

Introduction

Politicians and academics have long been using the notion of world politics and the term ‘international relations’ as a generalized category for a single world of international political relationships. However, the international relations system and the space of international affairs are in fact far from homogeneous. Because of the rising popularity of globalization, the homogeneity of the world system has markedly risen. This is notwithstanding the increase in IR actors, the different models of regionalism and an obvious regionalization trend, which, in their turn, are calling for new methods of global governance and regulation instead of outcries that our world is falling apart and we need a new set of non-Western theories as a substitute for Western IR theories to understand that. A new global scenario does not necessarily mean that the world system is splitting into separate parts or that *bellum omnium contra omnes* is breaking out with all that it implies. Heterogeneity in the converging world political-economic

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A.D. Voskressenski, *Non-Western Theories of International Relations*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-33738-8_1

1

space suggests that across various spatial world segments, each having their own forms of evolving internal structure, all of these processes have their own pace and shape and thus affect the regional structure in different ways, determining the distinctiveness of the international relations regional subsystems within a single international system. The development whereof is predicated upon universal laws and global trends (Mahbubani 2013). The ability to take advantage of regional integration and adapt to global processes predetermines, ultimately, the option for successful development models of the nation-states under the current global interconnectedness, facilitating or inhibiting their ascent or wane, eventually pointing out the nature of the IR system, the contingency of its constituent parts and the route forward, influencing the processes of international and global society formation.

The recognition of unique features in the regional form of global processes poses a challenge to politicians and academics as it requires mastery of analysis methodology of the global and regional tier, and also of global and local processes simultaneously. Even if they are related to cultural patterns and different kinds of cultural and historical [land]scapes (Appadurai 1996), they are caused by the allocation and redistribution of power in the world system and international governance structures, geopolitical, political and economic rising and nation-states' wane, nature and methods, which govern the world processes. In other words, the exploration of such processes pertains to the sphere of international political and political-economic analysis, with its own particular traits, which relate to the research subject specificity: the anarchized international phenomena (that is, going on in the absence of the global sovereign, rather than full anarchy and turmoil), structured and organized in a special way through historically changing forms of international order, transforming spatial-temporal interaction of the sovereign nation-states and other world political actors in terms of international affairs, enrooted in their regional domain. Even fifteen to twenty years ago the new quality of the regional and later transregional tiers in international relations was not reflected in IR theory because the regional relations tier was reputed to have been playing a small part, whereas the process logic at this level had been subverted by the pattern of world politics and completely determined by it.

Enhancing interstate cooperation at the regional and macro-regional levels as the tangible global development trend, economic and political modernization, open regionalism, regionalization and emergence of macro-regional and transregional cooperation (transregionalism), as well

as cross-regional cooperation geopolitics and the global politics logic determines not only the economic but also political, social-cultural and civilizational factors (Acharia 2013) because in every regional segment there exists a unique membership of nation-states with different social order types, as well as non-state actors with their own cooperation/partnership rules. Therefore, at a specific historical stage of development, the transition of the world system to a real polycentric structure with a compound intercourse configuration among its constituents is likely. This rests on intensifying political-economic integration inside the regions, the incipience of controversies, pertaining to the need of national states with various social order types for competition and cooperation in the spatially adjacent regional segments (Coleman and Underhill 1998). Simultaneously, there would be cross-regional cooperation, forming a national political space, but a different degree of depth, a specific kind of globalization in a new environment; development of global hubs (including new ones) with different competitiveness and, at the same time, a manifestation of controversies among them—the cultural, economic, political and so on. In the course of addressing these controversies and given the availability of a deft global governance system (Sinclair 2012), further formation of the single global space of the world system proceeds within the evolution and transformation of the world order up until the transition of the international system into a new supra- and transnational quality and gradual completion of the global politics as a new phenomenon in international relations.

