1 Why is there no non-Western international relations theory?

An introduction

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More than 40 years ago, in a provocative essay that has since become a classic in the field, Martin Wight (1966: 20) addressed the question of 'why is there no international theory?' Wight asserted that 'international theory, or what there is of it, is scattered, unsystematic, and mostly inaccessible to the layman'. To explain why this is so, he compared **political** theory with international theory. Political theory was informed by a widespread belief in the sovereign state as the highest form of political life, a belief which contributed to the lack of interest in the possibility of a world state. Whereas political theory and law were concerned with the good life featuring 'maps of experience or systems of action within the realm of normal relationships and calculable results', the realm of international relations could be equated with a repetitiously competitive struggle for survival, reproducing 'the same old melodrama'.

In this project we take up a more specific question than Wight's, but inspired by it. We start from the premise that there is now a substantial body of theory about international relations, some of it even meeting Wight's normative understanding of political theory. The puzzle for us is that the sources of international relations theory (IRT) conspicuously fail to correspond to the global distribution of its subjects. Our question is: 'why is there no non-Western international theory?' We are as intrigued by the absence of theory in the non-West as Wight was by what he considered to be the absence of international theory in general. But our investigation into this puzzle follows a broader line of enquiry. Wight's central message was that satisfaction with an existing political condition identified with the pursuit of progress and the good life within the state inhibited the need for developing a theory about what was regarded as the repetitious melodrama of relations among states. If so, then one may find a ready-made explanation for why non-Western international theory, or what there is of it, remains 'scattered, unsystematic, and mostly inaccessible'. Today, the contemporary equivalent of 'good life' in international relations – democratic peace, interdependence and integration, and institutionalized orderliness, as well as the 'normal relationships and calculable results' are found mostly in the West, while the non-West remains the realm of survival (Goldgeiger and McFaul 1992). Wight maintained that 'what for political theory is the extreme case (as revolution, or civil war) is for international theory the regular case'. One might say with little exaggeration that what in Wight's view

was the extreme case for political theory, has now become extreme only for the international relations of the core states found in the West, while for the non-West, it remains the stuff of everyday life.

But the absence of non-Western IRT deserves a more complex explanation than the simple acknowledgement of the conflictual anarchy of the non-West. Indeed, we do not accept Wight's observation that international theory, in contrast to political theory, is or should be about survival only. We acknowledge the possibility of progress and transformation both in the West and the non-West. Our explanations for the absence of a non-Western international theory focuses not on the total lack of good life in the non-West, but on ideational and perceptual forces, which fuel, in varying mixtures, both Gramscian hegemonies, and ethnocentrism and the politics of exclusion. Some of these explanations are located within the West, some within the non-West and some in the interaction between the two. These explanations have much to do with what Wæver (1998) has called the 'sociology' of the discipline, which reinforces material variables such as disparities in power and wealth.

In this book, we set out to conduct an investigation into why is there no non-Western IRT and what might be done to mitigate this situation. We focus on Asia, both because it is the site of the only contemporary non-Western concentration of power and wealth even remotely comparable to the West, and because it has its own long history of international relations that is quite distinct from that of the West. History matters to IRT, because as we will show in section 3 below, even a short reflection on Western IRT quickly exposes that much of it is conspicuously drawn from the model provided by modern European history. We are acutely aware that we are excluding the Middle East, whose history has an equal claim to standing as a distinctive source of IR. We also exclude Africa, whose history of state traditions was often tied into the Middle East and Europe, and whose non-state history perhaps has less immediate relevance to IRT (though this perception too, may be part of what needs to be rectified). We make these exclusions on grounds that our expertise does not lie in these regions, and that including them would require a much bigger project than we have the resources to undertake. We hope others will take up our challenge to do for these regions what we do here for Asia, and that they will find the approach adopted here useful in doing that.

Our goal is to introduce non-Western IR traditions to a Western IR audience, and to challenge non-Western IR thinkers to challenge the dominance of Western theory. We do this not out of antagonism for the West, or contempt for the IRT that has been developed there, but because we think Western IRT is both too narrow in its sources and too dominant in its influence to be good for the health of the wider project to understand the social world in which we live. We hold that IR theory is in and of itself not inherently Western, but is an open domain into which it is not unreasonable to expect non-Westerners to make a contribution at least proportional to the degree that they are involved in its practice.

There is, in addition, the powerful argument of Robert Cox (1986: 207) that 'Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose.' IR theory likes to pose as neutral, but it is not difficult to read much of it in a Coxian light, especially those that offer not just a way of analysing, but also a vision of what the world does look

like (realism, English School pluralists), or should look like (liberalism, Marxism, critical theory, English School solidarists). In the Coxian perspective, liberalism, especially economic liberalism, can be seen as speaking for capital. Realism and the English School pluralists speak for the status quo great powers and the maintenance of their dominant role in the international system/society. Though they are presented as universal theories, and might, indeed, be accepted as such by many, all three can also be seen as speaking for the West and in the interest of sustaining its power, prosperity and influence. Various strands of Marxism and critical theory have sought to speak for excluded or marginalized groups (workers, women, Third World countries) and to promote improvement in the position of those in the periphery. From this Coxian perspective, Asian states have an interest in IR theory that speaks for them and their interests. Neither China nor Japan fit comfortably into realism or liberalism. China is trying to avoid being treated as a threat to the status quo as its power rises, and the moves to develop a Chinese school of IR are focused on this problem. Japan is seeking to avoid being a 'normal' great power and its status as a 'trading state' or 'civilian power' is a direct contradiction of realist expectations. ASEAN defies the realist, liberal and English School logic that order is provided by the local great powers. South Korea and India perhaps fit more closely with realist models, yet neither seems certain about what sort of place it wants for itself in international society. To the extent that IR theory is constitutive of the reality that it addresses, Asian states have a major interest in being part of the game. If we are to improve IRT as a whole, then Western theory needs to be challenged not just from within, but also from outside.

The next section looks at what we understand by IR theory. Section 3 sets out the pattern of Western dominance in IRT. Section 4 surveys non-Western contributions to thinking about IR. Section 5 explores the possible explanations for Western dominance of IRT. Section 6 sets out the structure of the book and summarizes the arguments in the chapters that follow.

What do we mean by IR theory?

