

## ANALYTICAL ESSAY

# The IR of the Beholder: Examining Global IR Using the 2014 TRIP Survey

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This article presents findings from the 2014 Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) Project's worldwide faculty survey that speak to recent claims in the Global International Relations (IR) Debate. The expansion of the 2014 TRIP faculty survey to thirty-two countries, including more than a dozen non-Western IR communities, enables an initial empirical assessment of some key questions raised by advocates and detractors of "Global IR." This contribution describes and analyzes scholars' own perceptions of the IR discipline and adds to the empirical literature on the Global IR Debate. In particular, we address three claims: that IR is a Western/American dominated discipline, that geography is the core dividing line in IR, and that there is a division of labor within IR wherein scholars in the West are responsible for theory production while the non-West supplies data and local expertise for theory testing. We believe that these findings shed light both on how the discipline came to be divided between dominant and marginalized discourses and in which areas this division is most embedded and/or ready to be dismantled.

**Keywords:** Global IR, sociology of IR, Western-centrism, American-centrism, perception

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This article presents findings from the 2014 Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) Project's survey of international relations (IR) faculty that speak to emerging concepts and theories about Global IR (Acharya 2015). Although the Global IR Debate has been dominated by conceptual pieces and normative accounts about non- or post-Western IR (cf., Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Peters, forthcoming), this article adds to the growing empirical literature by focusing on the academy's perceptions of key issues in this debate: Western-centrism, theory production, and community formation. Previous empirical studies in this

area have focused on scholars' actual behavior and shown that, for example, citation networks in IR center disproportionately around US-based journals (Kristensen 2012), that authors based beyond the Anglo-American core are less often published in theory-heavy journals (Aydinli and Mathews 2000), and that American-authored scholarship still constitutes the vast majority of texts assigned in IR classrooms (Hagmann and Biersteker 2014). However, we have little systematic evidence on whether scholars *believe* that the discipline is divided. Similarly, we have little evidence on whether scholars think such a division is problematic for the discipline and/or why disciplinary divides exist.

We believe that an examination of scholars' perceptions about these divides in the discipline is overdue for two reasons. First, patterns of epistemic domination and subjugation, which are the focus of the Global IR Debate, are not an inherent property of the discipline. Rather, these patterns exist through social production (and reproduction) by IR scholars. We believe the question of whether IR scholars recognize these patterns is important for understanding how the discipline came to be separated in the first place. This is a backward-looking approach to studying Global IR; for a more forward-looking perspective, we would also suggest that for those seeking to bridge the gap between dominant and marginalized discourses in IR, identifying those areas (both geographic and intellectual) where divides are most embedded and/or are ready to be dismantled is a powerful exercise. As Amitav Acharya (2014) states, "Global IR constitutes not a theory, but an aspiration." If we do not understand how IR scholars perceive their own discipline, these aspirations will be impossible to realize.

This article addresses questions central to the sociology of the discipline, focusing on its members' beliefs and perceptions rather than behaviors. We use the 2014 TRIP survey data to test some central claims derived from the Global IR Debate—in particular, from Amitav Acharya's (2014) International Studies Association (ISA) Presidential Address.

### *1. IR is a Western/American dominated discipline.*

Acharya's vision for a future Global IR—a field capable of transcending its current disciplinary and geo-epistemological borders<sup>1</sup>—rests on the assumption that scholars beyond the Anglo-American core are willing and able (i.e., have the capabilities and resources necessary) to reshape IR (Acharya 2014, 2016). Other scholars of the Global IR Debate are more pessimistic about prospects for change. Tickner (2013) writes that IR's "political economy stands out [over other social sciences] due to its origins in a single country, the United States, and to US hegemony and domination over both academic production and political practice. (...) [It] 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" (633–4; cf., Bilgin 2010; D'Aoust 2015).

Although the normative debate about change within the IR discipline remains open, the empirical literature confirms a Western/American-led hierarchy. Kristensen (2012, 47) finds "American journals dominating most of [the journal citation] network and European journals clustering together while non-Western journals are conspicuously absent". This American dominance is driven by a few elite institutions in the Northeast of the United States, with a similar stratification being visible in Europe (Kristensen 2015; Maliniak et al. 2015). An empirical objection to IR as a specifically American social science comes from Helen Turton, who reminds the field that "the discipline may be dominated by the US in some

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<sup>1</sup>The term geo-epistemology refers to the idea that knowledge is produced and interpreted differently in different geographical locations due to cultural, historical, and academic trajectories (cf., Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006; Agnew 2007).

ways but not in others” (Turton 2014). Her research suggests that although American-based scholars indeed dominate IR journals and conferences in terms of numbers, the theories and methodologies that are usually defined as being American (neorealism, neoliberalism, and rational choice methods) are not published more frequently than others (Turton 2015).

Later in this article, we test the claim of Western/American dominance with data on (1) scholars’ perceptions about differences between American and other IR scholarship, (2) their beliefs about patterns of domination in the IR discipline, and (3) a survey experiment comparing scholars’ judgments about “Western” versus “American” dominance.

## *2. Geography is the core dividing line in IR.*

Geography plays a central role in the Global IR Debate (sometimes in the form of geo-epistemology [cf., Wæver and Tickner 2009; Wemheuer-Vogelaar and Peters, forthcoming]). For example, the Global IR literature repeatedly categorizes scholars into “Western” and “non-Western,” or regional and national schools (Hutchings 2011). But is location really so determinant of a scholar’s place in the discipline? Daniel Maliniak and Ryan Powers (2014, 29) argue that it is not. Their citation-based analysis of community structures in IR shows that networks are instead structured by the theoretical paradigms used by authors and the substantive issue areas under study. However, as Kristensen (2012) points out,

“Geographical divides and intellectual divides are . . . connected; European journals are often cocited because they publish more articles authored by Europeans which, according to Wæver (1998), are generally more constructivist, postmodernist, and “other” compared to the American rational choice and quantitative approach” (46).

