

Core, periphery and (neo)imperialist International Relations

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Abstract

This article analyzes the core–periphery dynamics that characterize the International Relations discipline. To this end, it explores general insights offered by both science studies and the social sciences in terms of the intellectual division of labor that characterizes knowledge-building throughout the world, and the social mechanisms that reproduce power differentials within given fields of study. These arguments are then applied to International Relations, where specific factors that explain the global South’s role as a periphery to the discipline’s (mainly US) core and the ways in which peripheral communities place themselves vis-à-vis International Relations’ (neo)imperialist structure are both explored.

Keywords

core–periphery relations, domination, International Relations theory, knowledge production, the discipline of International Relations

Introduction

Reflexivity is everywhere. If one had to choose a single buzzword that is driving current debates within the field of International Relations (IR), especially those that are about IR itself, the ‘R’ word would be at the top of the list. Indisputably, the post-positivist, critical, or dissident wave that began over two decades ago has allowed for greater awareness and understanding of disciplinary dynamics. How ‘authoritative’ knowledge about world politics is produced; why theorizing has evolved as it has; how United States domination operates; how boundaries are enacted, defended, and challenged; how ‘outsiders’ are kept at bay; and how ‘others’ see things in the world differently are only some of the questions that have been visualized. With reflexivity, a

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certain degree of geocultural sensitivity has also been forthcoming, allowing for a wider picture of IR in distinct corners of the globe.

We have learned, among other things, that the discipline is gendered, ethnocentric, and rooted not only in problems of war and peace, but also in the challenges posed by imperialism, including issues of race. We have also discovered that although IR in the United States has become increasingly parochial, the fact that its meta-theories do not travel especially well to the rest of the world does not mean that its power over the intellectual means of (re) production in global IR has necessarily diminished, even though gradual change in the field's center of gravity is slowly becoming visible (Cox and Nossal, 2009; Wæver, 1998, 2007). We know that theory-building is a 'dreaded' enterprise in many IR communities in the so-called 'periphery' and 'non-West,' although the reasons for this have yet to be fully analyzed; also, that the field looks strikingly similar in diverse geographical sites, even if many of its key concepts (state, anarchy, security, power) do not exactly fit (Acharya and Buzan, 2010; Tickner and Blaney, 2012a; Tickner and Wæver, 2009a).

And yet, many aspects of the inner workings of IR continue to be underexplored, including its 'geography,' that is, its placedness or situatedness (Agnew, 2007). What role specific locations have in the making of scientific knowledge, how local experience is transformed into shared generalization, and, vice versa, how local scholarship is influenced by global forces, are all questions that have only begun to be addressed. Among the distinct facets of this spatial component of reflexivity that beg to be examined further, the core-periphery dimension¹ that continues to characterize global IR is especially intriguing. Despite diverse calls to decolonize, decenter, and pluralize the study of world politics (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004; Jones, 2006; Nayak and Selbin, 2010; Shilliam, 2011; Tickner and Blaney, 2012a.), and to research how the field operates outside of the Western center, the actual mechanisms involved that account for IR's resilience as a (neo)imperial field have yet to be examined systematically and empirically. Sociology and historiography have only gotten so far in explicating how highly asymmetrical interactions are enabled and (re)assembled through distinct disciplinary tropes. Moreover, the geopolitical dimension of core-periphery dynamics is either downplayed or ignored, even by Foucauldian and Bourdeuiian readings that underscore power relations that play out in fields of study such as IR.

The present article attempts to address this lacuna, apparent in most IR scholarship, by identifying what reflexivity has helped us learn about core-periphery relations and what we still know too little about, and by suggesting moves that might help fill this gap. To this end, I make use of some general insights offered by science studies, in particular the work of Bruno Latour on 'imperial science' (1987, 1999), to suggest one way of appreciating core-periphery dynamics. Latour's model is helpful for identifying the assembly of global fields of inquiry and the creation of what the author refers to as 'centers of calculation,' to which distinct peripheries are subsequently networked, but his analysis, as well as that of other Northern scholars of science, is less helpful in understanding the specific roles played by peripheral scholars and scholarly institutions, as well as how both participate in the transport and insertion of 'global' knowledge into Southern locales.

I then discuss the ways in which the core-periphery dynamics described in science studies are reflected in the social sciences, and in the everyday workings of global IR,

looking specifically at the how US dominance and the operation of social spaces such as scholarly journals relate to and reinforce power differentials within the field. I follow with a summary of existing knowledge about IR in the non-core, paying special attention to those aspects that may best explain its role as a 'periphery' to the discipline's (mainly US) core. These include the relative absence of theory, a strict adherence to the state as the principal unit of analysis, and the gravitation of scholarly work around 'practical' issues considered of use in thinking about foreign policy.

In the last section, I focus on some of the ways in which the global South places itself vis-à-vis the core-periphery structure of the discipline. I conclude with a series of ideas for moving forward. One of the paradoxes that the article exposes is that the deeply rooted core-periphery structure that characterizes global IR, in which scholars and institutions from both are actively involved, makes operating 'behind' or 'within' the field counterproductive in many ways. Therefore, one of the alternatives that is posed for developing scholarship, and in particular, theory, that is meaningful for understanding (and transforming) global politics is to move 'beyond' disciplinary boundaries and its principal agents.

Modern science and its (neo)imperialist impulse

Post-Kuhnians, feminists and postcolonialists, a heterogeneous bunch that form part of the field known as science studies, have contested the idea of 'science' for decades by showing that modern ideas such as objectivity, scientific method and the nature/culture dichotomy are poor gauges of how knowledge is actually constructed. According to Sandra Harding (2008: 3), one of the remaining challenges is to undo the modernity/tradition binary that still shapes scientific philosophies and practices, and that was left essentially unfazed by postmodern critiques of the modernist project.

