Thinking International Relations Differently

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1 Introduction
Thinking difference

Arlene B. Tickner and David L. Blaney

A host of voices has risen to challenge Western or core dominance of the field of International Relations (IR). Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan’s (2007: 288) assertion that it is principally “produced by and for the West” is typical of this discontent (see also Ikeda 2010; Mgonja and Makombe 2009; Qin 2007), as is swelling critique of IR’s colonial character (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Jones 2006; Shilliam 2011). That the field is indifferent to scholarly practices and policy issues outside the core and even dismissive of them, and that its primary conceptual tools, analytical categories, and concepts are ill-equipped for understanding many of today’s key global problems, is disputed by shockingly few scholars, even those that represent the “mainstream.” And yet, the core-periphery structure that governs the apparatus of intellectual production in IR has proven relatively immune to these charges (Tickner 2003; Tickner and Waever 2009a).

Such concerns have motivated recent efforts to create recognition for contributions from the non-core as legitimate sources of IR knowledge. Much of the literature that purports to deal with International Relations elsewhere than in the United States and Europe is authored by Western, core scholars or, in rare cases, non-core scholars residing and working in the core. However, attempts to correct this imbalance, making strides towards expanding the discipline’s geographical boundaries by showcasing academic production and activity in distinct parts of the globe, are slowly gaining speed. A comprehensive study led by Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Waever (2009a), *International Relations Scholarship around the World*, and like-minded works by Acharya and Buzan (2007, 2010), Branwen Gruffydd Jones (2006a), and Robbie Shilliam (2011), bring to light scholarship not just about the non-core but actually produced by academics from or located in it.1 Notwithstanding key differences and limitations, all of these share a concern for the development of IR theory, widely understood (Acharya and Buzan 2007: 292) in the non-West and non-core and the potential of local knowledges to become a general framework for analyzing global problems.

The “geocultural epistemologies and IR” project, launched in 2004, was premised too on the idea that presenting studies authored by a wider array of academics located in diverse countries and regions would both expose the
On difference and power in IR

Much of the work done to recover a voice beyond the West is premised on the assumption that academic analyses of world affairs outside the United States and Europe are “different” and that exposing and interrogating such difference constitutes an important step towards a more inclusive and healthy discipline that is also true to its international name. The distinct nature of the global challenges faced by non-Western countries, the varied social conditions under which scholarship takes place, and lived experience itself figure most prominently in explaining the potential fruits of greater pluralism (Acharya and Buzan 2007, 2010; Tickner and Waever 2009a).

The promise of such projects to pluralize or democratize IR seems great. John Agnew (2007) suggests a “geography of knowledge” to reveal the way particular countries and regions claim to produce a “singular” understanding of the world that excludes other “bases of knowing.” In consequence, if the story of modernity as European were retold instead as a hegemonic project, this would potentially open space for alternative histories (Halperin 2006: 57–8; see also Harding 2008). Attention to narratives emerging from areas beyond Europe and North America would similarly suggest alternative understandings of key analytical concepts of world politics and new bases for world order (Chekuri and Mutpadi 2003; Saurin 2006: 25–6). Hence, instead of dividing “up the world into a series of discrete spaces and locating the causes of events and processes in one site or another,” we might also consider adopting a more global view based on an understanding of the “mutually constitutive character of world politics” (Barkawi and Laffey 2006: 348; see also Grovogui this volume). Whether revealing one world or many, our point is that exposing the provincialism of (Western) IR undercuts its hegemony and opens space for a plurality of views.

Not enough difference?

Although the underlying rationale of the earlier volume, *International Relations Scholarship*, was based to a large degree on a similar hunch, the global tour conducted in that book highlighted the need to refine and qualify the promise of alternative conceptions and histories. Throughout the world the discipline shares a surprising number of common traits that could hardly be considered “alternative.” Globally, IR tends to be state-centric, emphasizes security concerns, lacks normative theory or attempts at theorization in general, and largely follows state cues, especially related to foreign policy (even though its influence over the state is usually minimal). Although International Relations is arguably different in distinct places, its difference does not reflect what we might have originally expected in terms of variation and “local” flavor. In *International Relations Scholarship* this led Tickner and Waever (2009b: 338) to conclude that the “[p]revailant notion that non-core, non-Western readings of International Relations are essentially ‘different’ needs to be thought through.”

This finding was somewhat unexpected and a bit disappointing, at least for some of us, given that the aforementioned volume was conceived largely with the hope that more distinctive visions of the world would emerge. Though the present book continues the examination of what IR as a field of study does around the world, emphasizing in this case scholarly production outside the core on key concepts, we mean to proceed with greater caution and more insight about the nature of difference within and beyond IR. In particular, three observations on the finding of limited difference in the previous volume inform this one.

First, it is to be expected that certain disciplinary mechanisms work against diversity. Edward Said (1983a: 141–2) points to the “role of social convention,” “rules of accreditation,” “techniques of analysis, disciplinary attitudes and commonly held views” that construct disciplines as relatively closed spaces. The danger, Said (1983a: 143) warns, is that disciplines slide into a “quasi-religious,” “universalizing habit.” IR is particularly prone to
this risk since it claims to speak about the world. As Agnew (2007: 139) puts it, the “typical positivism” of IR presumes “conceptions of knowledge that implicitly or explicitly assume their own self-evident universality,” and thus appear as the result of “an evolutionary competition based around the professionalization of knowledge accumulation in universities and research institutes.” In this context, a “sociology of knowledge” is hardly relevant, even less so a “geography of knowledge,” given that a global “marketplace of ideas” is seen to produce, eventually at least, a convergence of disciplinary practice and knowledge around the world.

Conversely, knowledge production that steps beyond or challenges these boundaries is placed outside the pale of acceptable scholarship. As Patrick Thaddeus Jackson (2011: 188–91) has observed, the exclusionary move is normally made in the name of “science,” uttered in almost religious tones. To extend the argument, that which is “too different” is coded as “un-scientific” or ideological. The reception of Latin American dependency theory in the U.S. academy is a case in point. Work on dependency was treated either as empirically inadequate (subject to improvement by core scholars with better scientific credentials) or stereotyped as irredeemably political (Blaney and Inayatullah 2008: 664–7; Cardoso 1977). A similar fate greeted African theorists of underdevelopment who challenged North American and European accounts of the global order (see Grovogui this volume). Past experience thus operates as a warning to others of the need to “fit in” if they are to be considered “serious” scholars. As Chen (2011: 12) suggests, not being different can be a “self-empowering” strategy too.

Second, the globally state-centric character of IR should not surprise us. The state remains the nearly singular legitimate form of political organization worldwide and much IR production globally is linked to it via factors such as obedience to state directives for knowledge production and attempts to mirror its foreign policy needs (Tickner and Waever 2009b). Although true that the state model proffered by traditional IR theories may not adhere especially well in non-core settings (see Ayoob 1995; and chapters on the state in this volume), even if we assume that it does in the core, the centrality of this actor in everyday political life and the social sciences throughout the globe makes state-centric readings of international relations especially appealing. This tendency may reinforce the dominance of (Western) IR in understanding the shape of world politics (see Mallavarapu this volume; Walker 2010). As Rob Walker (1993) argues, IR turns on a particular understanding of political space: a settled political community on the one side; a dangerous international space beyond states. Thus, IR is not simply a description of state practices that may or may not be universal; it is a project connected to a particular political imagination of the world as states.

Third, it is worth reiterating the recurrent lament about the dominance of U.S. IR (Breuning et al. 2005; Crawford and Jarvis 2001; Hoffmann 1977; Smith 2000; Waever 1998), but there are limits to this claim. In qualifying the argument about the intellectual hegemony of the United States our intention is not to step back from the point that disciplinary power operates spatially. Along with Agnew (2007: 139), we believe that “what knowledge becomes ‘normalized’ or dominant has something to do with who is doing the proposing and where they are located.” The sheer muscle of the academic community in U.S. IR, as measured in numbers of scholars, Ph.D. programs, conferences and publications is palpable (Biersteker 2009). Not only does size matter in a numeric sense, but education and publication venues also constitute an important source of influence to the degree that many scholars living and working outside the United States receive their degrees there and seek to publish in English-language journals, which are largely what “count” in terms of scholarly recognition in IR worldwide (Tickner and Waever 2009b).

However, the reach of “American” intellectual production in IR is limited by its own parochialism. As Thomas Biersteker (2009) shows, the United States constitutes an extreme case of parochialism, even more so today than it did 25 years ago when Biersteker and Hayward Alker (1984) wrote their famous article on the subject. Parochialism is apparent not only in excessive reliance on English-language texts, American (male) scholars, and global issues of mainly U.S. concern, but more significantly in the dominance of “rationalist” meta-theoretical models (Biersteker 2009). According to authors such as Waever (1998), and Wayne Cox and Kim Richard Nossal (2009), this latter factor in particular has undermined U.S. IR’s global influence. Admittedly, domination is still exercised via the analytical categories used in other parts of the world, among which the state and security figure prominently, as this very book attests. But theories themselves are employed in a piecemeal and amalgamous fashion through which they are “vernacularized,” diluting their power-potential considerably (Tickner and Waever 2009b). Therefore, IR scholarly communities outside the core may in many ways be relatively independent and operate more or less as a result of local conditions and needs, largely related to the foreign policies of their respective states more than relations with the core.

Signs of awareness concerning decline in the dominance of U.S. IR are increasingly visible. At the 2011 meeting of the International Studies Association (ISA) in Montreal, for example, Amitav Acharya organized a fascinating roundtable, “Why is IR a Decreasingly American Social Science?” in which a number of comments echoed this intuition. Pinar Bilgin, a contributor to this volume and an invaluable member of our larger project, noted that there may be an underlying connection between waning U.S. influence in the field, the hunt for “other” readings of international relations and recent growth in “national” schools of IR. In particular, we might point to recent interest in identifying a Chinese school of IR (Liu in this volume; Qin 2007; Wang 2009), that in turn reflects mounting confidence of China and Chinese scholars relative to the United States. Though undoubtedly an important trend in the global field of IR scholarship, new nationally marked schools such as this one often feel the need to reference U.S. or English-language
scholarship in order to gain legitimacy both locally and internationally. This suggests to us that IR’s social power may be reinforced not through direct replication but to the degree that “authoritative” texts and authors are invoked, thus shaping (at least in part) the identity and possibilities of local variants. Therefore, steps made to pluralize the field might actually be a means to shore up the declining hegemony of IR itself, as inferred by critical scholar James Mittelman at the same roundtable.

It is notable that we have slipped into talking about the United States as if it were the West and as if U.S. IR were homogeneous. We noted above that much ink has been split counterpoising “American” IR against European alternatives. Recently, Benjamin Cohen (2008) staged the same debate among international political economists in the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Notwithstanding significant differences between these academies, it is essential not to over-state the uniformity of scholarly practice in the United States as if there were a single “national” school of thought (Blaney 2008), or to confuse the pluralization of the discipline within the Western core with welcoming voices from the non-core into the conversation. In short, a critical European stance does not necessarily open IR to peripheral readings of the global order (Chen 2011; Hobson 2007; Holden 2002).

The problem of seeing difference

We now find the results of International Relations Scholarship in this ongoing exercise in “revealing” difference somewhat disappointing. The ending statement of the book that, even though it looks basically the same outside the West, “[r]eal existing IR in non-privileged parts of the world is a purposeful, meaningful and socially relevant activity, only under conditions different from those in the core” (Tickner and Waver 2009b: 339) seems in retrospect incomplete.

