

# Getting to Global IR: Insights from Critical Arctic Studies

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## Abstract

Since its introduction in the presidential address of the International Studies Association's annual convention in 2014, Global IR has captured a great deal of scholarly attention. While Global IR's aim – namely, to make the discipline of IR more inclusive and more reflective of its “multiple and diverse foundations” (Acharya 2014, 1) – was generally welcomed as a desirable and necessary development, academics have debated its contributions, critiqued its underlying assumptions, and discussed methods for achieving it for more than a decade. In this article, it is argued that insights from the emerging subfield of Critical Arctic Studies (CAS) can usefully contribute to Global IR by helping to achieve its aim, and in part, addressing its critics. The paper proceeds with a discussion mapping the evolution of Global IR and critical responses to it, before turning to CAS' profile. The paper then analyses the connections and disconnections between CAS and Global IR, demonstrating what knowledge and approaches produced from a CAS perspective add in Global IR context. The article concludes with some final observations on CAS, the ‘how’ of Global IR and its implications for the future of international studies.

**Keywords:** Global IR; Critical Arctic Studies; International Relations theory; the Arctic.



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## Introduction

Although in his 2014 ISA presidential address Acharya coined the phrase ‘Global IR’ and articulated its grand vision, the substance of Global IR did not arrive in a vacuum. Academic explorations of what ‘global’ captured, that ‘international’ did not, in the context of IR, had been gathering apace over a lengthy period. Consider, for instance, the backdrop of the wider globalisation literature emerging from the 1990s onwards (Hughes 1997; Clark 1998; Petras & Veltmeyer 2000; Sklair 2010). Also, and even more specifically, the subjects of globalising IR and the ‘global turn’ in IR were a part of the literature by the time of Acharya’s statement (Callahan 2001; Chandler 2009; Corry 2013). In fact, in the same year that Acharya’s piece on Global IR appeared, was the release of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the very popular textbook introduction to IR entitled ‘The Globalization of World Politics’ (Baylis, Smith & Owens 2014). Applying a ‘global’ lens in IR context was therefore not especially innovative.

However, what was new in Acharya’s work was the attempt to reconcile traditional IR with its critics under the same framework. Various criticisms of IR on postcolonial, Eurocentric and gender grounds, amongst others, had left IR without a clear means by which to respond effectively to critics while at the same time maintaining its own disciplinary self-identity (Brown 1988; Murphy 1996; Kayaoglu 2010; Seth 2013). This sorry state of affairs is reflected in the opening sentence of Acharya’s 2014 abstract:

The discipline of International Relations (IR) does not reflect the voices, experiences, knowledge claims, and contributions of the vast majority of the societies and states in the world, and often marginalizes those outside the core countries of the West (2014, 1).

Thus, the aim of Global IR was to retain the best of what traditional IR had to offer, while suggesting pathways for further, more inclusive, and more self-aware development of the discipline.

Also in 2014, Critical Arctic Studies (CAS) held its first panel at an international conference, driven by a dissatisfaction with “the ways in which questions, such as gender, indigeneity and development were conceptualised and constructed in contemporary Arctic political and scientific discourses” (Tennberg, Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, undated). Since then, CAS has become a thematic network of the University of the Arctic. In 2022, an edited collection outlining diverse CAS approaches and insights from a range of multidisciplinary scholars was published.

In this article, it is argued that insights from the emerging subfield of CAS can usefully contribute to Global IR by helping to achieve its aim, and in part, addressing its critics. The paper proceeds with a discussion mapping the evolution of Global IR and critical responses to it, before turning to CAS’ profile. The paper then analyses the connections and disconnections between CAS and Global IR, demonstrating what knowledge and approaches produced from a CAS perspective add in Global IR context.

The article concludes with some final observations on CAS, the ‘how’ of Global IR and its implications for the future of international studies.