Northern science studies have been concerned mostly with interrogating the social and historical processes by which modern, Western scientific knowledge has been constructed, and less interested in its effects upon power and knowledge in other parts of the world. Conversely, both feminist and postcolonial science studies expose how modern science is complicit in asymmetrical relations of power, given its natural tendency toward imperialism, and its colonialist attitudes and practices (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 2008; Raj, 2007;).

Authors such as Donna Haraway (1991) and Bruno Latour (1993) challenge the traditional boundaries upon which modern science has been built — modern/premodern, human/non-human, fact/value, nature/culture — by showing that such distinctions are distorting and that they obscure the social processes by which scientific knowledge is constructed. While for Haraway, modern, Western, masculine ideas of science allow humans to pretend to exercise superior, universally valid knowledge by employing god-tricks, Harding attributes this attitude to 'exceptionalism,' or 'the belief that Western sciences alone among human knowledge systems are capable of grasping reality' (2008: 3). For Latour, such ploys point to the fact that the Western subject has never actually been modern. All three suggest that nature and the social and political dimensions of human existence are not separate, discrete spaces, but rather, are always implicated in each other. Accepting this idea challenges the way in which science and knowledge is understood. As a result, for Latour what is needed is further study of the 'messy middle,'

that is hybrids that bridge the false human/non-human divide or analyses of the 'co-production' of science and societies (1993: 134).

Although modern, Western science and other sciences are equally local, and historically and socially specific, one of the key factors that distinguishes them is the former's ability to mobilize resources, objects and people in such a way that it can travel worldwide. Latour's work (1987, 1999) is especially helpful for understanding the social processes by which (core) science becomes internationalized. The author's research questions are somewhat removed from the relation between science and domination. Nevertheless, his analyses suggest that long-distance social control is one of the keys to scientific development and that global knowledge networks that establish clear divisions of labor between distinct locales and actors are fundamental to this process. Therefore, and perhaps unintentionally, Latour's insights are helpful for envisioning the construction and operation of (neo)imperial science.

From a Latourian perspective, for the world to become 'knowable' objects of study and language must be made to correspond through processes of manipulation and translation. This is because theory does not mirror nature, but rather, scientists are responsible for converting nature into words (or theory). In a fascinating case study of soil analyses in the Brazilian Amazon, the author observes that 'if virgin forest is to be transformed into a laboratory, the forest must be prepared to be rendered as a diagram' (Latour, 1999: 43). From the tagging of trees, to photograph-taking, map-making and the collection of soil samples, Latour traces the steps through which the Amazon is translated into codes that are compatible with previously existing (core) knowledge, thus preparing it for international transport to Paris. The transformation of objects of study such as the Amazon into 'inscriptions' is referred to as 'circulating reference' (Latour, 1987: 226–227; 1999: 73). Such mediations that take place between the world and language/theory allow for the conversion of the local or the particular into mobile, immutable and combinable resources, abstractions of reality that can be easily moved and combined (Latour, 1987: 223).

Scientific development consists then of repeated 'cycles of accumulation' (Latour, 1987) whereby inscriptions are gathered from myriad sites distributed across wide expanses of territory, immutable mobiles are constructed and redeployed, and associations or networks between human beings and the objects they study are created. Although for Latour knowledge results from the distinct and scattered activities that take place in such networks, the fact that this process is controlled by 'centers of calculation' that are both capable of the highest order of abstraction, that is, theory (1987: 241–242), and that attract the most amounts of money, prestige and people, points to the existence of hierarchical relations between different sites.

For example, when Columbus began to represent the new world with maps or Alexander von Humboldt to name its flora — both endeavors that required diverse technological, economic and political resources available only in the core — pieces of the local order in the Americas were converted into immutable mobiles and transported to centers of calculation, where enthusiasm with these discoveries sparked enough interest to initiate a cycle of accumulation. In addition to discovering 'things,' such journeys to the periphery also entail encounters between people who occupy differing social roles and levels of authority. In the cases of Columbus and von Humboldt, as well as that of

the Amazon (Latour, 1999: 24–79), Latour is relatively uninterested in the intrinsic value of peripheral ideas and minds, focusing instead on how local resources are harnessed to ‘know’ new objects of study and are eventually effaced to make them compatible and combinable with Western science.

A related way of looking at this problem is by means of an intellectual division of labor that mirrors the global capitalist order (Mignolo, 1998: 47). Born out of modernity and developed during the postwar period in correlation with the social construction of the first, second, and third worlds, the first world/North has come to be viewed as the primary producer of ‘finished goods’ or scientific theory, while third world/South sites constitute sources of ‘data’ or, in the best of cases, local expertise, while interpretation — a decisive stage in theory-building — occurs in the North, where knowledge is produced and circulated in order to be consumed worldwide.

The fact that, for Latour, the application of science to the world consists of creating and extending networks from core to periphery highlights the power exercised by centers of calculation across wide geographical spaces and the ways in which scientific enterprises allow them to ‘possess’ the periphery. Contrary to the author’s claims, however, ‘immutables’ as such do not exist, given that knowledge is highly changeable, as Said’s (1983) idea of ‘traveling theory’ clearly suggests. Therefore, how knowledge is transformed through distinct processes of accommodation, negotiation, and rejection is a crucial question (see Raj, 2007). In science studies, the problem of scientific development outside the core was first examined by George Basalla (1967), who developed a model for analyzing how knowledge originating in Europe (and by extension the United States) traveled to the rest of the world. In keeping with modernization theory’s cumulative and evolutionary assumptions, Basalla argues that science undergoes three stages of development: a preliminary phase where non-scientific societies act as passive sources of data, called imperial science; colonial dependence, characterized by the promotion of like-minded scientific institutions in the periphery by the West; and national science, in which societies break out of dependent relations and create autonomous, national scientific traditions, although based upon the standards of the West. Among the shortcomings of Basalla’s scheme, its linear, sequential, progressive structure, and blindness to the cultural, historical, and economic contexts within which knowledge diffusion takes place, stand out. More importantly, the author’s idea of scientific progress assumes that different locales would be best served by emulating Western science and tying their fate to global networks in which the rules of the game have already been predetermined by the core, with which national science can never aspire to truly autonomous status (Wade, 1993).

