Decentring Western IR Theories
Unveiling Efforts from the Arab World

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Abstract

Since Stanley Hoffmann's assertion that the field of international relations (IR) is predominantly Western, several non-Western trends have emerged to challenge this dominance. This study aims to examine Arab efforts that challenge Eurocentrism, their success in doing so within the field of IR, and to draw connections with other transformative efforts, mainly Global IR and Post-Western IR. The analysis is carried out within the broader context of the "Homegrown" trend in IR that seeks to diversify and decolonize the field.

The argument within this article states that while the Arab efforts, represented by the Beirut School of Critical Security Studies, the School of International Relations of the Middle East (IRME), and the Islamic IR, are important steps. However, they have had limited impact and, in some cases, replicated the problems they seek to address. It also advocates for a more self-critical and contextual approach to decentralizing Western International Relations Theories (IRT), drawing lessons from the experiences and shortcomings of other non-Western initiatives. Moreover, a vision for enhancing the Arabic efforts to overcome Western hegemony, on the level of knowledge production as well as on the pedagogical and institutional levels, will be presented. An Arab exclusivity is not advocated in this article; instead, it emphasizes the need for a thorough examination of Arab initiatives, as part of the Global South, to improve their impact in achieving their goals

Keywords: Global IR, Post-Western IR Beirut School of Critical Security Studies, the School of International Relations of the Middle East, the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, Eurocentrism.

1. Introduction

The term "traveling theory" is closely associated with Edward Said. He is of the opinion that theories, like humans, "travel – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another." (Said, 1983, p. 226). On traveling, theories undergo certain metamorphism, in order to accommodate themselves to their newly acquired home. However, projecting the notion of traveling onto International Relations (IR) theories reveals two problems. First, traveling has been unequal, i.e. from North to South. Second, traveling has not been accompanied by the expected transformation of these theories' content; hence, they remain

bound to their original context and incapable of explaining global events (Capan & Zarakol, 2018).

According to Robert Cox, theories can never be objective, since "theory is always for someone and for some purpose … There is, accordingly, no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in time and space." (Cox, 1981, p. 128). The main shortcoming of IRTs is that they are plagued by Eurocentrism and parochialism. Since existing theories stem from Western perspectives, there is a question regarding their ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of a largely non-Western global political system (Bull, 1972).

Although 45 years have passed since Stanley Hoffmann claimed that the field of IR is US-dominated, (Hoffmann, 1977) the situation has experienced no radical change. Many theorists have attempted to challenge Eurocentrism. While thinkers from regions such as South Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East have made important efforts, the Arab world appears to have made only limited contributions in attempting to overcome Western dominance.

Believing in the importance of studying these Arabic contributions, this article aims to highlight the Arab trends that have emerged to achieve this purpose. It focuses on the Beirut School of Critical Security Studies, the School of International Relations of the Middle East (IRME), and the Islamic IR trend, evaluating their overlap with global approaches that seek to challenge Eurocentric hegemony, such as Global IR and Post-Western IR.

The article raises significant questions related to whether these Arabic contributions have managed to overcome Eurocentrism or if they have simply reproduced the flaws of "Global IR." In addition, the article seeks to provide an answer to how the Arab world can practically enhance its contributions to overcome Eurocentrism. This appeal for a more self-critical and contextual approach to decentring Western IRT is a valuable contribution to the ongoing scholarly discourse and is essential to advancing the decolonization project within the IR field.

The article argues that Arab contributions to the IR field are not only limited but also lack significant impact, often replicating some flaws of Global IR. This raises important questions about how effectively these initiatives have challenged the hegemonic status quo and introduced genuinely innovative perspectives. On the other hand, it argues that the current Arab-led efforts in IR have not adequately learned from the experiences and shortcomings of other non-Western approaches that have sought to challenge Eurocentrism. A meticulous understanding of the complexities involved in decolonizing a field that has been deeply shaped by Western intellectual traditions and power structures is mandatory.

A critical literature review has been employed to examine the effectiveness of Arab-led approaches in challenging the Eurocentric premises of mainstream IRT. This analytical approach is grounded in the epistemological foundation of Global IR, Post-Western IR and the emergent Arab-led efforts. The 'homegrown' approaches, as proposed by Aydinli and Biltekin, are analyzed. This article supports two key manifestations of this 'homegrown' trend: the first is Referential Homegrown, and the second is Authentic Homegrown (Kuru, 2018). The purpose of exploring these diverse 'homegrown' approaches is to challenge and diversify the Western-centric foundations that have long shaped the field of International Relations. This represents a concerted effort to amplify marginalized perspectives and foster new, non-Western-derived knowledge within the IR discipline.

The article is structured as follows: It begins by examining "Western Centrism in IRT: The Need for Broader Perspectives on the Global South". It then discusses the broader context of

"Decolonizing IR Theories", highlighting two approaches—"Global IR" and "Post-Western IR". This sets the stage for the primary focus on "Addressing Eurocentrism: Arab Trends in IR Theory". In this section, the author provides details about three Arab-led efforts. Finally, the article suggests a solution-oriented approach that goes beyond merely criticizing existing Western-centric paradigms.

Western Centrism in IRT: The Need for Broader Perspectives on the Global South

This section explores Western centrism in IRT and its shortcomings in addressing the Global South. It will also briefly highlight examples of how some intellectuals have attempted to overcome Eurocentrism. In this context, Western centrism in IRT has established an asymmetrical North-South relationship and shaped hierarchical dynamics. Western theorists presume that their experiences are sufficient to establish universal standards and laws (Neuman, 1998). Therefore, they often view global regions as testing grounds rather than as contributors (Shih & Hwang, 2018), perceiving the non-West as mere consumers (Turton, 2016, p. 52). This hegemony is multifaceted: it determines essential topics and knowledge in the field, defines sources from cultural and geographic perspectives, and controls the publication and distribution of knowledge (Smith & Tickner, 2020, p. 2).

The marginalizing of Southern researchers is enforced by Western gate-keepers of knowledge located in scientific journals and academic associations. They close off the academic space to contributions from the South (Tickner, 2003, p.301). Such tasks are carried out by various means, including setting evaluation criteria for acceptance or rejection of theories, disregarding alternative approaches as "nontheory" or "non scientific" (Qin, 2020, p. 152). Additionally, they set research and publication agendas that grant Southern states an insignificant space (Tickner, 2003, p. 301).

These practices stem from the discipline's Western-centrism and its tendencies towards colonialist behaviors. Western intellectual hegemony has always marginalized Southern knowledge. Boaventura de Sousa Santos critiques this Western hegemony as "epistemocide," (Santos, 2016, pp. 92-152) which undermines our understanding of the world and stifles creativity in addressing global problems. Colonial powers have frequently considered Western knowledge to be universal, while Southern knowledge is viewed as primitive and unscientific. This perspective has allowed the West to justify its dominance and the imposition of its knowledge on the South (Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 6). Consequently, American dominance, along with that of European theorists to a lesser extent[1], is mirrored by the absence of Southern counterparts, further entrenching the power dynamics between the two regions.

