The Making of Global International Relations: Origins and Evolution of IR at its Centenary; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan; Cambridge; CUP; 2019; pp.382; Indexed; £26.99 (paperback); ISBN 978-1-108-72711-2; Available as e-book.

The idea that the International Relations discipline is ‘Eurocentric’ – that it privileges European histories and ideas – is not new. The question over what to do about it, however, remains unresolved. Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan have been at the forefront of this debate for over a decade and this book provides their most comprehensive contribution to date, and a timely historical reflection on the state of IR as we move into a multi-polar world order.

At the core of the book lies a relatively simple argument: that the IR discipline has closely tracked the ‘nature and practices’ (2) of international relations more broadly. Two related stories therefore structure the work: First, the historical development of ‘global international society’ (GIS); second, the parallel story of how scholars have understood these developments. What makes the book ‘global’ is the tracing of these developments in both the ‘core’ (America and Europe) as well as the ‘periphery’ (pretty much everywhere else). Accordingly, IR is a Eurocentric discipline because it emerged in an era of ‘western’ dominance in the first half of the twentieth century. Crucially, the book shows that this does not mean that ‘non-western’ international relations thinking was absent, it was simply repeatedly marginalized by a dominant core.

For those new to the field, whether IR students or the intellectually curious, the book provides a pleasing dialogue between theory and practice, offering a wide-ranging summary of major developments in world politics, and how they have been incorporated (or not) into the discipline’s theoretical and substantive focus. Throughout, a more expansive geographical coverage of IR’s disciplinary development in the periphery gives vital historical inroads into a more ‘global’ conception of how the world was understood elsewhere – ideas that the authors show revolved around critiques of racialism and imperialism, often spearheaded by nationalist leaders and thinkers in the colonies (96). Again and again we see how the intellectual vitality of ‘periphery’ thinking has been overlooked by the ‘core’ – a process that the authors argue has left the IR discipline bereft of a more pluralist vision of world order.

Building on a growing literature, the book also brings to the fore those topics traditionally overlooked by the disciplinary ‘core’ – which will no doubt please the ‘periphery’. Accordingly, the impact of imperialism and colonialism on the early IR discipline (Chapter 2), including its racist foundations, are given weight. Decolonization, as perhaps the most important development in post-1945 world politics, is more front and centre (even if its ‘periphery’ intellectual life worlds are not). We are also treated to a more historically complex story of IR’s disciplinary development through multiple formations and reformations prior to 1919, post-1919, post-1945, and post-1989. These stories matter. The major exercise in disciplinary ‘forgetting’ (141) of the imperial and racial origins of the field post-1945, for instance, continues to bedevil the normative and methodological diversity of the field.

As a whole the absence of sustained primary source research means the impact of the book’s message is sometimes lacking, but a question also remains over what to do with these materials once we find them. A more conventional approach – arguably reflected in this book – advocates ‘adding in’ the concepts and histories built and experienced in the non-west to ameliorate their previous exclusion from the ‘mainstream’. The problem with this as critics of the global IR agenda point out, is that it does little to address the underlying hierarchies and exclusions that continue to underpin disciplinary knowledge, leaving the western intellectual edifice intact, and in some ways reaffirming it as the norm. The west remains, in Arlene Tickner’s words as the ‘centre of calculation’, and its histories retain their benchmark status, as suggested by the rupture points of 1919, 1945, and 1989 featured in this book.

Critics of the global IR agenda will also be unconvinced by the ‘core’/’periphery’ framing that underpins the work. Arguably, these simplifications perpetuate intellectual divisions between the ‘scientific’, ‘modern’ west, and a ‘cultural’, regionalised non-west; a worldview deeply entangled with the imperial histories upon which – as this book points out – the IR discipline was founded. The global intellectual connections that united the world (and patterned its divisions) remain under-explored. Aimé Césaire’s crafting of *negritude* through the revolutionary pamphleteering of interwar Paris; Frantz Fanon’s adoption of the same concept to justify Algerian resistance to French colonial rule; the renaissance of South Asian *vedic* texts through projects of orientalist colonial knowledge-gathering; the diffusion of Confucian notions of *Tianxia* as cultural ‘soft power’ by Xi Jinping; all point to the troubled politics and globally entangled histories that connected ‘core’ and ‘periphery’. Recovering these concepts may give the illusion of intellectual diversity, but they also demonstrate that the ‘non-west’ does not join the fray in the post-western era – now we have ‘rising powers’ - it has always been with us as the site for the constitution of western identity. Greater attention to the global histories through which this intellectual bifurcation emerged now point the way to a truly post-western discipline.