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Abstract

This article reviews three recent books that challenge conventional ways of doing International Relations. The rich arguments deployed in these books provide different yet complementary perspectives that can help us to rethink International Relations. They share a concern over what they regard as International Relations' entrenched coloniality and disciplinary straitjacket. They challenge what they identify as the hegemonic practices of conventional knowledge production that exclude alternative ways of knowing the international. They explore how International Relations is produced in the non-core and how personal narratives are embedded in theory-making, and question the claims to science of conventional methodologies. Yet, if all three books contribute to a praiseworthy attempt to trespass disciplinary boundaries, they also perpetuate hegemonic silences by failing adequately to engage with gender and indigenous perspectives.

Keywords

International relations, feminism, indigeneity, post-colonial studies

Books under review

Arlene Tickner and David L. Blaney (2012) *Thinking International Relations Differently*. Routledge. Series Worlding Beyond the West. 358 pp. Paperback.

Naeem Inayatullah (2011) *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR*. Routledge. Series Interventions. 212 pp. Paperback.

Patrick Thaddeus Jackson (2011) *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics*. Routledge. The New International Relations Series. 268 pp. Paperback.

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Introduction

At a roundtable during the 2012 meeting of the International Studies Association (ISA), Robbie Shilliam claimed that we should “kill” International Relations (IR). His trenchant intervention proposed eliminating IR as a discipline, and retaining it merely as a perspective within political science. An ensuing sense of intellectual discontent disrupted what is typically a placid conference. Attendance at panels on post-coloniality rivaled those discussing nuclear security; young presenters spiced up their interventions with musical performances; and the “Occupy IR” initiative aspired to capture the disciplinary core in a manner paralleling the “Occupy Wall Street” movement. Such irreverence toward established schools of thought is clearly not shared by the mainstream, yet it indicates an existential malaise felt by many IR scholars. Their critical stance is shared by the books under review here. The proliferation of research dealing with the periphery and coloniality is the product of a growing discontent with a discipline regarded as disconnected from the world that it is supposed to understand. After 9/11, isolated expressions of discontent (Tickner, 2003) began coming together in an emerging literature out of and about the “non-West,” taking early post-positivist debates (Ashley, 1987; Walker, 1993) to a new level. Not only is IR accused of being conceived by and for a hegemonic core, but it is also decried as a disciplinary straitjacket. Shilliam’s declaration, extreme as it may seem, starkly illustrates IR’s internal vicissitudes.

Critics accuse IR of two significant, interrelated sins. The first is an ingrained hegemony. IR has long been accused of US-centrism, as when Stanley Hoffmann (1977) described it as an American social science. The constructivist turn grappled with this criticism, using norms and identity to account for the social fabric of world politics and the persistence of difference (Katzenstein, 1996; Ruggie, 1998; Wendt, 1992). This was followed by the feminist critique, which accused IR of perpetuating masculine dominance (Tickner, 1997), while other critics denounced IR’s implicit penchant for white supremacy (Vitalis, 2010). Progressively, the discipline acquired a semblance of *worldliness* (Tickner and Blaney, 2012: 5), yet the production of knowledge remains starkly hegemonic. The US is still the home of most scholarly journals and graduate programs. US authors account for 58% of the assigned readings in undergraduate classes throughout the world—and over 70% of readings in undergraduate classes in the US (Maliniak et al., 2012). The assigned topics further highlight patterns of dominance. Realism is the most widely taught paradigm in IR (feminism only accounts for 7%), Europe is the most studied region; almost every scholar worldwide describes her approach as positivist. Women constitute less than a third of all IR professors; only Martha Finnemore and Susan Strange rank among IR’s 20 most influential authors. No information is available concerning other minority groups. Most IR scholars conduct primary research in non-native languages, except for English speakers, who tend to speak only their mother tongue.