Knowledge divides

Inferring from Latour, core–periphery seems to be an appropriate heuristic tool for describing and understanding global knowledge production and diffusion. However, solid metrics for examining its constitutive structures and dynamics continue to be sparse, especially in social science fields such as IR. Wiebke Keim (2008, 2011) attempts to fill this void by proposing that core–periphery relations be evaluated empirically along three interrelated dimensions, development/underdevelopment, autonomy/dependence, and centrality/marginality, via factors such as material infrastructure,

internal organization, conditions of scholarly existence and reproduction, and international visibility and recognition. In the discussion that follows I make use of Keim's analytical framework to describe the knowledge divides that are most prevalent in both the social sciences and IR.

Social sciences around the world

The Unesco 2010 *World Social Science Report* points to severe asymmetries in a number of realms, including size, material and human resources, institutional conditions, and quality of research systems, within and between countries and regions around the globe. As I will discuss subsequently, these are all easily extendable to IR. Bibliometrics have become a common and important measure of academic influence, but are only partially effective in analyzing the place and productivity of the global South (Hanafi, 2011; Keim, 2008; Unesco, 2010;). Nevertheless, both participation in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals and citation patterns suggest that the geography of social science knowledge production is characterized by an entrenched core–periphery structure. According to Keim (2008: 28), 58% of the total literature covered by the Social Sciences Citation index is authored or co-authored by scholars affiliated with the United States, while all of Western Europe accounts for 25%, Latin America for 1%, and the entire African continent for less than 1%. Peripheral scholars themselves reproduce these asymmetries by referring overwhelmingly to core literatures. Over half of the journal articles published in Latin American and Asian journals refer to US sources, while European sources account for over half of the citations in African journal articles (Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson, 2010: 152).

Conversely, only a small handful of countries and institutions in the global South are visible in international social science publications. In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, for example, South Africa and Nigeria represent more than 60% of the region's social science production in ISI journals (Mouton, 2010: 63). Brazil and Mexico, in turn, publish far more than the remaining Latin American countries together (Keim, 2008: 28). The fact that an outrageous percentage of institutions of higher education do not conduct research of any kind partially explains disparities in the periphery and within individual countries (Unesco, 2010) in terms of their investigative capacities.

Language is also an issue, considering that 80% of academic-refereed journals in the social sciences are edited in English (Unesco, 2010: 143). In the case of the Arab East, Sari Hanafi (2011) attributes the compartmentalization of scholarly activity precisely to the language divide. While private, for-profit universities encourage their professoriate to publish internationally (meaning in English) in order to raise their global competitiveness, the main language of academic expression used by public ones is Arabic, in order to communicate with local societies and states. Language of publication determines not only the audiences (global or local) to which scholars speak, but also research themes and methodologies. Although some forms of social science, such as public advocacy or public research, are prevalent means of intellectual engagement in many peripheral sites, especially those that are locally oriented, they are often ill-suited for academic journals, with which their international marginality is reinforced (Hanafi, 2011: 301; Mouton, 2010: 65).

Diminishing local, public resources and the concomitant rise of foreign actors, both state and non-state, in determining the types and content of scholarly research constitutes a related source of dependence and underdevelopment (Unesco, 2010). Throughout the global South a near-universal trend is the appearance of an extreme version of Mode 2, 'engaged,' or 'donor-driven' knowledge production (Asher and Guilhot, 2010; Losego and Arvanitis, 2008) that is narrowly focused, short-term, and adapted to demand, and whose authority is derived from sources other than academic peer review. Many scholars give priority to this kind of research simply for material reasons, as a supplement to low academic wages and unstable employment conditions.

Notwithstanding the conditions described, global (social) science has experienced increasing levels of internationalization and interconnectedness, as measured by research collaboration and scholarly mobility, among others (Keim, 2011; Losego and Arvanitis, 2008; Unesco, 2010). In Latourian terms, this process points to the success with which core academe has established knowledge networks throughout the world by harnessing distinct peripheral sites and inserting them into the intellectual division of labor. Philanthropic foundations have been key players in this process, as they have been active in cultivating elite academic institutions (or 'centers of excellence') in the global South with which Northern centers of calculation can link up, in stimulating research in specific areas, and in supporting the creation of international knowledge communities. Indeed, as Inderjeet Parmar's (2012) research on the international programs of Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller illustrates, foundations are crucial political agents whose key operative venue and main product are knowledge networks that facilitate the creation and maintenance of relations of intellectual domination. In the specific case of IR, for example, the role of the Ford Foundation in training IR specialists, framing research agendas, strengthening institutional infrastructures, and creating links between local scholars and regional and global communities has been ostensible in regions such as Latin America and South Asia (Behera, 2004; Tickner, 2009).

IR: An extreme case of asymmetrical knowledge?

