

All Azimuth Debate: Gradual Reform or Revolution? Pathways to Global IR

Ayşe Zarakol

University of Cambridge

Ersel Aydınli

Bilkent University

Abstract


This forum article is based on the All Azimuth Debate held at Bilkent University on 3 October 2024. The event was organized by the Center for Foreign Policy and Peace Research in cooperation with Bilkent University's Department of International Relations. The debate was moderated by Dr. Seçkin Köstem. The forum article demonstrates the scholarly exchange between Dr. Ayşe Zarakol and Dr. Ersel Aydınli based on the answers that they gave to Dr. Seçkin Köstem's questions on Global International Relations (IR). This forum article features two leading scholars' perspectives regarding the definition of Global IR, the main actors and venues for Global IR, the role of English language as the dominant academic language, the essentialism/parochialism trap and pathways for a stronger global representation for the discipline of IR.


Keywords: Global IR, Global South, globalization, theory, language

Defining “Global IR”: Temporary Fad or Fundamental Turn?

Ayşe Zarakol: First of all, thank you for inviting me to Bilkent, I think it's the first time I'm visiting in an academic capacity. It's my great pleasure to be here with you. I hope we can live up to the promise of a debate, you know perhaps the word suggests something more confrontational; I don't know how confrontational we will get, we'll see.

So, what is global IR? Global IR I think as far as I understand it -- Ersel Hoca is more of an expert on this -- came out of this general observation that International Relations as we know it and as we've learned it, was quite Western-centric, especially U.S-centric. Many of us know the article by Stanley Hoffman calling IR 'an American social science', which was published in 1977. That is generally true to this day, so from that observation came the desire, I suppose, to do something about it, to be more inclusive, include perspectives of other regions, other cultures, other geographies. So, I think that's generally the mission of Global IR. It corresponds to similar movements, at least in terms of its labeling, in other disciplines. For instance, long before International Relations had this global turn there was a movement in history, you know at the end of the 90s, that's still with us. This idea of Global History:

Ayşe Zarakol, Professor in International Relations, University of Cambridge,  0000-0002-1236-3226, Email: az319@cam.ac.uk

Ersel Aydınli, Professor, Department of International Relations, Bilkent University,  0000-0002-8534-1159, Email: ersel@bilkent.edu.tr

let's move away from doing national histories... Let's talk about the history of the globe, of things that are connected and interconnected.

What happened in IR is slightly different, but because there were these globalizing movements in other social sciences and humanities, IR also had its own turn. I believe within IR this movement was led primarily by Amitav Acharya and to some extent with Barry Buzan. I would say it's a movement that's been around for maybe 15 years at most, because when I did my PhD in the 2000s, there was nobody in the US talking about Global IR. I don't think I ever came across it, I never even heard the term. Then it started making an appearance, I would say maybe around 2014-2015. Then it becomes kind of a thing, as the various turns do in International Relations.

We can of course talk about why we have so many turns or the successes of various turns. You can see the success of Global IR right here: nobody talked about Global IR 15 years ago, suddenly we are all talking about it. This room is very full, you clearly all want to talk about Global IR...everybody's interested. I think there is this idea --- especially for those who are not based in the mainstream of the discipline as it's called in the US -- there is this idea that Global IR could become a vehicle, a vessel for getting heard finally. It is up to debate whether Global IR has accomplished that or not.

But that's why people are attracted to the label. They think that it's a way of maybe changing the discipline, making it more pluralistic...Now there's a Global IR section at the International Studies Association, the creation of which I initially opposed, I should say, because my thinking was all of IR should be global. Why are we having a separate section for this? Because creating a section suggests that it can be somehow contained or that the people who want this can be placated if they just get their own corner. I think this points to some of the pitfalls of Global IR, which I'm sure Ersel Hoca will also raise. I'll pause here for now because I know there are many more questions coming.

Ersel Aydınli: First of all I would argue that Global IR is just a new label, but the *problem* that Global IR is trying to address has been there forever, probably since the inception of this discipline, not just when Hoffman wrote his article, or when others raised this issue. Later, when the people that Ayşe is referring to labeled it as "Global IR," finally it had a name and came to our attention. That in itself actually is problematic because that tells you something about how broken this discipline is. Just being a problem is, by itself, not enough to be heard and recognized. Instead, certain people, some small Gods or big Gods somewhere, have to decide finally to bring it to the agenda and give it a label. And generally this happens in the core of the discipline or it's done by core-related people, and only then does something become an issue that we are interested in. That shows the artificiality in a sense, of agenda setting in this discipline.

In terms of definition, it's not easy to define 'Global IR', but it's worth noting perhaps that this initiative is a response to something larger going on. Many of us are highly disappointed with our discipline; and many of us believe IR, both the discipline and IR theory, are in crisis. IR theory hasn't been necessarily achieving what it promised—truly explaining world affairs, anticipating future developments. The push for Global IR, therefore, may be considered a symptom, not a starting point. Every new initiative in IR runs the risk of turning into just a fad and gradually losing steam. Take globalization in the 1990s for example. Many of these new 'big ideas' maybe deserved to fade away. They became popular but didn't have substance. My worry is that Global IR may also follow this course, but in this

case, it wouldn't be because of the weakness of the idea. It is the strongest in potential for restructuring the discipline, but, because the discipline is broken and hegemonic, this anti-establishment push faces that risk.