Related to this first critique is the charge that IR is out of touch with many important issues in the world because of its narrow disciplinary approach. Scholarly dominance implies a certain conceptual parochialism, with inevitable epistemological implications. The study of international relations, it turns out, is often not all that *worldly*. Inequalities of power between various cores and non-cores have fueled critiques that challenge the foundations of IR. Immanuel Wallerstein (2006) decried European universalism as a rhetoric of power, whereas John Hobson (2007) interpreted IR theory as a defence of Western civilization, thus making understandable the persistently Eurocentric organization of IR. These criticisms were the prelude for Hamid Dabashi’s (2013) proposal to discard habitual binaries such as “Islam and the West” because their conceptual traps conceal the plurality of Muslim worldliness. IR’s Eurocentrism is accused of enforcing a narrow understanding of the world, one that self-validates positivist perspectives against other ways of knowing. One problem with an imagined West as the central subject and referent of global politics is that it

deprives the discipline of a multiplicity of ways of being in the world. This means, for instance, that IR discussions of state formation almost invariably refer to Westphalian nations, failing to account for centuries of slave trade between Africa and the Americas, ignoring Muslim understandings of security, or dismissing indigenous practices of authority.

The critics' charges are confirmed by the homogeneity of IR theory. Epistemologically speaking, IR remains a confined space. The production of IR varies surprisingly little around the world: the discipline still excludes innovative perspectives produced outside its core as non-scientific (Tickner and Waeber, 2009). Even constructivism, while broadening IR's theoretical spectrum, largely focused on variations in the state system. The obsession with stateness and sovereignty continues unabated, the post-colonial critique remains largely unaddressed, and IR's tendency to be unreflectively ahistorical has yet to be rectified. These questions are being addressed in History (Belmessous, 2011) and Anthropology (Kauanui, 2008), but IR has yet to adequately engage with such contributions. Overall, IR's theoretical crisis has only been recognized by a minority of scholars who share disquiet over the field's entrenched coloniality.

This article reviews three books that seek to expand understandings of what constitutes IR. They each provide stinging critiques of conventional forms of doing IR. The books share an insistence on blurring the lines between valid knowledge produced at the core and other ways of knowing that typically tend to be dismissed as irrelevant. They seek to break free from conceptual canons, authorized forms of knowledge, and conventional methodologies. Rather than simply reiterating hegemonic dynamics, they validate non-core knowledge to expand and decentre what counts as IR. What differentiates them from each other is that they contest conventional ways of doing IR from different angles. One challenges IR's hegemonic discourse from a location at the periphery; the other two seek to undermine IR's methodological positivism. While all three criticize IR's entrenched coloniality, they do so in complementary ways. Tickner and Blaney focus on the production of knowledge in the periphery. The other two challenge the methodological rigidity that confines IR: Naeem Inayatullah by recognizing the role of personal narratives; Patrick Thaddeus Jackson by probing IR's methodological claims to science.

Thinking International Relations Differently, edited by Arlene B. Tickner and David L. Blaney, explores how IR is produced around the world. The book, the second in a trilogy that gathers perspectives from the non-core to interrogate the foundations of IR,¹ contributes a view of what IR looks like from the non-core. Scholars from Brazil to Pakistan tackle the deeply entrenched yet underexplored center–periphery axis, challenging the conceptual dualism between an imagined centre and its periphery through four central themes: security; the state, authority and sovereignty; globalization; and secularism and religion. In his edited volume *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR*, Naeem Inayatullah contests myths of objectivity by suggesting that personal narratives influence IR's theoretical articulations. Eighteen scholars substitute storytelling global politics for traditional forms of knowledge. The result is accessible and delightful, a book at times tragicomic and unfailingly engaging, one that brings to life alternative forms of knowing the international. In *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson links philosophy of science to methodology. He reflects on the production of knowledge, clarifies procedures of scientific inquiry in IR, and disputes invocations of science to privilege some research approaches at the expense of others. He brings together what he describes as two philosophical wagers: the relationship between the knower and the known on one side; and the relationship between knowledge and observation on the other. The result is a fourfold table with different methodologies that stem from a particular combination of philosophical-ontological commitments—neopositivism, critical realism, analyticism, and reflexivity—each the subject of a chapter.

