

RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: POST-WESTERN, NON-WESTERN, GLOBAL PURSUITS?

Convenors: Menderes Çınar, Baskent University (mcinar@baskent.edu.tr) & Katerina Dalacoura, London School of Economics (K.Dalacoura@lse.ac.uk)

The Western nature of the International Relations (IR) discipline—in terms of its origins, concepts, institutions, theory, epistemology, norms, and law—perpetuates a founding hierarchy that universalizes the West and denies the agency of non-Western actors. Consequently, the contention that the discipline is American- or Western-centric has become a growing debate in international literature and politics. This debate has been the starting point for both (1) a search for nativist and culturalist agencies that challenge Western-centrism by rejecting universalized values such as democracy and equality because these values are Western in origin, and (2) a search for post-colonial, post-Western, and non-Western approaches in IR. It has been claimed that such endeavors as the integration of “non-Western” experiences (for example, the Chinese, Ottoman, and Mongolian empires), concepts (such as *umma*, prosperity, *Khalsa panth*), thoughts (such as Sufism or Confucianism), and thinkers (such as Cemil Meriç, Mevlana, or Sun Tzu) into the existing IR discipline are inadequate in overcoming the Western-centric epistemology that characterizes the field. In fact, they risk perpetuating Western-centric hierarchies or falling into the trap of essentialism.

This has led to a search for Global IR—borrowing from “connected histories” and “global history”—that emphasizes simultaneity and repudiates hierarchical distinctions such as East–West. Against this backdrop, the objective of this workshop is to explore how the discipline of IR can be reimagined through post-Western, non-Western and global perspectives, and how these can inform a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of international affairs. Accordingly, participants are invited to critically engage with the conceptual and methodological debates surrounding the global re-making of IR, while also reflecting on empirical cases that challenge the assumed universality of Western theory. The themes addressed by paper submissions for the workshop may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Rethinking the fundamental concepts of IR from a non-Western perspective.
- Critically examining the role of institutions, research funding, and rankings in the hierarchical structure of the discipline.
- Non-Western alternative and innovative methods.
- Decolonization of IR education and training curricula.
- Sovereignty and agency issues in the face of transformations in civilizational standards and civilizing colonial practices.
- The problems of nativist and culturalist challenges to Western-centrism.
- The relationship between transformations in capitalism and Western-centrism, and its critiques.
- The potential of pan-ideologies (e.g., pan-Islamism, pan-Turkism, and pan-Asianism) and Third Worldism to overcome Western-centrism.
- Critical examination of the Western-centric nature of classical and critical IR theories.
- Problems of Western-centrism, Orientalism, and Occidentalism in human rights, democracy, and democratization discourses and practices.