IR displays traits similar to those observed in the social sciences. However, its political economy stands out due to its origins in a single country, the United States, and to US hegemony and domination over both academic production and political practice. Thirty-five years after Stanley Hoffmann's (1977) depiction of IR as an American social science, some of the basic contours of the discipline have changed surprisingly little (Biersteker, 2009; Crawford and Jarvis, 2001; Smith, 2000; Tickner and Wæver, 2009a; Wæver, 1998). IR textbooks continue to be written mainly by American (and British) authors and rely upon 'Americocentric' (Nossal, 2001) or Eurocentric representations in which the United States and Europe are normally at the core of world politics. Publishing patterns in specialized IR journals indicate the pervasiveness of these same scholars (Aydinli and Matthews, 2000; Friedrichs and Wæver, 2009; Wæver, 1998). And IR teaching, especially in the area of theory, revolves largely around US-authored approaches.

IR exhibits an internationalized structure characterized by the coexistence of a global discipline dominated by the United States with distinct regional and national nodes

where varying degrees of influence, interdependence, and interaction with the US core can be observed (Wæver, 2007; see also Wæver and Tickner, 2009). At the global level, a hierarchy of journals, universities, and scholars concentrate control over the means of intellectual production (Wæver, 2007: 297). One of the major paradoxes of US dominance is that the field's extreme parochialism there (Biersteker, 2009; Wæver, 1998) makes it increasingly autistic to what the rest of the world has to say. Jonas Hagmann and Thomas J. Biersteker's analysis of the required reading lists of core graduate IR theory courses in 23 US and European universities (2012) points to the generalized dominance of 'rationalist' modes of thought (quantitative, formal theory, applied rational choice) — more pronounced in the former than in the latter — the near invisibility of 'radical' approaches (neo-Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism), and complete non-recognition of non-Western or peripheral authors.

European institutions outside of the UK are less self-referential than their American or British counterparts in that their openness to foreign texts is greater, but parochial teaching patterns are endemic to them as well.² The 2011 Teaching and Research in International Politics (TRIP) survey confirms similar non-pluralism worldwide: in the opinion of the IR professoriate from 11 countries located outside of Europe and North America, not a single non-Anglo-American has exerted the greatest influence on IR in the past 20 years, or produced the most interesting or best scholarship (Maliniak et al., 2012: 48–50).

Although Biersteker (2009: 324–325) cautions that the lack of reflexivity and self-understanding of the nature of 'American IR' makes it arrogant and vulnerable to mistakes in both foreign policy and academic practice, waning US economic, political, and even meta-theoretical power has been largely unmatched by loss of control over the intellectual means of production in IR. Intuitively, this suggests that other structural factors reinforce US power, and mitigate pluralism and diversity.

The United States has more degree-granting institutions, IR faculty, students, and dissertations, holds more and larger academic conferences, and publishes more journals than anywhere else in the world (Biersteker, 2009). The 2011 TRIP survey illustrates how much size matters. Of the 7294 professors included in a universal sample collected in 20 different countries, over half (3751) are located in the United States, while the closest contenders size-wise include the United Kingdom (842) and Canada (488) (Maliniak et al., 2012). In specific countries such as Argentina and Colombia, and to a lesser degree, Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa, smaller pools of IR scholars combine with lower levels of formal academic training: in the first two cases, only a third of professors hold a PhD or its equivalent.

In addition to training future generations of US scholars, many practicing and aspiring academics from outside the United States have been educated or will seek out their doctoral degrees there, encouraging the intellectual reproduction of the US IR model. The fact that this country grants more PhDs than any other place in the world and equally important, more PhD fellowships, is not just a matter of academic capital, but finance plain and simple. Also, 50% of the IR professoriate in 20 countries believes that obtaining a PhD there gives the candidate an advantage in her/his home job market (Maliniak et al., 2012: 51).

The majority of IR theorizing also continues to take place in the United States. One recent snapshot of the state of the field — the geographical distribution of authors of articles

in top journals — points to the role of the United States as the principal geographical location from which theory is developed and put into circulation. In their examination of articles published in five leading English-language IR journals (*International Organization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Security*, *Review of International Studies*, and *European Journal of International Relations*), Jörg Friedrichs and Ole Wæver (2009) show that US-based scholars dominate the first three (US) journals, accounting for between 80% and 100% of the articles published in any given year between 1970 and 2005. Even in the latter two (non-US) ones, American authorship continues to account for an average of 33% of all articles, surpassed only by British-based scholars. In comparison, authors stationed in Europe fare quite poorly, representing on average less than 10% of articles in the US and British (*Review of International Studies*) journals and 34% in the European one (*European Journal of International Relations*). In tandem with general findings in the social sciences, the ‘rest of the world’ is essentially invisible in all five publications. A close-up of publication trends during the last decade leads Friedrichs and Wæver (2009: 274) to conclude not only that US dominance is not in decline, at least in terms of the publication game, but also that it actually seems to be growing.³ The general ascendance of international publishing, especially in outward-looking institutions, as one of the main criteria for extending recognition in academic communities throughout the world only reinforces the centrality of US and European publications, most likely breeding greater homophily, which works at cross-purposes to intellectual pluralism.

Admittedly, publishing patterns are just one way of measuring the state of academic disciplines, constituting one among many social spaces in which intellectual battles take place (Hagmann and Biersteker, 2012). Nevertheless, the research article plays a key role in disciplining everyday academic life. Also, the fact that journals that enjoy international visibility and recognition favor specific sites points to their role in reinforcing global academic asymmetry.

If the majority of authors in the top IR journals are US- and European-based, one would expect those theories, methodologies, and topics in vogue there — in which non-North American and non-European scholars may be uninterested or with which they have a hard time engaging — to be prevalent in their articles. Besides issues of English-language proficiency, appropriate use of the specialized language of IR and forms of scholarly writing then constitute significant entry barriers to participation in publishing activities. As a strict keeper of the intellectual division of labor, the more theoretical a journal, the less likely it will be to make room for peripheral contributions. And when Southern participation in specialized IR journals actually does occur, it is usually limited to expertise on a specific country (Aydinli and Matthews, 2000: 297).