Although all the aforementioned processes are gaining momentum, the degree of their interpretation by the world's analytical and political communities is not very high. The existing education system of the global, regional and national processes as well as specific traits in their behavior are studied separately within the fields of World Politics, International Relations, International Political Economy, Political Science, Geopolitics and Area Studies. And the latter discipline is undergoing a clear methodological decay. The notion of “area” in theoretical or applied research helps to set boundaries, geographically and to a lesser extent functionally, within which commonalities can be investigated with a manageable loss of competence in practical knowledge and concepts used by academic disciplines. Nevertheless, the notion of area is too vague and thus not satisfactory in terms of conceptualization on a global level. Appadurai's notion of “scapes” is useful for understanding the differences within the common functional spheres of “ethnoscapes,” “mediascapes,” “technoscapes,” “financescapes” and “ideoscapes” (Appadurai 1996, 33) and he

rightly argues that modernity is experienced differently over space and time. However, modernities can be different also in terms of their internal structures. Thus, multiple modernities can be formatted through structural differences as well as different historical/cultural experiences. The understanding is that we are living through multiple modernities and thus to seek the universal applicability of Western or non-Western theories is an illusion. However, a framework conceptualization to address these multiple modernities may help us understand how the unique combination of general settings and regional and national factors forms the contemporary world of these multiple modernities. Appadurai shows that different cultural landscapes exist, but they are different not only because the reality is socially constructed—intentionally or unintentionally as Appadurai argues—but also, as I argue, because the socially constructed differentiation is based on the existing objective structural differentiation between societies of different types (Western/non-Western). To explain the regional specifics of heterogenization/homogenization, a researcher needs to explain the differences enrooted in the existing objective differentiation of social structures as well as those that are socially constructed. In IR, a politician, diplomat, practitioner or researcher needs to theoretically and practically deal with differentiations of both kinds, inside and outside of nation-states. This creates the possibility of a nonconflictual future for the development of social conditions for human beings.

In IR, the notion of “a region” in all senses is much more satisfactory than “an area” since there are no difficulties in distinguishing the regional level from the unit level (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 27–30). The development of regions and their transformation into international regions and also the further formation of global regions as possible new actors in IR, though separated by certain economic, political, military, cultural and civilizational boundaries, enable researchers and politicians to distinguish a regional dimension from a global whole. The current world development is marked by regionalization and regionalism to a much larger extent than before as well as the theoretical explanations of such phenomena (Ieda and Uyama 2006; Buzan and Wæver 2003).

So, in addressing current international developments we must admit the following:

1. The phenomenon of a segmentation/differentiation within a generally converging world (Mahbubani 2013), though it exists on a common sense level, is explained inadequately both methodologically

and practically. The consequence of which is the decay of Area Studies as an academic discipline. A parallel skepticism is developing around disciplinary studies as a tool to understand simultaneously existing multiple modernities of a different structural character with universal theories;

2. Current international development and practice suggest that the notion of “area” is transforming into the notion of “region,” which is more satisfactory in practical and methodological analyses. Both have geographical as well as economic, political and cultural connotations, but the latter better explains commonalities and homogenization as well as irregularities, heterogenizations, disorders and differences;
3. The regional dimension of IR is now much more theoretically conceptualized than ten years ago due to the new development trends in our world. Following these newly developed concepts, regionalization as well as regionalism do not necessarily mean that the world is diverging though such a possibility exists;
4. We are witnessing an increase in regional-level theoretical IR concepts such as the Regional Subsystem (Thompson 1973), Regional Security Complex (Buzan and Wæver 2003) and Meso-Area/Mega-Area concepts and approaches (Ieda and Uyama 2006). These help us to understand the regional specifics within IR commonalities, which constitute by themselves a basis for a common framework of analysis.