We test this claim about IR’s geographical stratification using survey data on (1) scholars’ community identities, (2) their perceptions of various dividing lines in the discipline, and (3) their responses to questions about their actual research practices in terms of methodology, paradigm, and epistemology.

## *3. There exists a division of labor among scholars where in the West is more involved in theory production and the non-West supplies raw data for theory testing.*

This claim concerns a division of labor within IR wherein scholars in the West are the primary producers of IR theory, while scholars in the non-West serve as area experts who—in the best case—supply raw data for theory-testing (Inoguchi 2007; Mahajan 2010; Acharya 2014, 648). Although more than a decade old, Ersel Aydinli and Julie Mathews’ (2000, 297) study of publication patterns still offers the most impressive empirical support for this division of labor. They find that the more theory-oriented a journal is, the less likely it is to include contributors from outside the Western core, that contributions from the periphery tend to focus on the contributor’s native country, and that when scholars from the periphery are recognized, they are rarely seen as making a larger theoretical contribution but rather as contributing to our knowledge about particular countries and regions (Aydinli and Mathews 2000, 297). These results might stem from biases enforced by the Anglo-Western core, but they might also be caused by a perception within the periphery that theorizing is a luxury task—a luxury that not all scholars in all countries can or want to afford (Tickner and Wæver 2009). For instance, theorizing may not be valued by academic employers in certain peripheral countries, especially as it is seen as contributing very little to solving real-world problems and thus is less valuable for career-building purposes (Tickner 2013, 637).

We will evaluate this claim in two ways: (1) by looking at who is doing research in the subfield of IR theory and which IR scholars are perceived as having exerted

the greatest influence on the IR discipline and (2) we will present some evidence on the perceived desirability of establishing local schools IR theory.

In the remainder of this article, we first provide a brief overview of the Global IR Debate and the 2014 TRIP faculty survey. We then empirically evaluate the three claims outlined above. We conclude with a plea for improved and varied types of data collection on the IR discipline (especially in the non-West) and some speculation on future developments within an increasingly globalized discipline.

### **The Global IR Debate—A Summary**

At the 2014 ISA conference in Toronto, then incoming President [Amitav Acharya \(2014\)](#) presented his vision of a “Global IR”. He highlighted, from a central intellectual platform in the field, the debate about IR’s identity as a global discipline, which has developed in various phases ([Appeltshauser et al., forthcoming](#)). In the late 1970s, Stanley [Hoffmann \(1977\)](#) famously argued that IR as a discipline could not have evolved as it did anywhere else but in the United States. Reactions to Hoffmann’s claim of American-centered IR were diverse. All of them, however, focused on European and other Western counterexamples (e.g., [Wæver 1998](#); [Jørgensen and Knudsen 2006](#)). Over the course of the past decade, these responses to Hoffmann’s article have been complemented by a vivid conceptual-normative literature on “IR beyond the West,” which seeks to uncover the hegemony of Western history and culture in IR theorizing and sensitize the discipline to the realities of people and institutions in the Global South/East ([Nayak and Selbin 2011](#); [Hobson 2012](#)). Although some have argued for the establishment of national or regional schools of IR as a means of decentering mainstream “Western” IR ([Song 2001](#); [Makarychev and Morozov 2013](#)), others have invested in the development of “post-Western” IR theories ([Shani 2008](#); [Vasilaki 2012](#)).

Running parallel to this normative-conceptual debate, an empirically oriented literature has developed which is more actively engaged in the description and analysis of IR practices beyond the West ([Acharya and Buzan 2010](#)). Authors in this literature enrich their narrative reports with quantitative and qualitative data about publishing practices, providing evidence for the low level of representation and impact of non-Western scholars in international journals ([Aydinli and Mathews 2000](#)). Moreover, the analysis of graduate curricula and syllabi illustrate both local patterns and global trends in IR scholarship ([Hagmann and Biersteker 2014](#); [Colgan 2016](#); [Grénier 2015](#)). Finally, citations have become an increasingly popular form of evidence for studying Global IR. Citation analyses permit researchers to determine what counts as central knowledge in a discipline ([Maliniak and Powers 2014](#)), connections between scholars and scholarly communities ([Kristensen 2012](#)), and the diffusion of knowledge ([Wemheuer-Vogelaar 2013](#)).

### **The 2014 TRIP Cross-national Faculty Survey**

This study builds upon the efforts of the TRIP Project at the College of William & Mary, which houses the world’s most comprehensive database of information on the discipline of IR. Among these resources, TRIP conducts a periodic survey of IR scholars about teaching and research practices and views on foreign policy issues. Beginning with just one country (the United States) in 2004 and expanding to twenty countries in 2011, TRIP broadened its outreach further in 2014 by surveying scholars in thirty-two countries and in ten different languages. The 2014 survey was sent to 12,222 scholars, of which 5,148 responded for a response rate of 42.1% and a margin of error of  $\pm 1.0\%$ . The survey included more than one hundred questions divided into four sections: two about respondents’ teaching and research practices, a third focused on opinions about the discipline, and

a fourth section covering contemporary foreign policy issues. Questions were selected for inclusion based on several criteria, including whether they were asked in previous surveys, whether they address emerging practices or debates in the discipline, or were suggested by our local partners with plans to use the data in their research. Each survey contained an additional page of questions written specifically for respondents in that country by our local partners.<sup>2</sup>

The survey was sent to every IR scholar in each of the thirty-two countries, nineteen of which we classify as Western and thirteen non-Western.<sup>3</sup> Scholars were identified, either by TRIP researchers or our local partners, using systematic web searches, emails, and communications with academic departments and individual faculty. To qualify for our survey, a scholar must either teach or research topics that cross international borders and have an active affiliation with a college or university in a political science department, IR program, research unit, policy school, or the closest local equivalent. We did not include scholars of economics, sociology, law, or other disciplines unless their research explicitly addressed questions of international politics. In certain cases, we included scholars employed in government, the private sector, or think tanks at the recommendation of our local partners if those institutions are integral to the academic discipline of IR as defined in that national context. Local partners also provided guidance on cultural and institutional practices of IR within different national/regional contexts and consulted on the exclusion or reformulation of culturally and/or politically sensitive questions (e.g., questions about age, political orientation, and gender identity may be socially appropriate in some local contexts but not others). A full elaboration of our methodology can be found in [Maliniak et al. \(2011\)](#).