It is important at the outset to have some sense of what 'theory' means in IR. The question is problematic because of the dichotomy between the hard positivist understanding of theory, which dominates in the US, and the softer reflectivist understandings of theory found more widely in Europe (Wæver 1998). Many Europeans use the term theory for anything that organizes a field systematically, structures questions and establishes a coherent and rigorous set of interrelated concepts and categories. The dominant American tradition, however, usually demands that theory be defined in positivist terms: that it defines terms in operational form, and then sets out and explains the relations between causes and effects. This type of theory should contain – or be able to generate – testable hypotheses of a causal nature. These differences are captured in Hollis and Smith's (1990) widely used distinction between *understanding* and *explanation*. They have epistemological and ontological roots that transcend the crude Europe-US divide, and it is of course the case that advocates of the 'European' position can be found in the US,

and of the 'American' position in Europe. In both of these forms, theory is about abstracting away from the facts of day-to-day events in an attempt to find patterns, and group events together into sets and classes of things. Theory is therefore about simplifying reality. It starts from the supposition that in some quite fundamental sense, each event is *not* unique, but can be clustered together with others that share some important similarities. Each power rivalry (or development trajectory, war or empire etc.) will have both some unique features and some that it shares with others of its type. In this sense, and at the risk of some oversimplification, social theory is the opposite of history. Where historians seek to explain each set of events in its own terms, social theorists look for more general explanations/understandings applicable to many cases distributed across space and time. For historians, the goal is to have the best possible explanation for a particular set of events. For theorists, the goal is to find the most powerful explanations: those where a small number of factors can explain a large number of cases. Waltz (1979) aims for this type of parsimonious theory with his idea that anarchic structure makes the distribution of capabilities the key to understanding the main patterns of international relations for all of recorded history.

For the enquiry that we have in mind, we do not think it either necessary or appropriate to get engaged in the bottomless controversies about theory that emanate from debates about the philosophy of knowledge. We set aside concerns about whether the social world can be approached in the same way as the material one. We are happy to take a pluralist view of theory that embraces both the harder, positivist, rationalist, materialist and quantitative understandings on one end of the spectrum, and the more reflective, social, constructivist, and postmodern on the other. In this pluralist spirit we also include normative theory, whose focus is not so much to explain or understand the social world as it is, but to set out systematic ideas about how and why it can and should be improved. Although normative theory has a different purpose from analysing the social world as it is, it shares the underlying characteristic of theory that it abstracts from reality and seeks general principles applicable across a range of cases that share some common features. Privileging one type of theory over others would largely defeat the purpose of our enterprise, which is to make an initial probe to find 'what is out there' in Asian thinking about IR. A broad approach to theory will give us a much better chance of finding local produce than a narrow one, and those who take particular views can apply their own filters to separate out what is of significance (or not) to them.

Given the peculiarities of international relations as a subject, it is worth saying something about whether IR theory needs to be universal in scope (i.e. applying to the whole system) or can also be exceptionalist (applying to a subsystem on the grounds that it has distinctive characteristics). As noted above, the holy grail for theorists is the highest level of generalization about the largest number of events. That impulse points strongly towards universalist IR theories, like Waltz's, that claim to apply to the whole international system and to be timeless in their application (though even Waltz can be faulted here for keeping silent about the vast swaths of history in which 'universal' empires held sway, overwhelming his supposedly indestructible self-reproducing logic of international anarchy – Buzan and Little

2000). Yet there is also plenty of room for exceptionalism. Perhaps the leading example is European studies, where the emergence of the EU has created a regional political structure that fits neither domestic nor international political models. It is too far removed from anarchy to be Westphalian, and too distant from hierarchy to count as either an empire or a domestic political space. This post-Westphalian experiment has a reasonable claim to be exceptional, and is theorized about in terms of 'multi-level governance' and other such specifically tailored concepts. In principle, area studies should be a main location for subsystemic theorizing. In relation to Asia, elements of this are visible in the idea that East Asia may be dressed up in Westphalian costume, but is not performing a Westphalian play. Because of its Confucian culture, East Asian states are more likely to bandwagon with power rather than balance against it. This line of thinking (Fairbank 1968; Huntington 1996: 229–38; Kang 2003) projects Asia's past into its future. It assumes that what Fairbank labelled the 'Chinese World Order' – a Sinocentric and hierarchical form of international relations – has survived within the cultures of East Asia despite the superficial remaking of the Asian subsystem into a Western-style set of sovereign states. This line of exceptionalist theorizing about East Asia is not that well developed, and mainly emanates from the US. The problem with area studies is that although it might well be the right location for subsystemic, exceptionalist theorizing, area studies is generally dominated by disciplines that have a low interest in theorizing, effectively taking exceptionalism to be a reason *not* to theorize. Europe (in the form of EU studies) once again stands apart.

Subsystemic theorizing in IR is thus generally underdeveloped. Area studies experts mostly are not interested in it, and most mainstream IR theories concentrate on the system level (realism and great powers, liberalism and 'universal' values, the English School and international society, globalization and the world economy). It is noteworthy that English School theory has ignored the regional level generally and the EU in particular, even though there is no reason in principle why the idea of international society cannot be applied to subsystems, and many reasons in both theory and practice why it should be (Buzan 2004: 205–27). Even theorizing about regionalism is often done in universalist, comparative terms. Despite the effective dominance of system-level theorizing in IR, it is clear that if pushed to an extreme, the logic of exceptionalist claims would deny the possibility of universal IR theories – or indeed any universal social theory. If cultural differences are strong enough, then shared features at the system level will be too thin to support universal theories. There is an interesting link here with the Coxian formula discussed above. If all theory is for someone and for some purpose, this effectively makes universal theory impossible other than as a disguise for the secular interests of those promoting it.[1] E. H. Carr's (1946: 79) warning that 'the English-speaking peoples are past masters in the art of concealing their selfish national interests in the guise of the general good' captures this Coxian perspective nicely, and given the Anglo-American domination of IR is of more than passing interest. The result is to identify a perpetual tension in the act of theorizing about IR, whether at the systemic or subsystemic level. Is it possible to aspire to detached science in attempting to understand and explain how the world works, or must all

such attempts be seen as fundamentally sectional, and inevitably part of an ongoing political game to sustain or unseat the hegemonic view, and thus sustain or unseat those whose interests are served by that view?

Taking all this into account, and regardless of how one answers the last question, this project requires us to have some sense of what counts as a contribution to IRT. Unless we set some benchmark it will be impossible either to assess the present situation or measure progress. Since part of our purpose is to survey the state of the art it seems fitting to set the criteria fairly wide in order, in the first instance, to capture as much as possible. We are also conscious that it would probably be impossible to construct a watertight, uncontested definition that would clearly divide theory from non-theory. On this basis we will count something as a contribution to IR theory if it meets at least one of the following conditions:

- that it be substantially acknowledged by others in the IR academic community as being theory;
- that it be self-identified by its creators as being IRT even if this is not widely acknowledged within the mainstream academic IR community;
- that regardless of what acknowledgment it receives, its construction identifies it as a systematic attempt to generalize about the subject matter or IR.

We will also look out for what might be called ‘pre-theory’, which is to say elements of thinking that do not necessarily add up to theory in their own right, but which provide possible starting points for doing so. IR theory is mainly the province of academics, but we will not exclude the thinking of practitioners if it meets, or leans towards, our criteria. IR is a big subject without fixed borders. It has many frontiers where it blends into history, economics, sociology, domestic politics, psychology, law and military strategy. In keeping with this character, we will take a broadminded view not just of what theory is, but what it theorizes about.