As a result, since the formation of IR as a discipline, Southern states have largely been ignored. During the Cold War, the focus was on the US-USSR rivalry, with little attention given to the South's role in world politics. When the South was considered, it was mainly in relation to the "East/West struggle" (Neuman, 1998, p. 1). The end of the Cold War brought no significant theoretical changes, and the role of Southern states has remained a relatively terra incognita in the literature (Neuman, 1998, p. 1). U.S. International Relations theorists, on the other hand, have produced a substantial and consistently expanding amount of theoretical work, leading Ole Wæver to write that all states experience a deficit vis-à-vis the U.S. due to

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[1] This article acknowledges that while there is significant discourse in Europe about diversifying International Relations (IR), the field remains predominantly influenced by the United States. It highlights the need for greater recognition of contributions and contestations from diverse perspectives, particularly those from Southern states, in shaping knowledge about world politics.

its dominance in International Relations literature (Wæver, 1998 , p. 689).

Neorealism and Neoliberalism[2] reflect all the above issues. They have been criticized for their ethnocentrism and racism, rendering their key concepts, such as state, anarchy, sovereignty, rational choice and alliance, largely inapplicable to Southern contexts (Neuman, 1998, p. 2). Neorealists view anarchy as external, while it is generally internal anarchy that fuels conflicts in the South. This discrepancy undermines the realist framework and suggests that theories should consider internal anarchy to better explain post-1945 conflicts, thereby challenging the Western notion that external anarchy causes wars (Holsti, 1996, p. 82). Critiques of Liberalism highlight its idealistic focus on peace through trade and democracy, neglecting the realities of developing nations, particularly small authoritarian states vulnerable to external interference (Galal, 2020, p. 48), revealing its limitations in explaining the complexities of conflict.

Moreover, war in Southern states is a critical issue ignored by dominant IRT, which prioritizes superpower conflicts. Kal Holsti noted that 98% of armed conflicts from 1945 to 1988 occurred in the South (Tickner, 2003, p. 301). This neglect by neorealists and neoliberals has created an imbalance in understanding war, as ignoring a significant part of the globe dismisses key data relevant to the phenomena of war and peace (Ayoob, 2002, p. 30). In addition, the failure to analyze domestic wars undermines the understanding of Southern states. Barry Buzan posits that analysing Southern countries requires an expanded IR framework that includes internal factors (Willis, 2021, p. 27), such as ethnic tensions, economic inequality, and political repression, which can trigger conflict. Therefore, Southern states cannot be understood through the Westphalian model due to internal challenges like social incoherence, secession, division, and conflict-laden neighborly relations (Ayoob, 2002, p. 37), making the assumption of a stable state with external conflict drivers unrealistic.

Additionally, Realist and Liberal theories overlook the behaviors of smaller nations. They focus primarily on great powers and neglect the unique challenges smaller states face internally and externally. This oversight diminishes the complexities small countries face and reveals gaps in understanding international relations Focusing on major states leads to an incomplete view of global dynamics, neglecting the unique contributions of smaller countries. Despite their limited resources, many small nations engage successfully in international relations using alternative strategies, such as the key diplomatic role Qatar plays in facilitating the Gaza war negotiations, which shows that not all small states should be treated uniformly, as Realism does.

These limitations highlight the need for an expanded framework to address, for instance, conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, where internal wars have turned into proxy ones involving global actors, showing how revolutions may evolve into proxy wars with global consequences. Non-state actors, like ISIS, also challenge mainstream theories that focus on state actors. ISIS's territorial control illustrates how non-state entities can shape international relations, a complexity that Realism struggles to address, while Neoliberalism overlooks the military and security aspects of such actors (Valensi, 2015).

Recent events, such as those on October 7th, have made it still clearer that the peculiarities of small states must be addressed in IR, highlighting the role non-state actors can play in conflict dynamics. These events have also emphasized that mainstream theories, which

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[2] Referring to realism and liberalism does not imply that other International Relations theories are free from bias or that they are the only existing theories. Instead, these theories are examined as examples of the shortcomings in the field, primarily because they dominate the discourse in International Relations.

overlook groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of the Gaza war. It is essential to distinguish between Hamas (Frihat, 2021; Awad, 2021, p. 42), which positions itself as a resistance movement against Israeli occupation, and other non-state entities such as ISIS, which is considered a terrorist group.

All the above-mentioned shortcomings have led scholars to seek alternative frameworks that are a better fit for these realities. Some of these efforts can be described as "homegrown alterations'' as clarified by Ersel Aydinli and Gonca Biltekin, meaning the transforming of Western theories to reflect local contexts (Kuru, 2018, pp. 60–61). Notable examples include Ayoob's "subaltern realism" and Carlos Escudé's "Peripheral Realism", both of which aim to offer a more comprehensive understanding of IR in the Global South. Ayoob's "subaltern realism" is rooted in classical Realism in that it reaffirms the state's centrality in security, but emphasizes internal factors often overlooked by realists. He argues that state formation in the South leads to unique security concerns, where insecurity stems more from internal conditions than from external threats (Ayoob, 1983/1984, p. 43), making the relationship between domestic and external factors essential for understanding both intrastate and interstate conflicts (Ayoob, 1998, p. 45).

Escudé's "peripheral realism" examines IR from the perspective of weaker and developing countries, challenging the assumptions of Realism. He asserts that a country's unique state-society configuration influences its foreign policy, and that national interest includes not only security but also economic development and citizen welfare. Escudé argues that the international system is hierarchical, not anarchic, due to significant power disparities among states. Peripheral nations, lacking the ability to set rules, must prioritize their economic interests over confrontational strategies, as illustrated by, for example, Argentina's historical relations with Britain and the U.S (Escudé, 2014; Schenoni & Escudé, 2016).

In light of the previous points, it is clear that broader perspectives on the Global South are necessary to fully understand the complexities and nuances of international relations. By incorporating diverse viewpoints, we can better appreciate the unique challenges faced by Southern states and recognize the importance of their contributions to global discourse

Decolonising IRT: Global IR and Post-Western IR

Given the hegemony of Western mainstream theories, several theorists and researchers have sought to surpass Eurocentrism and address the marginalization of knowledge from the South. While there is a consensus among different perspectives on the importance of enriching IRT with suppressed voices, disagreements have arisen about the ways to realize this goal (Aydinli & Biltekin, 2018, p. 2).