### **Claim 1: IR Is a Western/American Dominated Discipline**

We turn now to examining perceptions of the IR discipline according to the three claims previously identified. The most fundamental claim of the Global IR Debate is that IR is a discipline dominated by Western/American scholars, theories, and research practices. We test this claim with data on (1) scholars' perceptions about differences between American and other IR scholarship, (2) their beliefs about patterns of dominance in IR and the importance of countering those patterns, and (3) a survey experiment comparing the effects of describing the dominant discourse in IR as "Western" versus "American."

#### *American Versus Local IR Scholarship*

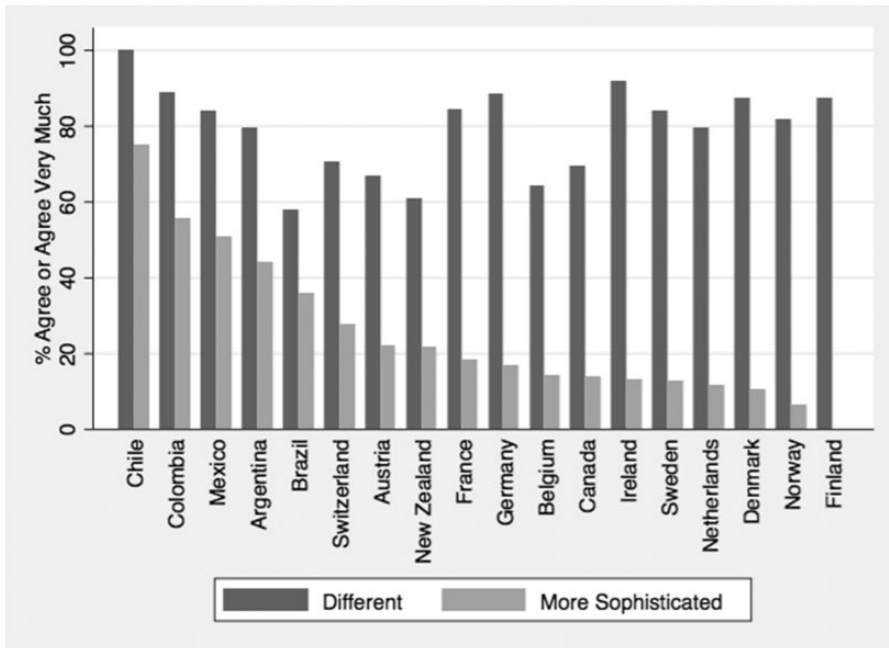
Before making any claims about the dominance of Western/American IR scholarship over other IR communities, we must establish that scholars actually believe that there is a difference between their local scholarship and the dominant discourse. When asked, 77.26% of scholars concurred that there is a difference between American IR scholarship and their regional IR scholarship.<sup>4</sup> In fact, as

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<sup>2</sup>The results reported in this article are based on data provided by the TRIP Project to the authors on October 11, 2015. The TRIP public data portal is available at <https://trip.wm.edu/charts/>.

<sup>3</sup>The Western countries include: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The non-Western countries include: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, Taiwan, and Turkey. The term "non-West" is problematic as it may imply a false sense of homogeneity among a very heterogeneous group of countries and scholars ([Hutchings 2011](#)). However, for lack of a better formulation and a strong interest in the difference between the Global North/West and South/East, we follow scholarly convention and use the term throughout this article ([Acharya 2014](#)). We follow [Kacowicz \(2009\)](#) in counting Israel as a Western country and [Chen \(2012\)](#) and [Yamamoto \(2011\)](#) in classifying Japan as non-Western..

<sup>4</sup>The questions discussed in this section were only included in surveys sent to Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, New



**Figure 1.** Proportion of scholars who believe American IR is different/more sophisticated than their own regional IR

illustrated in [Figure 1](#), we observe majorities in all eighteen countries where this question was asked. However, Latin American scholars were most likely to also believe that their local scholarship is not as sophisticated as American IR scholarship. Scholars in European countries as well as New Zealand and Canada tend to strongly disagree with this perspective. Overall, we can conclude that scholars do recognize that dividing lines exist within the discipline, but scholars in the West tend to be more confident in their local scholarship than scholars in Latin America.

#### *Dominance and Counter-Dominance*

In our most straightforward measure of perceptions about dominance and subjugation in IR, we asked respondents whether they agree that IR is a Western/American-dominated discipline.<sup>5</sup> The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (66.98%) with the statement, but agreement in the West was considerably higher (73.14%) than in the non-West (52.45%).<sup>6</sup> The only three countries in which less than half of scholars identify the discipline as Western/American dominated are in the non-West: China and Taiwan, where just 12% of scholars agreed with this view, and Brazil, where only 5.48% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Explaining these deviant cases is beyond the scope of this article, but given that we find no evidence of linguistic isolation that would prohibit the importation of Western IR scholarship ([Maliniak et al. 2014](#)), nor has scholarship

Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Scholars in Canada and New Zealand were asked about their national, rather than their regional, IR scholarship.