Western dominance of IR theory

There are two obvious, and partly reciprocal, ways in which the Western dominance of IRT manifests itself. The first is the origin of most mainstream IRT in Western philosophy, political theory and/or history. The second is the Eurocentric framing of world history, which weaves through and around much of this theory. Since the bald fact of Western dominance is not controversial there is no need to demonstrate this in great detail. But a brief sketch of the main branches of IRT in this light gives a sense of the nature and sources of Eurocentrism that might well prove useful in setting up comparisons with non-Western thinking about IR.

Classical realism, with its focus on state sovereignty, military power and national interest is rooted in the diplomatic and political practices of modern Europe up to 1945. It likes to claim an intellectual pedigree in classics of European political theory such as Hobbes, Machiavelli and Thucydides, and uses this to support its claim that power politics is rooted in human nature, and is therefore a permanent,

universal feature of the human condition. This, in turn, supports a foreign policy prescription based on self-interest, self-reliance, suspicion, vigilance and prudence. *Neorealism* differs mainly by placing the source of power politics in the survival needs of states embedded in anarchic international system structures. Both classical and neorealism project onto the rest of world history their basic Europe-derived story of international anarchy and balance of power politics as a permanent, universal structural condition. They support this move by citing examples from both Western history (classical Greece, Renaissance Italy, modern Europe) and samples of non-Western history that run parallel to the European story ('warring states' periods in India, China and the Mayan world). Because of its commitment to anarchic structure and balance of power politics, realism largely ignores the great swathes of history, both Western (Rome) and non-Western, where empires such as the Han, the Persian, the Inca and the Aztec held sway over their known worlds. Its main historical story is the modern one in which Western powers both fight amongst themselves and take over the rest of the world, though that said, realism unhesitatingly makes room for any state, Western or not, that qualifies as a great power. Japan thus climbs into the realist frame from the late nineteenth century, and China began to do so after the communists took power. Realism's current privileging of the Western powers is thus historically contingent, and not built into the theory. Realism has played a major role in defining the mainstream subject matter of IR in state-centric terms. In that sense, it has been an accomplice to Western hegemony by taking the political system that the West imposed on the rest of the world, and declaring it the norm for all of world history.

Strategic Studies is closely linked to realism, generally accepting the realist interpretation of how the world is, and focusing within that on the technical, tactical and strategic aspects of military power and its uses. Strategic Studies is rooted in the tradition of the Western way in warfare and its classics: Clausewitz (Napoleonic wars), Mahan (British naval practice and strategy) and a host of responses to developments in Western military technology (tanks, aircraft, nuclear weapons etc). During the Cold War, Strategic Studies flourished in the pursuit of deterrence theory as a response to the co-development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. In this pursuit it was much influenced by rational choice modes of analysis drawn from Western economic thinking. Since then, it has been much obsessed with the so-called 'Revolution in Military Affairs' largely driven by US-led applications of sensor, processing and communications technology to both weapons and tactics. But here at least there was some non-Western input with Mao Zedong and Che Guevara acquiring status as writers on guerrilla war, and Sun Tzu on strategic thinking. Like realism, the tendency of Strategic Studies to privilege the West is historically contingent rather than built in.

Liberalism and neoliberalism have clear roots in European political and economic theory (Cobden, Hobson, Kant, Locke, Smith), and in the Western practice of political economy from the nineteenth century onwards. The central liberal principles of individualism and the market (and more hesitantly, democracy) all come out

of Western thinking and practice, yet are presented as universal truths that are applicable to, and whose application would be beneficial to, all human beings. The general policy prescription of liberalism is the need to homogenize along liberal lines economic and political practices and human rights across the planet. Whereas realism reflects a backward-looking assessment of the European experience (how things were and always will be), liberalism reflects a forward-looking one: how to improve on past practice and move humankind towards a more peaceful, prosperous and just future. Justification for this frankly imperial perspective is found in the great relative success of the West (in terms of power and prosperity and justice) compared with the rest of the world during the past two centuries. As an offshoot of liberalism, the successful development of formal theory within Western economics has provided considerable support to those who want to apply the methodology of the natural sciences to the social world. This has manifested itself in the emergence of behaviouralism, the development of neorealism and the application of rational choice theory to a wide range of social phenomena. In line with liberalism's general outlook, these methodologies also carry universalistic assumptions about the human condition and how it can be theorized. While realism tends to relegate the economic sector to being an element of state power, the natural tendency of economic liberalism is to separate the economic and political spheres, treating the former as a separate domain amenable to scientific analysis, and the latter as a residual that will largely be taken care of if the economy is run on sound liberal principles. International political economy (IPE) struggles against both these tendencies, rejecting the idea that the economic and political sectors can be seen as autonomous, and seeing them instead as strongly interlinked.

Marxism is the main reaction against and counterpoint to liberalism's response to the rise of an industrial economy in the West. Instead of using individualism and the market to unleash the power of capital into an evermore prosperous future, Marxism sees the liberal formula as profoundly unstable and leading inevitably to class war. Marxism is the opposite of liberalism in preferring collectivism to individualism and a command economy to a market one. It also shares some of realism's belief in the durability of conflict in the human condition. But like liberalism, Marxism rejects the past and looks forward to a better future, and also sees its own prescription as universally valid. While the Soviet Union was in business, Marxists could use it to justify their claim to the future. But once the Soviet Union failed, and China kept the name, but not much of the substance, of communism, Marxism lost much of its standing as a model for the future of industrial society.

The *English School*, has its roots in much of the same Western political theory as realism (Hobbes, Machiavelli) and liberalism (Kant), albeit with more prominence given to Grotius and the idea that states can and should form among themselves an international society. The main models for this are found in European history, both classical Greece and modern Europe, though some work has also been done to show the existence of international societies in premodern, non-Western contexts. The English School's main contribution to world history is to show how an

international society formed in Europe expanded to take over the world. Through the success of its imperialism, Europe remade the world politically in its own image of sovereign territorial states, diplomacy and international law. Decolonization left behind a world in Europe's image, in some places made quite well, and in other places badly. The English School has been much preoccupied with the consequences of expanding a culturally coherent European international society to a global scale that lacks a strong common culture to underpin it. It has told well the stories of how China, Japan, the Ottoman Empire and some other non-Western countries encountered European international society. But there can be no doubt that the English School's main story so far is about how Europe remade the world. The concept of international society could in principle be applied to non-Western histories, but only a little work has been done in this direction.

Historical Sociology is perhaps on the borders of IRT. It has links to Marx, Weber and other classical Western sociological thinkers. Although some parts of its literature have taken on broad world-historical themes, notably Wallerstein (1974) Mann (1986) and Hobson (2004), the main focus of this literature is on the making of the Westphalian state, and thus, like the English School, it puts European history on centre stage. Some elements of historical sociology, most notably Tilly (1990) cut close to realism in their linkage of the state and war.