Consider the following commentary by an anonymous peer reviewer on one of my first attempts to publish a research article in a US journal. Keep in mind, also, that ‘z’ is not considered a ‘top’ IR journal, that I am a native English speaker, that I received my PhD in the United States, and that I had a fairly strong previous publication record, although mostly in Spanish. After regretting to recommend that the article not be published, especially since its author seems ‘hard-working and well-intentioned,’ the peer reviewer goes on to critique my research design, affirming in particular that the qualitative content analysis that I conducted is no ‘content analysis’ at all, but actually just ‘my impression.’

'He' goes on to say:

Again, I apologize for being so negative. My suspicion is that this manuscript represents the work of a younger scholar, perhaps a first submission, and I would very much like to be encouraging. But the author should know that this is not the type of work that is typically published in *our* scholarly journals. (1 October 2002; emphasis added)

Instead, the reviewer suggests that I look at 'research note' models in other publications such as *Latin American Research Review*, where I might have better luck getting published.

This anecdotal example is useful for illustrating the power function of journals (and academic publications writ large). Peer review is allegedly based upon a meritocratic model designed to filter out 'bad' scholarship in as 'objective' a manner possible. And yet, the criteria for determining academic excellence, according to authors such as Pierre Bourdieu (1988), are rooted in the ideational and social specificities of academic fields, their authoritative practices, and the rules of the game that uphold them. Increasingly, 'good' IR scholars are those capable of speaking to the latest networked debates that are frequently borne of closed, invitation-only venues of difficult access for 'outsiders.' The implicit message that comes across in this case is that although my 'impressionistic' manuscript might be considered acceptable elsewhere, such as in area studies, it does not qualify as IR because scholarship in this field reflects higher intellectual standards and because my subject matter does not fall within its limits. In consequence, by invoking the 'science card' (Jackson, 2011), dominant definitions of 'scientific' or 'worthy' scholarship are employed in order to downgrade what is epistemologically, theoretically, methodologically, or thematically different to inferior knowledge, thus reinforcing core-periphery relations.⁴

IR in the periphery

During the past decade or so, critical self-reflection in IR and research that examines the evolution of the field in the 'rest of the world' have grown on parallel but separate tracks. The former has been concerned primarily with unearthing the internal dynamics of the discipline and with exposing relations of power contained therein, while the latter is more interested in exploring IR's inadequacy for understanding key global problems of concern to the periphery and the ways in which the discipline has unfolded in distinct non-core settings.

While scholars belonging to the first camp self-identify with reflexivity, the second group can hardly be classified in the same way. Not only has it been less sensitive to historiographic, sociological, and epistemological debates, it is by and large uninterested in them, making non-core IR scholarship just as non-reflexive (if not more so) than its core counterparts. Many peripheral scholars have also largely embraced theories and concepts developed in the United States and Europe instead of revolting against them, despite the common mantra that they are sorely inadequate for understanding problems and dynamics in the global South.

Systematic interrogation of the evolution and conduct of scholarly activity in different national and regional sites, has exposed IR's lack of pluralism, as well as shedding light on its intellectual, social and core-periphery structure, and reasons why the latter has remained relatively unchallenged (Acharya and Buzan, 2010; Tickner and Blaney, 2012a; Tickner and Wæver, 2009a). One possible explanation has to do with the role of peripheral IR in the discipline's intellectual division of labor, which might be understood in analogy with area studies (Tickner and Blaney, 2012b: 8). Namely, local or national variants may exhibit a similar relation to global IR that area studies do to traditional disciplines. For Cheah (2000: 8–9), area studies differ from disciplines in ways that reinforce their inferiority: in particular, they are involved in empirical description and not theory-building, and they answer to the 'local' instead of the 'universal.'

The shape adopted by IR around the world largely mirrors these characteristics. Much peripheral scholarship tends to description of local or regional events and problems instead of conceptualization of the world, serving at best as 'raw materials' for the grand narrative constructed by theorists of the core. Indeed, one of the traits that stands out the most in non-core approaches to IR, with the exception of countries such as China, Japan, Russia, and Turkey, is the lack or unimportance of theory (Acharya and Buzan, 2010; Tickner and Wæver, 2009b). Theory is not considered especially useful for resolving the very 'pressing' and 'real' problems faced by many countries. Perhaps more so than in other areas of the social sciences, IR's intellectual genesis in the needs of states to produce knowledge translatable into policy formulas explains the demand for 'relevant' and 'applicable' know-how. As a result, with few exceptions, recognition of theorizing as a source of 'scientific authority' (Bourdieu, 1988) is virtually non-existent. Also, private donors, both local and foreign, upon which scholarly practice largely depends in the periphery, dissuade theoretically inspired work by targeting practical, applied knowledge.

When 'theorizing' actually does take place, it is largely undetectable to core eyes because it often looks quite different. In the case of Latin America, for example, instead of data testing, empirical observations, and the defense of hypotheses as the standards of theoretical knowledge, 'theory' basically consists of concepts and definitions 'borrowed' from existing theories and used to describe specific problems (Abend, 2006). This largely explains the tendency to 'pick and choose' from different US theories in eclectic ways, as well as the 'common-sense' versions of realism and liberalism that are observable in IR both in this region and around the global South (Tickner and Wæver, 2009b).

In all fairness, theory is not a widely cherished enterprise anywhere along the IR knowledge chain. Also, despite growing recognition that it holds diverse meanings for distinct intellectual communities everywhere, a pluralist definition has been largely overshadowed by the dominant core reading of theory as 'correlation-plus-empirical generalization followed by causal mechanisms' (see Guzzini, 2013) that is rooted in the rationalist or neopositivist underpinnings of knowledge (Jackson, 2011).