<sup>5</sup>We use the term “Western/American” because half of respondents saw the word “American” and half saw “Western.” See next section for a full description.

<sup>6</sup>It would not be correct, however, to suggest that a quarter of Western IR scholars believe that there is diversity within the discipline. If, as proponents of the Global IR agenda suggest, some of the marginalization of non-Western discourses is due to a lack of knowledge about other discourses, then failing to acknowledge Western dominance may be a reproduction of that dominance rather than a positive statement about diversity.

**Table 1.** Scholars' beliefs in an "American" and "Western"-dominated IR discipline

		"American dominated" (%)	"Western dominated" (%)
All respondents	Strongly agree	10.65	21.91
	Agree	48.52	52.97
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.31	10.82
	Disagree	19.18	8.01
	Strongly disagree	5.35	6.29
Western respondents	Strongly agree	11.44	24.49
	Agree	52.72	57.63
	Neither agree nor disagree	18.20	10.84
	Disagree	15.23	4.42
Non-Western respondents	Strongly disagree	2.40	2.62
	Strongly agree	8.81	15.72
	Agree	38.77	41.77
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.89	10.78
	Disagree	28.34	16.62
	Strongly disagree	12.19	15.12

**Table 2.** Scholars' support for countering "American" and "Western" domination of IR

		"American dominated" (%)	"Western dominated" (%)
All respondents	Yes	63.68	61.86
	No	25.93	24.42
	Do not know	10.39	13.72
Non-US Western respondents	Yes	67.22	62.39
	No	22.41	23.80
	Do not know	10.37	13.80
US respondents	Yes	53.16	55.39
	No	33.76	28.69
	Do not know	13.08	15.92

from these countries entered the dominant Western IR discourse, it seems likely that these countries have developed national (or international) IR communities that operate in parallel to Western-dominated networks and mitigate feelings of subjugation. Indeed, in the non-West, 58.05% of scholars consider themselves part of national or regional IR communities, compared to just 32.13% of Western respondents (see below).

Laying the groundwork for the Global IR agenda not only requires scholars to identify the existence of a hegemonic discourse in the discipline, but also to believe that there is value in challenging its dominance. Overall, we find fairly strong support (62.78%) for countering Western/American dominance among those who acknowledge its presence in the discipline. As expected, however, Western scholars are slightly less likely to endorse challenges to the dominant discourse of which they are a part, with 59.97% supporting such efforts compared with 72.06% of their non-Western colleagues. This suggests that ample work remains for proponents of the Global IR agenda to engage those in the West, including those who are aware of the existence of alternative discourses in IR, regarding the incorporation of non-Western IR into the discipline.

#### *Experiment: Western Versus American Dominance*

A key difficulty of discussing hegemony in IR is that European and North American countries are both the dominators (when conceptualized as "Western

domination”) and the dominated (when viewed as “American domination”). This entanglement has long been a concern of the Global IR Debate at large (Turton 2014). To understand more clearly the dynamics of each of these types of domination, we conducted a survey experiment in which half of the respondents were randomly asked about “American dominance” and the other half about “Western dominance” in the discipline. Unexplained variation in response rates across the two groups resulted in 2,263 respondents to the “American dominated” question and 2,273 to the “Western dominated” one.

There was a statistically significant treatment effect for asking the respondent whether IR is an “American dominated” or “Western dominated” discipline ( $\chi^2 = 223.7604$ ,  $N = 4536$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Respondents were 15.17% more likely to agree or strongly agree that the discipline is “Western dominated” compared with “American dominated.” When split into Western and non-Western response groups, the treatment effect remains,<sup>7</sup> but the effect is much larger for Western respondents than for the non-Western respondents. Scholars in the West were 17.96% more likely to believe that there is Western dominance compared with American dominance, whereas this same gap was just 9.91% in the non-West. Scholars in the West outside of the United States were only slightly more likely to identify Western dominance than American dominance (gap of 18.32%) than scholars in the United States (gap of 17.54%).

On the question regarding the importance of countering the aforementioned dominance, the treatment effect was again statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 7.8414$ ,  $N = 3029$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but in this case, receiving the “Western” treatment had a negative effect on agreement. Although 63.68% agreed that it is important to counter American dominance, only 61.86% said the same for Western dominance. The difference in support for countering American and Western dominance is reflected among non-Western respondents (73.15% and 71.16%, respectively), but in the West, we find a divide between American scholars and others. The non-US Western world is 5.26% more likely to agree to the importance of countering American dominance relative to Western dominance, whereas in the United States, scholars are 2.31% more likely to support countering Western dominance compared with American dominance. This suggests that although Western scholars appear willing to acknowledge the dominance of their own group in the IR discipline, they are slightly more hesitant to support countering that dominance.

### Claim 2: Geography Is the Core Dividing Line in IR

The second claim we address is that the IR discipline is divided into geographically defined camps or schools. We test this claim using survey data on (1) scholars’ community identities, (2) their views on the areas generating the most division in the discipline today, and (3) their responses to questions about their actual research practices in terms of methodology, paradigm, and epistemology.