Critical theory has roots in Marxism, specifically the idea that the point is not just to understand the world but to change it, and in the more contemporary European social theory of Habermas. Unlike the other progressive IR theories Marxism and liberalism, which offer quite concrete visions of the ideal future, critical theory offers a general commitment against exclusionism and in favour of emancipation. Like other progressive theories it is universalist, but unlike them (and more in common with historical sociology) it seeks to understand each situation in its own terms. In one sense critical theory is an offshoot of the Western tradition of normative theory and the practice of promoting preferred (Western) values. It can also be seen as a successor to Peace Research. In IR, critical theory was introduced and led by Robert Cox, Ken Booth and Andrew Linklater. Much, though not all, of feminist writing on IR is found under this heading, with the feminist perspective itself being very strongly rooted in specifically Western political and social practice.

Constructivism and *postmodernism* both have roots in Western philosophy of knowledge and social theory, building particularly on the work of modern European social theorists such as Bordieu and Foucault. They set themselves up as alternatives to the materialist, positivist epistemologies underpinning realism and liberalism, seeing the social world as needing to be approached in its own terms as an intersubjective realm of shared understandings. Within that, constructivism is mainly a methodological approach, not carrying any necessary normative content of its own. It ranges across a spectrum from Alexander Wendt, who builds bridges to the neo-neo rationalists, through Emanuel Adler, to Nicholas Onuf and Fritz Kratochwil. Postmodernism tends to be more radical, seeking out and challenging

the endlessly unfolding relationship between knowledge and power, rejecting metanarratives and the Enlightenment project, and seeing 'truth' as a temporary social construction limited in time and space. Both constructivists and postmodernists see themselves as universalist in application of methods, but as particularist in seeing social structures as being limited in time and space, and so difficult or impossible to compare across time and space. Most of the rest of feminist writing is found under these headings.

This brief survey shows not just the striking variety of Western IRT, but also the great extent to which, despite its frequent universalist pretensions, it is rooted in European history and Western traditions of social theory and practice. A few flecks of non-Western thinking or actors are allowed in at various points, but mainly to validate universalist claims. There is, of course, an important sense in which the ideas within Western IRT *are* universal. But looked at in another light, they can also be seen as the particular, parochial and Eurocentric, pretending to be universal in order to enhance their own claims. At the very least this West-centrism suggests it is possible for non-Western societies to build understandings of IR based on their own histories and social theories, and even to project these in the form of universalist claims.

Non-Western contributions

There are some non-Western contributions that fit broadly within our understanding of IRT, though these almost never meet the criteria for hard theory. Instead, they are more likely to fit within softer conceptions, focusing on the ideas and beliefs from classical and contemporary periods. Broadly, one could identify four major types of work that could be considered as soft theory. What follows is a brief examination of each.

First, in parallel with Western international theory's focus on key figures such as Thucydides, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Kant etc., there are Asian classical traditions and the thinking of classical religious, political and military figures: e.g. Sun Tzu, Confucius and Kautilya, on all of which some secondary 'political theory' type literature exists (Sharma 2001). Attempts to derive causal theories out of these do exist, but have been rare. (See for example, Modelski 1964; Hui 2003). An important aspect, though not necessarily limitation, of this type of work is that there is not always a clear demarcation between the boundaries of what is domestic and what is 'international' relations. More important, invoking of the ideas and approaches of these classical writers is seldom devoid of political considerations. In the heydays of the 'East Asian Miracle' in the 1980s and early 90s, for example, Confucian thought and ideas about communitarianism were frequently cited as the basis of an 'Asian Values' perspective, which was offered by elites in the region, as an alternative to Western individualist liberal values. It was also presented as the alternative conceptualization of an East Asian international order, which could challenge the hegemonic ambition of the liberal mantra of 'democratic peace'. In India, Vedic ideas about strategy and politics have been invoked as the justification of India's acquisition of nuclear weapons (Karnad 2002). This is by no

means unexceptional, however, since as many have observed, the development of international relations theory often reflects real world developments, and as Robert Cox reminds us, 'theory is always for someone or some purpose'. But what may be striking about the invoking of Confucian and Vedic justification for a particular approach to international relations is that they came at a time of growing wealth of power of certain nations: there has been no corresponding invoking of classical ideas to explain crisis or decline of nations in Asia.

A second category of work that might be called soft IRT in Asia relates to the thinking and foreign policy approaches of Asian leaders such as Nehru, Mao, Aung San of Myanmar, Jose Rizal of the Philippines and Sukarno of Indonesia. They offer what Keohane and Martin (1993) would call 'principled ideas' about organizing international order. Although a good deal of their thinking may be sourced to training in the West or training in Western texts at home (although some, like Sukarno were educated locally), they also came up with ideas and approaches independent of Western intellectual traditions that were a response to prevailing and changing local and global circumstances. One concrete example would be the idea of non-alignment, developed by Nehru and fellow Asian and African leaders in the 1950s, which though adapted from concepts of neutralism in the West, was in many respects an independent concept. Nehru also promoted the idea of non-exclusionary regionalism, as opposed to military blocs based on the classic European balance of power model. Aung San's ideas offered something that could be regarded as a liberal internationalist vision of international relations, stressing interdependence and multilateralism rather than the isolationism that came to characterize Myanmar's foreign policy under military rule (Aung San 1974; Silverstein 1972). Like Nehru but focusing on both the security and economic arena, he rejected regional blocs that practice discrimination, such as economic blocs and preferences. In the 1960s, Sukarno developed and propagated some ideas about international order, such as OLDEFOS and NEFOS ('old established forces' and 'new emerging forces'), which drew upon his nationalist background as well as his quest for international leadership (Legge 1984). Another example would be Mao's three worlds theory, and his ideas about war and strategy. There is some parallel here with the influence of statesmen and generals in Western thinking about IR, foreign policy and strategy: e.g. Clausewitz, Bismark, Metternich, Wilson and Lenin, in the case of whom it is hard to separate the intellectual contribution from praxis, and where theory always served immediate policy goals.

Unlike the case of these Western practitioners, however, the analysis of the thinking and approach of Asian leaders has been mainly undertaken by biographers and area specialists, rather than scholars specializing in IRT. Not many scholars, Asian or otherwise, have taken up the challenge of interpreting and developing the writings of Asian leaders from the perspective of IRT. (For an important exception, see Bajpai 2003). But this clearly belies the 'theoretical' significance of these ideas, especially those of Asia's nationalist leaders.