In what follows, I first identify the contesting of disciplinary straitjackets as the common thread connecting all three books. I then discuss how their shared attempt to challenge IR's coloniality seeks to expand theoretical possibilities. Lastly, I analyse the implications of the three books' failure to integrate a feminist critique and engage indigeneity as a category of analysis to expand theoretical borders.

Beyond disciplining: Alternative ways of doing IR

A recurrent theme across these books is how much IR *disciplines*. The conceptual and epistemological straitjacket that defines what can and cannot constitute IR, contributors to these books argue, limits possibilities for alternative thinking. State-centric premises are not only Eurocentric, (unapologetically) based on the colonial European nation-state, but also restrict our political imagination to a world organized in states. The authors of *Thinking International Relations Differently* vividly illustrate the inadequacy of thinking in terms of nation-states. Karen Smith reminds us that the domestic is often international in Africa, where state borders are typically arbitrary inheritances from colonial negotiations like the Congress of Berlin. From the perspective of the Collective for Social Research in Karachi, Ayesha Khan questions conventional thinking organized along state borders, as she examines the transnational nature of Afghan livelihoods on the Pakistani border. It is not only stateness that tends to be taken for granted, but also sovereignty. Both are still treated as a sort of Holy Grail in IR. The problem with a state-centric explanation of the world is that by indiscriminately grafting sovereignty onto politics, it tends to make extra-sovereign imagination illegible. This is why Siddarth Mallavarapu examines frontiers of the Indian Ocean as flows of goods rather than closed spaces, and describes overlapping patterns of authority in order to think territoriality in ways that Westphalian notions cannot grasp. The human dimension of stateness is vividly narrated by Rainer Hülse, who conveys the schizophrenic texture of dual citizenship in a tragicomic essay on being a double soldier in Switzerland and Germany (Inayatullah, 2011: 56).

Authors find IR's disciplining problem to lie partly in its own coloniality, which is far from being a memory of the past. Wafaa Hasan and Bessma Momani (Tickner and Blaney, 2012) explain that Arab scholars have a complex narrative of globalization because it hearkens back to the long history of colonial pillage by Europe. Taking a more contestatory stand, Khadija F. El Alaoui (Inayatullah, 2011) wonders what we learn to forget by reading Huntington and adopting an epistemology that leads to the forgetting of other worlds. She suggests that scholars learn disciplinary canons in order to engage in "real IR," and by so doing perpetuate (and support) its hierarchies. The very socialization of knowledge creates omissions that impact understandings of world politics. This is the experience narrated by Narendran Kumarakulasingam, who felt like an occupier of East Tamil for silencing the fear and terror witnessed, "taming reality through high (but critical mind you) theory" (Inayatullah, 2011: 39). Occupation takes forms other than military invasion, practiced by silences or conscientious exclusions.

Case studies from the non-core are indispensable to decolonize political theory because the history of *others* is often missing. The French Revolution, for instance, became inscribed in universal history whereas the Haitian revolution, which may have been equally momentous, was consigned to oblivion (Buck-Morss, 2009). Departing from the premise that IR continues to be "produced by and for the West," Tickner and Blaney's volume explores what it means to validate the non-core as a critical producer of knowledge. Isaac Kamola (Tickner and Blaney, 2012) argues that the conceptualization of globalization as a largely singular, mostly harmonious, force only makes sense if its contradictions and the exploitation of Africa are either omitted or reduced to exceptions. In other words, globalization as an object of academic inquiry is produced in relation to Africa's absence.

The deeper argument is that theoretical knowledge is productive of the world as much as it is reflective of that which already exists. In that sense, the invisibility of Africa in the literature is symptomatic of a specific knowledge produced through marginalization. Siba Grovogui advocates historicizing IR concepts because “the constitution of knowledge [is] infused with ideology and disciplinary practices that distort the terms of inquiry” (Tickner and Blaney, 2012: 125).