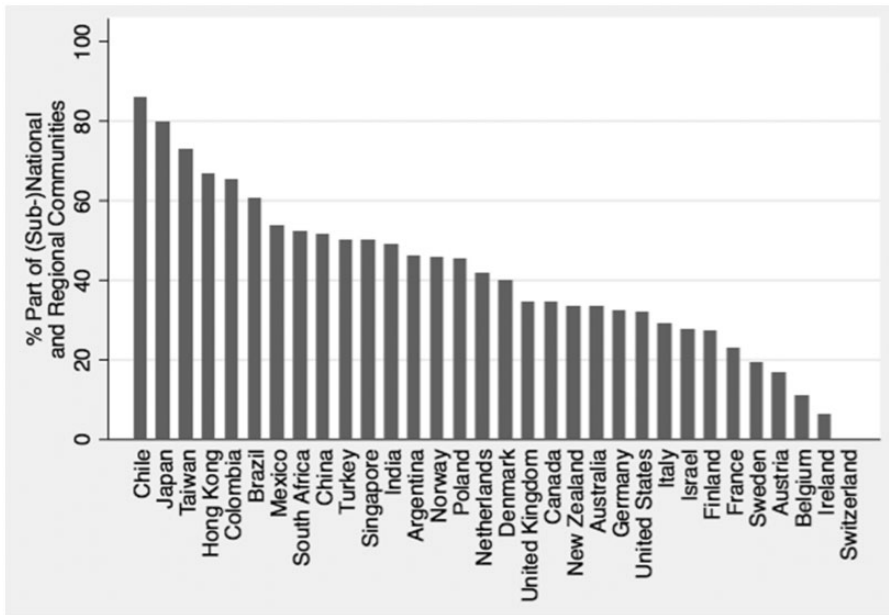
#### *Community Identities*

We asked respondents to identify the two communities within the IR discipline of which they most felt a part.<sup>8</sup> Although Maliniak and Powers (2014) find that issue area has declined as a defining feature of epistemic communities in the elite IR literature since the 1980s, a plurality (44.20%) of our respondents identified an

<sup>7</sup>Western respondents:  $\chi^2 = 203.8101$ ,  $N = 3187$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Non-Western respondents:  $\chi^2 = 36.9739$ ,  $N = 1349$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>8</sup>Respondents could select from epistemology-specific, generation-specific, global, issue-specific, subnational, language-specific, methodology-specific, national, ontology-specific, paradigm-specific, and regional IR communities, and “Other” and “I do not feel part of an IR community.”



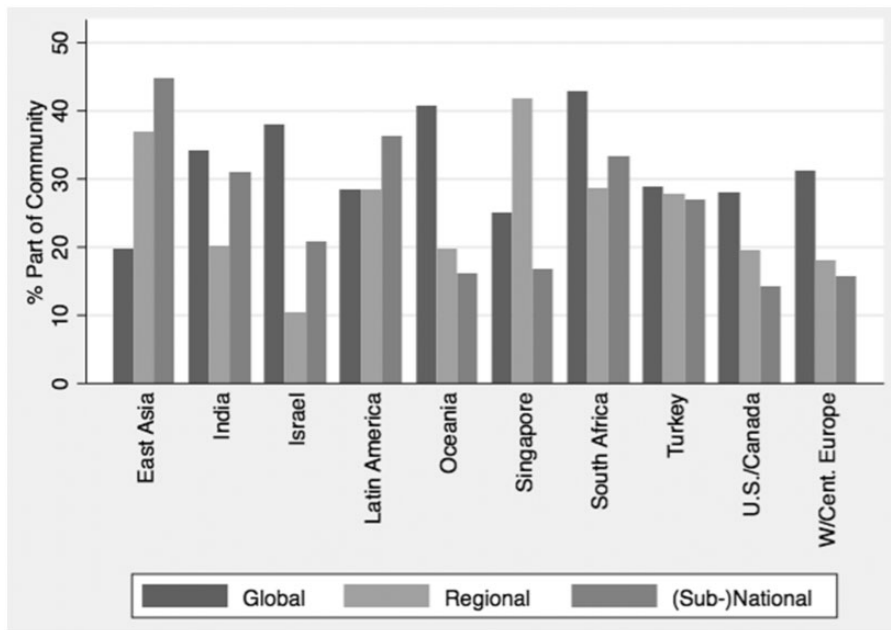


**Figure 2.** Proportion of scholars identifying firstly or secondly with a (sub-)national or regional community

issue-specific IR community as either firstly or secondly, describing their place within the discipline. Other nongeographic communities were selected less frequently. Less than 10% of respondents identified themselves as being firstly or secondly part of either a paradigm- or methodology-specific community, around 7% selected either epistemological or generational communities first or second, and 4.54% consider themselves part of an ontological community. However, these data tell us very little about how scholars geographically situate themselves. For example, although a scholar in the United States and a scholar in India might both identify as being part of an issue community around international security, one may understand that community to extend only to other scholars in their own country, whereas the other may see that community as encompassing all scholars globally.

Therefore, we also examine whether scholars report themselves as being part of geographically bounded communities. [Figure 2](#) displays the proportion of scholars in each country who identified either firstly or secondly with a national, subnational, or regional IR community. As reported in the section on Western/American dominance, non-Western countries are more likely to have geographically bounded perceptions of IR communities, perhaps indicating the development of parallel epistemic communities to counter Western/American dominance or an outright rejection of the “global” Western-dominated discipline.

On the other hand, we do not expect Western scholars to imagine their version of IR as stopping at national or regional borders. Scholars in the West are, by virtue of Western domination of the discipline, integrated into the “global” discipline in a way that scholars working beyond the West are not. [Figure 3](#) shows the percentage of scholars in each region who view themselves as part of the global discipline relative to either a (sub-)national or regional community. In each of the Western regions (Israel, Oceania, United States/Canada, and Western/Central Europe), respondents identified themselves more frequently with a global IR community rather than either of the geographically bounded alternatives. The global community was also the most common selection in India and Turkey, but



**Figure 3.** Proportion of scholars identifying with global, regional, and (sub-)national communities

only by small margins over national/subnational communities and regional communities, respectively. However, this interpretation does not explain the results in South Africa. We would suggest that although we find a relationship, the strength of this relationship relative to other factors driving community memberships (such as scholars' countries of birth and education as well as geopolitical factors) may vary from region to region and country to country. Further research in this area could focus on these variations.