Another small point with respect to the definition, Ayşe is right that there were other movements before this one in IR. Disciplines from archeology to linguistics to business management have all had—or are having—their push to be more global, more inclusive. We in IR may imagine we're the first time to experience this, but we aren't. There is, however, one difference with IR. The story of IR is already a kind of a misnomer, because its very name is "international", but those who named it 'international' relations were not necessarily doing anything truly international or global. It was a kind of false advertisement right from the beginning. So, in that sense, it's a very ancient problem and I'm very happy to see that finally there seems to now be this energy that we have got to do something about it. 90% of IR real activities take place globally, but 90% of the IR knowledge production takes place in just the 10%. Global IR is a kind of an adjustment effort, but we'll get into discussion of whether it can be done, or how well it can be done.

Actors and Venues: Who and Where Should Change Begin?

Ersel Aydınli: I can start with an anecdote because the first article I ever worked on and published was about the role of journals in IR. I was a PhD student and with my partner we wrote this piece. There was not a lot of information available on the Internet at the time, so we had to find and go through all the hard copies and look at the profiles of the authors, it was a very early bibliometric kind of study. That was in 2000 and the reason that I felt interested in the topic was because even in our IR theory graduate classes, as somebody who came from Turkey, this was a North American setting; it was clear that those of us from 'other' places were being directed in our class papers and in our dissertation research to study our own country cases and provide evidence for the core to theorize. We were expected to contribute from our so-called native background so that there would be enough material to support the existing theories. Generally, the expectation was that we shouldn't be trying to criticize them but instead to just bring in more evidence to point to their accuracy.

That hurt. First of all, we were all there in the same setting, obviously we were considered equal in terms of our cognitive ability, and if theorizing is labeled as the most prestigious and important form of intellectual discovery, the top level of knowledge production, then technically we should all of us have been able to do it. But that didn't seem to be the case. To be fair, in retrospect this dynamic was no doubt being upheld by language factors, in which the native English speakers were more fluently engaging with theoretical discussions and we outsiders were being politely invited into the conversation by telling about 'what things were like in our countries'.

In any case, when I looked at the articles that we were being assigned to read, particularly in our IR theory classes, again it was very clear that there were maybe 10 or 15 core people dominating, and they too were all of a similar background and profile. Turning back to my first article, therefore, in it we decided to look more broadly at who was being published in the top journals in IR. We were in shock because 95% of them came from just a few places. It became clear to us that it was really a white man's discipline. These journals, and these authors were setting the agenda, and everybody else basically was being forced to study

them. If an outside voice did appear, it was just to bring in extra evidence.

I can't emphasize enough, therefore, the role of the journals. That was when I was a graduate student. Now, with 25 years of experience I would still argue that the journals, the knowledge production venues, are the most critical entities for the continuation of the broken hegemony in the IR discipline. All of us, but I'll speak particularly for those of us in the periphery, we are all dying to get our name written in those journals, so that we could get acknowledged, so we could get a seat, even if just on the lower slopes of Mt. Olympus. Whoever sets up the criteria for acknowledgement at the end of the day is basically controlling the industry, and in this case it's the so-called 'top', core journals.

The way I see it, academia is a kind of industry and, at the end of the day, much like the military, there has developed a scholarly industrial complex. A recent op-ed came out in *The Guardian* by Arash Abizadeh, about how a few big publishing houses, those that own most of the leading academic journals, are making billions from our work. Instead of being upset about that reality, we're all competing, killing ourselves, to write more for their journals, all so that others can become rich. In my understanding, this is evidence of what I've called dependent intellectual development. We're part of a dependent system in which the periphery produces most of the raw material, the core turns it into manufactured goods and sells it back to us with a higher value, and then we come to think that it represents the primary knowledge and in turn try to fit everything we have at home into that knowledge or understanding—in other words, we assimilate. A dependent structure like this basically runs on assimilation and thus leads to a kind of homogeneity, because non-conforming ideas get ignored. As a young scholar in the periphery, you're left with two options: kill yourself to get acknowledged and therefore accept being assimilated, or rebel and be left with either no job or to being part of a peripheral scholarship that is generally considered to be low quality, conspiratorial, and often highly politicized. There have to be more options than that, and technically, that's what the global IR initiative is supposed to be.

Ayşe Zarakol: I guess here's where we get the debate. I have a slightly less pessimistic reading of the situation. I don't think the choice is either to assimilate or be relegated to the periphery. I think it is possible to change the conversation a bit. Maybe not in radical ways but still. People make different trade-offs, different choices. I don't want the students here to think that it's all doom and gloom. Because if you believe that you're never going to change anything, why are we doing this at all?

So, I'd like to present a slightly more optimistic scenario where you can push back a little bit. It requires engaging in the conversation, and again you make trade-offs because engaging in the conversation means reproducing some of these power dynamics. At the same time, you're not forever doomed to repeat the same things. That's how change happens.

It's true that the discipline is US and Western-centric, but this dynamic isn't all top down. In a way the periphery was also complicit in it, right? There was a long period where there wasn't enough confidence to push back. Where so much of the training was: 'here's where we learn capital T "Theory" and then I'm going to go apply that to my country'; Realist reading of X, Liberal reading of Y...

