

To: The Governing Council of ISA via Executive Director of ISA Mark A. Boyer and ISA President Helen V. Milner (boyer@uconnvm.uconn.edu; hmilner@princeton.edu)

Subject: Petition for the creation of a new ISA section: "Global IR" (GIRS)
Submitted by: The Working Group on the Proposed Global IR Section (GIRS),
see the list of its members, Appendix 1

Background

The Working Group formed from the roundtable presented at the CEEISA-ISA Joint Conference in Belgrade in June 2019¹. The theme of the conference was “International Relations in the Age of Anxiety.”

The standard usage of “International Relations” as already Stanley Hoffmann put it in 1977, refers to both “the state of the world **and** the state of the discipline”(1977). The conference topics dealt mainly with the former, disquieting, highly unsettling “state of the world”: in contrast, the roundtable focused on the “state of the discipline” as also a source of anxiety – anxiety, that is to say, of our making. We as faculty in the academic discipline of IR are agents of construction and change of the world² involved if not in advising to policy makers, in the production and dissemination of knowledge about the state of the world.

All participants (and audience as well) hailed or originated from what is referred to as non-Western world. Whilst the ISA has sections and a caucus³ prefixed by an adjective “global” (Global development, Global South) the Working Group does not see a significant overlap with the new Section. Not all countries from outside North America and Western Europe regard themselves as part of the Global South or as falling into a development category⁴, nor does the thinking on IR of China, economically the second economic power in the world, fit into any of the above existing sections. Nor is a virtue in creating yet another regional section, for East and Central Europe, for example, as a regional ghetto: IR should be global. Finally, the IR Theory section focuses on IR theory generally rather than on non-Western and non-Northern theory in particular, so the agenda of the new Section is different.

The rationale

The rationale for the Section builds upon the growing and worldwide call for broadening, diversifying, and globalizing the study of IR. For example, the Convention Themes of former President Amitav Acharya (2014–15) and the past President Cameron Thies explicitly call for a Global IR. The recognition of the need for globalizing IR is in the lineage anticipated by Hoffmann 1977, Bull 1985, Cox 1981, Alker 1984, Holsti 1985, Ashley 1987⁵ and it is now taken up by scholars from both the Global North and the Global South who use different terms like “worlding” – see note 11. Many of them are female such as L.H.M. Ling, Arlene Tickner, Pinar Bilgin, Karen Smith.⁶

The study of IR is gaining popularity around the world. Academic departments at universities around the world are devoted to the study of world politics. Annual meetings of the International Studies Association consistently attract 5000 or more researchers from all around the globe. Regional IR conferences convene regularly in myriad locales. Yet, sociological analyses have shown that IR is studied differently in different parts of the world. Until rather recently, there was little information available about the details or dynamics of such differences. Ole Waever’s 1998 article entitled “The sociology of a not so international discipline”⁷ highlighted differences between the study of IR in the United States and Western Europe while emphasizing variations within the latter. The US-based TRIP (Teaching, Research & International Policy) survey that collects and analyses data on IR teaching and research has become more global since its launch in 2004.⁸ TRIP reports that IR discipline exists in more than 50 countries on 5 continents. By now, students of IR have acquired a more sophisticated grasp of global variations in how IR is taught and researched.⁹

However, the TRIP Survey and other recent studies also show that the field’s theories, methods, curricula, texts and training centers reflect the dominance of North America and Western Europe, especially the US.¹⁰ Moreover, awareness of global variation in the study and teaching of International Relations has not produced greater insight into the implications of such variation. Indeed, often, “we” do not engage with others’ different ways of doing things. There are now literally hundreds of articles and several edited volumes dealing with such variations, but they compound the problem.

The CEEISA/ISA “Belgrade roundtable” reviewed over 150 articles/papers, books, all somehow implicated in the global turn of the IR discipline. The reviewed items are not easily accessible, books in particular

prohibitively expensive; access to journal articles too is restricted. The key question then is how much of this body of knowledge can trickle to curricula everywhere in the world where IR is taught? The sheer number of texts on the subject, carrying different, often new, erudite and original labels, approaching the topic from a variety of different angles, does not alleviate but compounds the anxiety of our age.¹¹ We live not in one world but many.¹²

Course syllabi in the US and Western Europe seldom include scholarship produced in other parts of the world. A survey¹³ of some of the US and UK publishing houses shows that the publication of introductory IR texts written by English, American and Australian authors has now become an export industry to wherever IR in the world is now taught. The global South seems to pay heed to IR as studied in the US and Western Europe in teaching, scholarly output offers a more variegated picture. Where scholarly publications in some contexts bear striking resemblance to IR scholarship in the US and Western Europe, in some others conceptual discussions take forms that are not entirely familiar to those students schooled in the former. Put differently, while we are all students of IR, we have limited insight into the differences between what each of us does, and the implications of such variegation for the production of knowledge about world politics. Hence the need for global IR so that our knowledge about world politics captures the perspectives of those in the global South as well as the global North – and in between.

