

TRENDS IN EUROPEAN IR THEORY

Series Editors: Knud Erik Jørgensen · Audrey Alejandro
Alexander Reichwein · Felix Rösch · Helen Turton

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REAPPRAISING EUROPEAN IR THEORETICAL TRADITIONS

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Trends in European IR Theory

Volume 1

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A series of 8 select Palgrave Pivots that together will provide concise accounts of IR theoretical traditions in Europe and the historical and theoretical roots that European IR currently is missing. The series will provide a theoretical backbone for the IR discipline and define and strengthen the identity of European IR theory.

Each Pivot in the series will constitute and reconstruct IR theoretical traditions in Europe (liberalism, realism, English School, International Political Economy, International Political Theory, the post-positivist tradition including constructivism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and critical theory), and a concluding volume on the advances of the discipline in the 20th century) following an initial framework volume setting the scene and providing the rationale.

But more than just providing roots, the series will have a critical integrative function. In order to achieve this aim, the projects will take a transnational perspective, going beyond the sociology of knowledge studies that so far has been predominantly national in its orientation. Each Pivot will be kept as close as possible to a common length and shared structure; the volumes will be developed individually yet with a very clear common thread and thus appear as an exclusive collection. Individual volumes will have a largely identical structure which the editorial committee will define and enforce.

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PREFACE

Theorizing is among the most important activities that take place within scientific disciplines, and theories make one of the constituent parts of a discipline. Scholars therefore routinely talk about the discipline of IR and its theories, and because scholars cherish theoretical knowledge, they prime students with the contents of IR 101 syllabi. Over time, theories crystallize in schools of thought, strands of theorizing and theoretical traditions. This introductory book and the seven volumes that will follow focus on the origins and trajectories of theoretical traditions.

We are situated in Europe, and it is thus the origins and trajectories of European theoretical traditions that are on our agenda. It seems to us that, somewhat strangely, no such comprehensive overview of theoretical traditions has been published before. Appraisals or reappraisals of theoretical work do exist, but they are scattered and thus miss the integrative reconstruction feature that we aim at.

The project is bound to be controversial. Calls to silence European IR are as frequent as American hegemony is deplored. Assertive statements about IR not being a discipline accompany claims that history is bunk. We open space to explore how Europeans reflect theoretically on the twentieth century, and we thus have an interest in both intellectual history and contemporary forms of theoretical knowledge. We claim that American hegemony to some degree is more imagined than real and contemplate which function(s) the imagined might have. *Vis-à-vis* the idea that International Relations is not a discipline, we claim that it

depends on how discipline is defined. In any case, numerous practices contribute to validate the existence of IR, and as a social fact, it is consensual agreement that counts for existence.

This book and the book series is a framework that took off during one of EISA's Exploratory Symposia in Rapallo, Italy, in November 2013, and we are grateful to EISA for enabling this project to be thoroughly discussed. We would like to thank Arslan Asif for research assistance during the final phases, Sarah Roughley at Palgrave for the necessary patience while we were bringing this collective work into existence, and the anonymous reviewers of our book series proposal and this volume.

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Introduction

Abstract In the Introduction, the authors set the scene and outline seven constituting features of the framework that will subsequently inform other contributions to the book series. While the scene is twentieth-century Europe, the features include diversity and reflexivity, that is, essential preconditions for rigorous research within the social and human sciences. Moreover, they highlight the importance and significance of theoretical traditions and identify the building blocks of scientific disciplines. Finally, they explicate the value of reconstructing theoretical traditions and argue that intellectual hegemony is a chimera and thus more imagined than real.

Keywords Europe · Diversity · Reflexivity · Theoretical traditions
Disciplines · Reconstructions · Hegemony

The twentieth century was characterized by extreme violence. Colonial wars, two world wars and a lengthy Cold War, followed by civil wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, implied more destruction or potential destruction than ever seen or imaginable before. While mass killings have been seen before in world history, the category of weapons of mass destruction assumed an entirely new meaning. When the century drew to a close, historian Eric Hobsbawm (1994) appropriately called it “The Age of Extremes”—and Europe was a main centre of it all. European powers fought colonial wars and invented doctrines of counter-insurgency.

European powers launched WWI and played a key role in WWII, and Europe was one of the main regions staging the Cold War. But the twentieth century was also an age when the turn to (international) institutions accelerated and processes of democratization, globalization and regional integration, together with transnational relations based on cooperation between and integration of non-state actors and civil society, increasingly had a profound impact on international relations among states and societies. Likewise, it is of some significance that interstate war became an increasingly rare phenomenon that the century witnessed significant advances of liberal international order and, eventually, an emerging global public domain (Burton 1965; Ruggie 2004; Ikenberry 2006; see also Doyle 1999).