According to Stefano Guzzini (2007, 2013), this reductionist view can be traced to prevailing attitudes in Western IR's very constitution: that theory should be useful for explaining world events, and thus necessarily grounded in historical experience of reality; and that there is little need for new theories, given that IR is all about the 'unaltered truths' of state action, and convincing explanations for this already exist. In

consequence, discussions of theory are largely limited to its function as a tool for understanding the world, which is susceptible to fine-tuning if overtaken by events on the ground,⁵ and the role of theorists to deciding which one is best suited to analyze them.

By attaching limits to what theory means, what kinds of theorizing are admissible, and who is authorized to theorize, core IR establishes considerable obstacles to theory formation in the periphery that, combined with local institutional hindrances, limit the periphery's capacity to become an autonomous 'ideas maker' (Guzzini, 2007), at least within the official boundaries of the field. Although, admittedly, disciplinary power may be muted by the fact that peripheral IR communities make use of 'hollowed out' versions of core theories, divorced from their meta-theoretical assumptions (Tickner and Wæver, 2009b: 337), the opposite is equally likely. For instance, colloquial use of the concept of securitization in regions such as Asia and Latin America, with little concern for the wider ontological and epistemological foundations underlying it, severely limits the critical, constitutive function of this theory, and thus its transformative intellectual potential. Stated somewhat differently, the widespread use of theory minus methodology allows the predominant view of 'no need for theory' to reproduce, blocking conditions for local theory development.

Critical analyses of IR scholarship outside the core reflect a general consensus that one of the reasons why standard discourses, and dominant theories and categories, are adopted somewhat mechanically in the periphery, even though they are ill-fit for the task of explaining its role in world politics, has to do with reluctance to question IR's main unit of analysis: the state (Behera, 2010: 97; Makdisi, 2009: 187; Tickner and Blaney, 2012a; Tickner and Wæver, 2009a). Western and non-Western scholars alike, mostly operating outside the discipline, have pointed insistently to the inadequacies of the Westphalian state model for understanding societal organization and governance patterns in many parts of the world, as well as the state's failure to provide basic well-being to its peoples, in part due to its artificial or imported make-up. And yet, peripheral IR seems wedded to the state, ontologically, epistemologically, and even materially.

Similar to many of their core counterparts, peripheral academic communities assume the national state as their point of departure for most scholarly inquiries and seek to create knowledge of use to it, even though they rarely exert a direct influence upon state practice. As a result, research agendas in IR throughout the global South seem to parallel those of the foreign policy agendas of states, reinforcing the idea that theory should operate as a toolbox that derives from the realities that states must address in their international dealings. A major criterion of recognition in 'x' IR, then, is its ability to make sense of the foreign policy challenges faced by 'x' country, as well as to provide knowledge relevant to the development of state action in the world. In terms of IR's intellectual and social make-up, this means that the political relevance of ideas is a key source of academic recognition, sometimes even greater than academic publications.

Paradoxically, intellectual elites and universities throughout the periphery, especially when they are outward-looking in nature, exhibit strong links to global networks that tie them to funders, academic institutions, and political agendas in the core, either former colonizers in Europe or the United States. In such cases, their ties to centers of

calculation are often stronger than those that bind them to local states and interests, doubling the imperialist effects of core–periphery relations.⁶ Thus, one of the trade-offs that internationalization poses for peripheral scholars is precisely that access to resources, people, and ‘thinking space’ that would be otherwise unobtainable comes at the price of occupying a subordinate, ‘local expert’ role, and accepting research themes that might be far removed from national(ist) perspectives and needs.

Peripheral placing

As hinted at previously, Northern post-Kuhnian analyses such as that developed by Latour are largely uninterested in how power accrued by centers of calculation translates into scientific (neo)imperialism, or its effects upon knowledge-building in those sites that occupy the lower rungs of global knowledge chains (Harding, 2008: 42–43). In part, this is due to the Eurocentric assumption that the periphery is a ‘non-actor’ upon which power/knowledge is simply enforced, when in fact peripheral scientific communities place themselves vis-à-vis core–periphery structures in myriad ways. In the case of IR, several kinds of strategy seem to stand out:⁷ ‘fitting in,’ also described by See Seng Tan as ‘self-orientalism’ (2009: 128); ‘domination by invitation’; and ‘delinking.’

‘Fitting in’ is perhaps the most prevalent way in which peripheral IR has responded to (neo)imperial dynamics and US domination in the field (Bilgin, 2008; Chen, 2011; Tickner and Blaney, 2012b: 4). It is premised (implicitly or explicitly) on recognition of the existence and centrality of the core, and thus entails academic moves by which the global South attempts to position itself favorably in relation to the core–periphery dichotomy. Although not being different can be an intentional and even self-empowering strategy, as Ching-Chang Chen (2011) and Pinar Bilgin (2008, 2012) both argue, the search for similarity under conditions of highly asymmetrical interaction often translates into ‘second class citizenship,’ in the sense that it is coded as bad or immature scholarship (Tickner and Blaney, 2012b: 7). The invisibility of the ‘rest of the world’ in key IR journals, as discussed previously, underscores this tendency. Also, treating scientific development in the periphery as predetermined by a global network — in which the United States monopolizes centers of calculation (the highest order of abstraction in Latourian terms), followed by Great Britain and parts of Western Europe — even if it is hybrid, or ‘almost the same but not quite,’ precludes the possibility of engaging with other traditions, both in the West (from outside the IR discipline) and beyond (including the periphery’s own local intellectual resources).