This year I was in Taiwan, Brazil, South Africa... More and more academies outside of the core are beginning to say now: "Well I don't know that the Theory is correct, let's come up with new theories that take our dynamics into account." That's how you kind of get a bit of progress. It's not just we are forever doomed to either reproduce the US-centric Theory or

just do periphery stuff. Through the conversation of the two, ideally something better comes out. That what I would hope Global IR produces. In its ideal form it's not just adding Turkey, China, Brazil or whatever to the core narrative without disturbing it. Doing it right requires rethinking the enterprise of IR with inputs from the whole world. Of course, that's very difficult, but still, I don't think it's completely hopeless. You may find the label 'Global IR' problematic in many ways, but these labels are often strategic within the discipline. Labels allow people to organize under them, to create critical mass and then even people who don't believe in the mission kind of have to take it seriously. We did the same thing with Historical IR.

I work at *International Organization*, probably the most 'mainstream' journal there is. There is an awareness even there. We have four editors and the other three are U.S. based. They don't know much about non-U.S. approaches to doing IR, even including Europe. But they all agree that we should have more articles from other parts of the world. They're at least in principle committed to this idea. That has something to do with American style liberalism. There's at least an in-principle commitment to inclusivity, which you can always deploy to your advantage. But it is also thanks to this Global IR movement there's now an awareness even in very U.S-centric spaces that it is a problem to talk only about the U.S. There's at least in principle the opening of that space. Of course, it'll close again, but this is how it always goes, there are cycles of spaces opening, then you make a little bit of progress, then it closes again, then you despair and then you push again... That's how any progress is ever made in academia, in human civilization, in anything really. It's never like "Here we rebel!" and then we create a perfect society. That never happens. You always win some and you lose some, that's how I see life.

Ersel Aydınli: There's no question that there's now an extra awareness in terms of inclusivity, exclusivity issues and all that. But when you look at whether things are actually changing in terms of the agenda setting; primary theories, primary concepts, the way we study, the type of philosophies that we are still utilizing, unfortunately you quickly realize that not a lot seems to be changing. Perhaps the problem with the 'Global IR' initiative is that it is not a truly global initiative. It is basically an ISA initiative now. It's been nicely incorporated into the core agenda; top journals have started publishing a bit on it and also it's being promoted by core people, but where is the periphery in this push? Where is the globe in this 'global' initiative? Where are the global journals in this? Why is it that periphery scholars, even when writing about the Global IR issue, still feel they have to be published in the top core journals and get acknowledged by them? Global IR is not a global initiative. Look at even the pattern of successful publishing relationships and you will see generally a global Southerner pairing up or allying with an established someone from the core. To become a major spokesperson for Global IR seems to require either this type of alliance or it requires you to be someone who is basically nationalized and has become part of the core. But the globe is much bigger than ISA, right? In my understanding ISA is kind of like the IMF. The day you can show me examples of multiple countries that actually managed to develop successfully within the IMF system and structure, is the day I'll be convinced that an ISA-led global initiative can work. Peripheral scholarship will never develop through ISA, because ISA is the embodiment of corporate IR.

To go on with the economic analogy, Economic Development Theory might offer some insights on a better way to promote Global IR. In a situation of dependent development, there

are various routes a country can take. The first route is to commit fully to liberalization and buy into the IMF/ISA agenda. Basically that means assimilation, or the current situation in global IR. A second option is to rebel completely, in other words break off from the core economy and set up an entirely new alternative one. The risk here? A full break means becoming a closed knowledge community, without an exchange of ideas between it and the outside world, and that's really the antithesis of Global IR. So we need to consider a third route, one in which countries adopt a strategic trade policy. That means finding one thing, a beautiful, unique local product, packaging it carefully, and turning it into a global product. With this interesting new product you capture the attention of the corporate core. Suddenly, your country gains some larger market advantage and recognition, and therefore more trading possibility.

Unlike the second route, a strategic policy like this is the truly revolutionary one. It involves a global revolution of ideas, in which new hubs emerge across the globe, each one offering locally produced knowledge based on different, perhaps new, perhaps ancient perspectives and offering options to current knowledge. With those multiple hubs we would have a free competition, not a regulated market competition, but a free fair environment in which these ideas can be marketed alongside each other. Like a farmers' market in which you walk along and pick and choose the fruits and vegetables that look good to you, rather than a commercial supermarket where you're presented with a homogenous, selected, 'best' form of each item. In this market of ideas, we would be able to look and decide for ourselves which ideas seem better, more logical, more relevant. In the current supermarket of ideas, everything is regulated, and small periphery farmers aren't able to even show their produce.

Think about the region of Anatolia and the neighboring countries of the Middle East. On these lands Sumerians basically invented the idea of the state. Excavations in Göbeklitepe suggest that religion was created and invented in these lands; money was invented in these lands; and all of these were signs of a search for order. Then the first 'world war' took place on these lands, at the battle of Kadesh between the Egyptian and Hittite Empires, resulting in the first peace treaty being signed between these same two superpowers. The Ionian League, right in the Southern part of Anatolia, was essentially the first International Organization. Despite all these 'firsts', has there been any contribution to IR out of these? Fundamental philosophies were first discussed and debated in ancient Anatolia. Do we see reflections of any of them, in any of the things that we study in today's IR? Unfortunately, we don't.