Theoretical reflections on the actors, structures and processes of world politics and economics during the century of extreme violence and a more sustained embedded liberal order contribute to define the discipline of International Relations (IR). If IR theory is the synthesis of knowledge about international or global affairs, then the discipline's theoretical reflections are bound to enjoy a direct yet also detached relationship with the subject matter. However, theoretical reflections do not only reflect in a stylized form, what is happening in the world. They also reflect and reproduce the social structures of scientific and ideological discourse. Thus, theorizing "foreign", "international" or "global" affairs in a disciplinary fashion did not begin from scratch and has often been more bounded and reproductive than innovative in the sense of breaking new ground. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were numerous sources of inspiration available. The roots and trajectories of thinking theoretically were therefore shaped by both external events and internal dynamics, including the personality, experience and situation of the individual theorist. As a reviewer once explained, "After reading the *Aberystwyth Papers* I was reminded by their occasional clouds of insipid gloom of a sentence in the general Anglican confession: 'we have left undone those things we ought to have done and have done those things we ought not to have done...'" (Soward 1974: 292).¹

The objective of the present book is to provide a framework for analysing what Europeans, during the twentieth century, have done in terms of thinking theoretically about the world affairs they witnessed or experienced. In other words, how European theorists synthesized knowledge in a theoretical form and thereby constituted what could be called the backbone of the discipline of IR. The scarcity of such meta-studies

suggests there is a lack of interest in the origins and trajectories of the discipline in Europe. In our view, that is problematic and the problem is that many European IR scholars generally do not have a clear sense of academic identity in terms of understanding their intellectual roots and their disciplinary trajectories.

The book series *Trends in European IR Theory* (TEIRT), including the present volume (the first of the series), aims at providing the historical and theoretical roots and trajectories that European IR currently is missing. In the series, contributors will therefore reread, reconstruct and reinterpret IR theoretical traditions in Europe, focusing on liberalism, realism, the English School, international political economy, international political theory, the post-positivist and critical traditions. As a theoretical tradition is nothing without theorists to constitute, reproduce and change it, the volumes on specific traditions will necessarily focus on both the collective outcome and the contributions of individual theorists. This feature should give the series an edge that is missing in “flattening” accounts of “the main characteristics” of, say, international liberal theory. In addition to providing and revealing European roots and outlining trajectories, the aim is also integrative for which reason we opt for a transnational perspective. Thereby, we go beyond the sociology of knowledge studies that so far have been predominantly national in orientation (e.g. Jørgensen and Knudsen 2006). In order to achieve the aims of the series, contributors will prepare a relatively short and concise reappraisal of each of the main IR theoretical traditions. Instead of a “bookkeeping” approach, keen on insignificant detail, the focus will be on broad lines of development, significant changes over time and main figures of each tradition, all features set in a pan-European historical and political context. Given that no such focused and structured work exists at present, we hope the series will be a useful resource for future research, not least because we outline the context, overview and historical dynamics that currently are sorely missing. With the TEIRT series, we aim at countering the prevailing trend of simply “complacently being” an IR scholar, thus aligning ourselves with Benjamin de Carvalho’s, Halvard Leira’s and John M. Hobson’s criticism of IR’s inherent tendency towards presentism. In their words, “It would seem that much of IR would happily go along Henry Ford’s historiophobic assertion that ‘[h]istory is more or less bunk. It is a tradition. We don’t want tradition. We want to live in the present, and the only history that is worth a tinker’s damn is the history that we make today’” (Carvalho et al. 2011: 756). We do not

believe that “history is bunk”, but we do believe that international intellectual history is an essential aspect of community building and identity formation. The present framework volume sets the scene and provides the project’s overall rationale and guidelines.

SEVEN CONSTITUTING FEATURES

Diversity

In a post-colonial context—and more specifically in a discipline in which scholars conventionally starts identifying academic Eurocentrism as a major issue (see Kuru 2016a)—is it really opportune to publish a book series written by European scholars talking about themselves? Isn’t this series swimming against the IR dialogue and diversity tide, when those ideals seem to be more and more promoted in the field? Those are only but a few examples of the type of questions we expect to be raised by such an innovative project. Those who consider IR global dialogue as a goal should, however, not forget that a “*dia-logue*” implies the encountering of two distinct perspectives. The literature has mainly focused on how IR around the world was produced and what were the specificities of the different national fields. In this quest for otherness, we may have forgotten to construct our own part of the dialogical formula. This book series aims at counterbalancing this situation by drawing a historical and sociological picture of the specific contributions of Europeans scholars to IR theories.