The impact degree of globalization, polycentricism and regionalization on world processes is increasing gradually. The emergence of true polycentrism and intensifying regionalization at a specific historical phase could even slow down globalization, trigger conflicts, destabilize world processes or bring on crises (Colaresi et al. 2007). Even if interpreted as fostering a possibility of world divergence, this does not necessarily imply increasing rift inside the global system, fraught with warfare, as it is considered to be among realism theory advocates—although such an option cannot be fully ruled out. On the contrary, it can testify to the acceleration of the interdependence and homogenization of different kinds of landscapes outside and within the nation-states that influence policies inside the macro-regional complexes. This will be followed by a new twist of cross-regional cooperation and a streamlining of the global governance system consisting of different civilizational and cultural landscapes already

on the basis of the developed macro-regional and transregional unions of various degree. This new level of cross-regional cooperation will be based on a new level of competitiveness and adaptability to the global tendencies, for sure, if not to spur the world on the military stand-off (Osterhammel and Petersson 2003; Mahbubani 2013 among others). Within the conceptual and analytical, rather than normative-ideological interpretation, the macro-regional complexes (for example, the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] and the Trans-Pacific Partnership [TPP], the European Union [EU], the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN] and the Eurasian Economic Union [EAEU]) can be viewed as new prototypes of centers in the new polycentric world system, resting upon the pre-eminence of the regional models with globally coordinating cooperation trends such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP), Trans-Pacific Partnership, Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the group consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). This fosters new world centers inside the new inter-regional affairs. In other words, it facilitates a leveling off of the global space by means of a new type of cross-regional cooperation, whereas the regional tier theories are elaborated across different regional segments of the world. If substantially extended, and possibly supplemented, the existing theories of IR and world politics can be a new stimulating foundation, dreaming up reasons for consolidation of the global governance system with different models by the members of the international community—those formatting and adjusting it to their regional and national needs, relying on an elaborated international consensus.

There are three consequences of this development on a theoretical and disciplinary level. The first denies the possibility of the existence of non-Western IR theories arguing that:

1. Western IR theories discovered the right path to understanding IR and so there is no need for non-Western IR theories;
2. And that partially because of this Western IR theories acquired a hegemonic status in the Gramscian sense (Acharya and Buzan 2010, 16–18).

The second proposes and even insists on the appearance of non-Western IR theories as a reflection of multiple co-existing modernities because:

1. Non-Western IR theories exist, but are hidden because we cannot read all these languages in which they are written, or they may exist somehow in an oral form being circulated within a narrow circle of people;
2. They exist but they are hidden because of certain reasons of the non-Western states (Acharya and Buzan 2010, 18–22).

The third position, which is explained in this book, argues that the framework for debate should be broadened and we need the establishment of a de-Westernized (or non-culturally/historically biased) framework of IR analyses. This approach will help to encompass structural as well as cultural/historical differences between regions and national states as their main constituent parts as well as other IR actors instead of specifically constructing a body of non-Western IR theories (but not completely rejecting such a possibility). This would breed a hope that a de-Westernized framework of IR analyses may better explain constantly changing and more and more complex and intertwined international phenomena.

I will argue that the ongoing global transformations, including globalization, modernization, integration/disintegration and regionalization trends, have particularly highlighted the uneven nature of international political and economic space. Indeed, the world is not so flat, as Thomas Friedman argues (2006), and this phenomenon must be addressed both conceptually as well as methodologically. On the one hand, various regional segments of this global space generate their own ways of coping with world transformations and living through them. On the other hand, regions themselves and their structural organization are becoming factors shaping the development of the world. The increasingly complex nature of the international system and the emergence of new actors contribute to the fact that the conceptual framing within the classical disciplines of IR, Political Theory, International Political Economy or Comparative Politics taken separately can no longer explain in full a number of processes originating from a tighter and more intricate nexus between local, regional and global dimensions. To assess and fill this lacunae, World Regional Studies emerged as a tool and framework for analysis to bridge the gap between IR theory, Comparative Politics, Development Studies, Comparative Macro-History, Critical Geopolitics and Comparative International Political Economy and to address both Western as well as non-Western theories and explanations. Thus, the aim of World Regional Studies as a sub-field of IR and as a conceptual framework is to explain the emergence of the

new regional tier phenomena and new actors in IR and world politics on a regional and predominantly non-Western regional level. These phenomena include Regional Security Complexes, regional complexes, regional subsystems of international relations and, finally, international and global regions. These phenomena are at the same time in conformity with the existing body of IR theories thus stimulating methodological interdisciplinarity by addressing regional regularities and disorders through a set of internationally (and not only nationally) approved theories that gives researchers a tool to address complexities of coexisting landscapes of multiple modernities united by their functional overlappings, sameness and irregularities through spatially fragmented time.