A potentially more helpful attempt to speak about limited geocultural difference is offered by Bilgin. She invokes Homi Bhabha in arguing that given inevitable processes of Westernization, “the effects of the historical relationship between the ‘West’ and the ‘non-West’ in the emergence of thinking and doing that are ‘almost the same but not quite’ should be examined” (2008: 6). In other words, although it is possible that “what” non-core scholars say—even “mimicry”—seems strangely familiar and thus uninteresting to critical Western scholarship, the study of “how” Western concepts and categories are adopted and “why” is a meaningful exercise. In her chapter for this volume on security studies in the Arab world and Turkey, Bilgin does exactly this by showing that “difference” adopts distinct forms in both locales, given the political and scholarly contexts that are prevalent in each. For her, exploring how IR is “differently different” constitutes a crucial step in understanding and dialoguing with the discipline outside the core.

Bilgin implicitly gestures towards the notion of hybridity and indeed the implications of invoking the term seem worth exploring. As Cheah (1998: 292–4) argues, hybridity points simultaneously to the “factual universality” of a global project and to its incomplete realization in local areas, where universalizing ambitions are infected with autochthonous elements. Hybrid space is always contested—a push and pull between uniformity and difference. In this respect, hybridity might be celebrated in that it preserves diversity in the face of homogenizing practices. To wit, Walter Mignolo’s idea of “border thinking” points to rather expansive possibilities. For this author (Mignolo 2000: 722–5), modernity’s “global designs” for salvation or emancipation are conjoined with “local histories” of reception and resistance that create hybrid spaces of “border thinking.” It is in these subaltern spaces where the fruits of modernity are both demanded and resisted that creative, alternative, cosmopolitan projects emerge.

It is worth noting that such zones of resistance or critical cosmopolitan projects are unlikely to be received sympathetically. One of the obvious dangers is that these “differently different” differences can easily be dismissed as “mimicry” and thus coded as a “bad” or second-class version of “good” and “serious” core scholarship. However, we believe it is worthwhile to begin to discern and value even the subtle differences offered by International Relations scholars around the world. This appreciation requires exercising a geocultural sensibility that avoids the imperative to translate hybrid forms into inferior or immature work. International Relations Scholarship and this book are in part attempts to engage this kind of “similar but not quite” evidenced by IR around the world.

A less sanguine reading of hybridity is possible, however. Relations of power are executed within fields of study such as IR by means of an intellectual division of labor that largely mirrors that of global capitalism (Grosfoguel 2002: 208; Mignolo 1998: 47). Born out of modern imperialism and colonialism, and perfected after World War II in correlation with the social construction of the first, second, and third worlds, the first world, North or core has been construed as the primary producer of “finished goods” or scientific theory, while third world, Southern or non-core academics are deemed incapable of theoretically-based thinking and thus specialise in the production of “raw materials.” Therefore, local third world sites are generally considered as sources of “data” or in the best of cases, local expertise, while interpretation—a decisive stage in theory-building—is concentrated in the North, where knowledge is produced and circulated in order to be consumed worldwide (Harding 1998, 2008; Nabudere 2005).

Tickner and Waver (2009b: 333) assert that non-Western variants of IR occupy a distinct role too in the division of labor and therefore perform different functions. Namely, scholarly communities outside the core operate largely in the shadow of an already-existing IR dominated by the West that occupies the top of the disciplinary ladder in terms of the creation of academic standards of regulation of scholarly work, including but not limited to theorization. This idea is echoed on a macro-level by Acharya and Buzan (2007, 2010), who blame Western hegemony for blocking local theory
building, even though the mechanics involved are somewhat sketchy. The
fact that we find efforts to create local schools of IR thought only in those
countries that exercise substantial or rising international influence, i.e.,
China and Russia (and to a lesser extent, Japan), seems to support this view.

The discipline’s division of labor between diverse locations might also be
understood in analogy with the role of area studies. More precisely, it
may well be that non-Western, local, or national variants are to global IR
what area studies are to traditional disciplines (Cheah 2000: 8–9). For
Cheah, area studies differ from disciplines in several ways that reinforce
their epistemological inferiority: they are involved in empirical description
and not theory-building; they derive their theoretical frameworks and
framing questions from the disciplines, albeit creatively; and they answer to
the “particular” instead of the “universal,” given their rootedness in local
experience. The shape adopted by IR around the world largely mirrors these
same characteristics. As we report later in this introduction and was found
in International Relations Scholarship, much of non-core IR tends to be
descriptions of local or regional events and problems instead of theory
(or conceptualization of the world). At best, it serves as “native informant”
for the grand narrative constructed by theorists of the core. At worst, it
is regarded as irrelevant to producing IR knowledge. In other words,
although we take seriously Bilgin’s call to attend to scholarship similar but
not quite, we also want to emphasize that the differences offered by non-core
hybridity may reflect a scholarly division of labor that is hard to describe as
anything but neo-colonial.

Navigating the universal and the particular in IR

In the middle of work on this book, we received two insightful commentaries on International Relations Scholarship that began to pull us in separa
tate but complementary directions. One calls for resisting the tendency to
pit the particularity of non-core IR scholarship against a more universal
(Western) IR, while the other challenges the relevance of the discipline
itself. Together, they have helped us to rethink the meaning of difference
both within and beyond IR.

First, in an email dated October 21, 2010, Beirut-based scholar Inanna
Hamati-Ataya gently protested the treatment of non-Western scholars as
representative of the non-West or some other, narrower, geocultural space.
She wrote:

I would like to urge you, in the following volumes of this series, to give
a voice to those non-Western scholars whose “identity” is not revealed in
the “identity” of their subject-matter, but rather in the underlying—
and perhaps imperceptible—perspective that motivates their scholarly
production. “Western” IR does not necessarily talk, write, or comment
about “Western international relations.” It simply produces a knowledge

Along with Cheah (2000) and Grovoglu (this volume), we have begun to
think about the way the global scholarly division of labor not only creates
peripheral sites of production but also constitutes them as particular
in relation to the ostensive universality of (Western) IR. That is, even though
we see our task as partly to provincialize IR, we are wary of the dangers of
provincializing non-Western scholars who represent not just their countries
or regions but also share in the project of imagining the world.

Second, a recent book by Nayak and Selbin (2010) positively invokes
International Relations Scholarship, but also challenges critical work that
continues to center on or within IR. Tickner and Wæver (2009a), to quote
the authors (Nayak and Selbin 2010: 2), focus on IR “as a body of knowl-
edge and set of discourses, as a discipline/field of study in which we partici-
pate as scholars, theorists and students, and as a field of ‘practical’ political
decisions and structures.” However, by beginning with “the story of IR,”
these and other critical thinkers inadvertently reproduce the centrality of the
U.S./North American discipline (Nayak and Selbin 2010: 4–8). The authors,
in contrast, call for a decentering of IR. Though they use language such as
“interrogating,” “disturbing,” and “mocking,” they concede that decenter-
ing also entails “engaging” and “reframing” (Nayak and Selbin 2010: 8). If
part of their quest entails, as ours does, asking “how scholars activists,
practitioners, and theorists in multiple locations both critique and use ...
[recognizable] concepts to do IR in a different way,” it also requires
exploring “other places to start” that may no longer be enclosable within IR
(Nayak and Selbin 2010: 9).

At first glance, the two commentaries seem to suggest divergent strategies.
Hamati-Ataya pushes for an expanded politics of recognition within IR by
claiming that the core-periphery critical depiction of the discipline, though
not without merit, should avoid becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy for
scholars outside of the Western core. Redress of this global division of labor
requires not only greater resources for university and think-tank systems and
a more a pluralistic disciplinary sensibility (see Jackson 2011: Chapter 7),
but also resistance to a representation of non-core scholars as embodiments of
a particularized identity and consequent second-class citizenship. The
vision is of a more inclusive IR. Nayak and Selbin seem to lead us away
from IR altogether as an arbiter of global political imagination. The argu-
ment here is for a more diverse, even epistemologically unruly and politically
charged arena of debate about the state of the world and its future. In such a scenario, International Relations is only one guest at the dinner table and perhaps not a favored one, meaning that the burden falls not only on those beyond IR to justify their place in a global discussion but on those within it too (Chen 2011: 18).

These ostensibly opposite visions might converge, nonetheless. Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) argue that the search for the “other” beyond IR is also a search for the repressed “other” within. It is not simply that the world needs a broader range of vision than that allowed by a provincial (Western) IR, though this is certainly true. Indeed, (Western) IR privileges itself by policing boundaries that restrict what counts as legitimate knowledge, and in so doing, repress difference both inside and outside the West (see also the chapters by Sheik and Waver, Kamola, and Grovogui in this volume). Therefore, International Relations itself needs the “others” within that it has repressed—that it has declared beyond the pale of science and civilization—to heal itself. This formulation begins to shift our spatial coordinates in a fundamental way. The West also exists in the “other” (as Hamati-Ataya emphasizes), just as the non-West is also within. And, by extension, IR may find its “other” within and not only beyond. If so, the decentering promoted by Nayak and Selbin might begin with an attempt to locate the “repressed other” within the field, to claim the post-hegemonic or post-imperial resources within (Western) IR that allow us simultaneously to engage and be engaged by the “other” beyond. That is, the tough conversation about world politics that authors such as these call for must occur both within and beyond IR simultaneously.

The red flags have now gone up. Epistemological unruliness and political charge surely threaten the order of IR with that perpetual danger—anarchy. Without settled rules and norms, science and civilization are not possible, which means, in this case, the conventions of (Western) IR. Of course, adopting such a relativist position is tantamount to disavowing any particular order as universal. Although our sense is that we cannot give up on universalism so readily, skepticism of post-Enlightenment or post-modern critiques of this idea should not be mistaken for a defense of scientific positivism or liberal global governance (in its more Lockean or Kantian versions) either. We agree with Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 255) that universalists play a necessary role in discussions of liberation and social justice in human society, but we share this author’s concern with their duality: although their appropriation is potentially empowering they have also been deployed to legitimate domination and “produce forms of thought that ultimately evacuate the place of the local.”

A discussion of difference must take claims to universality very seriously. To propose that the modern/colonial world, to follow Mignolo’s (2000) designation, actively suppresses alternative views and visions whose richness might be recovered, is not to descend into a spiral of epistemological relativism, but to convict a false claimant to the throne of universalism. For Mignolo, occupying this global/local space of both recovery and resistance does not translate into privileging local histories but invoking a critical cosmopolitanism. Similarly, Cheah (2000) stresses that insisting on the presence of an alternative is neither to negate the universal nor vindicate the relative or the local. Rather it is to defend the idea that the non-West is “part of the universal” and “not just as a check to a pre-formulated universal, but as something that actively shares and partakes of the universal in a specific way” (2000: 22). In other words, difference is always a particular engagement with the universal.3

Sandra Harding (1998, 2008) and Enrique Dussel (2009) make this argument more expansively. Both authors remind us that human thought, wherever it has flourished, has necessarily engaged universal problems of the nature of reality and human community. Recognizing this fact leads us precisely to challenge the modern Western claim to embody an “exclusive” universality. Instead, we are led to acknowledge it in all particular efforts to grapple with “problems that are ultimately human and thus universal in character” (Dussel 2009: 510). As a result, Dussel (2009: 512, 514) calls for “a complete reformulation of the history of philosophy,” involving a story of multiple traditions, as a necessary step towards a global dialogue that justifies the moniker “universal,” though he prefers to speak of this as a “trans-modern pluriverse.” In keeping with Dussel’s wariness of the term, given its “historically and conceptually misleading” nature, Harding (1998: 182) proposes that claims to knowledge be located on a continuum of two poles, local and global, with the “universality ideal” being thrown out altogether. For her, strengthening our understanding of the world entails both debunking Western science’s purported exceptionalism and using feminist and postcolonial standpoints to provide more expansive standards of knowing based upon the lives of marginalized peoples (Harding 1998: 18–19).