The case of Jawaharlal Nehru is especially interesting and relevant, because Nehru was recognized both within India and in the world, as a thinker in his own right, rather than simply as a political strategist. His views were influential in

shaping the initial foreign policy beliefs and approaches of several of Asia's fellow nationalists. Moreover, unlike other political leaders of the day, Nehru did engage Western realist intellectual writings, such as those by Nicholas Spykman and Walter Lippmann. In his *The Discovery of India*, he took a dim view of Nicholas Spykman's position that moral beliefs and 'values of justice, fairness, and tolerance' could be pursued by statesmen 'only to the extent that they contribute to, or do not interfere with, the power objective' (Nehru 2003: 538). Nehru also attacked Walter Lippmann's prescription that the post-war world order should be organized around a number of alliances each under a great power orbit. The fact that India could be the putative leader of a future South Asian 'Hindu-Muslim' bloc that Lippmann proposed did not impress Nehru. Such ideas about power politics were seen by Nehru as a 'continuation of old tradition' of European power politics, and led him to critique realism for sticking to the 'empty shell of the past' and refusing to 'understand the hard facts of the present'. Myanmar's Aung San also rejected military alliances under great power orbit; any 'union or commonwealth or bloc' that Myanmar may be invited to participate in must be a 'voluntary affair and not imposed from above'. It must not be 'conceived in the narrow spirit of the classic balance of power' (Aung San 1946). In short, for Nehru, some of the 'realist' solutions to the world's problems ignored new forces sweeping the world, including the physical and economic decline of Western colonial powers after World War II, as well as the upsurge of nationalism and demands for freedom in the former colonies. By ignoring these trends, 'Realism' was being 'more imaginative and divorced from to-day's and to-morrow's problems than much of the so-called idealism of many people' (Nehru 2003: 539).

The fact that such writings and discourses have not found their way into the core literature of IR is revealing. The fact that Nehru was a political leader first and an intellectual second (mostly when he was incarcerated by the British) cannot be the justification, since IRT has recognized the ideas and approaches of people who were primarily politicians or diplomats, such as Woodrow Wilson, not to mention the European master strategists such as Metternich and Castlereagh. Another example would be Kissinger, although it might be said that Kissinger was a trained academic who became a practitioner, whereas Nehru was a politician who became a theorist.

Despite their widely different backgrounds and circumstances, the ideas and approaches of Asia's nationalists shared some important common elements. First, they did not see any necessary conflict between nationalism and internationalism. On the contrary, some of these nationalists were among the foremost critics of nationalism as the sole basis for organizing international relations. India's radical nationalist leader, Subash Chandra Bose, as well as Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, fall into this category (Tagore 2004). This might have been driven partly by a desire to mobilize international support for national liberation. This 'open nationalism' of Asia was in some respect distinct from the exclusionary and territorial nationalism of Europe. Though a Myanmar patriot and a staunch nationalist, Aung San saw no necessary conflict between nationalism, regionalism and internationalism. He believed that regional cooperation could compensate for Myanmar's

weaknesses in the defence and economic sphere. Some of these nationalists would later adopt a *realpolitik* approach to foreign policy and security, partly due to the influence of the superpowers as the Cold War set in. The most important aspect of this nascent internationalism of Asia was the advocacy of Asian unity and regionalism. Nehru was the most articulate early post-war advocate of Asian unity, which he saw as the inevitable restoration of cultural and commercial links across Asia that had been violently disrupted by colonialism. He organized the Asian Relations Conferences of 1947 and 1949, the latter being specifically aimed at creating international pressure on the Dutch to grant independence to Indonesia.

It is noteworthy that many of these figures self-consciously distanced themselves from utopianism or 'idealism'. In critiquing nationalism in Japan, Tagore dreaded the 'epithet' of 'unpractical' that could be flung against him and which would 'stick to my coat-tail, never to be washed away' (Tagore 2002: 50). Aung San proclaimed: 'I am an internationalist, but an internationalist who does not allow himself to be swept off the firm Earth' (Aung San 1974). Similarly, in criticizing Lippmann's vision of great power orbits balancing each other and regional defence pacts such as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), Nehru defended himself against the charge of being a 'starryeyed' idealist, levelled against him by the members of such pacts represented at the Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations in 1955. Nehru derided the 'so-called realistic appreciation of the world situation', expressed by pact member Turkey in defence of regional pacts on the ground that they represented a more realistic response to the threat posed by communism than Nehru's idea of cooperation and 'engagement' with China and Soviet Union. Far from being a pacifist, he claimed himself to be 'taking a realistic view' of the contradictions and dangers involved in membership by the newly independent nations in such pacts, which to him represented a new form of Western dominance at a time when colonialism was in its final death throes, and which could lead to Europe-like tensions and conflicts in Asia and Africa (Nehru 1955). The Bandung Conference thus could be Asia's answer to the idealist-realist debate (the first of the so-called 'inter-paradigm debates' that graduate students in Western universities are obliged to read).

Outside of classical and modern political ideas about interstate or international relations, a third type of work is non-Westerners who have taken up Western IRT. Many Asian IR scholars have addressed the issue of theory by applying Western theory to local contexts and puzzles and to assess their relevance. Examples include A. P. Rana and Kanti Bajpai in India, Chung-In Moon in Korea, Muthiah Alagappa from Malaysia (working in the US), Inoguchi in Japan and Yongjin Zhang from China (working in New Zealand). Considering their work as part of the development of non-Western IRT may be problematic for two reasons, which were identified and extensively debated at the Singapore Workshop. The first relates to the fact that most such scholars have received their training in the West, and have spent a considerable part of their working life in Western institutions. Hence, can they be regarded as truly 'local' scholars and their work truly 'indigenous' contributions to non-Western IR theory? This caused quite a bit of controversy at the

Singapore Workshop, with one group holding the view that they should not, while another arguing that the place of training and career-building should be less important than the substance of their contributions in judging whether their work might be regarded as non-Western IRT. As editors, we are inclined to take the latter position. But then this raises a second issue. What if the work of such scholars simply applies and tests Western concepts and models on Asia to assess their fit? Should this work have the same claim to be an authentic contribution to non-Western IRT compared to work, which is much rarer, that makes independent generalizations from the Asian experience that might have transregional or universal applicability.

For example, Muthiah Alagappa suggests that 'Asia is fertile ground to debate, test, and develop many of these [Western] concepts and competing theories, and to counteract the ethnocentric bias' (Alagappa 1998). But will the problem of Western dominance disappear by using the Asian empirical record primarily to 'test' theories generated by Western scholars? Or will this merely reinforce the dominance of Western theory by relegating area knowledge as little more than provider of 'raw data' to Western theory? (Shea 1997: A12–A13).