The books seek to re-centre IR in alternative spatial imaginaries by looking outside traditional forms of IR. It was by wandering the streets of the Bronx that Joel Dinerstein realized that music invited a re-articulation of colonial relations (Inayatullah, 2011). How did a colonized ethnic group from a mostly agrarian society create a counter-culture of modernity like blues or hip-hop, which ended up colonizing the bodies of ruling classes in the supposedly more advanced, urban and industrial society? The books do not delve into indigenous spaces, although doing so would expose alternative political geographies and allow us to historicize modern state sovereignty. The sole exception is Karen Smith, who engages with indigenous philosophies in the exercise of thinking world politics with the *ubuntu* (Tickner and Blaney, 2012: 311). She explains this South African concept, translated as “collective personhood,” as a unique indigenous world view of the international that emphasizes interdependence.

The question of positionality, central both to feminist critique and to efforts to decolonize the self across disciplines, permeates the three books’ underlying argumentation. However, the books do not engage feminist perspectives directly. Inayatullah relegates to a footnote (Inayatullah, 2011: 11) the precedent of feminist IR in engaging in autobiography. The other volumes treat the feminist legacy *en passant* with sparse references that fail to recognize its revolutionary contributions to IR. Yet, *Autobiographical International Relations* explicitly questions positionality, and Tickner and Blaney’s volume closely interrogates the situatedness of knowledge. Both books explore what it means to be different, finding universalism to be less homogeneous than often portrayed. As they venture onto a terrain of decentring, neutral perspectives are increasingly hard to sustain. This is perhaps where Jackson’s methodological intervention is most propitious. His four models highlight the potential diversity of research approaches to world politics. Not only does Jackson capture current controversies in IR, but his typology places reflexive scholarship on a more equal footing with positivist methodological procedures. The ontological and epistemological implications of his inquiry can be applied to Liu Yongtao’s analysis of the function of culture when theorizing security in China (Tickner and Blaney, 2012). If concepts of goodwill and harmony proposed by Yongtao seem a bit romantic in light of China’s predatory approach to natural resources, Jackson’s pluralistic approach to science reminds us that diversity is not reducible to a single logic of inquiry.

It is the relentless invocation of science that is at stake. The autobiographical essays blur the borders between science and art, while the case studies from the non-core lament that the normalization of knowledge validates certain people in certain places. It is Jackson who most explicitly denounces the abuse of claims to science in IR theory. He analyses various inconsistencies in the assumption that neopositivist methodologies are the most reliable way to produce knowledge. Science, at its best, is inherently democratic, with hypotheses subject to testing criteria rather than being influenced by ascriptive social hierarchies. The problem emerges when the aura of objectivity attributed to science is unconsciously or deliberately distorted to maintain power structures. Jackson’s rigorous analysis deploys the philosophy of science to clarify IR research practices. If philosophers have not yet resolved what constitutes *scientific* knowledge production, he says, claims to science are not only a rhetorical commonplace, but also a self-fulfilling prophecy that privileges some forms of inquiry to the detriment of others. Methodology determines the incorporation of causal factors in research, thereby permitting dominance to reproduce itself without sufficient justification. Thus, Realists can reassert postulates like

sovereignty to go on reading world politics as a struggle for power among independent political units. IR scholarship reproduces its disciplinary canons, and that which is too different, as Tickner and Blaney claim, is easily invalidated as unscientific or ideological. Jackson sees the quantitative–qualitative divide as a distinction of method without methodology, an almost aesthetic consideration, whose main function is to limit knowledge production. Claims to science, he argues, play primarily a disciplining function in IR.