It's for this reason that I tend to be a bit pessimistic about the current Global IR trend. I feel that as long as we continue to proceed through ISA or under the current journal domination, there is no way that alternative ideas like these are going to become part of the core debate. Our only hope maybe is that since the core calls this discipline 'international', they will continue to need some periphery spice there for legitimate labeling. The corporate core, one hopes, cannot afford to completely ignore some kind of peripheral contribution and presence. Perhaps the best route therefore is to keep alive the threat of the rebellion route potential, and hope that core and periphery together can move into a genuine globalization of IR, not a core-determined and core-executed one. Not incorporation or integration, but mutual rebuilding. On the other hand, some pessimism remains though because there doesn't appear to be even an embryonic peripheral capacity to negotiate with the core for a mutual rebuilding. Instead, what you see in the periphery are scholars trying to save themselves through integration with the core, on the core's terms. This is, in essence, assimilation with the core.

English Hegemony: Lingua Franca Opportunity or Curse for Global IR?

Ayşe Zarakol: I'll first react to what Ersel Hoca said and then I'll link it to language. I don't want to be in this position of defending Global IR, having written some things a bit critical of the Global IR movement. For me the main problem is Global IR's tendency towards essentialism: this idea of recovering various cultural and national essences around the world and putting them in the mix. This is where it becomes problematic. But I will say something in its defense against the accusation that "You know Global IR through ISA will never globalize IR." I think that's a misreading of what the Global IR movement is trying to do. Global IR is not trying to create Global IR from scratch. It is actually trying to make IR as it exists into something slightly more global. It's not this whole "rethinking" project. Nor is it some kind of nefarious agenda as far as I know.

Global IR started with some people in the US finding their environment suffocatingly one dimensional and saying: "Hey wouldn't it be better if we also talked about like Indonesia?" That's all it is, really. It's become so large because, for the reasons that Ersel Hoca articulated, there's this desire in other parts of the world to be heard, to join the conversation, to make IR as it exists more open to their kind of scholarship and their articles to publish their articles, in top journals.

I don't think most people around the world who use the Global IR label really want to completely overhaul the discipline as it exists, because there are all these structural incentives. Universities, national science bodies etc. all demand some metric of evaluation and a long time ago it was decided that this would involve journal publications. Very few people who are drawn in to the Global IR project want to entirely stop this conversation, scrap existing journals and create a Global IR in a new way.

Ironically, I would want a Global IR that we create from scratch. I'm one of the few people who would want that because of the kind of work that I do, but at the end of the day it is not really possible. We've already been globalized, we've already been subjected to the modern international order, I mean even the language that we're using to speak about stuff... all of it is full of these influences. For instance, Ersel Hoca said "white people": that's U.S. speak, that's not organically from our own historical trajectory. Everything we know about how we see the world, even how we think about various hierarchies: they've already been subjected to some kind of convergence and anything we say against those hierarchies is also already reproducing that kind of convergence. It's impossible to escape from the previous conversation that's already taken place. It's there, it's always going to be there. We are never going to have genuine "authentic" hubs around the world creating IR from scratch. If we could it would be great, but I just don't think it's really achievable.

So, we are left with the very modest project to make IR as it exists more inclusive, more open, which again we can have problems for substantive analytical reasons, but I think on the whole it's helped people around the world, within the existing incentive structures. Then there's this whole idea of how we do social science better, which is a completely different conversation. How do we get away from U.S. centrism, Eurocentrism in our thinking about history, about our own cultures, our own political dynamics? And so on. That's a different conversation from the political disciplinary project of Global IR.

Coming back to language, what I'm saying applies to language as well. If we are to have a conversation that's "global", first, we have to have a common language. That could

be English, it could be some other language, it doesn't matter. But if people are having a conversation, it has to be in one language, it has to have existing priors, people we have to acknowledge what people have talked about before. All of those things, it's not because of the US, it's not because of the West. Whoever is hosting the conversation it's their language, their concepts that will dominate. There are always going to be tradeoffs, it's unavoidable. We can blame U.S. IR for a lot of things but that part is structurally determined. It is possible for people who don't write in English to become famous but it's very unlikely. Because you have to be theoretically so revolutionary that you make enough of an impact that your work gets translated. I think there are some examples from German. But it's just very difficult. Because the conversation is happening in English at the moment. This privileges English speakers unfortunately, but that's how it works.

Ersel Aydınli: The fact that Ayşe feels forced to say, however reluctantly, that 'this is the way it is', is exactly my point, and it's why I'm opposing the idea that this predetermined structure of agents and English language is ever going to turn IR into a Global IR. I would like to refuse to be part of that predetermined structure because it inevitably favors the privileged. Let's look at the structural problems with having a single language dominance—for all of us who have to conduct our professional academic work in a language that is not our native language. First, it inhibits our creativity. Sure, there are studies out there showing that multilingualism increases creativity, but those studies were all focused on non-verbal tasks. Writing, let alone academic writing, in a second language, certainly does not improve creativity. Then there are the studies that clearly show that academic writing in a second language is both more challenging and more stressful than writing in your native language, which further means that it distracts from the freedom and comfort we need to engage in full creative thought. And of course there are also the obvious concrete disadvantages when having to compete in the publication market when you're using a second or third language. There is increasing experimental evidence of how biased judgements of scholarly texts are. Basically, studies have shown that the exact same ideas and methodologies proposed, but with one written in standard and the other in slightly non-standard English, will result in the first one being accepted and the second being rejected.