Some have proposed reformist views, while others have suggested radical ones, with no universally agreed-upon classification of such views. Rosa Vasilaki, on the one hand, has classified them into "Pluralism", "Particularism" and "Postcolonialism" (Vasilaki, 2012, p. 6). On the other hand, Felix Andrel and Antonia Witt have classified them into "Non-Western IR", "Post-Western IR", "Postcolonial Approach", and "Global IR" (Anderl & Witt, 2020, p. 39). It is worth mentioning that these classifications overlap with one another, as different labels have been attached to the same theorists and researchers. This article will delve into the two most prominently recognized trends, Global IR and Post-Western IR, to explore how and where these trends overlap with the Arab trends.

Global IR

Ayoob contends that it is essential for IRT to study and, ultimately, try to explain conflicts in the South. However, since traditional IRT has failed to do so, it is vital to search for alternatives (Barnett, 2002, p. 49). Global IR has been one alternative. It was inaugurated in 2007 by Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, who condemned the IR discipline as being Eurocentric, that is, deeply rooted in Western history and philosophy and with dominant theories that are Western, not universal. They, therefore, called for the need for non-Western IR to grow, so that a discipline responsive to the globalized world, one in which different ways of life would be taken into consideration, can emerge (Qin, 2020, p. 7).

Acharya has envisioned the Global IR approach as a "vibrant, innovative, and inclusive enterprise that reflects the voices, experiences, interests, and identities of all of humankind." (Acharya, 2014, p. 657). It is grounded in pluralistic universalism and draws from world history rather than Western history alone, aiming to incorporate existing IRTs rather than replacing them. It also emphasizes the integration of regionalism and area studies, rejects exceptionalism, and acknowledges the existence of diverse forms of agency (Qin, 2020, p. 6). Similarly, Yong-Soo Eun emphasizes that the aim of Global IR is not to dismiss Eurocentric IR but to foster inclusivity and broaden its scope by recognizing experiences beyond the Western perspective (Eun, 2018, p. 5). This trend, therefore, rejects the exclusion of Western theories but seeks to extend the IR field beyond Western boundaries, believing that pluralism, to be realized through dialogue, is the solution.

Despite the support this approach has gained, it has been subjected to criticism on various grounds. One criticism is directed at its proclivity to maintain a Eurocentrist epistemology, as it does not believe that Western epistemology should be rethought (Shani, 2008, p. 723). It does not fundamentally question its foundations or epistemological principles, nor does it actively challenge its theories, concepts, or narratives. On the contrary, it approves them yet tries to transcend Eurocentrism only by adding Southern voices to the already existing Western heritage (Bilgin, 2020, p. 21; Anderl & Witt, 2020, p. 43).

Undoubtedly, integrating non-Western theories is a significant step, yet it provides no radical solution (Kerner, 2018, p. 554). It fails to address the core issues of Eurocentrism and the marginalization of Southern voices. Robbie Shilliam argues that simply adding non-Western thought perpetuates colonial rule and imperial expansion in the intellectual sphere (Shilliam, 2011, p. 24). Similarly, integrating Southern theorists within the existing epistemological order may exclude those who are unable or unwilling to conform to that framework. Therefore, this approach does not effectively address the representation problem, and ultimately limits genuine inclusivity in the IR community (Anderl & Witt, 2020, p. 36).

In addition, Acharya and Buzan have advocated for "constitutive localization" as a method for moving beyond Eurocentrism. It is described as "the active construction (through discourse, framing, grafting, and cultural selection) of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices" (Acharya & Buzan, 2010, p. 232). By encouraging the assimilation of Western conceptions, Global IR unintentionally produces knowledge that mimics the Western epistemological and ontological assumptions. This leads to, as Andrew Hurrel puts it, "a cultural and regional inwardness that may work to reproduce the very ethnocentricities that are being challenged" (Hurrell, 2016, p. 150).

The call to adapt Western concepts by Southern states suggests a belief that non-Western theories do not exist. Acharya and Buzan's question of "why is there no non-Western theory?" reflects this perspective, as they argue that knowledge from the South is still in a "pre-theory" stage (Acharya & Buzan, 2010, p. 6). This perspective views the contributions of the South as attempts to develop soft concepts and ideas that have not yet met the criteria of hard theories (Acharya & Buzan, 2010, p. 10). The demotion of Southern IR knowledge to pre-theory leads, according to Shani, to the reinforcement of orientalism and provincialism (Shani, 2008, p. 723).

An additional critique is related to the lack of clarity over how dialogue between the North and South should be launched and secured, a matter that has been insufficiently considered. Maintaining the Western hegemony renders any potential dialogue an unequal exchange dominated by the North, resembling a "piece of rhetorical bullying," (Hutchings, 2011, p. 645) in which engaging new voices from the South make no major difference. Double-standards are also applied to theory modification. If modifications are attributed to Western scholars, they are recognised without any objection or hesitation; they might even be hailed as innovative theoretical contributions. Contrarily, when such modifications are made by Southern theorists, they are doomed to be sidelined.

Take for instance, the theoretical attempts to turn classical Realism into "Subaltern Realism" by Ayoob (Ayoob, 1998, pp. 31-54; Ayoob, 2002, pp. 27–48; Ayoob, 2019, pp. 59–68) or "Peripheral Realism" by Escudé (Escudé, 2014, p. 46). Notwithstanding the added value of such theoretical undertakings, they have not received much recognition from Western theorists of various orientations, even though these contributions were made in English, in other words, language was not a barrier to their communication. The question has thus been posed: "Why should Europeans not be able to read, even when we write in the language they understand?" (Dabashi, 2015, p. 302). This reality suggests that the West has no interest in establishing serious dialogue with the South. In addition, the fuzziness of how dialogue should be established places the lion's share of the burden on the Southern thinkers, while relieving their Western counterparts (Capan & Zarakol, 2018, p. 127).

Another significant flaw stems from the lack of interest among prominent theorists in the Global North to establish dialogue with weaker Southern states. This can be attributed to two key factors. Firstly, Western theorists often consider their theories universally valid, irrespective of time and context, which diminishes their enthusiasm to engage in theoretical dialogues with the South. Secondly, the Western perspective tends to marginalize non-Western states and dismisses the importance of embracing pluralism in the IR field, thereby reinforcing Western hegemony and overlooking the value of generating theories from or about non-Western states. Mearsheimer, for instance, has opposed the rising calls to expand the horizons of US-centred IRT, assuming their hegemony on the field is benign (Mearsheimer, 2016, p. 147).

Waltz as well has celebrated the hegemony of the US as a benign superpower, refusing critiques directed against its hegemony as a form of neo-imperialism. Reinforcing that Western neo-imperialism reappears in the comforting altruistic guise of benign hegemony, which thereby naturalizes American empire (Hobson, 2022, p. 67). Waltz even went further by claimed that "it would be as ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica as it would be to construct an economic theory of oligopolistic competition based on the minor firms in a sector of an economy" (Waltz, 1979, p. 72).