It is in the relationship between knowledge and experience that different IRs may emerge. Jackson calls it the “hook-up” between the mind and the world, whereas the other two books refer to “ways of being in the world.” Contributors to *Autobiographical IR* write alternative forms of IR, whether in a post-communist world or through martial arts. Jackson, one of the authors, explores his son’s autism to give a pragmatic sense of the complex encounter of various worlds. His son lives in “a world that doesn’t really think like he thinks, but a world that needs what he has to offer even if it doesn’t know it yet” (Inayatullah, 2011: 171). Quynh Pham and Himadeep Muppidi, in turn, contrast their village *ishq* to the “global ambitions of knowledge, which desires to grasp the world comprehensively, systematically, and instantaneously” (Inayatullah, 2011: 178). Local practices reinterpret universal concepts in their own ways. These books’ larger aim is to recognize the vastness of the international without dissolving differences or establishing hierarchies.

Killing or revitalizing IR?

The dilemma, then, is which strategy to follow to convince the skeptics. Should we try to convince the unconvinced, compromising on our discontent to pursue common conceptual grounds, keeping the dialogue in flux to slowly introduce alternative epistemologies in mainstream IR? Or is it best to choose Shilliam’s more extreme proposal and seek to destroy the discipline by shredding mainstream assumptions in a ground-zeroing attempt to build a different IR altogether? These books do not attempt to kill IR; rather, they strive to breach its disciplinary walls in the hope of further decolonizing its practice. Underlying their reformist rather than revolutionary contestation, each book is committed to rethinking theory and providing alternatives to salvage the field from its inner crisis.

The most important contribution of these books is to expand disciplinary boundaries. In looking at IR from elsewhere, they denaturalize its location. Their project is less about redistributing knowledge than about redistributing the authority to define knowledge. The displacement of IR does not happen only at the geographical margins, integrating concerns raised, for example, by Pakistani and Romanian scholars. There is a larger intellectual displacement taking place. Where exactly is IR? What are its boundaries? Lori Amy (Inayatullah, 2011) interrogates the role of the elsewhere and the not yet. And following the seeds of doubt planted by Jackson, what happens to those objects left *unseen* in a philosophy of knowledge that traditionally equates knowing with seeing? Are they *untrue*?

The books simultaneously dislocate and clarify IR theory. The two edited volumes contribute to expanding what Tickner and Waeber (2009) have called IR’s geocultural epistemologies. Jackson’s defense of methodological pluralism offers a vocabulary to differentiate methods of conducting inquiry that characterize the field of IR today. His methodological clarification, notably, denaturalizing the critical realist position, echoes past critiques of IR’s vulgar positivism (Lawrence, 2007). Stretching disciplinary boundaries enables creativity. Once IR is not where it used to be, for instance, the music of blues can replace the state. At least this seems to be Dinerstein’s take, who

sees Duke Ellington's orchestra as the greatest display of democracy (Inayatullah, 2011: 118). Finding democracy in blues enables him to forge the concept of a creolized self. Advocating epistemological pluralism, Jackson argues that IR has no neutral or universal metalanguage but requires an ongoing challenge of translation (Jackson, 2011: 210). The challenge raised in these books is precisely to find contact zones that generate contentious conversations with other systems of knowledge. If the "outcomes of our total experience is that the world can be handled according to various, interpenetrating spheres of reality ... why would we assume that only one system of ideas is valid?" (Jackson, 2011: 209).

What does the new geo-epistemology of IR look like? Tickner finds that scholarly activity at the non-core is surprisingly similar to that at the core, often disciplined into reproducing canons, and that the most interesting IR comes, in fact, not necessarily from the geographical non-core, but from its own intellectual peripheries. Theory is enriched as one begins leaving the core behind, as various chapters in these volumes illustrate. Jackson's methodological approach suggests the more existential conundrum: can we build common ground without destroying IR? This question challenges the relevance — even existence — of the discipline. If scholars are exploring other spaces not enclosable within IR, are they still doing IR? Does where we stand define whether we are doing IR? Is IR even capable of developing epistemologies beyond the alternatives to those upon which it is now based? Can IR, as it stands (the study of states, inter-state relations, balance of power, war, etc.) reflect upon its own coloniality? The debates that emerge from these books look at how scholars seek to subvert prevailing patterns of reproduction in the discipline, whether it is possible to think IR differently from within, or if thinking alternative IRs requires moving outside/beyond it. Feminists have tackled such questions too. Ann Tickner's (2010) article, "You may never understand," expresses the difficulties encountered by feminist scholars in trying to shift IR epistemologies. The question becomes whether efforts to break IR open can be achieved without recognition from the core, which possesses the power of the gatekeeper.