Our point is that an engagement with difference does not relativism make, nor does it leave us with only a cacophony of particularized voices. Rather, it places us back in a world or, at least, multiple worlds in dialogue. But what “universal” status the world entails is much debated. Some, like Andrew Linklater (2010: 10–12), propose a more conventional notion—an inclusive and ethically encompassing theory and practice of international society. We might instead imagine a world of worlds that reflects Dussel’s “trans-modern pluriverse”—a kind of cosmopolitanism in which diversity flourishes.4

Structure and rationale

Building on the aforementioned discussion, in this book we begin to explore what it means to be “different” in a way that transcends International Relations Scholarship by examining both key concepts and categories are conceived in distinct geocultural settings in which IR knowledge is produced, and what these concepts might look like when explored at the boundaries of and beyond the field. These include security, authority and
the state, globalization, secularism and religion, and the "international." Although our instructions to contributors centered on International Relations as a discipline (as will be explained subsequently) our search for authors led us increasingly to scholarly production in particular countries or regions that speak from a distinct place, and one not fully encompassed by it. By asking how these concepts are experienced and problematized in distinct locales, IR becomes a secondary or at best competing consideration. As they blur the lines between an examination of difference within and beyond the discipline, the chapters themselves thus move us into the terrain of decentering.

The basic rationale of this volume, then, is that it is not only insufficient but potentially harmful and ironically Western-centric to argue that core concepts "don't fit" in non-core settings and replacements that work better "there" must be found. This idea, salient in a considerable portion of the literature on IR and the third world, risks portraying the "non-West" exclusively in terms of "particularities" and "experiences" that are contrasted to the Western concepts (that don't fit). As we argued above, this simply reinforces the notion that only Westerners conceptualize and are capable of "universal" thought. Non-Westerners remain defined in purely negative terms as non-universal, unique, or worse as perverse. Therefore, we feel that a more fitting and significant question to be addressed is "how do concepts get rearticulated in different parts of the world?" Undoubtedly, certain concepts are Eurocentric ("sovereignty") or U.S.-defined ("national security") in their roots, but they have been reworked in different ways in distinct places, thus acquiring varied meanings.

Everything gets inflected locally. As argued by authors such as Edward Said (1983b), Pierre Bourdieu (1999), and Arjun Appadurai (1996), knowledge changes as it travels to different places, mainly because it circulates divorced from the respective social context from which it originally originated. Theory is always a response, therefore, to specific social and historical situations. In today's global order, characterized by more complex and accelerated patterns of exchange, ideas mutate and feed into each other in even more challenging ways. There is neither a stable constellation of theories that simply "exist" (in abstraction or just in the core) and are responded to (in the non-core), nor can this situation be captured solely by a picture of local, independent realities. Rather, the distinct inflections of theories that connect and interact have to be understood in some intermediate manner that considers both local and global factors.

Our purpose in this book is twofold. Similar to the case of International Relations Scholarship, which offers a mapping of IR and an overview of its development in different portions of the globe, we hope to illustrate the field's diversity and variation. However, instead of the strict and comprehensive geographic format adopted in the previous volume, here we adopt a thematic structure, in which four concepts or conceptual bundles (security, the state, authority and sovereignty, globalization, and secularism and religion), chosen with the purpose of providing wide coverage across political, economic, military, cultural and religious concerns, are examined in chapters written from different parts of the world or with different parts of the world in mind. Although it would be impossible to aim at total coverage for each, we have attempted to select structurally different situations that shed light on distinct ways of looking at the same concept and the factors accounting for such variance. In addition to the four conceptual bundles, the book includes an "open" section in which authors write about the "international," an idea that is central to discourses about world politics but that comes out in given places as something the IR discipline might never have considered important.

Our second aim is to delve further into the contributions and conceptualizations that emerge in different parts of the world about world politics. Therefore, the volume is meant to make significant progress in bringing to light non-Western thinking and to force an expansion or decentering of the definition of IR, as Nayak and Selbin (2010) suggest. This links closely to the main concern of our forthcoming book, Claiming the International, the last of a trilogy originally envisioned with Ole Wæver, which will explore the role of the dominant Western discipline of IR as a set of boundary-drawing practices informing a particular mode of worlding and analyze promoting alternative avenues for claiming the world that transgress the boundary-drawing practices of IR in its more conventional forms.

The case studies

Each of the chapters in this book addresses three types of questions: What does "x" look like in "y" part of the world? Why? And what are the implications of this particular way of thinking about "x" for the global IR discipline or the study of world politics? Our goal here is not to summarize the contents of the fourteen case studies, as their diversity and analytical depth make this an impossible feat. Instead, we give an initial reading of the chapters organized in both conceptual clusters and themes that cross-cut them. In particular, we highlight a number of recurring ideas posed by the contributors that strike us as especially pertinent to the objectives of our project. Other readers, based upon their own knowledge and experience, will undoubtedly identify other trends and points of interest that we have either overlooked or decided to skip over.

What does "x" concept look like in particular geocultural and academic settings?

The common ground for the contributions to this volume is the question "What does thinking on key IR concepts and categories look like in different parts of the world?" However, the ways in which each author conducts this inquiry is quite wide-ranging, ensuring a plurality of approaches and
perspectives that will hopefully provide ideas and incentives for others attracted to similar endeavors. The range of disciplines from which the chapters develop their analyses constitutes another form of diversity that distinguishes this volume from International Relations Scholarship. Whereas this book is largely situated within the disciplinary boundaries of IR, mainly because its key concern is with interrogating the state of the field in distinct locales, our central objective here is to look at bundles of concepts and categories that have been crucial not only to International Relations but also to other areas of the social sciences and perhaps beyond. Moreover, what many of the chapters show is that pushing beyond the frontiers of IR sometimes lends itself to more innovative and creative thinking about many of these concepts.

Each case study offers a survey of the academic literature that exists on security, the state, authority and sovereignty, globalization, secularism and religion, and the "international" in distinct countries and regions. In itself, we consider these fourteen snapshots of scholarly production invaluable, given the limited familiarity of most scholars and students of international relations with knowledge produced outside the Western core. Although all of the authors illustrate quite forcefully how "pure" or "unadulterated" (Western) IR concepts do not correspond with many local realities, the case studies' main task is to trace how they are adapted and problematized in distinct geocultural settings. Even in the case of security, the "hard-core" of traditional approaches to IR in which one might expect to find the least amount of variation, the four chapters on China, Europe, Latin America, and Turkey and the Arab world, all point to the context-boundedness of local thinking. Admittedly, the ways in which countries experience specific problems (such as security) explains to a certain degree how scholarship evolves. However, as Pinar Bilgin's comparison of Turkey and the Arab world suggests, fairly similar experiences can also lead to distinct readings of the same issue, highlighting the importance of sociology of knowledge or geocultural epistemology based explanations (as suggested by the second question posed to our contributors, "why is this the case?").

By exploring the five concepts mentioned in a single publication the case studies provide a dual comparative set-up: both thematic and geocultural. Therefore, the book transcends the study of each individual conceptual package and progresses to a more general understanding of the formation of different types of knowledge of "the international" in diverse parts of the world.

First and most simply, we spot variation in the meaning and usage of concepts across geocultural locations. The four chapters on security—Liu Yongtao (China, Chapter 4), Ole Waever (Europe, Chapter 3), Pinar Bilgin (Turkey and the Arab world, Chapter 2), and Arlene B. Tickner and Mónica Herz (Latin America, Chapter 5)—and those on globalization in Russia (Andrei Tsygankov, Chapter 10) and the Western core (Isaac Kanola, Chapter 9) all focus on how variants of these recognized concepts within the field of International Relations have developed in the distinct places analyzed. Conversely, the three chapters on the state, written by Siba Grovogui (Africa, Chapter 6), Siddharth Mallavarapu (South Asia, Chapter 7) and Fernando López-Alves (Latin America, Chapter 8), Wafaia Hasan and Bessma Momani's analysis of globalization in the Arab Middle East (Chapter 11), and Karen Smith and Ayesha Khan's analyses of the "international" in (Southern) Africa (Chapter 14) and Pakistan (Chapter 15), respectively, provide crucial insights into alternative readings of concepts that are located either outside or at the edges of IR. By their very nature the two chapters on secularism and religion, authored by Mona Kanwal Sheikh and Ole Waever (Europe and the United States, Chapter 13), and Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid (South East Asia, Chapter 12), also make use of fields such as political theory and anthropology, given that discussions of religion in specific countries and regions has rarely been connected to disciplinary questions and debates in International Relations.

Second, as a general rule and in keeping with the conclusions of Tickner and Waever (2009a) and Acharya and Buzan (2010), the case studies point to a relative absence of theoretical discussion on security, the state, authority and sovereignty, globalization, secularism and religion, and the "international." In particular, as suggested by Tickner and Herz in their analysis of Latin American security, scholars engage only infrequently with the conceptual limitations of imported theories for analyzing their subject matter nor do they participate in theory-building, even when novel concepts (such as "democratic security") seem to appear. This is especially apparent in those chapters that operate within IR, but is also observable in globalization studies in the Arab Middle East and in reflections on the "international" in Pakistan. As we will suggest in the following subsection, and as argued in the chapters mentioned, the explanations for this theory "deficit" are varied. However, important exceptions include security thinking in China and Europe, and work on globalization in Russia. The chapters that make use of literatures originating from outside the discipline, in particular on the state, but also on the "international" in Africa, point to the existence of a substantial amount of local theorizing on these concepts as well.

Third, a marked state-centrism is apparent throughout the volume, reflecting the omnipresence of this actor as a key referent of IR throughout the world and the idea of the state as constitutive of IR and arguably much of the social sciences. As would be expected, many of the chapters address the myriad ways in which the state does not conform to a Eurocentric, modern, secular ideal. However, several authors also highlight the existence of competing or alternative geographical constructs. For example, in her comparative analysis of security studies in the Arab world and Turkey, Bilgin argues that a key difference of the former is that the distinction between Arabs and non-Arabs is vital to understanding security discourses there, more than physical, state borders. This idea is echoed in Ahmad's treatment of secularism in South East Asia, where competing forms of
identity coexist, one nationalistic and state-based, and the other borderless, "ummatic," and rooted in the global Muslim community. In this case, as in Sheikh and Waever, the relation between secular and religious in state/society varies and the meaning of both concepts is not fixed but rather always in process of negotiation. Mallavarapu too explores the variation in spatial imaginaries and the bases of rule and authority in the Indian context from the pre-colonial to the postcolonial period. The case of the Indian Ocean, which he discusses in depth, underscores one of the ways in which authority is linked to complex territorialities quite unlike the Westphalian model. In the cases of Pakistan and Africa, Ayesha Khan and Karen Smith also highlight the ways in which the complex interaction between local and international relations and flows gives new meaning to the term "transnational" and forces us to rethink the fixedness of the nation-state and of territorial borders.

Why is this the case?

The next question that each case study should address is "why?" Important factors that might shape thinking in distinct parts of the world include: (a) local political, economic and social realities; (b) the nature of the state; (c) policy needs and/or foreign policy; (d) the nature of the social sciences; (e) local cultural, religious and/or philosophical traditions distinct from the modern West; and (f) funding opportunities (Waever 1998; Tickner and Waever 2009a). With few exceptions, we find IR scholars around the globe more interested in writing about their country, region or the world than producing a sociology/geography of knowledge, although this happens to be one of the main goals of our project. Given the paucity of existing intellectual production on this issue, the way in which each contributor chooses to navigate in these mostly uncharted waters of sociology of knowledge explanations is largely the product of his/her creativity.

A common pattern that is observable across nearly all of the case studies is that scholarship on international relations regularly follows on the heels of state action and discourse. China constitutes perhaps an extreme case where ideas about security have originated primarily in the state and not academia, whose role, according to Liu, is often limited to absorbing and reflecting upon official discourse. In Russia too, Tsygankov analyzes the ways in which dominant scholarly analyses of globalization have been largely in tune with the Russian state's shifting perceptions following the country's highly negative experience with neoliberal reform in the 1990s. However, as Khan points out in the case of Pakistan, empirical research conducted by non-governmental organizations sometimes coaxes the state into reframing local problems. Waever notes that security studies, be they of the Copenhagen, Aberystwyth, or Paris brand, by lieu of their more detached view of scholar-state interaction, have also influenced state policy by reflecting upon it critically. Latin America offers an intermediate case in which security scholars have not only followed the state's lead but have also contributed to a civilian-based body of knowledge on this subject, in particular following the transition to democracy and the end of the Cold War.