Post-Western IR

The Post-Western IR trend emerged to overcome the flaws of the critical approaches of Eurocentrism, which unintentionally reproduced Western knowledge. To avoid repeating the mistakes of other schools, the Post-Western approach has completely rejected essentialism, particularism, exclusion, and the binaries of Western/non-Western, religious/secular, etc. It argues that the solution to overcoming Eurocentrism lies in recognizing the existence of multiple and diverse cosmologies (Behr & Shani, 2021; Shani, 2008, 2021, 2022; Shani & Behera, 2022; Trownsell et al., 2019). The concept of cosmology here primarily refers to "beliefs that people, societies, or religions have of the 'ordered' nature of the cosmos: how they believe the world to be structured" (Shani & Behera, 2022, p. 839).

Building on this principle, Post-Western IR criticizes Global IR for presuming that we can live in one universal cosmos despite the existence of multiple cosmologies (Querejazu, 2022, p. 875). While mainstream Western theories claim that we live in separate cosmologies within hierarchical relations, Post-Western IR believes in the interaction and coexistence of multiple cosmologies. To facilitate this interaction, it must be built on "plurilogue" instead of "omnilogue", as the first implies the importance of acknowledging and respecting various voices, while the latter presumes that there is only one normative rational discourse (Behr & Shani, 2021, p. 389).

Post-Western IR calls for deconstructing the dominant epistemology to recraft a new one. This process, as this approach claims, enriches the IR field, not because it introduces better or new ways of doing IR, but because it presents distinctive, disruptive and alternative paths to do IR differently (Trownsell, Chadha Behera, & Shani, 2019).

Believing in the agency of the non-Western, Post-Western theorists have adopted concepts from Southern cosmologies, such as Umma, Dharma, Din, Dao, and Khalsa Panth (Trownsell et al., 2019) to challenge Eurocentric concepts, such as the state, power, and so on. This adoption aims to establish a new order that does not recognize the Westphalian system as the beginning of the IR field. Instead, it rereads IR history by recognizing various cultures and religions, leading to the "multiple births of international relations", as Thakur and Smith put it. In other words, "recognizing the agency of non-Western actors is not only responding to Western incarnations of the field and its accompanying theories, but actively shaping it" (Thakur & Smith, 2021, p. 573).

Despite overcoming some flaws of Global IR, several criticisms can still be directed at Post-Western IR. It is true that it addresses Eurocentrism without mimicking it, but offering a vision that acknowledges all cosmologies on an equal basis still demands questioning. Actually achieving such equality is an ambitious goal due to power relations in knowledge production, which often establish a hierarchical global order. This raises questions such as: Is it possible to acknowledge diverse perspectives and knowledge systems equally? How can dominant narratives be deconstructed? What strategies can transform dialogue from 'omnilogue' to 'plurilogue'?

It is true that this approach advocates equitable dialogue, but it is difficult to achieve due to Western dominance, which marginalizes non-Western perspectives. Engaging in plurilogue requires Western powers to relinquish influence and validate diverse voices. However, the current power balance complicates this shift, allowing Western nations to maintain their control over the IR discourse.

The challenge, thus, lies in recognizing diverse perspectives while overcoming deep-rooted biases. Without strategies to dismantle dominant narratives, Post-Western IR may seem more theoretical than practical. While it aims to challenge Eurocentrism, its tendency to categorize the world into fixed cosmologies risks neo-essentialism by classifying the world into distinct 'cosmologies' or 'cultures.' It also risks homogenization, allowing certain individuals to speak for entire cultures while ignoring internal diversity within these groups. By using broad cultural lenses, it may overlook the nuanced experiences of individuals and communities, marginalizing minority perspectives, thus oversimplifying cultural complexity, especially that understanding internal diversity within cultures is crucial for fostering genuine dialogue.

Addressing Eurocentrism: Arab[3] Trends in IRT

To take a quick glance at the status of IRT in the Arab world, a survey was conducted by Ahmad Hussein among 220 IR professors from various Arab universities. The findings showed that mainstream theories dominate both the professors' teaching syllabi and their research theoretical frameworks. According to the survey, 47% of professors incorporate Realist theories in their articles, while 13% utilize Constructivism and 7% take a Liberal theory approach (Hussein, 2023). This raises questions about the unquestioned reliance of Arab scholars and professors on Western mainstream theories in research and teaching.

Although the majority of Arab researchers heavily rely on Western theories, some are making efforts to challenge Eurocentrism. While these attempts are limited and often elite, they are important and worthy of study—not to promote Arab exclusivity, but because they represent a significant part of the Southern efforts. Arab endeavors can mainly be categorized as follows: The Islamic IR School, the IRME School, and the Beirut School of Critical Security Studies.

The Islamic IR School

Islamic IR is a transnational approach that was developed by Arab and non-Arab intellectuals worldwide. The first initiative can be attributed to Ismail al-Faruqi, who founded the International Institute for Islamic Thought in 1981 to integrate Islamic principles into a modern discourse, with the support of Malaysian intellectual Anwar Ibrahim, who advocated for the role of Islamic values in political and social structures (Bakir, 2024).

Believing in the role of Islam in IR and in its legitimacy as a paradigm (Adiong et al., 2019; Bakir, 2022), intellectuals adopting this approach trust that Islam can provide valuable insights into IR, seeking to make the field more international and capable to overcome Eurocentrism (Adiong et al., 2019; Sheikh, 2016). John Turner defends this argument and asserts that there is a significant relationship between Islam and international affairs. He calls for recognizing it as an independent subject of study, highlighting the importance of Islamic perspectives in understanding global dynamics and in challenging prevailing Eurocentric narratives in IR (Turner, 2009).

The first significant and well-established initiative in the Arab world to adopt the role of Islam in the field of IR, can be credited to Nadia Mustafa. Established in 1986, the Islamic

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[3] "Arab IR" refers to the contributions of scholars of Arab nationality or descent, irrespective of where they live, who analyze international relations from an Arab perspective shaped by their cultural and historical context.

Civilizational Paradigm, which was inspired by Hamed Rabie and Mona Abu Al-Fadl and led by Mustafa, aimed to develop an Islamic IR paradigm (Abu Samra, 2019; Mostafa, 1996, 2009). Abu Al-Fadl emphasizes that the project's objective is not to advocate for Islam but to critically evaluate Western paradigms, and to challenge prevailing notions of universality and the exclusive scientific authority associated with certain Western schools. The project, therefore, aims to foster an inclusive environment that welcomes diverse perspectives and voices within the field of IR (Mostafa, 2023, p. 161). Simultaneously, it endeavors to contribute fresh insights and perspectives from an Islamic civilizational standpoint, aiming for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of IR by integrating an Islamic perspective into the field (Bakir, 2022).