And all of that is valid for the mere 5-10% of periphery IR that actually speaks English. What about the other 90-95% of the IR world that doesn't? Let's not forget that there are also cores within the peripheries. In Turkey, Bilkent University is part of the core in the periphery, as are Koç, ODTÜ and so on. Language determines this position because these are English medium schools. When it comes to scholarly discussion, people in these schools do not communicate with the rest of the periphery. Those others are viewed as lower scholarly beings. The colonial mindset doesn't get any worse than that. We become linguistically racist against even our own people because they don't speak or write English. For those of us in the core of the periphery, we never publish in Turkish, because we think that somehow an article in English is holier than the other. In that sense, I think English language dominance is the glue that is keeping this dependent structure intact.

To be fair, the periphery's sins are huge too. You realize quickly that there are several other major structural issues in the periphery of the periphery. First there is the capacity issue, which stems from weaknesses within our universities, from teaching quality to methodological training. Then there are the politics, such as lack of academic freedom, or the fact that even when you do see a push in a country, it tends to be a top-down governmental

push, not an organic intellectual one coming out of the universities. Then there are problems with lack of resources, and poor production venues, such as not having enough established, high quality journals. Ultimately, there is the resulting quality issue.

That's why I almost want to call it the tragedy of Global IR, because the real burden depends on the peripheral scholars, yet peripheral scholars cannot seem to have the emotional and physical capacity to do it. Most of them don't have the voice to do it, and the few that do, like us, prefer to jump ship and try to join the club.

To Fear or Not to Fear: The Essentialism/Parochialism Trap or a Big Bang Rebirth?

Ayşe Zarakol: I don't think we have necessarily the same complaints about Global IR because I just don't have such huge expectations of Global IR. As I said before, I see it more as a modest project to make the discipline, especially in the US, a little bit better. It is not some kind of global rethinking of the whole field of International Relations. If we were to engage in that rethinking, it should not be called "Global IR" anyway. It should be called "Global Politics" or something. Even the term International Relations has its own various biases...

The article and the symposium ("Global IR and the Essentialism Trap") came to be because we became concerned, with Michael (Barnett) and others, that the Global IR movement could fall into a trap. This happens often with movements to open up space in the discipline. The core, the mainstream, whatever we call it, they say: "Okay yeah we've heard you, we're going to open up space, we're going to have a few of you in the mix." It becomes tokenistic. That's one problem. This happens with any kind of diversity initiative. It happened at my university, Cambridge. There was a student movement to "decolonize" the reading lists, so it became "Okay we're going to add Fanon." Dealing with criticism by not changing anything but adding token... There's that tendency where the mainstream deals with the critique by saying "Okay we have given you space, now shut up. Stop criticizing us." So, there's that tendency.

But also, from the other side there is also a problem. I don't only want to blame the mainstream for everything. For example, in some of "Chinese IR", which falls under the Global IR umbrella, there is this idea: "We are just going to do our very essentialist, nationalist kind of thing and this will be Global IR just because we're not from the US." And in my mind, this is even more problematic than just Eurocentric stuff that pretends to be universalist. Because then we've actually divided the world into ghettos, cultural ghettos, and we've suddenly reproduced the very problematic 20th century nation state understandings of world history in IR.

For me substantively, from an academic perspective, that goes to very bad places. As I've been saying in the course of this conversation, in an ideal world we would rethink the whole enterprise of IR. To give an example of my own work: it's not enough to critique Westphalia, the Westphalian narrative as being a myth or Eurocentric. We need to offer alternative ways of thinking about world political history. It's not just that in addition to US foreign policy we study Turkish foreign policy, but maybe we rethink the whole concept of "foreign policy" by using examples from different pasts. In an ideal world, this is where I would want any effort to globalize the discipline to go. But I don't think that's Global IR's main purpose at the moment, which is just trying to create space for people around the world to be heard. But it

has created at least some space for people who want to rethink the basic concepts of the field.

I guess I'm not a revolutionary. I'm more of a gradual kind of reform type of person. Trying to make my corner of the field a little bit better is where I'm at.

Ersel Aydınli: We have to remember something. Even some of today's so-called conventional perspectives or theories, when they were first introduced they were treated as parochial, or in some cases essentialist, or provincial. Neorealism was introduced as basically a part of American foreign policy, no? In a way, IR itself was introduced as a discipline to support American foreign policy. So to me, core scholars arguing about the risks of essentialism or parochialism seems a bit like the West telling developing countries that they can't pollute—sure, we developed without paying any attention to the environment, but *you* need to develop in a sterile manner. My point is that when new ideas come in, it's not unusual for them to get labeled as essentialist or parochial or otherwise, but that should not stop them from being introduced, otherwise we'll never know which ideas really make more sense. Every idea deserves a fair shot.