The local political, economic, and social context constitutes a second factor identified frequently by the volume's authors as affecting scholarship on and lived experiences with security, the state, authority and sovereignty, globalization, secularism and religion, and the "international." Hasan and Momani, for example, show that in the Arab Middle East reflections on globalization are largely the result of the negative (and positive) impacts of neoliberal reform upon Arab society, and censorship and political repression. Contrary to assertions of the decline of the state, López-Alves claims that the historic and continuing weight of the state in Latin American societies helps explain its centrality in the social sciences in the region. Grovogui points to the decimation of African universities with the advent of structural adjustment and prolonged conflict in some areas as explanations for the paucity of scholarly production on the continent, though he sees this less as a local reality than the product of Africa's constitution in the social relations of a neo-colonial global order.

The fact that scholarly activity is considered personal and political, not detached and neutral, points to a third explanation for international relations thinking in the non-West and non-core. Khan's portrayal of "socially committed" social science in the context of Pakistan constitutes perhaps the most explicit acknowledgment of the engaged nature of academic work. However, several other chapters suggest that the study of globalization in the Arab Middle East, and of security in Latin America and Europe, has been markedly political in its origins as well. In the case of the former, Hasan and Momani trace this to scholars' strong connection to the everyday struggles of Arab society with the socio-political and economic costs of globalization. According to Tickner and Herz, and Waever, active participation by scholars in public discussions about democracy, in the case of Latin America, and security, in that of Europe, account for the political roots of scholarship. Grovogui discusses the anti-colonial quality of African scholarship on global order, but also sees this as key to its dismissal by the core academy, echoing a concern aired earlier in this introduction about the ways in which difference is interpreted by the West. Kamola, by contrast, suggests that the very notion of globalization performs a kind of political exclusion. Namely, with its global communications and transnational values, globalization is constituted in and through the erasure of African realities.

A fourth account revolves around the role of foreign monies, including private foundations and multilateral organizations, in conditioning and/or enabling scholarship on global issues. Tickner and Herz focus on the role played by international funders in establishing the security research agenda in Latin America and the type of intellectual production considered valuable, namely, applied knowledge of use to the regional states and thus
capable of influencing security policies. Conversely, Khan argues that given the political context in Pakistan, donor agencies exercise a crucial positive function. Although she concedes that they may indeed influence and constrain local research agendas, not only are they less opprobrious than the authoritarian regime but they are also the “only game in town” in terms of providing sorely needed funding for research.

A similar argument could be made in the case of the Arab Middle East and Africa. Neither Hasan and Momani, nor Grovogui address the issue explicitly, but both of their chapters make clear that in order for scholarly life to flourish universities require rebuilding after an era of dismantling in the name of structural adjustment. The fact that the university is not always the main source of knowledge production, given its (induced) weakness in regions such as these, also highlights the need to look outside of academic practice conventionally understood and to consider research activities conducted by NGOs and think tanks, among others.

Finally, the three chapters that focus mainly on thinking in core locales (Sheikh and Wæver, Grovogui, and Kamola) point powerfully to what is excluded from consideration by the disciplinary routines of IR. Sheikh and Wæver note that secularism is not only a concept used by social scientists but is assumed as foundational to scholarly practice in International Relations. Religion appears, then, as an excluded category that might be seen to pollute what are essentially secular activities of statecraft and intellectual objectivity. Ahmad points to a similar problem with Western scholarship, which fails to see beyond its own dichotomy of secular/religious states and thus ignores the nuanced forms of Islamic statehood that exist in Indonesia and Malaysia. Grovogui and Kamola are even more damning of IR. For Grovogui, contemporary social scientists construct African malfeasance as a particular that parcels out blame to African leaders and peoples, and excludes colonial and neocolonial practices even as legitimate objects of inquiry. Similarly, Kamola explains how globalization as a challenging but ultimately progressive set of forces is imagined only in relation to either Africa as a particular problem or by excluding African realities. The condition of globalization as an academic object of study, he claims, is precisely the absence of Africa.

**Implications for global IR**

The chapters in this volume posit a series of arguments that advance a preliminary agenda for centering IR that the discipline at large would be well advised to consider. A number of authors highlight the importance of historicizing the evolution of specific concepts in diverse geocultural settings. Grovogui, Mallavarapu, and López-Alves argue this issue most forcefully in the case of the state, authority and sovereignty, in Africa, India, and Latin America, suggesting that disciplinary understandings rarely conform to political events as experienced by their participants, largely because

“history” is missing or the history provided writes away other possible stories. Alternative histories provide a different set of political judgments about current African states, the nature and future of authority in South Asia, and the resilience of the state in Latin America. A similar point is made by Sheikh and Wæver, and Ahmad, in their respective analyses of how a story about the suppression of religion by secularism obscures the varying ways that states—in France, the United States, Germany, Denmark, Malaysia, and Indonesia—are both secular and religious in complex ways.

Another way in which history comes into play in the case studies is through collective memory. For Hasan and Momani, readings of globalization in the Arab Middle East need to be placed against the backdrop of the communal memory of colonialism and collective suffering. Conversely, Tsygankov argues that cultural essentialist readings are rooted in a nineteenth century view of Russia as a self-sufficient Eurasian orthodox empire, and thus call for resistance to imperialistic globalization. In the case of Latin America, the region’s common authoritarian past and its commitment to establishing democracy has exercised a strong influence on scholarship in all areas of the social sciences. Mallavarapu also explores the role of historical memory in South Asia, although in this case as myth, where the story of the loss of the continent of Lemuria informs contemporary desires for a Tamil homeland.

Several authors suggest that indigenous worldviews are potentially translatable into IR or deployable as alternative conceptions of the “international” or “transnational.” Smith points to ubuntu, an African philosophy of humanism used in other areas of the social and human sciences and in political practice itself in South Africa that could erase dichotomies of friend and enemy and inform an alternative view of the international community and the responsibility of states and peoples towards each other. According to Liu, Confucianism, prevalent in China’s attempts to build its own international thinking on issues such as security, also constitutes the basis for a different kind of global interaction, characterized by concepts such as “goodwill,” “lofty morality,” and “harmony.” In turn, the lived experiences of Afghans in Pakistan, as examined by Khan, give new meaning to the term “transnational” and force us to rethink categories such as refugee, the nation-state and national borders.

We are also intrigued by Ahmad’s discussion of how Southeast Asia’s uniqueness (or difference) lies in the ability to subsume Western categories such as modernism and secularism in Islamic terms, showing that Islam and modern society are not antithetical. In a similar vein, Kamola suggests that Africans themselves are beginning to mobilize the language of globalization to politicize and fundamentally challenge the existing world order. Both examples highlight the complex processes of negotiation and engagement that take place between the local and the global, and suggest more nuanced readings of how concepts spread and are transformed as they move across the globe.
Finally, many of the fourteen chapters, in particular those that unfold outside of the disciplinary space offered by International Relations, underscore the value of distinct views of the "international" and their tremendous potential for enriching existing debates. The effect might be both to enlarge the boundaries of IR by allowing difference—in its multiple guises—to be heard but also to decenter it as the arbiter of knowledge about world politics. In this respect, at least, we hope that the volume serves as a welcome and healthy counterpoint to existing surveys of the field.

Notes
1 The 2008 version of the Teaching, Research and International Policy (TRIP) survey shares a similar interest in visualizing scholarly readings of the discipline from throughout the globe. See Jordan, et al. (2009), in which IR professors in ten different countries are surveyed. The 2011 survey will include an even larger number of countries.
2 Anna M. Agathangelou and Lily Ling's (2004) likening of International Relations to a colonial household constitutes another insightful way of envisioning the assignment of varied social roles within the field.
3 Anna Tsing (2005: 1–11) refers to this "engaged" or "practically effective" nature of universals as "friction," conceived by her as the key enabling condition for interconnection across difference. While friction allows universals to travel across time and space, it also curtails their local reach by adding new meaning to and transforming them.
4 In the field of physics the problem of dialogue amidst disunity has been addressed by authors such as Peter Galison (1996: 2), who asserts that the world of science looks "more like a quilt than a pyramid," notwithstanding modern attempts to project an image of unity and thus authority. According to him, scientists in disunity develop "trading zones" or intermediate languages that exercise a mediating function, thus allowing new ideas and concepts to emerge that are exclusive to none of them (Galison 1996: 14–15).
5 For an earlier attempt at answering this question, see Tickner (2003).
6 The structure of the book enables it to be read in various ways. For each separate concept, one can focus on the comparative perspective supplied by the parallel chapters and thereby gain an in-depth reflection on its variable meanings and usages. It is also possible to compare developments across the different concepts in terms of, for example, their varying relation to conceptualizations in the core.
A preliminary inventory of new conceptualizations and emerging theory emerging from distinct fields and parts of the globe is also offered, pointing to the richness of understandings of world politics when eyes are allowed to search beyond the usual parameters. The book thus presents potentially alternative visions for the global agenda in terms of how major concerns are conceived and approached around the world. Finally, each chapter provides general "sociology" or "geography of knowledge" insights about the workings of knowledge production under different social and geocultural conditions.
7 This point is made quite forcefully in Khan's chapter on Pakistan, and in a review of International Relations Scholarship authored by Itty Abraham (2010). Abraham argues that a comprehensive approach to IR needs to take into account the role of "new discourses of the international" emerging from diverse non-academic actors, as well as the “[... ] ongoing struggle over the authority to speak for and about the international,” and that necessarily transcends scholarly life (2010: 372).

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CLAIMING THE INTERNATIONAL

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INTRODUCTION

Claiming the international beyond IR

David L. Blaney and Arlene B. Tickner

Claiming the International was conceived as the third in a sequence of edited books growing out of a conversation that began at the International Studies Association (ISA) meeting in Montreal in 2004. The conversation traveled for a while under the label, “Geocultural Epistemologies and IR” and morphed into the Routledge book series, “Worlding Beyond the West.” The series promises to focus on the issue of domination of the discipline by the West, explore the role of geocultural factors in determining how knowledge of world politics is produced, and seek out alternative ways of thinking about the “international.” The first two books of both the series and the original trilogy—International Relations Scholarship Around the World (Tickner and Wæver 2009) and Thinking International Relations Differently (Tickner and Blaney 2012)—explore the ways in which the field of International Relations (IR) has globalization via a set of boundary-drawing practices that inform particular modes of worlding and knowledge. The language of production is used intentionally (as opposed to diffusion) in order to highlight the geocultural conditions of possibility of IR as a globalized discipline, as well as the localized contexts beyond the West in which it is received, adopted, adapted, and/or rejected. In other words, the books have been attentive to the situatedness of knowledge and experience.

International Relations Scholarship Around the World and Thinking International Relations Differently attempt to map global variation along two distinct but complementary planes: a disciplinary and geographic one, and a thematic and geographic one, respectively. In addition to a sociology of knowledge of the state of IR in distinct countries and regions of the world and the ways in which key concepts are problematized, the two books also begin to explore the “different” contributions and conceptualizations that emerge in these sites, but that remain largely unacknowledged by or unknown to Northern-based scholars.
The aim of these books might therefore be associated with the kind of pluralizing of IR that Patrick Jackson (2011) has called for. He argues that IR scholars use an unquestioned, even unexamined, notion of “science” as a “trump card” to be played against diversity in the field. We take the author's view that the dominant definition of “science” plays a disciplining function (Jackson 2011: 9) to indicate that IR could also be analyzed in terms of an inside-outside or core-periphery chasm that it supports. In contrast to the philosophy and history of science, where no general consensus exists as to what “scientific knowledge” is, in IR its definition has largely been a function of United States dominance and of the prevalence of rationalist positivism. However, as in the case of science, which appears as “irreducibly pluralist,” Jackson suggests that if we actually examine the process of “producing knowledge about world politics,” a plural IR discipline is also revealed (Jackson 2011: 189). He illustrates this point through a four-fold mapping of distinct philosophical ontologies that are currently operative in the field. These are described as “wagers” that determine epistemologies, theories, methods, and problems that researchers deem important (Jackson 2011: 35), and include neopositivism, critical realism, analyticism (the equivalent of constructivism), and reflexivity.