Skeptics may fear a balkanization of IR concepts, warn against the trap of a critical critique cum nihilistic relativism, or debunk post-colonial critiques for putting few concrete proposals on the table. The most progressive skeptics may validate the general argumentation while sidelining it as a peripheral concern. Whatever reactions it generates among the mainstream, the current discontent with IR is rapidly producing novel, complex, and open-ended modes of scholarship. Despite their possible weaknesses, these interventions indicate a democratizing trend in the field of IR. This rebellion has perhaps a Freudian undertone, expressing the inevitable discontent vis-à-vis prior generations. Yet, rebellions that challenge power structures, refusing sexism and racism and exclusionary practices, are inexorable. It was just a matter of time for the rebellion to reach IR. The question, now that this door has been opened, is whether IR can survive its own democratization.

These scholarly initiatives represent a broader, collective project, one not yet mainstreamed but far from trivial, to break away from IR conceptual dictates. What is at stake in these books is Homi Bhaba's (1994) commitment to theory: "Is the language of theory merely another power play of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation?" Reinforcing Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2000) sense that Europe is indispensable yet inadequate, contributors expose the limits of IR theory for understanding the multiplicity of ways of being-in-the-world. The books reviewed here constitute critical interventions that seek to revitalize their discipline. Yet, if the richness of arguments deployed is in itself an invitation to rethink IR, their own silences suggest the difficulty in bringing down certain established borders—and risk jeopardizing the books' innovative enterprise.

Not yet understood: Feminist legacies and indigenous world views

Alas, even critical treatments of IR are flawed. Despite inviting significant critical projects, these books reproduce two sins of their discipline: the sidelining of feminist legacies and the silencing of indigenous world views. Feminist and indigenous critiques provide crucial ways to reframe our understanding of what constitutes IR. Beyond telling stories deemed irrelevant in hegemonic narratives of global politics, both offer valuable insights for undisciplining IR's state-centrism. They highlight the significance of hitherto under-represented groups within world politics. More importantly, all critical approaches to IR scholarship should address feminist and indigenous epistemologies because incorporating their theoretical insights transforms both our understanding of what constitutes IR and how we go about studying it.

The feminist critique, intrinsically radical for subverting the established political order, is a fundamental ally in any attempt at revolutionizing the practice of IR. Critical approaches to IR need not reinvent the wheel. Feminist scholars have generated a voluminous literature involving sophisticated critiques of IR, dethroning canons and delineating alternative epistemologies to tackle assumptions about war, security, and sovereignty (Ackerly et al., 2006). More than a category of analysis that has expanded conceptual tools and tackled methodological debates, feminism has significantly decentred IR. Feminist IR may be criticized for its Eurocentric slips (Hobson, 2007), but its epistemological critique is too powerful to be disembedded from post-colonial referencing, as the books implicitly do. From my location as a female scholar in the non-core, it is distressing to find little engagement in these books with feminism because it fundamentally weakens the reach of a post-colonial critique. More positively, recognizing the critical role of feminist critique can provide an opportunity to articulate overlapping knots of contestation that are disordering conventional foundations in IR.