Mustafa describes this paradigm as a "normative paradigm of a special nature" (i.e., neither oblivious to reality, nor to the material world)" (Mostafa, 2023, p. 194), emphasizing concepts like Da'wah, Jihad, Power, and the Muslim Ummah. While acknowledging variations within the Ummah, such as states, groups, or individuals, it underscores the importance of the Muslim Ummah as a collective entity (Mostafa, 2023, pp. 208–231). The significance of Mustafa's project stems from the fact that it is the only Islamic initiative in the region. Tracing its origins to the 1980s, it also provides evidence that an Islamic theoretical framework was being developed more than two decades before Acharya and Buzan published their article "Why There Is No Non-Western Theory." This, therefore, refutes the claim that non-Western theories in the IR field do not exist (Bakir, 2022, p. 23).

Key figures of the project include Nassef Adiong, Deina Abdelkader, Raffaele Mauriello, and Faiz Sheikh, who have all contributed to this approach following Mustafa's paradigm. Such intellectuals highlight the growing importance of Islamic perspectives in contemporary IR discussions (Bakir, 2024). They aim not to replace the Western-centric approach, but to enrich IR by incorporating diverse viewpoints on global issues (Adiong et al., 2018; Bakir, 2022, p. 32).

Despite the efforts of Islamic IR, it has been subject to criticism. Some critiques can be directed specifically at The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, while others pertain to Islamic IR's efforts in general. Regarding the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, it faces an obstacle in defining itself. While it acknowledges the importance of avoiding arrogance and detachment from other critical trends (Abu Samra, 2019, p. 153), this perspective aligns with Post-Western IR in emphasizing non-Western perspectives. However, it struggles with a self-imposed dilemma arising from its commitment to preserving its distinctiveness. It emphasizes the unique nature of the Islamic approach in IR, which is grounded in the Quran, Sunnah, culture, and history (Mostafa, 1996, 2009, 2013), justifying this distinctiveness by drawing upon religious principles governed by divine law. Consequently, this effort sets itself apart from global trends questioning Western dominance and asserts its distinct identity (Abu Samra, 2016, 2019; Mostafa, 1996, 2009, 2013, 2023). Additionally, by publishing mostly in Arabic, the gap between the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm and other non-Western trends deepens, causing further detachment and reinforcing binary divisions influenced by Western epistemology.

To achieve its goals, Kornay and Abu Samra have argued that the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm should expand its recognition and impact beyond local boundaries and disseminate its insights both locally within Arab and Islamic circles and internationally to the wider world (Abu Samra, 2019, p. 151; Korany, 2022). Kornay argued that this could be achieved by

publishing in languages other than Arabic and by engaging English-speaking readers with its works (Korany, 2022), since, as Bakir emphasizes, proficiency in English, alongside one's native language, is essential (Bakir, 2024). Intellectuals living abroad, such as Ismail al-Faruqi, Anwar Ibrahim, AbdulHamid Abu Sulayman, Nassef Adiong, Deina Abdelkader, and others, have filled this gap by publishing in English, broadening discussions on Islam's relation to IR. Their work has enhanced accessibility to publications of this approach, inviting different audiences and promoting a more inclusive understanding of Islamic principles in contemporary IR.

Another criticism concerns the insufficient interaction between the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, led by Mustafa, and other Arab and non-Arab scholars within Islamic international relations. This lack of engagement creates a significant gap in the development of a comprehensive approach. Such isolation can impede the advancement of alternative theories that seek to challenge Western paradigms. There is an urgent need for collaboration to cultivate an Islamic IR theory, particularly since no cohesive Islamic theory currently exists in international relations. As Adiong, Mauriello, and Abdelkader noted, efforts to theorize Islamic IR have not produced a cohesive and systematic framework, which aligns with Ali Bakir's observation of "the absence of grand or hard Islamic IR theory" (Bakir, 2022, p. 32).

Additionally, a critique directed at Islamic IR by Ali Bakir is the lack of "ijtihad" in modern Islamic jurisprudence, particularly regarding political issues, which poses challenges to the development of Islamic IR theory. This situation forces scholars to rely on outdated concepts from the pre-Westphalian era, hindering the creation of relevant theoretical perspectives (Bakir, 2024). To address these challenges, Bakir suggests two approaches: a traditional approach that updates and organizes existing Islamic concepts for modern use, and a revolutionary approach that seeks to develop new frameworks grounded in the Quran and Sunnah to engage with contemporary global issues (Bakir, 2022, pp. 34-35). However, such a project needs a supportive environment in order to grow and succeed in promoting authentic Islamic research, particularly in politics and IR (Bakir, 2022, p. 33).

Yet, these criticisms should not prevent us from recognizing the external obstacles facing Islamic IR. One of these obstacles is that Islamic IR faces the exclusion and dominance of Western theories, which limits its visibility. This mirrors the challenges encountered by other anti-Eurocentric approaches. Ideological differences and the sense of superiority among some IR scholars hinder cooperation with non-Western scholars, while skepticism among Arab intellectuals about the viability of the project complicates matters[4]. As Mostafa notes, this skepticism arises from the overwhelming influence of Western theorists in the Arab world, creating barriers to meaningful engagement and impeding the project's dissemination and impact (Mostafa, 2023, p. 160). Moreover, Islamic IR is often viewed more as a political theology than as a comprehensive theoretical framework, which further impedes its development (Bakir, 2024). Integrating Islamic principles like Hadith, Fiqh, and Ijtihad into IR is challenged by a failure to recognize religion's role in global dynamics.

Therefore, Advancing the Islamic IR approach requires long-term investment, institutional support, and contextual expertise. Key strategies include fostering intellectual innovation, promoting impactful publications, and establishing professional journals. A balanced approach that combines traditional and revolutionary methods, along with mentorship and

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[4] These ideas depend on the anonymous reviewer's feedback.

international collaborations, can increase its visibility in global discourse and facilitate engagement with critical approaches that challenge Eurocentrism (Bakir, 2024).

The School of International Relations of the Middle East (IRME)

One cannot understand the insights the IRME proposes without referencing the Montréal School, which could be considered the first effort to discuss the problematic application of the dominant IRT to the Middle East, highlighting their flaws and the need to establish alternative theories.

Building on the insights of Paul Noble, Bahgat Korany, and others, the Montréal School has emphasized the complexities of IR in the Middle East by integrating regional dynamics, global influences, and internal factors (Salloukh & Brynen, 2004). Proponents argue that IRT must consider the intersections between various levels of analysis. Through critiquing Realism's focus on external material threats and on the state, the School underscores the interaction between domestic and regional factors in shaping Middle Eastern IR (Salloukh, 2015, p. 47). It was, therefore, a pioneer of analytical eclecticism, adopting this approach before it became a recognized methodology in IR (Sil, 2000; Sil & Katzenstein, 2010).