The ingenuity of this argument is that all four “ideal types” are treated from a neutral vantage point in order to show that they represent equally legitimate claims to scientific status. But the four are actually not equal in terms of the power they exert within the discipline. Neopositivism not only occupies the throne of science, granting it the power of the “god trick,” to use Donna Haraway’s (1988) famous expression, but also its followers cannot help but try and convert others into believers from this elevated position. In consequence, although a pluralist science of IR along the lines proposed by Jackson (2011) is in principal very attractive, the currently dominant strain, neopositivism, is ill-suited to accept methodological diversity. From its standpoint, pluralism would entail either inviting “non-believers” to the table (and perhaps sharing a meal with them), never actually acknowledging that they do “proper” science, or subsuming scholarship done by those who share a vaguely similar wager (such as in the global South) as inferior and “substandard.” Such a reading of pluralism (as well as potentially that of International Relations Scholarship Around the World and Thinking International Relations Differently) thus envisions a dialogue between distinct perspectives or wagers that may be nearly impossible to sustain in practice given the current structure of global intellectual production.

We would be well advised to be skeptical or at least agnostic about dialogue within the field (see Hutchings 2011). As in other kinds of social interaction, dialogue may only be possible between similar subjects or equals, not only in terms of power and resources, but perhaps more importantly, in terms of sharing access to similar worldviews or systems of knowledge. Calls for dialogue may only distract from the genuine problems affecting IR, among them its entrenched core-periphery structure, and may actually reinforce boundary-drawing practices. Take, for example, the idea of hybridity, a fashionable buzzword for myriad configurations of identity and temporality produced by transnational geocultural phenomena such as imperialism and globalization. Hybridity points simultaneously to the “factual universality” of a global project and to its incompleteness, given that the universal is always inflected with local elements (Cheah 1998: 292–34). What makes dialogue feasible is precisely its near sameness (Bilgin 2008). This is the point that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) makes when he argues that the main prerequisite for being heard is the ability to speak in the West’s (or the powerful’s) own language.

Transposing this argument to IR proper, the common framework of understanding or “sameness” that allows us to talk about dialogue with difference is essentially imposed by the core through the theories, concepts and categories it employs to think about world politics. Although re-examining them, as we did in Thinking International Relations Differently, is an important step in exploring geocultural variation, it may prove too limited in that it accepts as its own point of departure the very ideas that are at the root of the modern Western worldview (state, sovereignty, security, globalization, secularism and the “international”). The fact that dialogue with such “different” readings of these concepts seems possible may indeed suggest that their underlying difference has already been effaced. In this book, Ash Çalkıvık (Chapter 3) makes a related argument, though focuses on critical IR theory. As in the case of the concepts and categories that are operative within the field, she points to how critique itself is disciplined by the need to be timely—to be capable of speaking to the discipline as it currently exists or to problems in global society as they are already conceived. Inanna Hamati-Ataya raises related questions about the complex issue of reflexivity and dissonance within the discipline (2011a and b) and the nearly impossible position of “representatives” of the non-West or “outsiders within” who want to do IR from beyond the West (Chapter 2, this book). We are tempted to conclude from this that critical scholarship may be equally incapable of engaging difference in genuine dialogue.

If Western understandings of the nature and purpose of dialogue contribute to occulting intellectual domination, or even to legitimating it, the task then becomes how to envision an exchange or conversation between multiple and at times contradictory perspectives where none occupy positions of power or privilege. Ideas such as “contact zone” (Pratt 1992) and “trading zone” (Galtung 1996) propose just this. The notion of “decentering,” developed mostly by feminist theory (Narayan and Harding 2000; and Nayak and Selbin 2010 in IR), aims at the like-minded goal of sparking cross-border discussion by suspending entrenched modern, Western and masculine assumptions regarding its privileged access to knowledge of the world. And yet, in all of these conceptual constructs it is difficult to envision concrete steps that might actually push us in the desired direction, especially within academic practice, where epistemic violence seems most entrenched.

Expanding our definition of “science” or “authoritative” knowledge is a potentially promising strategy, provided that the widening is genuine.
In attempting to strike up conversation between IR and feminist theory, Robert Keohane (1998: 195) argues for a plural social science that, almost mockingly, pushes a single and exclusionary view of method based upon causality, hypothesis testing and replication. In contrast, Jackson’s (2011: 93) definition of science, as “worldly knowledge” based upon facts but not ethical evaluation or mystical contemplation, aspires to create a larger umbrella with room for distinct ways of thinking about world politics. However, even here, especially outside the West, where divisions between material and spiritual sources of knowledge may not be as clear-cut as they are in Western thought (Tickner 2003a; Shani 2008; Acharya 2011), making enough space for wide-ranging difference continues to be an elusive goal. Perhaps, as suggested by Naeem Inayatullah (Chapter 11, this book), we need to bypass or at least complement the mode of working constituted by social science and by Western IR with other registers, such as literature or popular culture, that allow us to experience diversity and multiplicity in less defensive and more humane ways.

The difficulties described above help explain why our earlier explorations of how IR is done across countries and regions (Tickner and Waever 2009; Tickner and Blaney 2012) reveal a plural field of study, though not as plural as we had imagined. These books indicate that, generally speaking, plurality in global IR is one that evolves within a (narrow) space allowed for by the United States and Western European core, which exercises a strong disciplining function in terms of the theories, concepts, and categories authorized to count as knowledge of world politics. We worry that our original premise, that achieving greater dialogue and pluralism within the field requires making visible scholarly work that has either gone unacknowledged as a legitimate contribution to knowledge or that has occupied subordinate positions, may potentially leave disciplinary foundations and power asymmetries intact, when in fact our underlying goal has been to promote their transformation. Indeed, in the introduction to Thinking International Relations Differently, we note that “this on-going exercise in ‘revealing’ difference” has been “somewhat disappointing” (Tickner and Blaney 2012: 6).

It seems clear to us now that the first two books of the trilogy were both enabled and constrained by their very conception. International Relations Scholarship Around the World begins with the question, “how is the world understood around the world?” but the topic is quickly delimited to “scholars of international relations,” under the assumption that “we are all part of a global discipline studying a shared object of interest” (Waever and Tickner 2009: 1). The analytical exercise proposed by the editors required a boundary—the register of IR—against which variation might be revealed. The capacity to identify differences across geographic space within a “global discipline” is precisely this book’s strength. Similarly, the second book, Thinking International Relations Differently, explores variations in the treatment of key concepts: security, sovereignty, the state, secularization, globalization, and the “international.” Although this too is one of the book’s main contributions, we noted that when our chapters began “pushing beyond the frontiers of IR,” it prompted “more innovative and creative thinking” (Tickner and Blaney 2012: 14). Maybe we needed to look even farther afield, pushing more fully beyond the discipline itself. We promised that Claiming the International would begin this process by attempting to “analyze promising alternative avenues for claiming the world that transgress the boundary-drawing practice of IR in its more conventional form” (Tickner and Blaney 2012: 13).

Indeed, we associate the present book with a kind of global democratic ethos that opens up the world to be claimed by “multiple, geographically dispersed actors from many vantage points” (Chen, Hwang and Ling 2009: 744), although we are aware of the risks that granting formal “equality” may entail in terms of normalizing unequal relations of power within IR. We might also gesture toward Ashis Nandy’s explorations (2007: xi) of “diverse sources of defiance” found in “legends, informal public memories, and private and public myths” that emerge from “underprofessionalized and undersocialized” sources. In general, we use the language of claiming the international to point to myriad possibilities for alternative worldings that may exist beyond the established boundaries of IR, but also within it, including the very ways in which difference is classified and responded to (see Darby 2008: 103).

**Doubts: where is beyond?**

As Amitav Acharya (2011: 620) states quite pointedly, “how we develop IR into a more genuinely universal discipline depends very much on what we think is missing from it now.” Are we concerned mainly with the fact that existing theories and concepts are insufficient to account for non-Western experiences and readings of world politics? Do we feel that predominant definitions of “science” disavow scientific knowledge that fails to conform to its standards? Do we worry that attempts at inclusiveness via the development of indigenous concepts result largely in mimickry? Or is there something more? Spelling out in a clear fashion what we consider to be missing from or wrong with IR is largely what we do in this introduction. However, here this “beyond” lies leaves us with tensions and perplexities. At moments we feel optimistic that positive change is actually taking place within the boundaries of the field, largely as a result of the post-positivist debate and the feminist and postcolonial movements in the social sciences in general. In keeping with this optimism we have tried to join forces with others who have risen to challenge Western or core dominance of IR (Rajaee 1999; Dunn and Shaw 2001; Geeraerts and Jeng 2001; Inoguchi and Bacon 2001; Euben 2002; Bajpai and Mallavarapu 2005a, 2005b; Jones 2006; Hutchings 2008: 154–77; Acharya 2011; Acharya and Buzan 2007, 2010; Shilliam 2011; Lizée 2011). But at the same time, we are moved by a sense of both sadness and outrage that things may well remain pretty much the same. Arlene Tickner (Chapter 12) explores some of the reasons why this is the case, including those specific to IR and the social sciences, and others related to the crisis of academia itself as a site for meaningful knowledge.
We also feel the push and pull between the professional demands of our academic work and our political commitments and desires. At one point, we conveyed messages such as this one to contributory:

We find ourselves in an uncomfortable place. The imperative on one side is to produce a volume that is impactful and the temptation then is to figure out how to speak to the existing conversation. On the other hand, we want to change the conversation or even begin a new and different one.

The fact that we still find ourselves exercising the imperative to translate the “other” into IR points, perhaps, to an underestimation of how much of the discipline we carry within us.

Edward Said (1983: 141–2) warns that disciplines define the conventions and customs that inform “the rules of accreditation” under which scholars toil. Said (1994b: 76–78) refers to this condition as professionalism, whereby academia becomes a “way of life” characterized by politically correct behavior, properly certified expertise, specialization, and proximity to power and authority. Besides nurturing the exercise of knowledge for power, professionalism anesthetizes the senses that ideally academics should bring with them when engaging in scholarly activity. We face the very practical tensions involved in straying too far from disciplinary and scholarly canons in order to market this book and solidify our professional lives. In countries of the global South as diverse as Mexico, Indonesia, Morocco or India, the kind of reflection attempted here might indeed be deemed completely irrelevant, if not a little eccentric or outrageous. Surely this book will be seen as such by many in North America and Europe, too!

We agree with Said (1994b: 76–8) that the moral obligation of the intellectual is to ask difficult, uncomfortable, even impertinent questions, and to claim the status of “exile” in terms of privilege and recognition (Said 1994b: 52–3). Instead of doing what is expected and recognized as academic activity, he suggests that intellectuals should adopt the role of the traveler or amateur, which involves being responsive “[... ] to the provisional and risky rather than the habitual, to innovation and experiment rather than the authoritatively given status quo” (Said 1994b: 64). And we must admit, to be labeled “eccentric” or “untimely” or “unscholarly” bears relatively little cost for those fortunate enough to occupy secure academic positions.