#### *Nongeographic Dividing Lines and Research Practices*

In the preceding section, we found implicit support for national and regional IR communities by examining the community memberships of scholars. We would find further support for a geographically divided discipline if those areas seen by scholars as fault lines in the discipline also reflected differences in practice between the West and the non-West. When asked which three areas are generating the most division in IR today, the most frequent selection was methods (52.61%), and we find this division reflected in the methodological orientations of the West and the non-West. Western scholars are more likely to be qualitative or quantitative (by 12.26% and 8.24%, respectively), and non-Western scholars more likely to be engaged in policy analysis (by 19.05%). We also found substantially higher use of quantitative analysis as a primary method in the United States/Canada than any other region except Israel, and outside these countries quantitative use drops to just 9.07%. Although we cannot say that methodological differences between the West and the non-West are driving scholars' perceptions of divides in the discipline, it is evident that an area seen by a majority of scholars as establishing an "us" and a "them" in IR is reproduced along geographic lines.

Epistemology and paradigm also received votes from more than a third of scholars on creating division within the discipline.<sup>9</sup> On epistemology, we do not

<sup>9</sup>The theory-policy divide was also cited by 38.57% of scholars, but we do not address this area here.

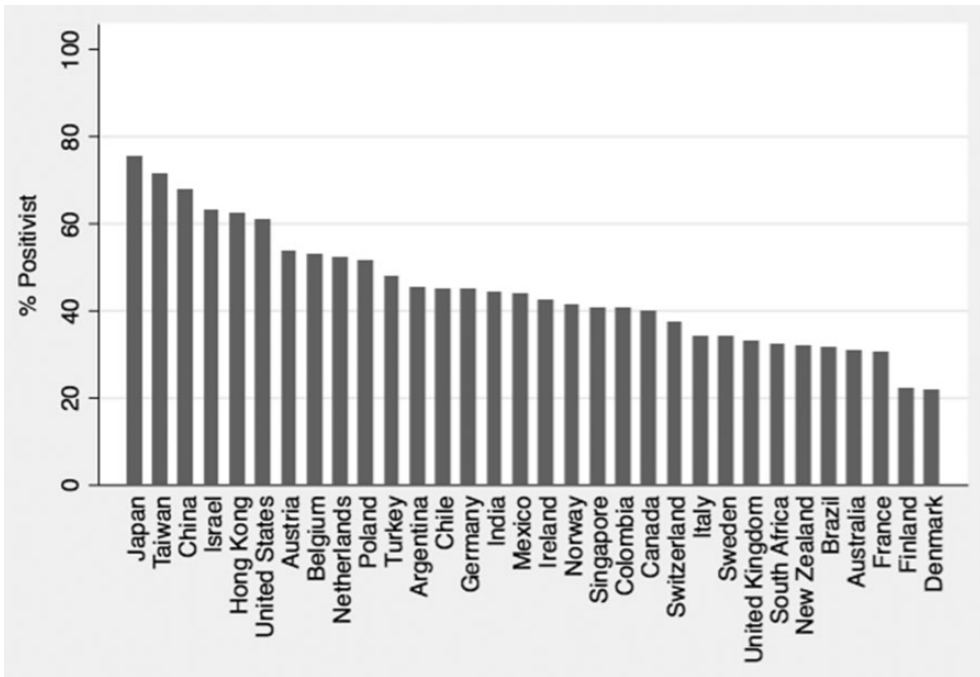


Figure 4. Proportion of scholars who describe their work as positivist

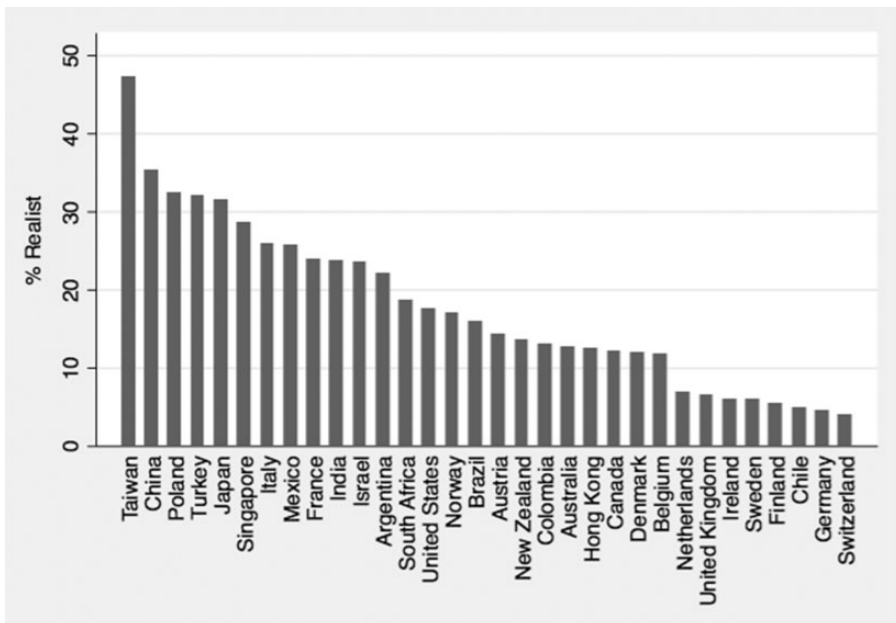


Figure 5. Proportion of scholars identifying their approach to IR as realist

find evidence for a West versus non-West divide. Nonpositivist and postpositivist methodologies are more common in the West, but only by a small margin; more than half (50.92%) of Western scholars employ these epistemologies compared with 48.74% of non-Western respondents. Indeed, we find much more variation within than between the West and non-West. For example, although a majority of

**Table 3.** Scholars' paradigmatic approaches

	West (%)	Non-West (%)
Realism	15.52	26.88
Liberalism	12.03	11.42
Constructivism	22.76	21.27
Marxism	3.34	6.22
English School	3.78	4.79
Feminism	1.89	1.57
Other	11.26	9.44
I do not use paradigmatic analysis	29.41	18.40

scholars in the United States, Israel, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Poland primarily describe their work as positivist, in the rest of the West, the incidence of nonpositivism ranges from 42.19% of scholars in Turkey to 78.08% in Denmark. In the non-West, positivism is only the majority epistemology in East Asia; in all other countries, nonpositivism predominates.