Years later, two trends have developed when studying IR in the Middle East. The first adapts mainstream IR approaches to fit the region's unique characteristics. Sibli Telhami exemplifies this trend in his analysis of the 1978 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. He depends on both realist and psychological explanations, using the notion of legitimacy to clarify how Arab regimes make alliance decisions, arguing that regional threats are influenced by transnational symbols of legitimacy (Darwich & Kaarbo, 2019, p. 229; Telhami, 1992, 1999).

The second trend adopts analytical eclecticism to understand the complexities of regional alliances, using multiple theoretical frameworks to analyze the region's political dynamics (Darwich & Kaarbo, 2019, p. 226). Both the Montréal School and this second trend employ analytical eclecticism, focusing on the interplay between local actors and external forces. This approach recognizes how the region's international relations are shaped not only by state interactions but also by socio-economic conditions and cultural exchanges. This eclectic framework allows for a holistic examination of alliances, avoiding what Basil Salloukh termed "sectarian eclecticism" (Salloukh, 2015, p. 50), which arises from an overreliance on any specific Western theory. By examining interactions and factors shaping the region's international relations, and showing how Middle Eastern states respond to external pressures while managing domestic politics, scholars challenge traditional views—views which depict the region as passive or only reactive to Western interventions.

Despite its valuable contributions, the knowledge produced by the IRME has had limited influence on the wider field of IRT. One of the reasons is that intellectuals of the current two trends rarely interact with the Montréal School's foundational works. Though Salloukh consistently refers to the Montréal School, most scholars often overlook it as a whole, although building theories definitely requires benefiting from the contributions of others.

Another factor is the lack of an alternative paradigm that challenges Western epistemology. The school relies either on analytical eclecticism or on adapting mainstream theories to fit the Middle Eastern context, resembling what Aydinli and Biltekin call 'Homegrown Alterations,' which refer to modifying Western concepts to suit local realities while neglecting local heritage. This might limit its impact, especially since mainstream theorists often overlook such modifications. Unlike Western adaptations, such as Walt's Realist perspective on the

balance of threat, the school's contributions have not received significant attention (Hazbun & Valbjørn, 2018, pp. 6–7). While the IRME has diverged from mainstream theories, particularly Realism, it has not claimed to present new theories or paradigms, indicating the intellectuals' hesitance to position their ideas as a distinct theoretical paradigm.

Moreover, the IRME has not sought to develop other kinds of homegrown theories, such as "Referential Homegrown", which utilizes the works of local thinkers to enrich IR concepts, or "Authentic Homegrown," which develops original concepts from geo-cultural experiences and common idioms for integration into IR (Kuru, 2018, pp. 60–61). By overlooking these approaches, the school has missed vital local heritage sources that could counter Eurocentrism, weakening its ability to critically engage with dominant theories.

In addition, the IRME's scholars have relied on English to write and publish, limiting knowledge dissemination and critical engagement among Arab intellectuals. Writing and publishing in English means targeting foreign audiences, who may not be familiar with regional nuances. Interactions within these academic circles are often limited to those who share similar perspectives and affiliations, creating an echo chamber that stifles broader discourse.

The Beirut School of Critical Security Studies

The Beirut School of Critical Security Studies, which emerged in 2016, is another example of an effort that questions mainstream theories by challenging the traditional approaches in understanding security dynamics. It was inspired by and built on the work of postcolonial IR and critical security approaches (Abboud et al., 2018, p. 273). The origins of the school can be traced back to a shared interest in exploring security concerns in Lebanon. This interest fostered networks and collaborations among researchers from diverse backgrounds, Arabs and non-Arabs, enabling the exchange of knowledge and perspectives. Building upon this momentum, the Beirut School was established, with its scope gradually expanding beyond Beirut to encompass the broader Middle East and North Africa region (Abboud et al., 2018, pp. 275–276). It has focused on developing alternative approaches to studying security to better understand the realities in Arab countries, where less attention is given to the state and a greater focus is put on the dynamics of groups and individuals (Abboud et al., 2018, pp. 275–276).

One notable contribution of the Beirut School is its emphasis on decolonial pedagogies. It addresses the power dynamics and historical legacies that shape IRT. This contribution is exemplified through its summer school program, which aims to encourage critical thinking among young scholars and promote generational exchange of knowledge and thought (Abboud et al., 2018, p. 273).

While the establishment of the Beirut School undoubtedly brings certain benefits, it confronts several challenges. Firstly, it functions as a platform that supports critical thinking and promotes decolonial approaches in the Middle East and the Arab region, rather than as a coherent school of thought with a well-developed theoretical framework. Unlike other critical security schools, such as those in Copenhagen and Paris, which have developed clear theoretical approaches, the Beirut School has not yet succeeded in constructing a clear theory, as its scholars merely agree on the overall vision and goals. Hazbun, one of the school's notable figures, expresses this concern, stating that "these efforts may not result in a coherent

approach or a distinct theory of security" (Hazbun, 2017, p. 659).

Despite its limited progress, Hazbun believes that it inspires scholars "to engage in global debates bringing in new perspectives and voices in the long-overdue project of making IR more 'global'" (Hazbun, 2017, p. 659). Bringing in new voices, being one of Beirut School's goals, leads to a second challenge, whereby merely adding new voices will not effectively overcome Eurocentrism. Such an attempt, instead, could cause a repetition of the flaws of the Global IR trend, where bringing in different voices and perspectives does not resolve the essence of the Eurocentrism problem and does not lead to radical changes in the IR field.

Moreover, and similar to the Middle East school, the Beirut School relies on English as the primary language to produce its knowledge. This might create barriers to understanding the insights generated within these frameworks.

How Could the Arab World Practically Enhance Trends to Overcome Eurocentrism?

The engagement of Arab scholars in Global IR and post-Western IR debates is clearly limited due to several factors. Many Arab scholars still prioritize existing Western theories, which are believed to be more legitimate in the global discourse. Additionally, limited access to alternative literature reinforces existing paradigms. The historical legacy of colonialism has also reinforced intellectual and cognitive dependency on Western frameworks, marginalizing local and indigenous systems of knowledge. Furthermore, the dominance of English as the primary language of scholarship has hindered the participation of prominent Arab IR thinkers. Their absence has limited mentorship opportunities, discouraging younger scholars from engaging in the field.