Even in cases in which attempts have been made to stake out a position of ‘difference’ from within the boundaries of IR, such as in ‘Chinese,’ ‘Japanese,’ or ‘Russian’ schools of IR thinking, what is interesting about these bids themselves is that they usually attempt to stake out territory and acknowledgment by positioning themselves vis-à-vis the US version of the discipline. This highlights the fact that IR outside of the core operates in the shadow of an already-existing network in which the standards of regulation and what constitutes an ‘authoritative’ contribution to the debate are already pre-established, making embracing the rules of the game, or even defending the status quo, a precondition for recognition. At best then, ‘fitting in’ offers the possibility of movement from the

periphery to a semi-periphery (a status presently occupied by Western Europe, Canada, and, perhaps, Australia). At worst, it simply reinforces the marginal status of peripheral IR.

‘Domination by invitation,’ on the other hand, consists of local state, academic, or private sector elites conducting explicit campaigns geared to reinforce relations of domination with US (or Western) bearers of knowledge in order to provoke intellectual development. Dependency theory provides a simple explanation for how and why this occurs. One of the main problems that the dependency literature attempts to engage with is the interaction between local social, economic, and political structures and the global system, and the ways in which local elites and states are active players in the internalization of capitalist logics that facilitate foreign domination (Cardoso, 1977; Cardoso and Faletto, 1978;). The degree to which dependence was (and is) the result of factors endemic to the periphery, in particular, elite groups torn between the pursuit of national projects and the immediate, particularistic gains to be accrued from alliances with the core, is something largely lost upon Northern audiences that assume — in keeping with the view of the global South as a non-subject — that dependency is caused solely by core exploitation of the periphery.

Just as the ambivalent nature of local elites and state bureaucracies make them incapable of pursuing an autonomous national political and economic project, given their permanent temptation to ally themselves with core countries and other like-minded foreign actors, they also tend to attach to the core intellectually, in order to harness the potential benefits to be derived from complacent and close interaction. The examples of this kind of interaction between periphery and core abound — the favoring of core knowledge as more authoritative and scientific in comparison to local variants constituting just one — underscoring the tendency of peripheral elites to undermine local intellectual production and to privilege US and Western knowledge as superior.

‘Delinking’ is practiced, among others, by pan-Arab institutions and networks, as well as Islamic ones, in the study of both world politics and specific issues such as security (Bilgin, 2012; Makdisi, 2009; Shani, 2008; Tadjbakhsh, 2010). It is distinguishable primarily by the fact that it stakes out a position of difference outside of or in opposition to core IR, and is unconcerned with passing as ‘real’ IR, unlike the other two strategies. Contrary to ‘radical’ or ‘dissident’ scholarship in the West that has branded itself as ‘different’ (Hamati-Ataya, 2011: 270) and has been accepted by the mainstream as an incomprehensible but tolerable alternative to thinking about world politics, past experience suggests that peripheral thinking that has attempted to take this route has been disavowed not only as ‘unscientific,’ but also as ‘ideological’ and ‘dangerous’ (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2008: 664–667).

Indeed, in a seminal article on the consumption of dependency in the United States, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1977: 15) argues that significant distortion took place when it traveled north, entailing both the replacement of local problems of interest to social scientists in Latin America by a Northern research agenda and its (re)making. Although theories subject to travel (Said, 1983) should not be expected to mutate in one direction (North–South) and not in the other (South–North), the fact that dependency was rebuilt in the image of then-dominant understandings of scientific knowledge, and that typologies, variables, hypotheses, and other empirical standards of measurement were attached to it in order for it to be made into a proper ‘theory,’ points to the elusiveness of change within a core–periphery structure. Moreover, the fact that Northern

(social) science is so deeply implicated in (neo)imperialism and hegemony makes it an especially poor candidate for determining what aspects of peripheral knowledge to keep and which to discard.

Delinking strategies, similar to Marxist dependency theory (of which Cardoso is not an exponent), are premised on the assumption that an essentially causal relationship exists between development and underdevelopment, and autonomy and dependence, and that the only way for the periphery to cease being one is by completely severing ties with the core. And yet, under conditions of academic internationalization, it is hard to imagine knowledge projects completely free from core meddling. From a Northern perspective, as Latour's work illustrates, delinking from given scientific communities is inexcusable as it threatens their very foundations: global networks. Therefore, unless potential 'delinkers' remain relatively unpublicized and inaccessible, even to ordinary scholars in the periphery, they run the risk of losing their potential power as autonomous roads to locally specific and locally relevant knowledge.

Similar to national IR communities in the United States or Europe that are characterized by diversity, eclecticism, and internal power differentials, so too are academics in distinct peripheral sites compartmentalized, as hinted at previously. As a result, the Southern professoriate does not necessarily share the same 'placing' strategies, and it is likely that all three are employed simultaneously by scholars occupying different social (and political) roles. For example, those seated at outward-looking universities may be highly integrated with the IR's disciplinary core (in the United States, Great Britain, or Western Europe) and attuned to its rules of the game, albeit in a subordinate role, through academic training abroad, participation in international publishing venues and conferences, and foreign funding. The lion's share of the peripheral IR professoriate that has an interest in 'fitting in' is likely concentrated among this 'globalized elite,' meaning that much of its scholarly endeavors are directed toward other foreign interlocutors instead of local counterparts. Indeed, one of the main ironies of existing critiques of the invisibility of peripheral perspectives on world politics is that they are conducted more for a core audience than for the periphery.

A second level, accounting for much of the IR professoriate in the 'rest of the world,' comprises groups of scholars that operate mainly at the local or national level. In many of these sites, little direct intellectual exchange may take place with the core, which by no means implies that they are isolated from the effects of US domination or from the global intellectual network. However, the workings of scientific (neo)imperialism under which such scholarship operates may be different, as well as its attitudes toward core-periphery relations.