Paradigms present a final interesting case. Western scholars (29.38%) are more likely than their non-Western counterparts (18.40%) to eschew traditional paradigmatic analysis in their research, whereas non-Westerners are almost twice as likely to use Marxism as a theoretical framework (though at just 6.27%, Marxism in IR is arguably on life support around the world). However, with the exception of Realism (which non-Westerners are almost twice as likely to identify with), the distribution of scholars among the remaining paradigms is more or less the same.

What is to be made of the relative popularity of Realism in the non-West? As the figure above indicates, it is probably misleading to categorize Realist thought into Western and non-Western camps; the approach is alive and well in Western countries like Poland (32.40%) and Italy (25.89%), even though it finds the most support in East Asian countries. Whether the distribution of paradigmatic approaches can highlight disciplinary communities running parallel or subordinate to dominant Western discourses is a question for future research.

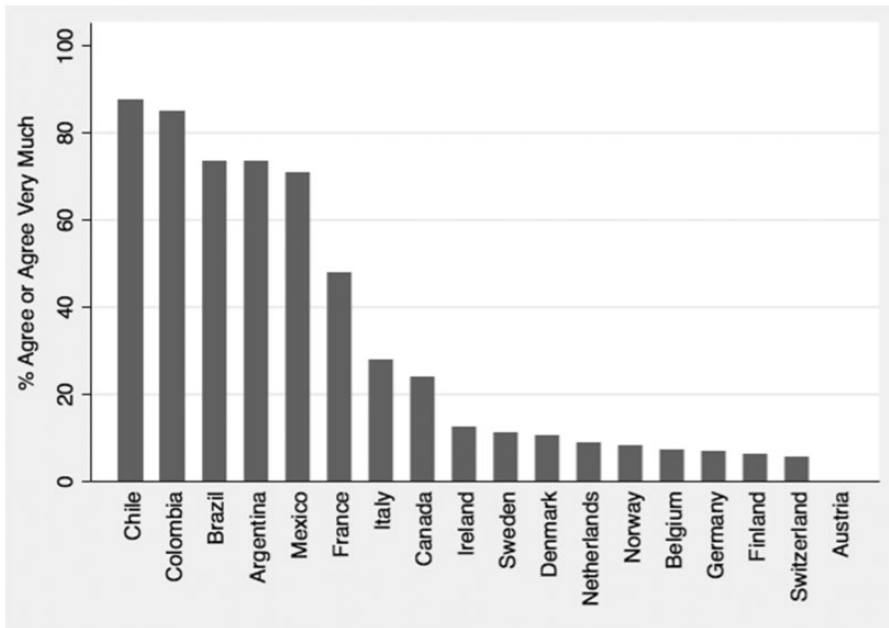
### **Claim 3: The West Is More Involved in Theory Production**

The last claim that we will examine in this paper is centered around a claimed division of labor wherein scholars in the West are responsible for theory production, while the non-West supplies raw data for theory testing. We will test this claim in two steps: first, we will use our survey data to look at who is doing IR theory and whether Western or non-Western IR scholars are more likely to be recognized for their impact on the discipline. Second, we will present some data on the perceived necessity of establishing local schools of IR theory.

#### *The Theory Development Gap*

Despite the importance of theoretical texts in the Western IR canon—think *Theory of International Politics*, *After Hegemony*, or *Social Theory of International Politics*—IR theorists make up only the fifth largest research group within the discipline. Worldwide, 7.54% of respondents declared their main area of research to be international relations theory (IRT)<sup>10</sup>; by comparison, international security was the most common answer at 16.23% followed by international political economy at

<sup>10</sup>Another 15.8% of scholars identified IRT as a “secondary area of research,” but these results are difficult to interpret since respondents were allowed to select as many options as applied. On average, scholars selecting IRT also identified 2.25 other secondary areas of research. The relative importance of IRT in a scholar's research is indeterminate.



**Figure 6.** Proportion of scholars who believe it is important to develop local IR theories

9.57%. Scholars in the West and non-West are about as likely to engage in IRT (7.01% and 8.76%, respectively), but we did find some variation across regions. More than one in ten scholars in both East Asia and Israel are engaged primarily in IRT, while that proportion drops to 4.07% in Oceania and 3.12% in South Africa. On the whole, however, we find little support for a division of labor in which the West is primarily responsible for theorizing in the discipline. This is consistent with [Tickner's \(2013\)](#) argument that theory development takes place around the world even though the theories produced in the non-West might not get much traction within the core.

We also look at how frequently, and by whom, non-Western scholars were named as having had the greatest influence on the field of IR in the past twenty years as a proxy for where scholars believe the most important IRT work is being produced. Surprisingly, we find little evidence that non-Western scholars value IR scholarship from the Global South significantly more than Western scholars. Of the 3,678 “most influential scholars” listed by non-Western respondents, just 6.25% were from the Global South. Among Western scholars, that number declines to 0.16% (from 9,125 responses). Respondents were asked to list four “most influential scholars,” and when we look at how frequently a respondent lists at least one non-Western respondent, we find slightly stronger support for an undervaluing of non-Western IRT in the West. More than thirteen percent of non-Western respondents listed at least one non-Western scholar as “most influential,” compared with just 0.62% of Western scholars. On the whole, however, even non-Western scholars tend to identify Western sources as constituting the most influential scholarship in the past two decades, a sign that IRT work from the non-West goes relatively unrecognized throughout the discipline.