An alternative pathway may be found in a fourth type of work on IRT related to Asia. Such work studies Asian events and experiences and develops concepts that can be used as tools of analysis of more general patterns in international relations and for locating Asia within the larger international system and comparing it with other parts of the world. Some of the finest examples of this include Anderson's 'imagined communities' and Scott's 'every day forms of resistance' (Mittleman 2000; Anderson 1983; Scott 1985), which have inspired scholars of comparative politics as well as international relations (Adler 1994). Anthropologist Edmund Leach's *Political Systems of Highland Burma* is an example from another discipline that is now used to underscore fluid notions of ethnic identity in Southeast Asia and beyond (Leach 1954). What distinguishes this type of work is that the scholars are not turning Asia into a mere test bed of Western social science theory. Rather, they are identifying processes from an Asian (and other local) settings that could be used to explain events and phenomena in the outside world. Other works in this category include Wolters' 'mandala state' (1982), Geertz's 'Negara' (1980), Fairbank's 'Chinese World Order' (1968), Huntington's 'Confucian international systems' (1996) and Kang's notion of 'hierarchy' (2003–4), which may not help IR scholars studying other regions of the world, but which do capture distinctive Asian patterns and experiences, and serve as the basis of comparing Asian international relations with the more general pattern. Another emerging body of work that can be considered here draws on generalizations about Asian interdependence and regional institution building and Asian regional *practices* such as 'the ASEAN Way'. These constructs are considered exceptionalist, but in reality they are not. For example, consensus decision-making is a worldwide practice of multilateral institutions. But they do acquire a certain myth of distinctiveness in local contexts and are recognized and accepted as such. Hence, claims about Asia's distinctive regionalism has found increasing acknowledgement in IRT literature on multilateralism and regionalism (Johnston 2003).

As editors, we hesitate to take a definitive stand on this debate, lest we be accused

of gatekeeping. We might be a little partial to the second type of contribution, but leave the ultimate judgement to the scholars in the field, including those who have contributed to this volume. We also believe that when judging the significance of the work of Asian scholars, one could look for contributions that may be regarded as 'pre-theories' in the sense defined by James Rosenau, i.e. generalized work that begins to suggest broad and persistent patterns of behaviour of actors that may or may not have the full 'causal' and predictive attributes associated with American-style IRT. The diversity of opinions expressed on the subject at the Singapore Workshop is itself healthy, and would help develop the kind of critical reflections that will open the door to a greater sensitivity to the need for theory in studies of Asian international relations.

The extent of non-Western IR literature focusing on distinctive praxis remains a potentially rich source, although it is limited. And with few exceptions, neither type of work has been attempted in Asia by Asians. Theoretical work by Asian scholars seems to be concerned mostly with testing Western IR theory on an Asian national or regional setting. Countless graduate dissertations by Asian scholars in American universities testify to this trend. Hence, a key challenge for IRT in Asia is to explore 'how "local knowledge" can be turned into definitive frameworks for analyzing global processes'. Such type of work – in which Western local patterns have been turned into IRT concepts – is commonplace in the West. For this reason, the Concert of Europe has been the basis for the literature 'security regimes', the European Union is the main springboard of the entire theory of neoliberal institutionalism and the classical European balance of power system informs a good deal of theorizing about power transitions (now being applied to China's rise), alliance dynamics and 'causes of war' literature. Hence, the question: 'if European and North Atlantic regional politics could be turned into international relations theory, why not Asian regional politics?' (Acharya 2001).

Yet such work, if and when attempted by non-Westerners, would beg the question – another subject of heated debate at the Singapore Workshop – have they been simply been co-opted into Western IRT, or have they in some sense transcended it, and made contributions that could be counted as distinctively non-Western variants of originally Western ideas? One candidate here would be dependency theory (Frank 1966; Smith 1979). This was supposed to be a theory derived from the experience of Third World countries. But this too became an over-generalized framework, in some way reinforcing the neglect of the non-West in IRT by denying it any autonomy. Shamir Amin or Cardoso were followers of an essentially Western theory, but they did not simply stop at theory-testing (as happens in Korea, Taiwan or Japan), but advanced some of their own ideas as well. A stronger claim for an indigenous theory is postcolonialism. There is now a discernable IR variant in which Indian scholars have played a prominent role in developing 'subaltern studies': Homi Bhaba (1994) on subaltern studies and Arjun Appadurai (1996) who writes on globalization. They are rebelling against orientalism and Western dominance, and hence are largely negative in their inspiration. But postcolonialism's autonomous nature can be overstated. Postcolonialism challenges Western dominance by pointing to its odious outcomes; Gayatri Spivak criticized Foucault

for treating 'Europe as a self-enclosed and self-generating entity, by neglecting the central role of imperialism in the very making of Europe' (Ahmad 1977: 374). Edward Said had made similar criticisms, accusing Foucault of neglecting not only European imperialism, but also resistance to imperialism outside of Europe. Postcolonialism also seeks to dismantle relativism and binary distinctions found in postmodern theory, such as the distinction between First World–Third World, North–South, centre and periphery and 'reveal societies globally in the complex heterogeneity and contingency' (Dirlik 1994: 329). These are useful contributions in the search for a non-Western IRT. But postcolonialism cannot be regarded as an authentic attempt to counter Western-centrism, because, as Arif Dirlik points out, it is basically framed within cultural discourses originating from the West. Its aim has been 'to achieve an authentic globalisation of cultural discourses by the extension globally of the intellectual concerns and orientations originating at the central sites of Euro-American cultural criticism …' (1994: 329). In other words, postcolonialism seeks

> not to produce fresh knowledges about what was until recently called the Third World but to restructure existing bodies of knowledge into the post-structuralist paradigms and to occupy sites of cultural production outside the Euro-American zones by globalizing concerns and orientations originating at the central sites of Euro-American cultural production.
>
> (Ahmed 1997: 368)

It is also noteworthy that postcolonialism has not attracted wide adherence in Asia from scholars outside of South Asia, certainly not in China.

Explanations for the dominance of the West

There is little doubt that Western IRT is massively dominant, and it is important to understand why this is so. There are many possible explanations, some of which leave little or no room or reason for remedial action, and others of which suggest the condition of Western dominance is likely to be temporary. The following list covers the main possibilities that could in principle explain a distortion on such a scale.[2]

1. Western IRT has discovered the right path to understanding IR

If true, this explanation would put IRT on a par with physics, chemistry and mathematics, whose theories can reasonably claim universal standing regardless of cultural context. This book would then have no point other than to exhort non-Westerners to engage themselves more in the established theoretical debates. One would not expect the laws of physics, or IR, to vary just because they were being discussed by Asians rather than Westerners, but one might well expect a larger body of participants to improve the quality of criticism, insight and application. We think this claim cannot be defended in any absolute sense, not least because so

much of Western IRT is drawn from modern Western history. One consequence of this 'Westphalian straightjacket' is an over-emphasis on anarchy and an under-emphasis on the many possibilities for how international systems and societies could (and have) been constructed. In pursuit of 'scientific' status mainstream Western IR theory has also been excessively concerned with rather narrow rational choice views of motive in power politics, strategy and economics. It is only beginning to come to terms with the wider range of possibilities such as identity, honour, tradition etc. There can be no doubt that Western IRT has generated significant insights and deserves to be taken seriously by all who are interested in the subject. But equally, there can be no doubt that it is rooted in a very specific history, and that a more world historical perspective should open up additional perspectives.

