reality, Global South scholars who deploy their own history and culture to engage in IR debates, remain stubbornly diverse and plural.²⁰⁷ They are arguably less civilizationalist than IR theorists – which includes the majority in the West – who overtly or implicitly draw their ideas and epistemologies from the histories and philosophies – classical or contemporary – developed in Europe/West.

Related to the above, Global IR has been on the forefront of rejecting cultural exceptionalism and parochialism (or ‘ethnicism’, or ‘civilizationalism’). As I have warned earlier, ‘Claims about exceptionalism frequently fall apart not just because of the cultural and political diversity within nations, regions, and civilizations’; such claims also ‘reflect the political agendas and purposes of the ruling elite’. Moreover,

exceptionalism often justifies the dominance of the powerful states over the weak. American exceptionalism, seemingly benign and popular at home, finds expression in the Monroe Doctrine and its self-serving global interventionism. One strand of Japan’s prewar pan-Asian discourse – founded upon the slogan of ‘Asia for Asians’ – also illustrates this tendency. Some efforts to invoke the Chinese tributary system as the basis of a new Chinese School of IR raise similar possibilities.²⁰⁸

A second criticism and risk of Global IR has to do with the fact that work by Global South scholars sometimes seem too close to official worldviews and foreign policy approaches. But this is hardly unique to the Global South. Using IR scholarship to support official policy and legitimizing regimes is also very much present in Western, including American IR community, including in the construction of Liberal Internationalism and Liberal International Order. Indeed, the revolving door between

206. Sankaran Krishna, ‘On the Pitfalls of Geo-Cultural Pluralism in IR’, *International Politics Reviews* 9 (2021), 276–9. I agree with his perspective.

207. See for example, in the context of India, Siddharth Mallavarapu, ‘Development of International Relations Theory in India: Traditions, Contemporary Perspectives and Trajectories’, *International Studies* 46, no. 1–2: 165–83. In China, many IR scholars do not draw on Chinese ideas and culture. And those who do, disagree about how to deploy cultural and historical arguments. For a discussion, see: Amitav Acharya, ‘From Heaven to Earth: “Cultural Idealism” and “Moral Realism” as Chinese Contributions to Global International Relations’, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 12, no. 4: 467–94.

208. Amitav Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds’, 651.

academics and governments is far more common in the United States than in Global South countries such as India, Indonesia or Pakistan. At the same time, not everyone in the Global South who searches indigenous pasts for ideas and concepts is serving the interest of governments. Sometimes, such history and ideas could also be used to challenge political regimes; for example, the religious tolerance of King Ashoka, which is also invoked as a basis of Indian IR theorizing, challenges the Hindu nationalist outlook of the Narendra Modi-led BJP government. There are always differences or multiple approaches in different national and regional contexts, which should be recognized and respected.

This leads to a related point. The purpose of Global IR is not about assuming, creating, or expecting a single global conversation. Global IR creates space for multiple, different, and cross-cutting conversations, even at the cost of theoretical ‘confusion’ or dilution of theoretical parsimony. While Global IR seeks some ‘common ground’ among these conversations, it does not make it a necessary condition. Distinctive, local, national, and regional dialogues also have their place in Global IR. While not without problems and limitations, they help to ensure that Global IR does not become a uniform, homogenous, essentialized, and top-down construct. This also means there would never be a single pathway to the global (see also the idea of ‘mapping’ as strategy to problematize the global by Anderl and Witt in this Forum). Against this backdrop, viewing the emergence of Chinese or other ‘schools’ of IR as a threat to ‘global modernity’ is problematic. The very notion of a ‘global modernity’ is deeply embedded in Western imperialism and dominance.

‘Global’ in global IR from my own perspective argues that the ideas and institutions of non-Western societies deserve to be studied on their own terms. This conception of global accepts and encourages comparative work involving societies and its relationship with a still West-dominated IR theory. But there is no reason why such work must conform to some arbitrary notion of ‘modernity’. Global modernity should not become a pretext for reaffirming a singular Western-dominated idea of ‘modernity’ while rejecting or marginalizing the ideas and voices of societies and scholars from the non-Western world. As far as Global IR is concerned, instead of such Europe-derived global modernity, it embraces what Eisenstadt among others has called ‘multiple modernities’.²⁰⁹