In this context, Gramsci's insights on hegemony are particularly relevant. His concept of the cultural counter-revolution, or "war of positions," offers a potential solution to the challenges faced by Arab scholars. Without such efforts, it would be impossible for various attempts to escape their dependent position within IRT, leaving states of the Global South as "weak, subservient partners" (Aydinli & Mathews, 2008, p. 694) in the discipline. Therefore, the active participation of Arab scholars is essential for advancing Southern alternative theoretical frameworks that challenge Eurocentrism. Their contributions can help shape a pluralistic discourse in IR, promoting inclusivity and diversity. This not only would help balance representation among theories and scholars from various regions but also foster a more equitable and inclusive landscape within the field of IR.

As a first step towards enhancing their contribution, Arab scholars must acknowledge the double obstacles they face. On one level, they should fully recognize the existence of the Eurocentric hegemony over the IR field, acknowledge the foundations upon which this centrism is based, and be aware of the consequences it leads to. It is important to keep in mind that Eurocentrism was based on a number of myths, in Hobson's words, that were seen as facts: "noble identity/foundationalist myth, positivist myth, great debates myth, sovereignty/anarchy myth, globalization myth and theoretical great traditions myth." (Layug, 2022, p. 117). These foundations/myths have created a theoretical hierarchy, wherein top theories proclaim themselves as "universal" and "timeless". Having established themselves as a form of academic imperialism, these theories have aborted alternative theories, silencing them and prohibiting their travel to other settings (Capan & Zarakol, 2018, p. 122). On another level, Arab scholars should be aware of and should address, the challenges they face internally in

their countries. Addressing these challenges requires interventions on multiple aspects: in the knowledge production aspect, as well as in the pedagogical and institutional aspects.

By addressing these obstacles, practical steps can be taken to challenge Eurocentric narratives, encourage alternative theories and perspectives, and create an environment where Arab scholars can contribute to knowledge production on equal footing. This idea aligns with the insights of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who proposed an "epistemological theory of the South" based on three fundamental principles. Firstly, it recognizes that an understanding of the world extends far beyond the Western perspective. Secondly, it emphasizes that achieving global social justice necessitates the pursuit of global cognitive justice. Lastly, it asserts that emancipatory transformation in the world should be guided by alternative grammars and frameworks, rather than solely relying on Eurocentric critical theory. It is imperative to embrace this diversity of perspectives in order to foster a more inclusive and equitable global intellectual landscape (Santos, 2016).

However, an analysis of the survey conducted by Ahmed Hussein suggests that a significant number of Arab researchers have not fully internalized the sense of intellectual subjugation imposed by Western centrism. Many still heavily apply mainstream theories to their research. Some may justify this application by asserting that the Realist perspective is neutral, positing that power is indeed the main determinant in IR. Consequently, the exclusion of countries in the Global South is regarded as an expected outcome, given their perceived lack of substantial power. They simplify the matter by stating that acquiring power is the key to becoming an influential actor, thereby justifying the marginalization of these countries in the IR discourse. This point of view reinforces Eurocentrism and hinders the development of genuinely alternative and context-specific theories.

Reliance on Western epistemology and theories limits Arab scholars' understanding of local realities. By prioritizing Eurocentric frameworks over indigenous knowledge, they reinforce Western intellectual dominance. This narrow focus leads to a simplistic view of IR discipline that overlooks the complexities of their political and cultural contexts. Many Arab intellectuals exhibit what can be termed "false consciousness,"[5] failing to grasp the implications of their dependence on Western theories.

To move forward, it is crucial for Arab scholars to develop a critical awareness of their intellectual landscape and to recognize the limitations of dominant theories. By examining their reliance on Western epistemology, they can create a richer understanding of IR that truly reflects their experiences. This shift is vital for producing theories that address the realities of the Global South and contribute to a more diverse IR discourse.

Once Arab scholars truly recognize that Western theories are neither universally applicable nor neutral, and start to question the adoption of such frameworks, it will prompt them to explore alternative perspectives grounded in the realities of Southern states in general, and the Arab states in particular. Efforts should be redirected towards utilizing local sources of knowledge and constructing alternative theories. By harnessing these local sources, Arab scholars can not only develop theories that are applicable to their own contexts but can also contribute to the broader field of IR by offering alternative perspectives and frameworks. This would promote a more comprehensive understanding of global dynamics and present theories that ultimately lead to a more balanced and inclusive intellectual landscape.

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[5] The author has benefited from the anonymous reviewer's insightful comparison between leftist scholars and their frustrations with workers' "false consciousness" and the Arab scholars engaging with Western epistemology.

In this regard, Arab scholars should benefit more from Authentic Homegrown theorizing, which emerged as a response to the epistemological violence of Western-centric academia. While it is important to engage with this type of theorizing, they should avoid the reformist approach, as historical experiences have shown that attempts by the South to modify mainstream theories often do not yield the desired results. Instead, a focus on Referential and Authentic Homegrown theorizing would be more effective in avoiding the pitfalls encountered by other Southern states.

The article notes that both the Beirut School and the IRME have not adequately developed Referential and Authentic Homegrown theories. Instead, they often focus on alternative approaches that fail to challenge Western centrism. If they continue this way, they risk remaining in a dependency relationship with the core. As Aydinli points out, dominant narratives in IR are shaped by the academic core, which relies on scholars from peripheral regions. These researchers frequently conform their work to core standards, a practice reinforced through student training that encourages them to replicate core narratives with local case studies and data. This labor-intensive process benefits the core while limiting the development of original homegrown research that could provide valuable insights often overlooked by core institutions (Aydinli, 2024).

To genuinely diversify the IR field, it is crucial to move beyond simple modifications. If Arab intellectuals fail to make this shift, they risk remaining locked in a cycle of dependency. Hence, it's time for Arabs to follow the footsteps of Turkish scholars in the field, who have recognized, as Aydinli says, that "two decades after introducing Western IR theories to Turkish IR, it may be time to revisit local histories and area knowledge to develop original concepts, frameworks, and theories" (Aydinli, 2024, p. 14).

All the above-mentioned efforts will not result in effective changes however, if made individually, as theory building is a collaborative process that requires collective engagement. Theories are not the product of one theorist's contribution; they emerge and evolve out of discussions within groups of theorists. Therefore, efforts should be dedicated to developing and enhancing nascent theories in the Arab region, and to applying them in different contexts. This can be achieved through establishing intellectual and theoretical dialogue with other Southern states. It is important that we show the South how to speak with and listen to itself, with the aim of having a "chat" among friends (Ling & Pinheiro, 2020, p. 318).

It is important to emphasize that dialogue between scholars from the Arab region and those from other Southern states should not be based on a hierarchy but on interaction between equals. When intellectuals in the South endeavor to theorize in concert, the result will be a constitution of real pluralism in the field of IR. This can be accomplished through joint research projects, conferences, workshops, and academic networks that promote cross-cultural dialogue. Therefore, Arab scholars should put more effort into actively engaging with and critically evaluating existing critical trends, such as Global IR, Post-Western IR, and others. By building on these, adapting them, and applying them to the Arabic context, scholars can contribute to the development of pluralist IR theory.