Gender is a key tool of colonialism, both because colonialism enforces gender hierarchies to establish and maintain its dominion and because colonialism is structured by the logic of sexual violence and conquest. Feminisms, with their contesting of inequality and blurring of the lines distinguishing public and private, are ineluctably woven into post-colonial critiques. John Hobson (2007) engaged with feminisms at length to argue for a post-racist critical IR, and Ann Tickner drew on feminism and post-colonialism to retell IR's foundations because both share a commitment "to counter familiar western narratives" (2011: 7). However, the fundamental ties between the two approaches have been articulated mostly outside IR. Other disciplines like History and Anthropology have explored how gender and race are intrinsically connected in the construction of hegemony. Anne McClintock (1995) wove together race, gender, and class as inextricably linked categories that come into existence in and through relations to each other under the British Empire, whereas Peter Wade (2009) stressed the articulations and intersections between race and sex in Latin American politics. It is because gender and coloniality are intimately entangled that Joan Scott (2007) reads Muslim women's use of headscarves in France as a modern act of colonial insubordination. The goal should not be to dedicate a chapter to feminist considerations in a quota-like fashion. Rather, the challenge is to weave post-colonial research into existing feminist interventions (Tickner, 2011). Recognizing such common ground improves the prospects for destabilizing IR.

More disquieting still is the omission of indigenous perspectives in these books. As much as they value different ways of doing IR, the contributors fail to mobilize indigenous perspectives to contest accepted premises of the discipline. Culture and religion are present in various chapters, from the variations of Islamic statehood to Confucianism, but only Smith directly engages

indigenous world views. Implicitly located at the borders of political rationality, indigenous praxis continues to be dismissed as irrelevant to the study of international relations. Indigenous methodologies, relegated to the non-scientific (and non-European) realm, remain widely excluded from legitimate processes of knowledge production (Smith, 1999). These books prove that even critical analyses seem to consider indigenous ontologies to be “inappropriate” subjects of international politics (Shaw, 2008). Yet, it is precisely because indigeneities stand in the non-core and transcend state-centrism that they are essential to rethinking world politics.

That all three books overlook indigeneity as a category of analysis is problematic in at least two ways. First, indigenous politics are intrinsically international, and they are meaningful to IR because they depart from Westphalian, state-centric practices. From the Arctic to the Amazon, indigenous peoples are all relatively stateless. It is this location outside the state that provides a unique standpoint to rethink world politics. Historically, indigenous diplomacies produced sophisticated legalities to defy the self-assigned sovereign authority of the state over land. In fact, indigenous legal activism from the 16th century on was so dynamic that scholars have argued that European legality in the New World should be understood in part as counterclaims rather than as original discourses (Belmessous, 2011). Today, indigenous rights to self-determination are recognized by international treaties like Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). They are also providing an increasingly important focus for contestation. Across Latin America, for instance, indigenous movements are perhaps the most significant force resisting predatory state natural resource policies, and indigenous systems of justice are progressively redefining legal sovereignty. Research outside IR already offers a wealth of case studies and theoretical recasting to think varied forms of sovereignty. Scholars have referred to indigenous forms of self-organizing in the Andes as “vernacular statecraft” (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 2009) and framed self-determination as “the art of not being governed” in upland Southeast Asia (Scott, 2009). Kevin Bruyneel’s (2007) “third space of sovereignty” indicates the overlapping, non-binary renderings of indigenous political life. As Marshall Beier (2009) noted, indigenous politics are not untold stories, but unheard ones.

Second, indigenous peoples are the ultimate outsiders, not because they are pure or authentic (they are not), but because indigeneity historically identifies the imaginary *other* against which the modern state could invent itself. Indigeneity refers to those peoples who do not belong in the European nation, the “local” and “cultural” other without a history, in contrast to the “modern,” “universal” state. Whether Indians were excluded as the mirror of state-making in the Andes (Canessa, 2005) or were “disappeared” in New England (O’Brien, 2010), they were cast as outsiders unworthy of (and silenced from) political modernity. The indigenous refers to the pre-modern because it constitutes that which is prior to the state. According to the United Nations Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (United Nations, 2004), indigenous and tribal peoples have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories. What makes societies tribal in India or indigenous in Canada is their precedence over the state, tangible in their cultures, languages, and territories. Indigeneity is a fluid identity encompassing different claims because it is tightly contingent on varying histories of nation-making. It is a homogenizing category impossible to strictly define in international law because it refers less to a constitutive who/what than to the otherness implied by it. Indigeneity is a strategic epistemological location to do IR because it is intrinsically relational to, and co-constitutive with, its main object of study: the state.