Several journals are claimed to publish articles from different parts of the world (JIRD, JPS, EJIR) but there is a need for a more sustained institutional support to “bring the Global IR debate in”. No matter how brilliant scholarship and contributions, unconnected and unsupported, they “do not make a discipline” (Hoffmann 1977).

The proposed Section will explore ways of critical, engaged pedagogy, using the audiovisual methods to come up with an undergraduate textbook which would reflect the global heritage and scope of the discipline. (Currently a contract is being negotiated).

Organization

The efforts to create the new Section and its initial activities (assuming it would be approved by the GC) will be handled by the Working Group until the Section is formally established, convened and has its first elections.

The Working Group includes academics working on the issues of global IR from the Czech Republic, USA, Netherlands, Germany, Canada, China, India, Columbia, Russia, Morocco, Japan, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Ukraine.

It is proposed that they should be assigned regional responsibility to involve and coordinate with scholars from their parts of the world.

Activities

The Section would engage in all activities of sections (organizing panels at conferences, competition for the best student essay, book, award of the distinguished scholar). Additionally, it would organize workshops, engage in fundraising to defray the cost of travel to the ISA conventions for those not usually coming to ISA conventions. It would create a website listing the materials dispersed across journals and thus facilitating access to them. It would make as its priority the facilitation of teaching via critical and engaged pedagogy using the most UpToDate methods of teaching.

The goal “to bring the Global IR debate in” has been stated in many publications, the new section would serve this goal.

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To support GIRS and this Petition, please, fill in [the GIRS support form](#).

If your experience any technical issues in accessing the form, you can alternatively support GIRS by sending the following message with your name and institutional affiliation to girs.wg@gmail.com or zemanova@vse.cz or rshaykhu@fau.edu:

“I hereby express my support to the establishment of the Global International Relations section (GIRS) within the International Studies Association framework as well as my agreement with its Petition.”

Appendix 1: The GIRS Working Group consists of Štěpánka Zemanová, University of Economics, the Czech Republic; Vendulka Kubálková, University of Miami, USA; Renat Shaykhutdinov, Florida Atlantic University, USA; Amitav Acharya, American University, USA; Beatrix Futák-Campbell, Leiden University, the Netherlands; Antje Wiener, Universität Hamburg, Germany; Thomas Tiekku, King University of Western Ontario, Canada; Tang Shiping, Fudan University, China; Navnita Chadha Behera, University of Delhi, India; Arlene Beth Tickner, Universidad del Rosario, Columbia; Maria Lagutina, Saint-Petersburg State University, Russia; Nizar Messari, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco; Kenki Adachi, Ritsumeikan University, Japan; Thomas J. Biersteker, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID), Geneva, Switzerland; Dan Plesch, SOAS University of London, UK; Nadiia Koval, Kyiv School of Economics; Ukraine.

Appendix 2: List of signatures supporting this petition (attached).

¹ The proposed GIRS initiative was conceived at a roundtable organized at the CEEISA/ISA Joint Conference in July 2019. The “Belgrade roundtable Working Group” included Vendulka Kubálková, Pinar Bilgin, Radka Druláková, Viatcheslav Morozov, Štěpánka Zemanová, Jeremy Garlick.

² Amitav Acharya, 2018, *Constructing Global Order: Agency and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press; Vendulka Kubálková, 2015, “Reconstructing the discipline: Scholars as agents” in Vendulka Kubálková et al. *International Relations in a Constructed World*, Routledge.

³ <https://www.isanet.org/ISA/Sections>

⁴ According to the World Bank the Global South refers to countries seen as low and middle income in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. These nations are often described as newly industrialized or in the process of industrializing.

⁵ Stanley Hoffmann (1977) “An American Social Science: International Relations.” *Daedalus* 41–60. Robert W. Cox (1981) “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory”, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*; 10 (2): 126. Hayward Alker and Thomas Biersteker (1984) “The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire”, *International Studies Quarterly* 28(2):121–142; Hedley Bull (1985) “The Revolt against the West” *The Expansion of International Society*, New York: Oxford University Press, 217–228. Kal Holsti (1985) *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory*, Boston: Allen and Unwin. Richard K. Ashley (1987) “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics”, *Alternatives* 12: 403.