For diversity to be enhanced in IR, scholars need to have something original to share. What makes the discipline diverse is that production is localized. But between the denunciation of Eurocentrism and the research of “non-European” alternatives, European IR(s) appear to be lost in the middle. We believe that European IR theory is much too valuable to be lost in translation. The trends in European IR reflect European thought on Europe and the world and the theoretical traditions constitute Europe’s contribution to the global coordinates of the discipline. This book brings together a set of scholars from different locations within Europe who use their different perspectives and experiences to produce a book series on how to reconstruct the European IR traditions and explain why this is important.

We engage in the project without falling into the trap of creating an enclosed space of European IR, but instead aiming at contributing to

what Amitav Acharya (2014) calls “pluralistic universalism” in the global IR community. Pluralistic universalism should be characterized by different intellectual pathways and sources of knowledge, different thinkers and their personal experiences, different historical and political backgrounds and beliefs about the world, and different disciplinary histories and theoretical traditions beyond the image of a supposedly American-dominated discipline.

Reflexivity

This project is reflexive and experimental in nature. This book series builds its contributions on values largely shared in the field (pluralism, dialogue, openness) through innovative efforts (reappraising European traditions). Its explorative dimensions aim not only at knowledge expansion (to reappraise when there are only a limited number of appraisals)—but social reflexive transformation. Thus, this project is also a collective one. By speaking to an academic community about its roots, its construction and its identities, this book series addresses sensitive issues that can trigger resistances. The project is therefore bound to be controversial because we will performatively constitute something that clearly exists but remains unarticulated (see e.g. Ringmar 2012).

We aim at collectively examining the controversial issues and the promising opportunities resulting from such a challenge. Instead of describing Europe as the leading edge of what needs to be done in IR and reproduce the teleological narrative of the discipline, we take as a point of departure the need for European scholars to get to know their own intellectual and disciplinary history and identity, in order to recover and re-emphasize the forgotten/neglected IR theoretical traditions. Once we better know the historical dynamics and trajectories of individual European theoretical traditions, and once we are aware of our own intellectual identity, we are better equipped for starting an open-minded and fruitful dialogue with scholars being socialized in other IR traditions and geographies elsewhere in the world. For us, Europe is the starting point that will enable the follow-on pluralistic ambitions of our book series—and for sure, for us it is a very interesting case, because it is from here our authorial perspectives on the world begins. Moreover, the “Old Continent” of Europe is the birthplace of IR as an institutionalized academic discipline after WWI, thus offering a troubled history between the enlightenment, “perpetual peace” and European integration on the

one hand, and conflict, war, racism and genocide on the other, reflected in a rich compilation of different intellectual styles, worldviews and disciplines.

Considering this context, this framework volume aims at making explicit the academic context in which this series is written, as well as the specific perceptions of reflexivity and diversity that represent the starting point of this endeavour. The introduction of concepts and methodologies from other social sciences such as ethnocentrism or sociological intervention will enable us to explain how we approach this project of *reconstructing* traditions that we consider “our own”. Through this reflexive, constructive and voluntaristic posture, we reappraise narratives about what it is to do IR in Europe in order to ensure that those narratives that existed but were implicit are coherent with the objective of dialogue we pursuit.

Traditions

Similar to other traditions, theoretical traditions in IR are invented yet not “made up”, and by their nature essentially, they are contested. They are social constructions of the *longue durée* (Armitage 2012), implying that their existence depends on shared understandings. They exist because we agree they exist, and if we do not agree, they do not exist. In this book, we argue that we need theoretical traditions (cf. also Hall and Bevir 2014; Nau 2016).

We are fully aware that traditions have origins and sometimes ends and that both origins and ends are contestable. Michel Foucault’s (1970) genealogical method (see Garland 2014) is an invitation to increase awareness about the existence of several origins and how each origin, rather than simply reflecting a given past, often serves specific functions or purposes in the present. Theoretical traditions, like history, are characterized by both continuities and discontinuities. Thus, Fritz Sternberg’s *Imperialismus* (1926) is the last major book on imperialism that was produced by intellectuals, including Rosa Luxemburg and V.I. Lenin, belonging to the Marxist Second International (Anderson 1976).

Moreover, traditions often experience transformations, i.e. start off with certain features and end up somewhere else. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, for instance, coined the term “critical theory” during the time of the Weimar Republic (Horkheimer 1937/1972; Horkheimer and Adorno 1947) when democracy was always in danger