For a while at least, though admittedly with developments in AI this may become a moot point, I think IR has to be multilingual if we want to have a fair and inclusive, creative global discussion. I think there can be and should be a multipolar period of building up multilingual, multicentric global discussions. So I imagine a lot of hubs emerging, a wide variety of ideas and perspectives arising. This would create the possibility at least of a fair competition rising among them. Then we can be in a better position to assess the quality, relevance, possible impact of different ideas. As it is now, we don't have the chance to genuinely compare and contrast ideas. It's a rigged competition. The marketplace is limited, regulated, and blocks free access to new producers. What I am suggesting is a full rebooting at the global level. I would like to see a global movement in which the current core is just one respected part of the whole, rather than forcing the 90% periphery to become nicely incorporated.

This is what I see as the necessary Big Bang for the universal expansion of IR to become global, and an inevitable risk that has to be taken. The so-called ghettos won't remain ghettos in this information age. It is only a phase, but also an opportunity for flourishing different perspectives, theories, philosophies. Then, out of these flourishing 'ghettos' we can get a fair global competition and the chance for a genuine Global Politics discipline. To me, this period is not about rebelling, it's about lifting the floodgates for the ideas to flow freely. It's liberating! I understand that anyone who has a comfortable seat in the establishment part of IR could see this as risky, but for me, it's a freeing up of intellectual potential. Currently, the dominant hub doesn't let anything else emerge so we don't know what is out there.

Will the current dominant language, dominant institution of ISA, dominant Anglo-American discipline slowly expand and allow in some global elements? I say no, it can't. Linguistic and institutional hegemony won't let real homegrown influential rises across the globe. Those have to grow independently, and then compete with their own philosophies, histories, perspectives. Then they will have a chance. Is this feasible? Of course it doesn't look so under the current circumstances, but maybe that's because the current dominant structure is saying 'I will manage the global IR process'. But we've been trying this route, through ISA, expanding the product line with a few local 'tastes' from around the globe, and it hasn't worked. We need to try something new.

The real question again emerges of who is going to really do it. The periphery alone doesn't seem to have the capacity. If the core, and top people in the core, are truly genuine in

their desire to transform this discipline into a global one, I have one concrete recommendation: they need to start publishing their works in periphery journals. That would be a litmus test for how serious they are about Global IR. Simply allocating a few spots in top institutions or journals or associations to some in-name-only periphery scholars, that's only lip service, and it's no different than a big American corporation claiming to be global if they appoint a CEO from a non-American background.

What we have now is an asymmetric dependent structure. Our goal for a more globalized IR project should be to turn it into a symmetric interdependent structure. You know true globalization means *interdependency* not dependency. How are we going to make it interdependent? The core would have to need the periphery as much as the periphery needs the core. You might say that's impossible, and I might agree with you that's why I call it tragic, this current global IR argumentation, but that's what I believe has to happen.

Ayşe Zarakol: I don't disagree it would be great if there were multiple hubs, many journals, and if we didn't have this hierarchy in the discipline. I've written against various hierarchies in early part of my career. I don't disagree with any of that but what I don't hear from what you're saying is the following: is this a structural problem which then would require structural overhauling or are specific people to blame? Because it seems to me that you're suggesting both at times and it's a bit of a cop out. Because the people who've been very involved in the Global IR movement -- again I have my own disagreements with them -- but Amitav and Barry Buzan, for instance, they both are very invested in publishing in non-Western journals. When asked, they do it, sometimes they give support to Chinese IR etc. I personally don't think that's actually a real solution to the problems that you've identified.

It's a bit like this: I'm invited to a party. I go. There is a conversation that is already happening at this party. I can go join the conversation. So then I either have to talk about what they're talking about or I can gradually try to shift the conversation to what I want to talk about. But if they're already talking about something, I can't just go there and yell "Why aren't you talking about my cat?" I can always stay out of the group. I could be alone in my own corner. But if that is the case it doesn't really help my social standing if somebody from the core group comes and says, "Hey do you need anything to drink?". The only thing that will change that dynamic of core group-outsider is if I maybe start my own conversation in the other corner, and then I attract enough people who want to join, people who want to talk about my cat and then that corner becomes eventually attractive enough that there are these multiple centers of conversation. But the impossibility of creating your own conversation in IR away from US-centrism at the moment is not because people like Amitav and Barry are supposedly insincere. It's because the world out there itself is organized around already all these structural hierarchies. The discipline came out of the US, the university incentive structures everywhere, here in Bilkent or over there in Brazil mimic that.

It is easy to say "I hate the system! I'm a revolutionary!" Okay, fine, we all have our complaints, but the real question is what can we do about it? At the end of the day, we're still complaining about the discipline in English language journals which are also ranked by the hierarchy of the discipline. That doesn't make us disingenuous or insincere. It's just how the world is ordered. Isn't it better to actually make the changes that we can make instead of throwing our hands up in the air and condemn the whole enterprise?

Ersel Aydınli: You brought it to a good point. Yes, it is a structural problem, that's why we're perplexed about finding a way of solving it. That's why we're saying it's a little

bit about the journals, it's a little bit about the institutions, and it's also a little bit about pedagogy. We haven't gotten into it, but our classrooms, particularly graduate classrooms, are like the factories of the whole system, and in them, we keep producing new figures to feed into the same asymmetric dependent structure, and keep the same broken discipline going. I'm not saying the people involved in Global IR are insincere, but I would wish that they would emphasize more the critical role of structural hierarchy, linguistic hegemony, and institutional domination.