The suggestion here goes beyond simply increasing the number of workshops or replicating existing theories. It emphasizes the importance of quality engagement, mutual dialogue, and context-specific theorizing. The call for Arab scholars to collaborate with Southern scholars and embrace critical trends is not about duplicating Western theoretical frameworks or adopting existing paradigms uncritically. Instead, it advocates for a pluralistic

approach to international relations theory that honors diverse perspectives and experiences. This aligns with Jørgensen's broader argument that such workshops "should address contemporary issues and be future-oriented. Furthermore, the workshops should contribute to redefine the (contested) core of the discipline" (Jørgensen, 2017, p. 1).

In this regard, it would be crucial to enhance the three existing schools and trends through which Arab scholars present their writings and perspectives. Ensuring that their works are accessible in both Arabic and English languages is of utmost importance. This dual-language approach serves two significant purposes. It allows for the examination and potential application of their contributions, thereby contributing to the development of suggested theories. It also facilitates the dissemination of critical thinking regarding prevailing IR theories. By undertaking these efforts, Arab scholars can make valuable contributions to fostering a culture of critical thinking and intellectual independence.

The responsibility of initiating this process lies on the shoulders of researchers associated with these schools that attempt to deconstruct Eurocentrism. No doubt, it is important for scholars from the Beirut School and the School of International Relations of the Middle East to write in English, as it facilitates dialogue and engagement with researchers worldwide. However, an increased emphasis on writing and publishing in English does not effectively broaden the horizons of dialogue within the Arab countries and does not facilitate knowledge transfer among students of political science and IR who may not be proficient in English. Likewise, writing exclusively in Arabic— especially for researchers adopting the Islamic paradigm in the Arab world— narrows the scope of discussion and limits engagement with other scholars from different trends in the field of IR. This results in a localized and isolated trend, hindering ideas and perspectives from diffusing and crossing borders.

The linguistic dominance of English in International Relations (IR) is a critical issue, as Aydinli and Aydinli emphasize: "A key feature of the long-observed 'core' hegemony in IR is a linguistic one, yet it remains the least explored and confronted." (Aydinli & Aydinli, 2024, p. 1). This linguistic unilateralism is a fundamental pillar of a dependent relationship, in which the English-speaking center maintains a hegemony while the non-English periphery is structurally standardized and hindered from making original contributions. The imperialistic process of assimilation shapes the development of IR knowledge. Confronting and dismantling this linguistic hegemony is essential for globalizing and decolonizing IR. Therefore, greater multilingualism is necessary to facilitate the development and integration of peripheral concepts into a broadened IR core, limiting the imperialistic influence of linguistic unilateralism (Aydinli & Aydinli, 2024, pp. 19–20).

On the pedagogical level, epistemological disobedience should be extended to university courses and curricula, as Western theories continue to dominate the field of IR in the Arab region. Educators and professors in the Arab countries should be more conscious that such courses should not be considered neutral, passive spaces; rather, they are environments where competing ontological and epistemological perspectives vie for supremacy (Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 3). Arabs possess a rich heritage of literature and theories that could be revived. Thus, Arab scholars should strive to distance themselves from what the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie called "The Danger of a Single Story" (Smith & Tickner, 2020, p. 3). Instead of solely relying on mainstream theories and participating in the cognitive violence perpetuated by the West, Arab intellectuals should embrace a more diverse range of perspectives. By doing so, we can nurture a new generation of scholars who possess a comprehensive understanding of

global IR debates. They would be equipped with the necessary methodological competencies to engage with critical approaches and challenge the Eurocentric narratives that dominate the field (Darwich et al., 2021; Salloukh & Darwich, 2023).

When this generation of scholars teach IRT, they will transfer their knowledge and skills to their students. Arab IR students will then be equipped with a comprehensive understanding of various quantitative and qualitative critical approaches that challenge the notion that the IR field is solely Western. This will lead to a more inclusive and globally representative approach to the discipline (Darwich et al., 2021; Salloukh & Darwich, 2023).

On the institutional level, Arab universities, like their global counterparts, place great importance on achieving high rankings in international classifications as a measure of their performance and achievement. However, the pursuit of these rankings can hinder knowledge production in the Arab World's native language. This challenge arises from the dominance of English-language journals, which are generally given preference in influential rankings such as the Shanghai Ranking and QS World University Rankings (Hanafi, 2016, p. 146). Consequently, Arab researchers may feel compelled to write in English to advance their careers, reinforcing the dominance of English in academic discourse. To prevent the exclusion of those who are not proficient in the prevailing language of theories, it is crucial to support theorization efforts in researchers' native languages.

Part of the solution is to put more effort into producing scientific research in multiple languages, not just one. This could be achieved if another obstacle is overcome: the lack of research funding in Arab countries. To address this issue, it is essential to recognize scientific research as a national priority and allocate sufficient investment toward research production. This will contribute to the development of knowledge production processes that aim to challenge Eurocentrism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has shed light on the imbalanced process of knowledge transfer between the North and the South, emphasizing the limited Arab attempts to break free from Western dominance in the field of IR compared to efforts from other regions.

To strengthen Arab trends and enhance them, it is essential to be open to, and get involved with, other non-Western trends, such as Global IR and Post-Western IR, that have aimed to deconstruct Eurocentrism. It is also important to draw inspiration from their advantages and their shortcomings, so that Arab trends can effectively challenge Western centrism and reject the cosmetic solutions that merely modify Western theories, leading to unintentionally reproducing Eurocentrism. Arab efforts to deconstruct Western centrism should be guided by fundamental principles: avoiding mimicry of Western theories; avoiding essentialism and particularism; amplifying the voices of the subaltern; and fostering equal and open interactions with others. Given that the Arab world possesses a rich intellectual heritage, it can provide valuable insights into IR. Embracing this diversity can lead to a more inclusive understanding of global affairs and significantly enrich the discipline as a whole.

The process of rejecting Eurocentrism and its domination in the IR field should focus on three levels of intervention: the level of knowledge production, the pedagogical, and the institutional levels. The integration of Arabic and Islamic heritage, coupled with the production of theories that resonate with contemporary contexts and changes, should be the

overarching goal of Arab IR theorists. Realizing this goal requires nurturing a new generation of researchers who embrace critical perspectives and advocate diversity as the bedrock of the field. Arab universities should break free from the grip of Western hegemony and resist perpetuating Eurocentrism. By doing so, the path toward a more balanced and inclusive global knowledge exchange can be forged. This article is only one attempt at fostering a South-South dialogue that should be established, and at developing an intellectual and theoretical discussion that should be empowered to challenge Western hegemony.

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