Moving to a different point about ‘going global’ in IR, it does not require rejecting existing theories out of hand, which is often the stated or unstated goal of other critical theories. Global IR as Shahi notes in this Forum, has emerged, and is better viewed, as a research agenda – a viable and expanding one – rather than as a new theory. Global IR is also a dialogue between different theories and approaches. It is not a conversation among the like-minded, but across theoretical and epistemological divides that often talk past, rather than talk to, each other. This is also an important part of being inclusive. One reason for this approach to global is that IR theories vary considerably in accepting diversity

209. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ‘Multiple Modernities’, *Daedalus* 129, no.1 (2000): 1–29; Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Multiple Modernities as Limits to Secular Europeanization?’, in *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, eds. Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–33.

and inclusion. Moreover, they are not unchanging. Some so-called ‘mainstream’ theorists have adapted to the global shift in power and ideas, while others have remained resistant. Moreover, those who interrogate Global South scholarship that does not conform to their expectations or liking should realize that the latter is hardly homogenous. IR scholars, not just within the Global South as a whole but also within regions and countries are remarkably diverse in their theoretical orientation. One can find strands of realism, liberalism, constructivism, feminism, and postcolonialism within countries and regions of the Global South. Telling or expecting all of the Global South to conform to a singular postcolonial or decolonial turn or else risk the intellectual opprobrium of the latter would not only essentialize the very idea of Global South, but also constitute another form of arrogant intellectual gatekeeping.

Concluding Thoughts

The creation of a Global IR Section within ISA in 2022 with support from over 500 scholars from 55 countries,²¹⁰ including many from the Global North, shows that Global IR is filling a gap in IR’s ongoing and often stunted efforts at intellectual broadening and inclusion. The distinctive contribution of Global IR has been well summarized by Loke and Owen, who note:

Global IR. . . has become an effective discursive tool to critique the (re)production of Western-centric knowledge, creating greater consciousness about Western privilege, historical specificity and non-Western agency. It has also facilitated the growth of non-Western-centric theorizing. . . accelerating the diversification of the discipline. Overall, Global IR has enabled greater interrogation of context and complexity in IR knowledge production, beyond conventional conceptions of a dominant West and subordinate non-West.²¹¹

This goes into the heart of the rationale and purpose of Global IR, which especially aims to contribute toward ‘accelerating’ IR’s ‘diversification’ and ‘integration’.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that Global IR has emerged and will continue to evolve not with a big bang, but in a thousand small steps. Global IR is not a top-down vision commanded by some guru of IR theory as with the development of other theories like realism, liberalism, constructivism, and some critical theories. Rather, global in Global IR is evolving organically through bottom-up construction, feeding on dissent by scholars from around the world who find themselves excluded and alienated by the current dominance of a handful of scholars from a handful of powerful countries.

There are already differences of views over Global IR’s theoretical potential. Some see Global IR more as a theory than I did, although their challenge has led me to rethinking my position and into accepting that Global IR is at least a research program. While Global IR may not have been cast as a theory in itself (that’s just me), this does not mean

210. ISA Global IR Section Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 1 (2022), 1.

211. Beverly Loke and Catherine Owen, ‘Mapping Practices and Spatiality in IR Knowledge Production: From Detachment to Emancipation’, *European Journal of International Relations* 28, no.1 (2021), 5.

it cannot be ‘theory incubating’ or trigger theoretical work. At the same time, the idea of Global IR seems to now come to such a stage that one might expect the emergence of different versions of it. For example, the idea of Global IR not displacing existing theories but challenging them to account for the voices and agency of non-Western actors and ideas may be contested by those who seek a more fundamental break, or ‘rebooting’ of the discipline. Moreover, it is inevitable if not intellectually justifiable that work labeled Global IR or ‘global IR’ would emerge in the West without necessarily acknowledging the prior contributions of non-Western scholars. Global IR is likely to attract many competing claims of parenthood, and some intellectual paternity suits.

Finally, the terms ‘global’ and Global IR are always going to be contested: your version of what are global or Global IR might differ from mine. Since when have IR scholars agreed on the meaning and scope of core concepts? One’s version of Global IR would be challenged by others, often, based on their pre-existing or preferred theoretical predispositions. This is both inevitable and welcome. Embracing this diversity of perspectives to encourage debate and advance in the hitherto stiflingly Eurocentric and American-centric field is the true essence of Global IR. But those who seek to broaden the IR field should be less engaged in turf battles and more positively predisposed to a whole range of approaches that constitute the idea of global in Global IR. Otherwise, IR is doomed to remain mired by the narrow and oppressive confines of its current Western dominance. That IR is worth exiting.


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ORCID iD

Felix Anderl  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3536-8898>