There is also the Coxian view set out above, that because social theory is always for someone and for some purpose, it is to its very core, and unavoidably, a political enterprise. To the extent that they are accepted, theories such as balance of power, hegemonic stability, democratic peace or unipolarity cannot help but construct the world they purport to describe. There may be room for argument about the balance of effects between material and social factors, but it would require a heroic commitment to pure materialism to argue that it did not matter whether or not people accepted these ideas as true. To accept the world is now unipolar, as many do, not only forecloses other ways of understanding international order, but automatically puts the US in a unique and privileged position. The acceptance would produce effects even if in material terms unipolarity was *not* an accurate description of how things are. The consequential impossibility of detaching social theory from the reality it addresses means it must always matter who it is that generates IR theory. The extreme dominance of Anglo-American voices in IRT should not be, and is not, viewed without suspicion, namely the quote from E. H. Carr discussed in Section 2 above.

2. Western IRT has acquired hegemonic status in the Gramscian sense

This explanation is not about whether Western IRT has found all the right paths to truth. It is about whether, because Western IRT has been carried by the dominance of Western power over the last few centuries, it has acquired a Gramscian hegemonic status that operates largely unconsciously in the minds of others, and regardless of whether the theory is correct or not. Here one would need to take into account the intellectual impact of Western imperialism and the success of the powerful in imprinting their own understandings onto the minds and practices of the non-Western world. As noted above, the process of decolonization left in its wake a world remodelled, sometimes badly, on the lines of the European state and its 'anarchical society' form of international relations. The price of independence was that local elites accept this structure, and a good case can be made that they not only did so under duress, but absorbed and made their own a whole set of key Western ideas about the practice of political economy, including most conspicuously and most universally, sovereignty, territoriality and nationalism. Other

Western ideas such as democracy, the market and human rights have had a more contested, less universal reception, but nonetheless have become widespread and influential outside the West. Third World elites have embraced the key elements of Westphalian sovereignty and even expanded its scope. For example, the doctrine of non-intervention, a key subsidiary norm of Westphalian sovereignty, is being vigorously contested in the West, and has suffered some erosion, but in the Third World, it has remained robust. In fact, the decline of non-intervention in the West has paralleled its rise in the Third World.

If Western IRT is hegemonic because it is right, then there is little scope for non-Western contributions. But if it is dominant because it rode on the back of Western power, then there is both room and reason to develop a non-Western voice. Particularly significant here may be the extent to which Western imperialism not only overwhelmed local traditions of thought and knowledge, but also cut peoples off from their own history by drawing their self-understanding into a Western historical frame. Perhaps also significant is a consciousness of Western hegemony, a desire to avoid being ensnared by it, and an avoidance of engagement with theory precisely because it entails a risk of such ensnarement.

3. Non-Western IR theories do exist, but are hidden

There is, of course, a possibility that non-Western IR theories do exist, but that they are hidden from the Western discourse by language barriers or other entry difficulties and therefore do not circulate in the global debates. If the reasons for being hidden are largely cultural and/or linguistic, that may well result in local theories being hidden not just from the Western debate, but also from other non-Western debates. It is far from clear, for example, that theoretical debates conducted, say, in Japanese, would find much if any audience in China or India. Even in Europe, there are distinct local language IR debates in Germany, France and elsewhere that are only partially, and often quite weakly, linked to the English language debates (Friedrichs 2004)). Those engaged in the English language debates have more than enough to read within that, and often lack the language skills to investigate beyond it. Those with the language skills are mainly located in area studies, an approach that generally focuses on the uniqueness of the area under study, and so carries a low interest in general theory.

The reasons for being hidden may also lie in intended or unintended barriers to entry to the Western discourses. Is there a lack of receptiveness to non-Western contributions arisen from the ethnocentrism of Western scholarship, and its tendency to view the reality of others through its own experience, and to assume the superiority of its own cultural model over others? (See Acharya 1999). For a detailed empirical exposé of the Western dominance in IRT, see Wæver 1998 and Tickner and Wæver, 2009. An interesting attempt to bring in a Latin American perspective is Tickner 2003. It is also easy for those in the Anglo-Saxon IR core to assume that English as a lingua franca must make access easier for all. Up to a point, there is truth in this assumption, but for those having to work in English as a second or third language it may feel like a barrier, both because of the additional

work necessary to put one's thoughts into a foreign language, and because of the high rejection rates in the leading English-language IR journals. The amount of time and energy such persons may have to invest to get something published in a mainstream IR journal could be several times what they would have to spend to publish it in their own language. It is easy for Anglophones to forget that there are large IR communities in Japan, Germany, France and elsewhere within which individuals can make a perfectly satisfying career.

If non-Western theory does exist, but is marginalized, then the purpose of this book is to reveal that existence, and the problem is not to create such theory but to get it into wider circulation. Is it the case that the contributions of non-Western scholars remain hidden from view because of their inability to publish in the leading journals in the field, nearly all of which are edited in the West? The themes of articles published in these journals are heavily weighted in favour of Western issues, theories and settings, both historical and contemporary. Non-Western contributors to these journals tend to be rare, and those who do make it usually are based in the West. When Western IR scholars rebel against Western dominance, they usually target American dominance, especially its rational choice positivism. The alternatives they identify tend to be British and European (and to some extent Australian) rather than Asian (see, for example Smith 2000; Crawford and Jarvis 2000; Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003). The Crawford and Jarvis volume is another example of how extensions of IRT beyond the US stop at the UK and Australia. The Ikenberry and Mastanduno volume contains only a single Asian contributor.

4. Local conditions discriminate against the production of IR theory

There are various local conditions – historical, cultural, political and institutional – that could explain why the academic environment outside the West might not be conducive to the generation of IR theory. On the historical side, most stories about how Western IR got established as a self-conscious subject see World War I as a watershed, reinforced by World War II. The unexpected horror, cost, destruction and disruption of the 1914–18 war took Western civilization by surprise, and filled it with the fear that a renewal of all-out war might herald the end of Western civilization. These origins meant that right from the start, IR generally, and IR theory in particular, was endowed with a strong problem-solving orientation. Liberalism and realism were both, in their different ways, responses to the problem that fear of war had become equal to, or greater than, fear of defeat. From that fear grew the need for a better understanding of peace and war and it was around that goal that the field of IR was institutionalized. It may well be true that this particular historical trauma is unique to the West, and shaped and motivated the development of its IR theory in a particular way. Yet one might argue that for much of Asia World War II was not a wholly dissimilar experience. And if historical trauma is a necessary midwife for the birth of IR theory, then the experience of Western domination and decolonization should have been more than adequate to serve. Although Western history has unique connections to the development of IRT, it is far from

clear that non-Western societies lack similarly forceful mobilizing historical traumas.