The regional complex idea originated from the theory of Regional Security Complexes (RSC) put forward by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (2003) as a structural phenomenon broader than the regional security area and at the same time rooted in geographic regions. A regional subsystem concept is one step forward and based on the literature of the 1980s (though it appeared earlier) (Thompson 1973), and later (Kaplan 2012; et al.), on Buzan and Wæver's work and also on Russian IR literature. The understanding of regional subsystems is important for explaining the differences between and within the core countries, the world periphery and semi-periphery and also the specifics of the processes that take place outside the core of the world system. The global region is a new phenomenon of the interconnected world and/or another new integrated actor of transforming international relations compared to the macro-region and regions that have a predominantly geographical meaning. Though the academic literature already started to reflect the development of these new phenomena, it does so mostly in the realm of Political and Human Geography and not in the realm of IR. World Regional Studies, as explained in this book, may be considered a sub-field of IR (or a regional version of IR, or even a regional version of a non-Western IR) in a non-Western world that emerged in the wake of Area Studies, fusing International Relations, Comparative Politics, Critical Geopolitics and Global Political Economy.

The formulation of a third position about the need for alignment in regional and national economic and political modernization issues was articulated within the framework of World Regional Studies as a possible sub-field of IR (Voskressenski 2006), along with its already existing sub-disciplines: History (known in IR also as Diplomatic Studies) and Theory of International Relations, World Politics, International Political Economy and the evolving sub-discipline of Global Political Economy (O'Brien

and Williams 2010). Political Geography, which merged with Critical Geopolitics, addressed regions inside nation-states as well as the national state as the region itself. World Regional Studies is a framework of analysis, particularly of a non-Western regional IR phenomena, emphasizing the spatial-temporal dimension of IR and evolution of the international society in the developing world regional segments by means of cross-regional political analysis. It is based on the interdisciplinary synthesis of classical International Relations, Regional Studies (formerly Area Studies and its specific state/regional component), International/Global Political Economy, Political and Human Geography, Critical Geopolitics, Cultural Anthropology, Regional Sociology and Comparative Political Science.

If Development Studies has been explaining how to develop a reliance on the experience of Western countries (Törnquist 1999; Rist 2008), World Regional Studies' distinctiveness boils down to the synthesis of spatial, temporal and structural approaches into a multidimensional understanding of the generalized and simultaneously geographically/functionally segmented regionally distinct features in the course of the international society development, allowing to strike the most favorable ways for this development, combining imperatives and trends of the global, regional and local (glocal).

Therefore, the pivotal issues for World Regional Studies as a social science discipline and an IR sub-field whittle down to the methodology, nature, ways and methods aimed at governing the global space (Sinclair 2012) and trimming spatial aspects in the world political processes. In other words, they control the leveling off or differentiation of the global political, economic, social and cultural-civilizational space (Payne 2005), segmented by the geographic and/or functional regions and temporal stages of development, as well as the revelation and forecasting of these processes.

Appropriate adjustment of global experience to its application in the regional segments of the world directly correlates with the methodological debates around the subject field of World Regional Studies—the comprehensive, political-economic and social discipline—an IR sub-field, looking into the tendencies of building up and functioning of the social-economic and social-political systems and regional subsystems with regard for the particular historical, demographic, national, religious, cultural-anthropological, environmental, political and legal traits, positions and roles in the international division of labor and the IR system (Voskressenski 2006, 2014a, b). Such an understanding marks out