Because you ask what we can do, let me get a little bit into some specifics, starting off with pedagogy. First of all, the graduate classroom has to be totally revolutionized, starting with the syllabuses we teach. These should be negotiated syllabuses, the kind where everybody pitches in, rather than some God or Goddess coming in and saying: "Here is the syllabus, *this* is what we are going to study." Instead, students should also have some say in the materials selected; the teacher-student relationship should be less hierarchical, with professors functioning as guides or facilitators not exclusive sources of information; and assessment should emphasize growth and creativity over memorization. Turning to the institutions, Global IR shouldn't be only led by a World Bank or IMF-like entity called ISA, based in North America. It should be a global movement. Importantly, in terms of the actual agents of change, I've talked about the role of the core, but from within the periphery, the key lies in what I call "hybrid scholars," those people like you and me, who are foreign educated, and sensitive to localities, native perspectives and all that. We have a critical responsibility; we are the ones who have to be pushing for some type of structural change.

Moving Forward: From "Global IR" to Global Politics?

Ayşe Zarakol: As my final word, I should say all the concepts we use are potentially problematic and potentially productive. There is no concept that is free from its history, connotations, baggage of the people who first invoked it, their personal politics, all of that. Every framework we adopt comes with the vantage point of somebody. There is no critique or concept that will free you entirely from these problems and these tradeoffs. Because there's no perfect theory. It's always going to be flawed in some way. But my goal is to change the field as it exists. I also speak to other disciplines, but I really want IR to be better because it should be better for all the reasons we've discussed.

IR is not again going to be perfect. It's not even going to be great. But it kind of is terrible now so we could improve it a little bit. The Global IR movement -- I don't know their motivations, but I don't think it's a "changing the world" kind of movement. It's more that: "There are all these students who want to study these things, and they can't get jobs. How do we make sure that they get jobs, they get published?" I think it started from that place.

The mainstream vs critical issue: I want to remind everyone that in the US they don't think Constructivism is mainstream at all. It's very marginal. I also want to remind you that whatever happens, something has to be "mainstream". You're never going to have a world where critical is everything. The moment a criticism succeeds it's going to become mainstream and then it's going to get critiqued by others as being mainstream. These are relational labels; they are not forever labels. You're critical to the extent that you know you are opposing the mainstream. That dynamic is always going to exist.

And can Global IR be really truly global as long as it's dominated by Western institutions? No, it will never be truly global. But we have to compare it to not what is ideal, but what is

achievable. So, US-led IR is terribly US-centric, but maybe it's better than some alternatives because in theory at least it's open. Maybe Chinese-led IR will be even more closed. And maybe US-led IR can become more global from what it was 10 years ago. Please compare things to what is achievable rather than what would exist in a perfect world! Because we do not live in a perfect world.

I agree with Ersel Hoca that the burdens on the periphery and the semi- periphery are much higher. Because on the one hand, if you want to engage in the conversation you have to write in English, you have to publish in certain journals and all of that. At the same time, there is a duty of care to the place where you live, the students you teach. And those students don't necessarily have the same desire to join that academic conversation that's happening globally with its core somewhere else. So you also have to produce knowledge for the people that you see on a day-to-day basis. As a scholar, as a teacher, that creates almost two jobs. That is quite difficult, but it's really important. I think it is a big problem that we teach this IR Theory thing that is completely divorced from anybody's actual experience of how the world works in Turkey and then we expect students to kind of parrot that back to us. That does some epistemic violence to the local knowledge production. I completely agree with that.

And that brings me to this issue of innovation in Global IR. It doesn't have to be under the name of Global IR because again this was a disciplinary move. Not everything has to have a label. But in general, I do really think there's so much the rest of the world can say about theory production in IR and part of the reason we haven't is because of all the structural problems that we've discussed. But part of it is -- as I was saying earlier -- there were also hierarchies in our minds. We have lacked the self-confidence to say to the West: "You know what that theory doesn't make sense! That's not how things work." And I see more and more students becoming braver to criticize US-based scholars: "You say x but that's very specific to the US. Why are you generalizing from the American experience? Our experience is very different, you're wrong about your generalization." And that's where theoretical innovation will happen. When you bring something that's previously not incorporated into the corpus of knowledge and then you put it in conversation with something that already exists. That's where you find the creative nodes. That's why I think the rest of world has so much to contribute to IR going forward.

Ersel Aydinli: You made an interesting point earlier when you said Global IR is a modest project. But maybe it shouldn't be. Perhaps it should be an immodest one. I think the reason it's not revolutionary now is because it is an expansion of the current industrial scholarly complex. It can't be courageous because it comes from within the dominant establishment. It's rigged, designed not to really change the established discipline, but just to make the product a bit more interesting to sell better across the globe.

I think we can agree there is no debate in terms of need. There is a consensus that IR has to become global. Where we do have a debate is that Ayşe seems to be saying let's work within the current structure, with the same production outlets, but with the addition of a new sensitivity. I say we've seen this movie before. This factory incorporates new ideas when they're too popular to ignore, but still produces the same outcome. Instead, there have to be factories across the world—global IOs, global ISQs, global ISAs, otherwise we will see more of the same when the popularity of this trend fades. It can't become a true turn with the same production structures.