Admittedly, the fact that IR may be more narrow and exclusionary than many other fields of study, especially in the United States, but also in numerous sites throughout the world, makes such a mandate more difficult and a bit riskier professionally speaking. Phillip Darby (2008: 95) remarks on the “discipline’s failure over most of its history to engage with the non-European world except as an appendage to the body of thought developed in relation to the First World.” Similarly, John Hobson (2012) documents a persistent pattern of resistance to recognizing the colonial character of IR. He summarizes his findings (2012: 14–21) by honing in on international theory’s embrace of a set of “Eurocentric myths” that include a dark, racist, and imperial core that works to transpose a civilization/barbarism binary onto the sovereignty/anarchy construction, creating a gradated scale of sovereign capacities with the non-West placed securely at the bottom. And strikingly, he also observes the way international theory covers up this imperial/racist disciplinary core—the presumption of a formal/informal hierarchy of peoples—with “great debates,” including most recently a notion of globalization that ignores continuities with earlier periods in terms of how the West continually tries to remake the rest of the world (see also Vitalis 2000 and 2010), and ignores the rest of the world’s impact on making the West. Together these myths produce a vision of the world constructed by the West in its own image—a world in which the agency of the rest of the world is erased (conditioned on the “pioneering agency” of the West in Hobson’s terms) or treated as derivative of Western values and visions (Hobson 2012: 7).

IR, we might say, fails to see alternatives because those who make it assume the West, its science, and its development as the universal “norm.” Thus, recognizing difference is far from enough. Although it is “an important corrective to the dominant universalizing tendencies within social science [... ] ‘[d]ifference’ also has to make a difference to the assumptions that informed the initial enquiry: in this case the endogenous origins of modernity in Europe” (Bhabha 2007: 60, 70). However, given the imperatives of “science” and the core-periphery dynamics central to global knowledge production, it may actually be quite difficult for difference to make a difference. Scholars who counter IR with it face what may seem a real dilemma. Namely, positioning ourselves at the margins of the discipline or outside it entails the uncertainty of not knowing what difference such interventions from the edges may make. Also, we are generally unable to “make decisions about [our] positionalities” within (or beyond) disciplines, as such decisions are made for us by both the character of conventional debates and by the rules of scholarly practice (Darby 2008: 103). Nonetheless, the additional political and ethical resources for living better in the world made available by “difference” seem well worth such risks.

**Drawing the boundary**

Two very distinct but exemplary cases of disciplinary boundary-drawing—the rapid demise of theories of dependency in the North American academy and the mainstreaming of constructivism—help illustrate how dissent is marginalized and the challenges faced by those who dare to venture into domains that lead their work to be cast as “outside” or “beyond.”

The appearance and fairly speedy marginalization of dependency theories attest to a process by which an earlier, if fleeting, challenge to conventional ways of understanding states, international systems and the relations between the two was effaced. Primarily associated with a group of Latin American authors (Cardoso 1972, 1973, 1977; Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Sunkel 1969; Furtado 1970; and Dos Santos 1970), dependency thinking argued that twentieth century world
politics cannot be understood without a clear grasp of the historical development of the international system—both the evolving structures of the state system and the capitalist global division of labor. They noted that heroic accounts of the countries of the West setting an independent and natural path that others must follow obscure past and present interactions or relations among regions that produce wealth and poverty, centrality and marginalization, and consequently, justify representations of the non-West as collectively and separately backward, traditional, failed or quasi-sovereign. Dependency thus offered a counter to the history of the spread of civilizational advance favored by Eurocentric international theories.

However, by the early 1980s dependency theory had faded, at least from the North American and European academy. In Latin America too, IR scholars abandoned the language of dependency for the less “radical” goal of autonomy, drawing largely from earlier reformist Economic Commission for Latin America-school thinking (Tickner 2003b). Leading United States’ scholars justified the short-lived sway of dependency in disciplinary, we might say positivist, terms. Such theories, as Gabriel Almond (1990: 229–30) claimed, were “inescapably ideological”; measured against the conventions of social science, they constituted “a backward step,” or more harshly, an “intellectual guerilla movement” (Almond 1990: 233, 230). Likewise, Robert A. Pakenham (1992: 29–30, 43) stressed that the body of thought was “unfalsifiable,” and that its status as “critical theory” placed it immediately outside of scientific conventions (Pakenham 1992: 103–4). Not surprisingly then, dependency theorists ignored the dictates of (civilized) rationality, eschewing the “obvious” mutual gains of contemporary interdependence (Pakenham 1992: 306) somehow cleansed of imperial taint. Similarly, the key figures in exploring the logic of complex interdependence, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (2000; originally 1977), never mention dependency theory, welcoming instead a somewhat rosier picture of a world in which the colonial legacy is largely erased and third world countries might aspire to a greater international role.

Even more sympathetic readers placed dependency theory beyond the disciplinary pale. In one review, James Caporaso (1980: 622–3) recognizes dependency theorists’ rejection of a Newtonian notion of time—“homogeneous, infinitely divisible, and purely formal”—that facilitates generalization, favoring instead a “lumpy” or “qualitative” notion that limits our capacity to generalize beyond particular times and places. In Caporaso’s view, situating the analysis in relation to a historically specific capitalist global division of labor (an N = 1 situation) provides simply too little variation on independent variables and too few cases to give the number of degrees of freedom to statistically establish causal patterns (Caporaso 1978: 43). Even in this more generous reading, dependency theory is displaced from acceptable international theory into an outside whose pre-scientific status serves to confirm the epistemic superiority of IR “properly” conceived.

Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1977: 15–16) was prescient enough to anticipate this treatment. According to him, in order to ascribe to it the necessary disciplinary respectability, North American consumers of theories of dependency were stripping the complexity from its historical accounts of conditions of imperial domination and recasting dependence as a set of uniform, static and thereby testable, propositions that turned lumpy histories and space into homogeneous space and time. Linear, causal analysis of the behavior or interactions of unevenly interdependent units replaces a dynamic and dialectical analysis of concrete, structured relations. As Cardoso (1977: 16) put it, the “straw man” thus produced was “easily destroyed.”

This effort to construct dependency theory as beyond the limits of acceptable knowledge production reveals not just ignorance of the history of imperialism, but the active suppression of alternative and competing perspectives that would place imperial practices at the heart of the disciplinary understanding and empower voices from the postcolonial world.

Conceivably, things have improved in the recent past. The discipline of IR seems crowded with alternatives—constructivist, post-structuralist, feminist, postcolonial—although they often seem scornfully “collapsed” together under the label “reflective theory” (Hamati-Ataya 2011b: 270; see Keohane 1989b; Goldstein and Keohane 1993), as if being reflective was a lapse of good sense. Minimally, “reflective” scholars attempted to open up to scrutiny what IR treated as fixed, namely identities and interests (Jefferson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996). However, for many this de-reifying move was simply an initial gesture interwoven with more fundamental challenges to the discipline as commonly practiced. In other words, engaging “culture and identity” entailed much more than adding another layer of variation; it pointed to “critical margins” that would otherwise be neglected (Lapid 1996: 4–5). As Welde, et al. (1999: 17) explain, the point was not only to challenge the boundaries of common sense and accepted knowledge, but also to expose the way “dominant representations [...] remove from critical analysis and political debate what are in fact particular, interested constructions,” and open us up to “other possible worlds or forms of life” that normally are “represented as implausible, ideological, or spurious, and so often consigned to the realms of fiction, fantasy or nonsense.” More specifically, Kimberly Hutchings (2008: 155, 160–3) describes the way feminists and postcolonial theorists expose the “world-political” conceptions that situate “aboriginals, peasants, non-Western peoples, women and children” below the register of what counts as worldly and “timely.” The punchline, delivered by Hamati-Ataya (2011b: 276–7, our stress), is that reflectivism not only exposes the way “some groups’ interests and values manifest themselves in the production of allegedly universal visions of the world,” but thereby also challenges the strict “subject/object distinction that has provided positivism with its central cognitive and ethical argument.” In other words, what is ultimately at stake is the claim of positivism to a privileged position.

This interwoven set of challenges was not lost on prominent figures in IR, who greeted such work with relative hostility. Peter Katzenstein (1996: xiv) describes the rather strong characterizations of his project’s (relatively tame, in our
view) efforts to explore issues surrounding “culture” (norms and identity) as “a fundamentally flawed enterprise.” The *Culture and National Security* volume, these “distinguished scholars of national security” noted, “offers no more than an intellectually incoherent mixture of postmodern interpretivism, non falsifiable claims, ex post facto explanation, and insignificant embellishment of what mainstream realism analyzes elegantly add with precision.” Earlier, Keohane laid out just this case in some detail across several articles. According to him, reflectivists may be frustrated with the reception of their work, but they “have been slow to articulate or test hypotheses” and failed to elaborate clear “causal pathways” that give weight to the role of ideas in explanations (Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 6–7). Even when granting the ontological point, that “ideas and interests are not phenomenologically separate,” it is argued that their causal role must be established against the backdrop of rationalist theories. That is, the causal effect of ideas can only be measured against “the null hypothesis that actions described can be understood on the basis of egoistic interests in the context of power realities” (Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 26–7). In other words, even though we know that they are intertwined, somehow we can act as if interests are separable. Of course, the science card is always there to be played too. By insisting on pressing epistemological questions, reflective scholars drive the discipline into “a dead-end” without “agreement on epistemological essentials” (Keohane 1989b: 249) or a “purgatory of incompatible epistemologies” (Goldstein and Keohane 1993: 26). Performing what he treats as prediction, Keohane declares that, until the “reflective school has delineated [ ... ] a research program [ ... ]; they will remain on the margins of the field, largely invisible to the preponderance of empirical researchers” (Keohane 1989a: 173).

Despite sometimes harsh words, Keohane is always careful to write in the spirit of scholarly exchange (1989b: 248–9) or end with calls for constructive “synthesis” (1989a: 174–5). However, as authors such as Hutchings (2011: 646) suggest, feminist efforts to decenter the discipline in order to challenge ethnocentrism and parochialism draw responses (like Keohane’s) that construct a binary: the game of dialogue remains the sameness-difference game. Either feminist IR is a different way of doing things—in which case it is not really IR at all—or feminist IR is the same way of doing things, in which case it adds an interesting variable into the explanation of events, but shifts nothing in terms of underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions.

This argument is reflected in Ann Tickner’s (1997) earlier claim that IR theorists “just don’t understand,” to which Keohane (1998) later reposes. According to Tickner, following critics’ politically correct statements to the effect that feminist scholarship is interesting and important in its own right, it is normally shelved with other thinking that is deemed to have little to do with both the discipline and with international political practice. Often, as occurred with theories of dependency, feminist theory is accused of being atheoretical.

Keohane (1998: 197) makes this quite clear when he maintains that the “scientific method [ ... ] is the best path towards convincing current non-believers of the validity of the message that feminists are seeking to deliver.” What we take Keohane to be saying is that only when “they” adopt the social science method, thus becoming more like “us,” will “we” understand.

Cynthia Weber (1994) puts a finer point on this protest. Keohane, she shows, fragments or mutilates the feminist project by splitting an intrinsically interwoven effort into “empirical,” “standpoint,” and “postmodern” elements. This allows him to embrace those elements that serve to preserve his authority as scientific observer and to disavow those that challenge the standpoint of modern science and its regime of truth. In other words, “good girls” do proper social science and “little girls” might grow up to be social scientists; but “bad girls” are shunned as they well should be (Weber 1994: 338–40; 341–7).

This boundary-drawing has worked to separate “good” and “bad” reflectivist scholars more generally. Constructivism began with the promise of scholarship produced with greater “reflexivity and circumspection,” given the positioning of the scholar in the world that is studied and growing sensitivity to contingency. But the mainstreaming of constructivism was achieved only when it “aligned itself with dominant materialist and rationalist methodologies and epistemologies” (Barder and Levine 2012: 585). Qin Yaqing (Chapter 9, this book) provides a similar diagnosis of the Walejianization of Wendt’s constructivism that makes it feel increasingly closed to more relational scholarship of the kind Qin himself advocates. Key in this move “from the margins” to the center were Alexander Wendt’s own efforts to draw the boundaries between his constructivism and David Campbell’s more critical, post-postivist approach.