Probing deeper, one can ask whether there are cultural differences between the West and the non-West that make the former more generally inclined to approach issues in abstract terms, and the latter less inclined. In its strong form, the idea would be that theory in general is a Western way of doing things, with others more inclined either to empirical approaches or abstractions related mainly to local affairs, and without the presumption to universalism typical of Western social theory. On the face of it, it seems highly unlikely that this strong version would apply only to IRT, so any such factor should be visible at least across the social sciences. Yet it is undeniable that IRT has flourished most in English-speaking countries (US, UK, Canada, Australia) or in countries where English is almost universally spoken (Scandinavia, the Netherlands). This brute fact leaves room for the idea that IR might be in some respects culturally specific. In its weaker version the culture explanation would simply be that theory, especially universal theory, is a kind of luxury that societies struggling with the immediate and pressing problems of development simply cannot afford to indulge. The focus would all be on short-term local problem solving (perhaps typically foreign policy analysis for the state concerned, or at most regional level), and not on more grandiose efforts to understand larger systems. There could also be a link between culture and the hegemony explanation. One consequence of hegemony could be to induce in the local cultures a kind of radical demoralization and loss of confidence that would make it particularly difficult to engage in general theoretical debates. Conversely, hegemony would encourage exactly such theorizing from those in the dominant position.

Distinct from cultural logics, but possibly related to them, are political factors that might inhibit the development of IRT. In the West, IR theory has flourished most successfully in democracies, though the existence of more or less IRT-free zones in substantial countries such as Italy and Spain suggests democracy is more of a necessary than a sufficient condition. Other than in a narrow party-line sense, one would not expect IRT to flourish in totalitarian states where the government has a strong political interest in controlling how foreign policy and the structure of international relations are understood. The experience of the Soviet Union perhaps exemplifies the limits here. There is evidence from European history that authoritarian states are not necessarily hostile to social theorists (e.g. Kant), but this perhaps depends on the presence of an enlightened despot. It is, in general, an interesting question as to whether or not undemocratic governments are sufficiently sensitive to IRT so as to inhibit its development within their domain. It is perhaps worth noting that the typical Western academic experience is that governments could not care less about IRT, pay little or no attention to it, and certainly do not consider it a threat to their authority. They will occasionally pick up elements of it to adorn specific policies (e.g. deterrence, democratic peace), and the general principles of realism are suffused through the foreign policy elite. Perhaps the closest connections are possible in the US system, where it is not all that uncommon for academic theorists to play significant roles in government (e.g. Henry Kissinger,

Zbigniev Brzezinski, Joseph Nye, Stephen Krasner). This connection, however, almost certainly has much less to do with their standing as theorists, and much more to do with their willingness to pursue political activism within the party system. As a rule, it is perhaps fair to say the more closely linked the study of IR is to government and foreign policy establishments, the less theoretical it is likely to be. IR and foreign policy think tanks are generally averse to theory, and much more interested in, and encouraging of, focused empirical work relevant to the issues of the day. Perhaps the one exception to this has been in relation to strategic theory, where there was strong interplay between government and academic thinking about nuclear deterrence.

The final local condition that may discriminate against the development of IRT is institutional. By this we mean things to do with the resourcing, workloads, career structures and intellectual ethos of those, mainly academics, who might be expected to do IRT. In Western academia, research is encouraged by the career structure: you don't get either promotion or the esteem of your peers without doing it. Theoretical research generally has high standing, and it is mainly easier to get to the top ranks of one's field by doing theory than by empirical research. Such research is, up to a point, funded, and again up to a point, time is built into the career structure for research. Other resources such as IT and libraries are generally adequate to support research. If all, or even some, of these conditions are not present, then one would not expect academia to generate theory. If research generally, or theory work in particular, are not esteemed, then they will not be produced. If they are esteemed, but academics have too much teaching and administration, and too few resources, they will still not be produced. This institutional explanation might be related to the cultural one in the sense of absence of a research culture, but it might be more a question of inadequate resources. There might also be quite particular local reasons to do with how IR was introduced into a country, who the founding leaders were and what the disciplinary links were that could work against the development of IRT. In the Anglo-American IR world, IR has been most closely linked with political science, a discipline quite strongly inclined towards theorizing. But IR can and has been linked to less theoretically inclined disciplines such as history, law and area studies. Links of that sort might well build a theoretical or even anti-theoretical inclinations into a local IR community, whereas links to sociology and political science would tend to encourage a more theoretical bent.

5. The West has a big head start, and what we are seeing is a period of catching up

If this explanation is true, then the main problem is a question of time and resources. Where there are resources available for the study of IR we should expect to see, depending on the level of resources available, the steady unfolding of local developments in IR theory. Where such resources are available, we should expect to see the gap between West and non-West closing, and it might not be unreasonable to expect this gap would close more or less in line with the pace of catch-up in the wider process of modernization. One objection to this line of reasoning is

the same as that relating to Ayoob's (1995) catch-up theory of the Third World state: that it has to repeat the development trajectory of the West. The difference for state development and IRT is that the non-West has to perform its development in the shadow of ongoing Western domination and penetration.

These explanations are, of course, not all mutually exclusive. It is not difficult to imagine, for example, a combination of Western hegemony, inconducive local conditions and engagement in catch-up. Expectations of the pace of catch-up could be frustrated by unhelpful local conditions. One aim of the chapters that follow is to weigh the balance of these explanations in specific cases, and perhaps to add others to them.

The structure of the volume

The chapters included in the volume, covering both individual countries (China, Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia), as well as a regional study of Southeast Asia and a thematic focus on Islamic IR worldview that pays particular attention to the Arab world, have quite different stories to tell, but each in its own way touches on the following themes:

- To survey the thinking about IRT in the country/area concerned taking into account how it emerged and developed; how well organized and extensive it is; how it relates to general patterns of thinking in the social sciences; and what the main focus of its debates is.
- To evaluate the impact of Western IRT as an approach to understanding the international relations of the country/area concerned: in what ways does it clarify and give insight, and in what ways does it distort and obscure?
- To survey and assess how thinking about IR in the country/area concerned has been impacted by (and if relevant, impacted on) the Western debates about IRT.
- If there is an indigenous, non-Western IRT in the country/area concerned, to discuss whether it has been excluded from the Western debates, and/or insulated itself from them, and/or simply been insulated from them by factors such as language barriers.
- To examine the historical, political and philosophical resources of the country/area concerned (e.g. key historical experiences, key political leaders, key ideological traditions, key philosophical thinkers), with an evaluation of how these do or don't play into the debates about IRT, and assess how they might form the basis of an indigenous non-Western IRT. How do the key Western IR concepts such as sovereignty, statehood, legitimacy, balance of power, international law, justice, war, diplomacy, nationalism, private property and great power fit or not fit with local traditions and practices? Are there indigenous political or strategic traditions, beliefs and practices that may have no equivalent in Western IRT, but which did and may continue to influence local political beliefs and practices relevant to IR?

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Notes

1 We are grateful to Tang Shiping for this observation.
2 In this section we have drawn heavily both on insights provided by Kanti Bajpai, and on analyses, and discussions about them, in the first drafts of the country chapters, all gathered during the Singapore Workshop for this project 11–12 July 2005.