#### *The Development of Local Theories*

There are a growing number of authors building IR theories upon non-Western sources of knowledge in the discipline (e.g., [Qin 2016](#); [Phillips 2016](#); [Petito 2016](#)).

If IR is to become a truly global discipline, then this kind of theorizing must become prominent on a larger scale. Consequently, we asked respondents in some countries<sup>11</sup> about the importance of developing local (i.e., region-specific) IR theories. In Latin America, a vast majority of respondents (75.29%) agreed or agreed strongly that such efforts are important. In Europe and Canada (with the exception of France, where isolation from the global IR community has already been well documented [Cornut and Battistella 2012]), scholars' overall opinion is that the development of regional theories is not important. This contrast suggests that scholars in the Western countries are more satisfied with the status quo of IRT than their colleagues in Latin America, who seem to strive for change and seek a break from the dominant discourse.

### Conclusion

In this contribution, we sought to use data on scholars' self-reported research practices and perceptions of the discipline to assess the progress of the Global IR agenda in the IR academy. In doing so, we add to the growing literature within the broader Global IR Debate that seeks to empirically test the normative claims made by those engaged in the Debate. A core objective of the TRIP Project is to catalyze new research into the theory and practice of IR, and data such as those from the periodic worldwide faculty survey as well as TRIP's comprehensive database on journal publications and books in the discipline help advance this goal. The expansion of the 2014 worldwide faculty survey to thirty-two countries, including more than a dozen non-Western academies, provides ample opportunity to engage with the core questions around Global IR. In particular, since Global IR advances as an agenda not only through the integration of non-Western ideas and theories into actual research outputs but also into the way that scholars discuss, interact with, and teach the discipline, a survey of scholars' own perceptions of IR is a useful and novel tool for making these assessments.

We addressed three claims in the Global IR Debate: that IR is a Western/American dominated discipline, that geography is the core dividing line in IR, and that there is a division of labor within IR wherein scholars in the West are responsible for theory production, while the non-West supplies raw data for theory testing. On the first of these, we found that scholars, regardless of where they work, generally identify a Western or American hegemony in the discipline. However, not only are non-Westerners more likely to support countering Western or American hegemony, but the results show that US IR scholars are more comfortable with American domination and that other Western scholars more readily accept Western influence. On the whole, these results suggest that although scholars do perceive a power imbalance in the discipline toward the West, it is those scholars who benefit from the domination who will be most resistant to the Global IR agenda.

Our assessment of geography as a dividing line focused on scholars' identification with geo-epistemological communities and the reproduction of those borders in research practices. Although scholars identify themselves most frequently with issue-based communities that cross geographic boundaries, almost two-thirds place themselves within either a global, regional, or national/subnational group. Regional variation came into play here, with non-Western regions such as East Asia and Latin America most likely to select national/subnational communities and Western regions like the United States/Canada and Western/Central Europe predominantly identifying with the global community. We conclude that what scholars in the West perceive as the global community, scholars in other parts of the world might see as "the other" with which they cannot identify or feel that

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<sup>11</sup>See footnote 5.

they do not belong. We also found some evidence that geographic borders are reproduced in research practices, such as more use of policy analysis and less quantitative analysis in the non-West, as well as substantially more application of Realist paradigms in the Global South.

Finally, we assess whether IR theory development is the domain of the West, whereas the non-West is reserved for area studies and theory testing. We find that non-Western academics are frequently left off of lists of the most influential scholars in IR, even in the non-West itself. Yet, scholars' self-reported research activity suggests that there is no difference in the rate of theory development in the Global North and South. Moreover, scholars in Latin America are much more likely than those in the West to believe in the importance of developing local IR theories. These results suggest that while IRT is alive and well in the non-West, it is under-recognized and undervalued in the discipline as a whole, reproducing patterns of domination and subjugation as new scholars around the world are trained in the Western IR canon.

There are obvious limitations to our use of the TRIP survey data. Critical scholars, who are most likely to be actively engaged in the Global IR agenda, may have been less likely to fill out the questionnaire because of skepticism regarding survey methods in general or the way in which questions were asked. We readily admit that, even with efforts to engage local partners in the process of tailoring each survey to national context, the TRIP survey is a Western creation based on Western understandings of the field. Any attempt to assess the role of non-Western discourses in IR will necessarily be flawed because of this. However, we do not think this invalidates the analysis in this article. Rather, it suggests only that the results be taken with an appropriate level of caution, particularly where the results point to less robust engagement by the West with the non-West.

To overcome these limitations, those engaged in the Global IR Debate need access to more and better observational data on the discipline outside of the West. The TRIP Project has already begun efforts in this direction through its Global Pathways program, which expands the TRIP data set of articles and books in IR to include Latin American and East Asian journals and publications. Even as our empirical resources become more robust, it is important to remember two key points about the Global IR Debate in future research. First, the IR discipline cannot be described monolithically. Not only does where one sits matter in one's perception of the discipline, but the diversity of backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences in the many interactive and overlapping communities in the IR discipline makes it impossible to neatly pigeonhole the field—even within the West. Second, no single variable can explain the discipline in full and certainly cannot settle the Global IR Debate. To understand the field, those engaged in the Debate must continually expand the empirical horizons on which the normative discourse relies. Whether that means triangulating several different sources of data on the discipline, which TRIP is presently engaged in, or collecting new sets of data and information on scholarship in IR, there is much left to explore in this area.

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