Once constructivism became mainstreamed, a new pattern of core and periphery emerged in the discipline. As seen from the core, with the end of the Cold War IR morphed from a competition among realism, liberalism, and rational or transformative theories into a new tria of traditions: realism, liberalism and constructivism (Walt 1998). Though Stephen Walt (1998: 41–3) places constructivism in the radical slot once occupied by Marxism, there is very little “radical” about the constructivism that he considers part of ongoing processes of “intellectual arbitrage.” Indeed, the metaphor “arbitrage” suggests already the relative sameness of the three traditions: they are rooted in a positivist vision of scholarship only giving different weights to different factors, whether material or ideas. That Walt (1998: 38) implicitly draws a line within constructivism separating “good” and “bad” boys and girls is suggested by his tagging of Wendt and John Ruggie as the key luminaries of the tradition. Conversely, feminists, post-structuralists and postcolonial scholars are all invisible in this disciplinary cataloging.

Such silence confirms Hamati Ataya’s claim that “(scientific) IR” is relatively isolated from other social sciences, including various “philosophical, normative, historical and sociological approaches to world politics” and that the central journals in the United States—*International Organization* and *International
Security—are kept nearly free of work that is committed to the idea that theory itself is “constitutive of world politics” (Hamati-Ataya 2011b: 269, 272 [fn 7]; Hamati-Ataya 2011a: 391). More self-reflexive scholars within the field are painfully aware of this marginalization. In a survey of IR scholars in the United States, Hamati-Ataya (2011a) documents the experience of critical constructivists as quite distant from the core of the discipline: they tend to classify themselves less as “dissidents” within the field and more as distinct “minority” communities that, by embracing a “different cognitive culture,” face serious challenges to becoming visible. As she summarizes,

contemporary dissidence in IR is doubly structured. On the one hand, it logically stands against what is seen to be “mainstream IR,” which is […] coherently represented by a “core” including International Political Economy, Liberal Internationalism, Neoliberal Institutionalism, and Realism. On the other hand, it is itself divided along cognitive lines, [separating] older dissidents articulated to Critical Theory … from a less well-defined “cluster” of less vocal dissidents who engage the more anti-objectivist and anti-positivist approaches […] (Hamati-Ataya 2011a: 393–4)

If anything, these new dissidents are more marginalized by the positivist assumptions of the field than were the Marxists, suggesting real limits to the diversity of views tolerated within the discipline (Hamati-Ataya 2011a: 395).

The political and ethical implications of this continuing core–periphery dynamic of knowledge production are powerful. Where the scholarly authority of “middle-range” constructivism is established by splitting itself apart from more reflexive approaches, the discipline, even its supposedly “radical” form (as Walt would have it), continues to treat difference as a matter of appearance, as an illusion to be overcome through progress. This involves a re-inscription of modernization discourse where the story of the world is told as a realization of a specific Western-conceived vision of the political. Inequality disappears as a concern of IR or, more accurately, is taken for granted, if not explicitly justified. The history of empire is largely ignored, much less seriously theorized. With the move to the core of the discipline, constructivism steps in to help perpetuate “an obfuscation of relations of domination” (Barder and Levine 2012: 592–8) that was already central to mainstream IR. One consequence, Hamati-Ataya (2011b: 282) suggests, is that “non-Western scholars who engage in a reflexive assessment of IR may become skeptical as to the usefulness of the discipline,” if there appears to be “no possibility for them to significantly transform the material and ideational realities that maintain and reproduce their subjection to Western hegemony—including Western cognitive violence.” In Chapter 2 of this book, Hamati-Ataya expresses this ambivalence in a more personal way.

Indeed, challenges to Western hegemony are often countered by charges not only of the kind of disciplinary anarchism that Keohane fears, but also of a “state of ethical paralysis” produced by an overly critical stance toward modern “progressive moral change” (Price 2008: 208–9). Similarly, scholars such as Rosa Vasilaki (2012: 6–8) suggest that excessive emphasis on the particular (the local, the cultural) may not only distance postcolonial scholars, for example, from the “mainstream of the discipline,” but also that the pointed challenge to the nexus of knowledge and power threatens to undercut commitment to human progress. Specifically, she sternly warns of the dangers of a post-secular standpoint, a stance she associates with Ashis Nandy and Dipesh Chakrabarty, two authors who have inspired us, many of our authors and the postcolonial movement in IR more generally. Here we see not only the playing of the science card, but also the relativism one.

Against this simplistic view, Sandra Harding (2004: 131) explains that accepting sociological relativism, i.e. the belief that distinct social groups see the world differently based upon their varying lived experiences, is not tantamount to epistemological relativism. Perhaps not all social contexts provide equally good bases for knowledge of the world or alternative worldings, but those that have been relegated to the margins deserve to be treated more equally than modern Western science has normally allowed for. In keeping with feminist standpoint theory’s plural or “strong objectivity,” we also refuse the possibility that any region or social group can claim the kind of monopoly now asserted by Northern scholars in IR. In Chapter 12 of this book, Arlene Tickner discusses what makes some group experiences or standpoints conducive to “better” forms of knowledge than the dominant, positivist “view from nowhere.”

Furthermore, appeals to universal values or “settled” ethical positions normally rely on acts of historical denial that underplay the violence and destruction required for the imposition of relatively common political institutions and the settling of questions of what counts as human moral advance. Postcolonial or critical constructivist challenges to such ploys are thus not “ethical paralysis” so much as political and ethical protest against past and continuing relations of domination (Inayatullah and Blaney 2012: 168–70). In this sense, it is possible to see many of the contributions in this book as engaging not only vexed questions of ontology, scholarly orientation and methods, but also speaking, directly or indirectly, to questions of ethics and justice associated with the colonial legacy and persistent global inequalities.

De-schooling and alternative worldings

Sankaran Krishna (2001: 420–1) argues that

we need to be sensitive to the routine, everyday policing of the study of international relations we use to demarcate our field from that of subjects such as history, comparative politics, anthropology, literature, and cultural studies [ … ]; disciplining moves that [have] excised questions of inequality, genocide, the theft of lands and cultures.
The challenge he poses is no less than "It[ deserves] a response from the discipline in its current dominant manifestations" (Krishna 2001: 401). This is a striking notion, and indeed we think that this book can be fruitfully associated with the idea of de-schooling and how such practices make alternative worlds possible. More precisely, we are interested in how de-schooling is intertwined with re-schooling, given that "worldmaking," according to Nelson Goodman (1978: 6), "always starts from worlds already at hand." De-schooling discloses materials "at hand" that re-school us and give us access to multiple and often previously inaccessible worlds.

Hutchings (2011: 647) gives a clear accounting of "the variety of techniques used by scholars who challenge parochialism and ethnocentrism in IR" that we believe gives further content to the idea of de-schooling. These are generally familiar to those sensitive to the "third debate," reflectivist or cultural turns within the field. First, de-schooling would involve "de-constructing dominant identities by demonstrating the particular grounds of supposedly universally relevant frameworks." Second, scholars might begin to re-school through "active engagement with, and application of traditions of thought that have not formed part of the canon of IR theory, from feminism to Buddhism" and by attempting "to identify and articulate subaltern voices, whether we take these voices from peripheral literatures or of those who participate in social-scientific work in IR only as objects of empirical investigation."

Our authors adopt similar strategies. Inanna Hamati-Ataya (Chapter 2) and Asli Çalkıvık (Chapter 3) deconstruct our very identities as critical, reflective IR scholars in ways that force us to question the universal relevance of the field, even in its critical variants. Iver Neumann (Chapter 5) challenges the narrowness of IR historical archives where he constructs the site from Western European materials, ignoring the interconnected and co-constitutive experience of the steppes. Shih Chih-yu (Chapter 6), Manuela Picq (Chapter 7), and Qin Yaqing (Chapter 9) engage with traditions beyond the Western academy to claim the international and re-imagine IR theory, while Naeeem Inayatullah (Chapter 11) does so through the use of literature. Others, like Chris Chekuri (Chapter 4), Robbie Shilliam (Chapter 8), and Quy Nhun Phan and Himadeep Muppudi (Chapter 10) identify and articulate subaltern voices that speak back otherwise to mainstream IR as part of their scholarly engagement.

However, promising these techniques, Hutchings (2011: 647) warns that they are hardly "foolproof paths to a more inclusive IR" since they require scholars to make a commitment to represent or translate these alternative traditions and subaltern voices. One danger with this, Guruminder Bhamara (2007: 68-70) stresses, is that we pluralize IR by turning civilizations or cultures into separate entities that might be compared, forgetting "the always already existing interconnectedness of the world." Similarly, Hobson (2007: 150) calls on us "to begin by acknowledging that civilizations are not only connected but are co-constitutive and mutually embedded in each other." Or likewise, for Kamran Matin (2012: 18), the point of invoking difference is not to reject "the notion of the universal per se but its conception as the internal, homogeneous, and homogenizing product of any single self-contained social formation, cultural zone, or civilization." Such concerns prompt Said (1994a: 18, 32, 51) to propose "contrapuntal" techniques of reading that are sensitive to the "intertwined and overlapping histories" that have made the modern world—that juxtapose or read together and against each other the official histories of the metropolitan centers and the histories of those colonized.

Our own authors deploy versions of this. For example, Neumann (Chapter 5) argues that common understandings of the emergence of states are rooted in the erasure of the experiences of steppe polities that arose in mutually constitutive relations with settled agrarian empires. Shih (Chapter 6) shows how constructions of "self" in East Asia continue to emerge against official histories of China's central role. Shilliam (Chapter 8) juxtaposes slave populations' accounts of their own experience against Enlightenment stories of abolition.

Despite the power of contrapuntal techniques, many such readings still leave us largely within what Nandy (2007: xi) calls the "intellectually [...] own charmed circles." He calls for us to "venture out" and to engage those "who do not employ the favored categories of the academic world," who remain "underprofessionalized and undersocialized." This is not only a skill but an ethical responsibility towards alternative systems of knowledge, especially in a time, as Nandy (2007: ix) warns us, when "emancipatory ideas" may be turned into "tools of violence and oppression" as modern Enlightenment ideas have been. Said (2003: xvii) uses a somewhat different vocabulary when he calls for a form of "humanism" that is "sustained by a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods." We read Qin (Chapter 9) as offering his contribution in the same spirit, one that Said (2003: xix) imagines is "deployed with generosity and, if I may use the word, hospitality." Hospitality literally requires the opening up of a home or space to the other: the interpreter's mind actively makes a place in it for a foreign other" or a "creative making of a place for works that are otherwise alien and distant."

The final chapter of this book (Arlene Tickner, Chapter 12), makes a similar plea to move outside of the standpoint allowed by academic practice and institutions as a prerequisite for building knowledge more meaningful and more relevant to making the world a better place. Many of the chapters that follow do precisely this, including Phan and Muppudi (Chapter 10), who use an "underprofessionalized" narrative that compels us to open up to the voice of the other and recognize our own complicity in a world of violence, and Picq (Chapter 7), who explores indigeneity and indigenous politics as a means of contesting hegemonic readings of the world. Inayatullah (Chapter 11) points to the emancipatory potential of un-distancing ourselves via an engagement with literary accounts of regions of conflict. More precisely, he argues that we can mitigate the distancing characteristic of Western scientific knowledge by creating empathy, doubt and affection with figures in novels. We might say that Hamati-Ataya (Chapter 2) reads her own experience as an IR scholar from
the periphery, yet is producing for the modern academy contrapuntally and highlighting the paradoxes of this positioning. Shilliam (Chapter 8) demands that we extend hospitality to the voices of those who articulate their freedom in the language of coming out of one’s *kumbala*. And Chekuri (Chapter 4) takes us through a reading of a pre-colonial text from South India that articulates a worldview suppressed by conventional and highly instrumental readings of rulership.