the internal constituent parts of World Regional Studies (i.e., via the complex analysis encompassing all regions) in another already existing terminology—Global/International Regional Studies, International Area Studies or Interdisciplinary International Studies as it evolved gradually during the last two decades in the English-speaking world, or *Qiyü Yanjiu* in the Chinese-speaking world and *Mirovoye Kompleksnoye Regionovedeniye* in the Russian-speaking world, which consists of the mixing and overlapping of formal and substantive analytical and educational blocs. These are: International/World Regional Studies, analyzing the global/international/transregional/cross-boundary regions and a conglomerate of the “internal” or “national” regions loosely integrated for study and research in Area Studies, Political Geography, Human Geography and Critical Geopolitics. In other words, the disciplines that analyze the regions inside nation-states and “adjoin” two or three nation-states as part of it (intra-state regions, countries, “small-sized” transboundary regions, “triangles of growth,” etc). World Regional Studies has been evolving “inside” IR for a long time and by the early twenty-first century it broke completely with Area Studies after a merge with a segment of Comparative Political Science and turned it into a full-fledged but still “unofficial” constituent part (a sub-discipline) of IR on par with its history and theory, World Politics and International Political Economy under the guise of a conglomerate of intertwined disciplines as Geopolitics of Development (Nayar 2005; Nayar 2013), Global Politics of Unequal Development (Payne 2005), Regionalization de la Globalization, Geographies of Development (Chant and McIlwaine 2009), Human Geography (Knox and Martson 2013), Reformed Development Studies (Haque 1999), Reshaped Economic Geography (World Bank 2009) or Development and Geography (Krugman 1997). The research of ‘internal’ regions within former Area Studies, according to various national traditions, has been developing inside different “paradigmatically approved” academic disciplines and/or interdisciplinary fields of research: International Studies, Regional Studies, Economic Geography, Regional Science, Spatial Economy, Human Geography, Geo-Economics, Political Geography, etc., depending on which of the region’s study aspects are paid closer attention to and what the hallmark is in the national research and educational schools. Clear attempts to answer the need for a new interdisciplinary approach in IR and to reshape the conglomerate of educationally incoherent but internally intertwined disciplines into a more or less coherent view for educational purposes was undertaken by Sheldon Anderson, Jeanny A.K. Hey, Mark Allen Peterson, Stanly W. Toops and Charles Stevens in

their book *International Studies. An Interdisciplinary Approach to Global Issues* (2008) and also by Harm de Blij in *The Power of Place* (2009) and *Why Geography Matters* (2005). It is also reflected in the discussion on the need for spatial analysis in Social Sciences that can integrate qualitative, quantitative and cartographic approaches in interdisciplinary mixed-methods research (Thierbach et al. 2014). It seems that these attempts went largely unnoticed, buried by a fruitful discussion on the ideological consequences of China rising, the appearance of BRICS, the future of power politics, etc. (Lihmann 1979; Yoshihara and Sylva 2012) and the possibility for non-Western IR theories to emerge and solve all rising IR questions; in other words, within a predominantly realist traditional IR agenda.

A school of comprehensive “economy-oriented” Area Studies (and predominantly in Asian Studies) as a sub-field within Economic Geography and International Economic Relations has been evolving in Russia since the 1920s at Moscow State University (MSU), as well as in the institutes system of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS)—the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) and the Institute of Oriental Studies (IV RAN). Afterwards, it gradually transformed into a methodologically synthetic educational discipline (that is, with its own comprehensive “economy-oriented” methodology and methods for studying regions with an increased focus on the comparative analyses) of a more or less holistic essence. As a relatively self-sustained, methodologically synthetic discipline with emphasis on the comprehensive study of, first and foremost, international-political regions of the world (International Regional Studies as a part of Comprehensive Regional Studies), it was finally built up administratively by a decision of the Russian Ministry of Education in the mid- and late 1990s as an educational track and as a sub-field within IR. In the early 2000s a decision was made to separate it from IR, establishing educational and administrative equivalency with IR as well as other Social Science disciplines and the Humanities: Political Science, Sociology, History, Cultural Studies, etc.