I respect Ayşe's position. Many of us have, I believe, been trying to work the insider-for-

change route. But what happens, we get overwhelmed by the structure of that established conversation, its methods, its questions, its pre-set hypotheses, and 99% of the time you get incorporated into it, and you realize that even though you thought you were affecting the discussion, you were just serving to the establishment's need to pay lip-service.

Instead, given that risk, and to go back to your party analogy, I would argue it's better to seek out like-minded people at the party, go with them to another corner and try to start up a conversation from the beginning with new epistemologies and methodologies—one based on global potential—global histories, philosophies, and most importantly, problematiques. If the party organizers start to think that there is at least the possibility of alternative corners emerging, with more interesting conversations and people, then change may truly happen. Right now there is no urgently felt need for the organizers to go global. How do we know this? They don't start journals in the periphery, they don't truly promote them or invest in them. They know they don't need to. They can just add a little color to their own—add in a little Russian flavor, Indian flavor, Turkish flavor, and that seems to suffice. Working from within won't make them feel that need, but the possibility of other outlets (other corners or hubs) will make them feel it. It doesn't have to take actual revolution, but it's the *possibility* of revolution that may bring about change.

The current Global IR project is hierarchic and unilateral. A true Global Politics movement must be multilateral and multicentric. This is why I'm proposing a kind of 'big bang', an explosion for a genuine rebirth and expansion of a global discipline. Without this, I think it will remain as an incorporated project. And just to wrap up, I would repeat a few main points of how I would argue this change needs to come about:

First, education: We need to put an end to the regeneration of the current hegemony. Reproduction of the current hegemonic, unilateral, imperialistic competition-based, non-intellectual-based, corporate industrial scholarly complex must be exposed, and must be stopped or at least slowed down. The graduate classroom is the starting place for this because that's where regeneration happens. Second, journals: We need to promote and build up a different production scheme and outlets in a multicentric way. Third, the agents: who will make this happen? That's two-fold. First, all core established scholars who are genuine about promoting a more global discipline, must publish in periphery outlets and push for open access top journals to emerge outside of the core. If the core people are really sincere about globalization, they have to be constantly and actively promoting periphery production and gatherings, not just making touristic visits (both figuratively and literally). They should be joining in, serving as editors, and actively campaigning for them. And finally, hybrid scholars—those with one foot in the core and one foot in the periphery. This group of scholars, people like you and me, who are familiar with both contexts, must acknowledge their unique role as the pioneering agents for a genuine globalization of IR, accept that responsibility, and act accordingly.

Bibliography:

- Aydinli, Ersel and Julie Aydinli "Exposing Linguistic Imperialism: Why Global IR Has to Be Multilingual." *Review of International Studies* 50, no. 6 (2024): 943-964.
- Aydinli, Ersel and Onur Erpul. "The False Promise of Global IR: Exposing the Paradox of Dependent Development." *International Theory* 14, no. 3 (2022): 419-459.
- Barkawi, Tarak, Christopher Murray, and Ayşe Zarakol. "The United Nations of IR: Power, Knowledge,

- and Empire in Global IR Debates,” *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023): 445-461.
- Barnett, Michael, and Ayşe Zarakol, “Global International Relations and the Essentialism Trap.” *International Theory* 15, no. 3 (2023): 428-444.
- Beckmann, Nicolas, and Onur Erpul, “Realism’s Timeless Wisdom and its Relevance for the Global South.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace*, 13, no. 1 (2024): 49-68.
- Deciancio, Melisa, and Cintia Quiliconi. “Widening the ‘Global Conversation’: Highlighting the Voices of IPE in the Global South.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace*, 9, no. 2 (2020): 249-266.
- Eun, Yong-Soo. “Reflexive Solidarity: Toward a Broadening of What It Means to be “Scientific” in Global IR Knowledge.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 11, no. 1 (2022): 107-122.
- Karamık, İrem, and Erman Ermihan. “Quo Vadis, Turkish IR? Mapping Turkish IR’s Footsteps within the Global.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 12, no. 2 (2023): 241-260.
- Moshirzadeh, Homeira. “The Idea of Dialogue of Civilizations and Core-Periphery Dialogue in International Relations.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 9, no. 2 (2020): 211-228.
- Shahi, Deepshika. “Global IR Research Programme: From Perplexities to Progressions.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 13, no. 1 (2024): 5-26.
- Sula, İsmail Erkam. “‘Global’IR and Self-Reflections in Turkey: Methodology, Data Collection, and Data Repository.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 11, no. 1 (2022): 123-142.
- Sune, Engin. “Western-Centric Moments in Homegrown IR Theories: Dependency, Chinese and African Schools.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 13, no. 1 (2024): 27-48.
- Tokdemir, Efe, Ilker Kalin, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, Deniz Aksoy, David B. Carter, Cynanne E. Loyle, Seden Akcinaroglu & Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. “Forum: Fostering Cooperation in Conflict Research beyond Borders.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 0, no. 0 (2024): 1-36.
- Turton, Helen Louise. “Locating a Multifaceted and Stratified Disciplinary ‘Core’.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 9, no. 2 (2020): 177-210.
- Wemheuer-Vogelaar, Wiebke, Peter Marcus Kristensen, and Mathis Lohaus. “The Global Division of Labor in a Not So Global Discipline.” *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace* 11, no. 1 (2022): 3-27.