Conclusion

The center-periphery configuration of IR favors analytical categories and research programs that are defined by academic communities within the North while also reinforcing Northern dominance within international practice itself. The precariousness of the global South as both an agent of IR knowledge and a global actor seems directly related to such self-referential practices in the field. Kenneth Waltz's (1979: 72) well-known statement that '[i]t would be ... ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on

Malaysia and Costa Rica,' while glaringly elitist and ethnocentric, continues to provide a fairly accurate picture of the state of the field today.

Even if, following Jackson (2011), one were to embrace a pluralist, post-foundational definition of 'science,' the core-periphery structure that is entrenched in global IR (and, indeed, nearly all social science) would remain basically untouched. All other things being equal, acknowledging diversity is not enough, basically because scientific centers of calculation cannot simply recognize or tolerate Southern contributions without undermining their own power, privilege, and place in the global knowledge chain. That is, at the heart of the 'transnational' IR discipline is a (neo)imperialist structure by which peripheral nodes do not operate in a self-contained manner, but are rather part and parcel of a global intellectual division of labor.

To repeat a well-suited metaphor used by Navnita Behera (2010: 103), IR scholarship in the periphery has been 'boxed in' figuratively, conceptually, and materially by a disciplinary structure within which existing strategies for responding to (neo)imperialist practices have been relatively futile. Although she rightly suggests that what is then needed is to 'step out' of the box, my discussion suggests that this is not so simple, given that the core-periphery dimension that characterizes global IR is characteristic of Western 'science' networks writ large. So perhaps the problem is how to do away with boxes altogether.

Latour's work suggests that different actors and sites occupy distinct rungs of scientific networks. Although (neo)imperial science is grounded in an asymmetrical structure whose core is located in centers of calculation, but whose power and influence depend upon knowledge's ability to circulate, it is possible that 'faraway' places, in terms of geographical and disciplinary location, language, and funding, although still part of the network, are less touched, given the lower rungs that they occupy in the hierarchy. Is it conceivable then that 'distance' may translate into less direct influence, allowing for higher malleability, even of 'traveling theory'? If so, peripheral IR scholars who define themselves largely in relation to global IR, and are thus closer to its centers of calculation, are much less equipped to think differently about world politics.

If peripheral IR is 'boxed in,' so too is its core, given that the rationalist positivism that is still dominant in the control of intellectual (re)production (at least as measured in journals and graduate readings, as suggested above) leaves little room for innovative thinking, or for the creative use of raw materials supplied by the periphery. In other words, the core-periphery structure that still characterizes global IR may be stifling theory equally in its current centers of calculation.

As United States economic and political power in the world wanes, it would seem only natural that the core of IR, long occupied by this country, should also shift toward new centers. Wæver (1998, 2007) indeed points to the emergence of a 'reflectivist' contender in Europe, and has portended for over a decade that US parochialism will inevitably lead to its demise as the main center of gravity for the field of IR. In this vein, growing interest in IR outside the core, in particular, in 'rising' countries such as China, India, Brazil, Russia, South Africa, or even Japan and Southeast Asia, could be interpreted as a bid to shore up US disciplinary power by adjusting its boundaries such that these 'newcomers' can be fitted in.

If the theoretical knowledge of world politics that brews behind IR is stifled, inadequate, and (neo)imperialist, perhaps moving beyond IR — toward other fields of study, other places, and other sources outside the university — is the way forward (Tickner and Blaney (2013) engage with this question in depth). In sum, ‘seeing’ the discipline differently, as the product of multiple know-hows scattered across the philosophical, geographical, and subject spectrum, is not enough to overturn the tremendously skewed distribution of intellectual power that exists between core and periphery. Decolonizing IR also requires, at minimum, engagement with philosophy of science and the political economy of knowledge (Saurin, 2006: 25), and historicization of the links between knowledge production, circulation, certification, and reappropriation (Raj, 2007: 233).

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Notes

1. Although for reasons of political correctness and opposition to dichotomous language some may object to the continued use of these terms, core–periphery-like dynamics similar to those described by dependency theory in the 1960s and 1970s are still palpable, not only within global capitalism but also in academic practice, and thus warrant their preservation. I use ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ interchangeably with ‘North’ and ‘South’.
2. An exacerbated form of parochialism is observable in Latin America too, where US and British authors dominate IR theory course syllabi, regional ones rarely appear, and the presence of local theories, in particular, dependency, is negligible (Tickner, 2009: 42).
3. An interesting exception to US dominance is to be found in the area of security, where Western Europe in particular has developed theories, including critical security studies and securitization theory, that deviate significantly from their United States counterpart, and have even begun to travel to other sites across the globe. See Wæver (2012).
4. By no means does this mean that scholarship of poor quality is not produced in the periphery, as it is almost everywhere. However, it is likely that if core parameters were more amenable to multiple types of research, cutting-edge work would become more visible when and where it exists.
5. Thus the need, as insinuated by Latour, for initiating new cycles of accumulation by which resources are mobilized and unfamiliar ‘things’ brought back from ‘exotic’ sites previously off the radar of core IR!
6. Admittedly, more detailed case studies on this specific aspect of the discipline in diverse peripheral countries need to be conducted in order to assess the merits of this claim.
7. My discussion picks up on Friedrichs and Wæver’s (2009: 262–267) explanation of the distinct ‘coping mechanisms’ adopted by semi-peripheral IR communities in Western Europe. Given the preliminary nature of this exercise, I only briefly sketch out what each strategy looks like, well aware that a procedure for identifying them empirically is still wanting.

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