Methodologically, International Regional Studies (*Zarubezhnoye Regionovedeniye* or “foreign regional studies” as it was called by the Russian Ministry of Education) was developing on the basis of International Relations, Comparative Political Science and economic and political clusters of the classical Area Studies in the IMEMO (Russian Academy of Science) and MGIMO University and Diplomatic Academy, both under the auspices of Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Currently, World Regional Studies—its conceptual core—is valiantly developing at Moscow State

Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), which was recently renamed MGIMO University, as a methodologically synthetic Social Science discipline. It exists both in Russia's various universities and think tanks under different names (as Regional Political Science, Regional Economic Geography, Political Geography, Geo-Economics, Regional Politics), in the USA and Europe (as Regional Science, Economic Geography, Political Geography, Human Geography, Development Studies, Critical Geopolitics), and also in Japan, China, the Republic of Korea and some other countries.

Fifteen years of teaching this discipline has shown me that understanding the constituent parts in World Regional Studies, that give the possibility to analyze regionally segmented world political entities proceeding from the global entirety phenomenon, adapted to the regional specificity of large geographic and/or functional regions of the world, brings on perplexity, as it requires conceiving of a vast volume of disparate information, which is cross-cultural and interdisciplinary in nature. Thus, the aim of this evolving IR sub-field and a framework for IR analysis is to bridge the gap between traditional Area Studies and the basic pillars of knowledge for training in World Regional Studies as a subfield within IR and Comparative Political Science programs that defines the structure of this monograph.

On having acquired knowledge laid down in this book, the reader will obtain a basic understanding of the subject matter of World Regional Studies and find out:

- What the global regionalization trends in modern World Politics are, what are its principal subjects and possible implications for the international system;
- What are the arguments for a transformation of “areas” into “regions” and why “regions” are becoming new actors in international relations overlapping with, and also substantiating and competing with, main traditional IR actors—nation-states;
- What are the key responses of the regions to the transformation of the IR system;
- How one should view the debate on the need for constructing a non-Western IR theory as reflecting the world transformations;
- How to attest a phenomena of non-Western IR theories;
- What are the contents of World Regional Studies as an alternative approach to International Relations and Global Politics, tackling the necessity of extending the methodological frameworks of studying contemporary de-Westernized international relations;

- What are the contents of the main conceptual construct in World Regional Studies, and, in particular, meanings of such notions as “glocality,” “international region,” “global region,” “regional complex,” “regional subsystem” and “regional order”;
- What is the correlation between these notions and their practical implication in World Politics and International Relations;
- How peoples, places and patterns, that is, geography in international affairs, are intertwined with evolving interdisciplinary approaches to regional and international topics; how historically developing “North-South”/“East-West” politics influence the central issues facing contemporary world order;
- What the interlink between the social orders in various states is, how this interlink impacts the leveling off or differentiation of space in our converging world;
- What may be other types of differentiation of the world space related to the politics of unequal development and the answer to this challenge by different nation-states through different models of regionalism and competing regional orders, what may be the consequences of this differentiation in general and how may it influence social engineering processes in all three tiers: local, regional and global;
- What may be the concrete subject field of World Regional Studies as a sub-field within IR and also a framework to address non-Western specifics; why we need a new sub-field and a framework that may help to incorporate existing IR theories while adapting to a globalization-regionalization trend instead of constructing a new set of International Relations theories of a non-Western nature;
- What are the main practical contents of the aforementioned terms of reference, that is, how in essence one should format knowledge on the international and regional processes to such an extent that the internal politics would facilitate successful development of nation-states and the relationship between states, consensual solution of controversial issues and decrease world and regional conflict potential and not nurture interstate, regional or even global stand-offs, which waste time, resources and capacities, and frequently cost human lives.

I believe that to address all these newly evolving global/regional trends and glocal topics through a coherent set of already existing and also methodologically correct evolving transformed rules of academic research and analytical prognostications, which are adapting to reflect a constantly changing reality,

would be a better option. It may help us to answer all new challenges to better prepare for the future while formatting it in a favorable way. Elaborating a new set of IR theories, labeled non-Western, may symbolize a total disruption with existing practices of academic research and analytical traditions, and without guaranteeing a solution to the rising acute questions and challenges to traditional IR. World Regional Studies as a methodological framework can help to attest non-Western IR theories and explanations, but it is also possible to look at World Regional Studies as a national version of IR or even a non-Western framework for analyzing international relations in a non-Western world.

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