Critical approaches to IR that ignore the value of indigeneity as a category of analysis are problematic, if not fatally flawed, because they perpetuate the imaginary of the state system as modern and global, contrary to an indigeneity imagined as past and local. Imaginaries of this sort not only

reinforce the exclusionary dynamics within IR, but are also at odds with the sophistication of indigenous political praxis (Shaw, 2008). International norms affirming collective rights to self-determination provoke discomfort among UN member-states because the expansion of indigenous rights is explicitly related to issues of sovereignty, territory, and authority. This was made evident in the UNDRIP, which became the longest-debated human rights instrument in UN history. The negotiation over indigenous territorial autonomy required two UN Decades precisely because it entailed recognizing complex, alternative systems of authority.² Moreover, indigenous self-determination challenges much more than the sovereignty of individual states. It contests the organization of world politics around Westphalian principles. Inevitably, to historicize the state in the non-core means to integrate indigenous studies in order to apprehend alternative borders and complex arrangements of authority. Ignoring indigeneity severely undermines our ability to destabilize core postulates in IR.

Indigeneity is not a category of analysis that concerns merely indigenous peoples, just as feminism is not a matter for women only or Islam the domain of Muslims alone. The entire thrust of the feminist critique is that the non-core is the business of the core, that we must move beyond minority politics in our research. Ignoring these issues handicaps critical theory and perpetuates IR's unreflective and ahistorical tendencies (Taylor, 2012). Similarly, if we are serious about decolonizing the discipline, the inability of scholars at the margins to think indigeneity underscores the difficulty of escaping IR's epistemological limits. It reveals how much remains hidden or forgotten, indicating the extent of the colonial legacy still embedded in the discipline. Bringing indigenous studies into IR is not about ethical scholarship (although that is not such a bad idea); rather, it speaks to our ability to challenge methodological hegemonies while seeking to extend our political practice beyond the ivory tower. It remains to be seen whether critical approaches are up to the challenge, or if they too will fall into the trap of erecting walls around the enterprise of doing IR.

Conclusion

Can we articulate significantly different theories of IR without destroying it? These books do their part in breaking disciplinary boundaries, be it through perspectives from the non-core, biographical storytelling, or methodological debunking. Hopefully, they incite scholars to discern other irreverent places from which to do IR. But if we are to overcome the intellectual malaise voiced by Shilliam, we will need broader, collective efforts, a scholarly *ubuntu*, to emancipate the discipline from the threat of doing non-IR. The best way to rescue IR may be to consider non-canonical approaches, building bridges not only among dissidents and the mainstream, but also across systems of knowledge. These books combine wit and finesse to open new horizons to a growing debate aimed at decolonizing the social sciences at large.

Once IR is stripped of its canons and hierarchies, we must face the unsettling task of thinking beyond the discipline as we know it. A decolonized IR may provoke simultaneous feelings of relief and anxiety at the unforeseen choices that lie ahead. Determining which paths to follow is perhaps the most urgent task that we need to face. The next question, then, is: what political projects will IR be fundamentally inadequate to study? The gauntlet has been thrown down. The next task is to devise ways to meet the challenge.

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Notes

1. The first volume, *International Relations Scholarship Around the World*, was edited by Arlene Tickner and Ole Wæver (2009). The third and last volume, *Claiming the International*, is announced for 2013.
2. Most member-states reacted to Article 46, the most contentious, specifying that the declaration could not be interpreted in any way that could impair the territorial sovereignty of states. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the US voted against the treaty in 2007 (although all four have subsequently issued statements of support).

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