**Book structure and rationale**

Although as editors we intentionally provided little formal “structure” in the way of explicit questions that our authors were asked to respond to, we did invite each of them to consider and react to what we see as the two main goals of this book: (1) to explore the role of the dominant Western discipline of IR as a set of boundary-drawing practices informing a particular mode of worlding and a mode of knowledge production; and (2) to analyze promising alternative avenues for claiming the world that transgress the boundary-drawing practices of IR in its more conventional forms.

Despite many efforts in the field to expose the colonial complicity of IR, our sense is that this work has yet to deliver fully on the promise of engaging different modes of worlding and knowledge production. Although calling for dialogue with difference is a first (and perhaps easier) step, the most significant challenge is to continue and intensify the work begun in the previous two books of the trilogy—*International Relations Scholarship Around the World and Thinking International Relations Differently*—and in the “Worlding Beyond the West” series through a sustained process of uncovering, disseminating and assessing alternative worldings, and perhaps more importantly, the connections that may be possible between them.

This book is thus structured around four themes: (1) reflections on critical IR; (2) alternative archives of the state; (3) alternative international registers; and (4) writing the international differently. Many of the chapters might be thought untimely in the sense discussed by Çalkıvık (Chapter 3). At the very least they stand outside the time that IR constructs in two senses: first, that they recover events beyond the European experience that has defined the proper history of IR; and second, they disrupt central assumptions of modern IR. Whether we think of the timelessness of realist conceptions of the international or liberal conceptions of progress that proclaim themselves as the working out of human possibilities, posing alternative worldings appears out of sync, even temporally impossible from within the confines of IR. Some of our contributors also draw on unfamiliar archives to construct possible histories and worlds that call us to make space for ideas that are “alien” and “distant,” but that may allow us to see and think otherwise. Such histories point to very different resources than those we are normally accustomed to, including the relational quality of polities (Neumann, Chapter 5), imaginations of self and other in a direction unfamiliar to much of IR (Shih, Chapter 6), or the interconnection of all being in a way that imagines a different mode of world governance (Qin, Chapter 9).

**Reflections on critical IR**

Hamati-Ataya has written elsewhere on the challenge of reflexivity in IR scholarship (2011b). In Chapter 2, she explores the paradoxes of her own position as a Western-educated IR scholar now teaching in the United Kingdom, who wants to be able to claim the international with some non-Western voice, by speaking back to herself in layers of voices. In addition to performing a reflexivity frowned upon by disciplinary codes of writing, we see her chapter as suggesting that the capacity for critique that enables us to expose the “singularity that strives to forget its historicity” (see p. 28)—that allows us to turn IR into Western IR—also confronts us with a “blinding light” that potentially paralyzes us. We cannot be sure that our critique (from within) really counts as critique at all; but the chapter leaves us with the promise that the more we expose and experience the boundaries that seem to enclose us, the better we may understand the very “peculiarity” of our position of speaking both within and beyond IR, and our anxiety to make this peculiarity the norm. This summary hardly exhausts Hamati-Ataya’s reflections on the modern subject (and our anxiety to rescue it with constructivism), on the sociology of knowledge turned on itself, nor on the way we seem to impose “cultures” even as we think of them.

Çalkıvık (Chapter 3) examines the paradoxical nature of critical theorizing in the field of IR. Namely, she shows how even critical IR prejudices what counts as criticism, holding “critique” to relevance in modernist or timely terms by demanding that it should reflect upon pressing matters of the “here and now.” Such a stance, Çalkıvık suggests, curtails its ability to unsettle disciplinary boundaries—avowedly one of critical theory’s main goals. Making use of Wendy Brown’s treatment of critique, Çalkıvık points to the centrality of being untimely, going against the times or brushing against the grain for theory’s “critical” edge. She shows that what is ultimately at stake in critical debates within IR is the effacement of untimely political questions that should be at the root of any critique, given that they open up greater room for dissent.

**Alternative archives of the state**

In Chapter 4, Chekuri expands the archive from which IR might draw. He makes use of the *Teluguīvarī Andhra Rājula Canīna*, a seventeenth century Telegu text describing the practices of pre-colonial *nāyaka* (perhaps translated as rulers). Most crucially, a close reading suggests a narrative counter to most historians of pre-colonial Indian polities who presume a behaviorally instrumental account of rulership. We recognize this presumption in the dominance of rationalist paradigms and their extension to every time and place. What Chekuri finds
instead is a historically specific form of kingship that tends to spurn instrumentality in favor of practices of virtue, piety and generosity. Indeed, perhaps his most powerful observation is that individuals become nayaka only through these practices. Here we have a moral regime governing political life that offers us an alternative vision of the world.

Neumann (Chapter 5) notes that the IR discipline has taken on an evolutionary notion that makes states appear as products of an internal and separable dynamic. Neumann’s exploration of the Rus’ khaganate makes clear how untenable this assumption of pristine evolution is as an historical account. Rather, polities arise in relation to other polities, shaping and reshaping each other and the boundaries between them. This relational notion of polities forces us to rethink the assumption of much of IR as separable states. It also challenges the presumption of sedentariness as the natural basis of advanced polities that writes nomadism into the past and excludes the influence of the steppe from the story of the emergence of European states.

Shih’s chapter (Chapter 6) explores the multi-sited imagination of China and Chineseness that destabilizes any effort to fix their meaning. He begins with Mizoguchi Yuzo’s construction of an essentialized substance of China (or Kita) that attempts to world a Japan free from ties of identity to China’s modernization or backwardness and the temptation to military expansion. However useful to Japan’s reassessment of its identity in the post-war era, this construction founders even as the Chinese leadership itself lays claim to an essentialized Chineseness, reinforced by North American and European social science and its concerns with China rising or the China threat. Shih maps the way China and Chineseness are variously imagined both within territorial China and beyond, as scholars world their spaces from various sites. A very different China and distinct worldings emerge when we trace the trajectories of projects of self-discovery and creation emerging in China’s provinces, its East Asian neighbors, and in “Chinese” communities outside China. As these multi-sited scholars revise histories that place them as subordinates within or in relation to a Sinic world order, variously laying claim to or disclaiming Chineseness for their sites, China is produced, less as an essentialized Kita and more as a process of becoming along multiple, interacting paths such that no single site can claim monopoly on conceiving it.

Alternative international registers

According to Picq (Chapter 7), indigeneity is perhaps as far “beyond” IR as is possibly imaginable, given its links to forms of existence, knowledge and governance that precede the Western modern world. Also, the fact that indigenous peoples continue to be portrayed as “relies” of the past that modernity somehow left behind is living proof of the colonial mindset still embedded within fields of study such as IR. Picq reverses the polarity and explores what political being before and beyond modern state sovereignty and territoriality might look like through the lens of indigeneity. In doing so, she analyzes alternative strategies of dissent and political practice used by Kichwa women and the ways in which their struggles lead to quite distinct imaginaries of world politics. More precisely, she points to multi-layered governance structures very different from those associated with the European Union. Attention to indigeneity is valuable precisely because it destabilizes entrenched assumptions about what constitutes international relations, as well as offering counter-narratives that are oblivious to disciplinary boundaries such as those erected by IR.

Shilliam’s chapter (Chapter 8) is also striking in this latter respect, as it offers what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) calls an “unseemly comparison” or what Nayak and Selbin (2010: 8) might think of as the kind of “disturbing” discourses that de-center IR. The ideas of freedom and emancipation surely are central concepts in much of liberal and critical IR, but Shilliam’s exploration of Caribbean responses to enslavement makes clear that IR holds no monopoly over understanding slavery or what it means to struggle against it. Rather, he traces how a historical figure, Nelly, deploys her kumbla to protect herself in a world in which modern society was largely deaf to the pleas of slaves for emancipation, and Enlightenment thinking was completely oblivious to the way that slaves conceived their own freedom. It is not clear whether we should treat Shilliam’s work as a Rastafarian IR or a worlding possibility that stands outside of IR altogether. Either way, hearing it requires the kinds of hospitality that Edward Said recommends.

Qin (Chapter 9) is one of the key figures in China who speaks to the possibility of a Chinese school of IR. By explicitly rejecting any position that claims authority to speak on behalf of a people or the world, he has allowed himself to articulate a relational constructivist perspective on IR that draws on Chinese traditions but without advocating a Chinese school per se. He simultaneously refuses to allow European and North American constructivism to speak for the world, but also places his work in dialogue with the scholars he studied as a graduate student in the United States. His work (and others similarly inspired, both in China and beyond) to articulate alternative visions of the world allows us to hope for a more plural discipline and one that has access to multiple archives.

Writing the international differently

Two of our chapters employ alternative modes of writing that might be considered completely “beyond” IR. No chapter in this book is more effective in this respect than Chapter 10 by Phạm and Muppidi. They begin their contribution with the well-known documentary Hearts and Minds, and Westmoreland’s unforgettable claim that Orientals don’t value human life. Boxed in by their own position as Orientals, they confront a world of Westies for whom such statements authorize ruthless violence against others (most notably Vietnam and Algeria in their stories) and an empty desire to help those
(in homilies offered regularly by Nicholas Kristof) who are rendered incapable of helping themselves. Pham and Muppidi confront us Westies with our own words and challenge us with the images and words of those enclosed in the Oriental box in a way that explodes our capacity to keep them there in their place. In a way, quite unfamiliar to academic discourse, they hope to reach both our minds and our hearts.

Inayatullah (Chapter 11) seeks a similar goal in his analysis of two novels: finding a way to “bypass the mode of wordiness constituted by social science and by Western IR” (see p. 194) and to tap into the possibilities offered by our human emotions. He indicates that teaching, thinking and feeling through novels places us in a different register that helps us to de-school and re-school IR. Where academic literature promotes a “more humane and more holistic” response (see p. 211), the novel form may lead us to laugh and cry, feel anger and shame, perhaps breaking down academics’ “epistemological distancing” that insulate them from a different voice, at once outside the discipline but also within the self. Jacqueline Rose (2004) explains why the appeal to a register of feeling might penetrate our academic defenses: we cannot sustain our evasions when our feelings of complicity are exposed to the public eye.

Finally, and by way of conclusion, Tickner (Chapter 12) explores the conditions of possibility for meaningful analyses of world politics from diverse standpoints, both within and outside academia. Despite growing acceptance of reflexivity within fields such as IR, she suggests that even critical scholars have fallen short of examining how the academic world itself—through factors such as neoliberalization and professionalization—conditions knowledge in ways unconducive to imagining meaningful alternatives. Making use of insights derived from feminist standpoint theory and postcolonialism, Tickner explores the possibilities offered by non-dominant or peripheral scholarship and knowledges from below, that is, know-hows that emerge from sites that are removed altogether from academic practice. She concludes by suggesting that if academic disciplines such as IR are to reclaim the international for projects distinct from those they are currently tied to, new academic standpoints committed to different kinds of knowledge need to be created. Doing so requires, among other things, unthinking conventional ideas and promoting collective intellectual action designed to provide support for half-formed or “kooky” work that under “normal” circumstances would be subject to undue scrutiny or polite attack.

Tickner’s suggestion that we “forget” IR echoes the de- and re-schooling processes that many of this book’s chapters trace. She makes us think that instead of singing to the IR choir, as we ourselves have done in much of this introduction, our energies might be better invested striking up and strengthening conversations and connections among distinct actors and sites that are struggling to imagine the world otherwise. Chided by fellow travelers on this general project to be less concerned about our interventions’ possible impacts on IR, we are reminded that the space of IR is incessantly criss-crossed by endeavors from multiple fields of study and less-schooled theorists of the world. It is only the gatekeepers who take on the ultimately impossible task of securing the borders of the discipline.

References