⁶ Examples of the work of **Pinar Bilgin**: (2008) “Thinking Past ‘Western IR’”, *Third World Quarterly* 29(1): 5–23. (2009) “The International Political ‘Sociology of a Not So International Discipline’” *International Political Sociology* 3 (3): 338–342. (2010) “The ‘Western-Centrism’ of Security Studies: ‘Blind Spot’ or Constitutive Practice?” *Security Dialogue* 41(6): 615–22. (2016) “Do IR scholars engage with the same world?” in Ken Booth and Toni Erskine (eds.) *International Relations Theory Today*, Polity. (2016) *The International in Security, Security in the International*, London: Routledge. (2016) “How to remedy Eurocentrism in IR? A complement and a challenge for The Global Transformation” *International Theory* 8 (3): 492–501. (2016) “Edward Said’s ‘contrapuntal reading’ as a method, an ethos and a metaphor for Global IR” *International Studies Review* 18 (1): 134–46. (2017) (with L.H.M. Ling) (eds.) *Asia in International relations: Unlearning imperial power relations*, Taylor & Francis. (2016) (with Amitav Acharya and L.H.M. Ling), “Global IR special issue” *International Studies Review*. **Arlene Tickner**: (2003) “Hearing Latin American Voices in International Relations Studies”, *International Studies Perspectives* 4(4): 325–350. (2003), “Seeing IR Differently: Notes from the Third World”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 32(2): 295–324. (2013). “Core, Periphery and (neo)Imperialist International Relations” *European Journal of International Relations* 19(3): 627–46. (2012) with Blaney (eds.), *Thinking International Relations Differently*. London and New York: Routledge. (2014) (with Blaney) (eds.), *Claiming the International*, Vol. 2, London, Routledge; (2009) (with Ole Wæver) “Introduction: Geocultural Epistemologies” in Tickner Arlene B. and Ole Wæver (eds.) *International Relations Scholarship Around the World*, London and New York: Routledge, 1–31. **Ling L.H.M.**: (2002) *Postcolonial international relations: conquest and desire between Asia and the West*. New York: Palgrave. (2002) “The Fish and the Turtle: Multiple Worlds as Method” in Michael Brecher and Frank P. Harvey (eds.) *Millennial Reflections on International Studies*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. (2004) (with Anna Agathangelou) “The House of IR: From Family Power Politics to the Poiesis of Worldism” *International Studies Review* 6: 21–49. (2009) (with

Anna Agathangelou) *Transforming World Politics from Empire to Multiple Worlds*. London and New York: Routledge. (2014) *The Dao of world politics: towards a post-Westphalian, worldist international relations*. Routledge. (forthcoming 2021) (with Nizar Messari, and Arlene B. Tickner) (eds.), *International Relations Theory: Views Beyond the West* (London: Routledge). **Karen Smith:** (2009) “Has Africa Got Anything to Say? African Contributions to the Theoretical Development of International Relations.” *The Round Table* 98 (402): 269–284. (2012) “Africa as an Agent of International Relations Knowledge.” In Scarlett Cornelissen, Fantu Cheru and Timothy M. Shaw, (eds.) *Africa and International Relations in the 21st Century*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 21–35. (2012). “Contrived boundaries, kinship and ubuntu: a (South) African view of the “international”” In Arlene B. Tickner and David Blaney (eds.) (2013) *Thinking International Relations Differently*, London: Routledge, 301–321. (2013) “International Relations in South Africa: A Case of ‘Add Africa and Stir’?” *Politikon* 40 (3): 533–544.

⁷ Ole Wæver (1998) “The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations” *International Organization* 52(4): 687–727. Peter Marcus Kristensen (2015) “Revisiting the ‘American Social Science’ – Mapping the Geography of International Relations” *International Studies Perspectives* 16(3): 246–69.

⁸ <https://trip.wm.edu/about-us>

⁹ Pinar Bilgin, “How to Globalise IR?” e-ir. <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/04/22/how-to-globalise-ir/>.

¹⁰ Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan (2009) *The Making of Global International Relations: Origins and Evolution of IR at Its Centenary*. Cambridge.

¹¹ Although from different angles there are now many labels used to describe the fragmented approaches, most sharing the critique of the dominance of the American IR, the West centrism, Eurocentrism, the existence of the IR discipline in the US as a subfield of political science (and thus very American). Many challenge its universalist pretensions, its truth claims, its positivist and rationalist premises. Many express the institutional (national, linguistic) disadvantages thwarting any effort to be integrated into the US discipline, let alone try to influence its US mainstream. There are not just different approaches starting from the same premise, but this Global IR consists of (and the use of these terms is not uniform) different “narratives”, “readings”, “lenses”, “non-“ or “post-“ or “beyond” west, “peripheral” (or some call it “semi-peripheral”), originating from various “national sites”, “neglected places”, all representing a lens of one parish, “parochial”. Some refer to “homegrown” IR theories. These claim to see the world from new angles, of “geopolitics”, “geoculture”, “cartography”, “geopistemology”, “mapping and countermapping” IR discipline, talking of “bibliometry”.

¹² Ling, “The Fish and the Turtle”. Ling and Agathangelou, *Transforming World Politics from Empire to Multiple Worlds*.

¹³ Jonas Hagmann and Thomas J. Biersteker (2014) “Beyond the published discipline: Toward a critical pedagogy of international studies” *European Journal of International Relations* 20(2): 291–315. Sarah Cleeland Knight (2019) “Even Today, a Western and Gendered Social Science: Persistent Geographic and Gender Biases in Undergraduate IR Teaching”, *International Studies Perspectives*, 20(3): 203–225. The irony being, even studies that highlight such geographical bias seldom consult/cite scholarly works produced outside that same geography.