## 1. Global IR and its Critics

According to its proponents, Global IR is best understood not as a theory, nor as a proposal to rename altogether the discipline of IR, but as “an aspiration for greater inclusiveness and diversity in our discipline” (Acharya 2014, 3). The Global IR aspiration encompasses the following premises:

- (1) It is founded upon a pluralistic universalism: not ‘applying to all’ but recognizing and respecting the diversity in us.
- (2) It is grounded in *world* history, not just Greco-Roman, European or US history.
- (3) It subsumes, rather than supplants, existing IR theories and methods.
- (4) It integrates the study of regions, regionalisms and area studies.
- (5) It eschews exceptionalism.
- (6) It recognizes multiple forms of agency beyond material power, including resistance, normative action, and local constructions of global order. (Acharya 2014, 3)

Expanding on these in turn, it is revealed that “pluralistic universalism” embraces a “world of IR as a large, overarching canopy with multiple foundations” (Acharya 2014, 3). This type of universalism is not about uncovering one, homogenous, “universal history” that applies across time and space, but exposing “stories about forgotten spaces that respect difference, show tolerance and compassion, and are sceptical about absolute truths” (Acharya quoting Tickner 2014, 4). Second, Global IR’s emphasis on world history seeks to bring into IR “the ideas, institutions, intellectual perspectives and practices of Western and non-Western societies alike”, recognising “the voices, experiences, and values of all people in all parts of the world” (Acharya 2014, 4). This does not mean simply using the non-Western world as a source of case studies for Western-generated theory. Doing this would only buttress “the image of area studies as little more than a provider of raw data to Western theory” (Acharya 2014, 4). Rather, Global IR must “develop concepts and approaches from non-Western contexts *on their own terms*<sup>2</sup> and...apply them not only locally, but also to other contexts, including the larger global canvas” (Acharya 2014, 4). Creating Global IR is thus a “two-way process” (Acharya 2014, 4).

Third, Global IR flourishes in the spaces already opened for it by existing IR methods, claims, and theories, such as in new variants of realism and constructivism. At the same time, Global IR challenges these theories “to rethink their assumptions and broaden the scope of their investigations” (Acharya 2014, 4). Fourth, areas and/or regions in Global IR “are not just places, but are also locations for the production of other world-pictures, which also need to be part of our sense of these other worlds” (Acharya quoting Appadurai 2014, 4). Accordingly, Global IR is about synergising:

disciplinary IR (with its theoretical interests and innovations but perceived lack of empirical richness) and the area studies tradition (with

its strong emphasis on field research but which is seen by its critics as atheoretical) (Acharya 2014, 4).

The synthesis that results from this process “gives true meaning and substance to the idea of ‘international studies’” (Acharya 2014, 4). Thus, the name ‘Global IR’ is intended to refer to these synthesising efforts, which centre regions. In so doing, Global IR does not imply a growing regionalisation of international relations in practice. Rather, from the Global IR perspective, regions are neither “wholly self-contained entities, nor... purely extensions of global dynamics...” (Acharya 2014, 4). Instead, they are better understood as “dynamic, purposeful and socially constructed spaces” (Acharya 2014, 4).

Fifth, Global IR rejects “cultural exceptionalism and parochialism”, which are often used to justify “the dominance of the powerful states over the weak” (Acharya 2014, 5). To avoid this outcome, national and regional schools of Global IR should aim to achieve “comparative and broader understandings of the local context”, moving beyond “identity-based knowledge” (Acharya 2014, 5). These schools must avoid presenting their own group characteristics as “homogenous, unique and superior to those of others”, and instead, aim to contribute:

concepts and approaches that explain IR not only in that particular country or region, but also beyond...they must be applicable, at least to some degree, to the world at large (Acharya 2014, 5).

Sixth and finally, Global IR’s understanding of agency is wide; it includes ideational as well as material aspects and recognises Western and non-Western agents. An act of agency is not limited to “the strengthening of the status quo in world politics” (Acharya 2014, 5). It also “involves resistance and rejection”:

An agent-oriented narrative in Global IR should tell us how actors (state and nonstate), through their material, ideational and interaction capabilities, construct, reject, reconstitute, and transform global and regional orders. (Acharya 2014, 5)

In this way, agency is not only in the hands of the strong; it can also be a “weapon of the weak” (Acharya 2014, 6). Agency includes “constructing new rules and institutions at the local level to support and strengthen global order against great-power hypocrisy and dominance” (Acharya 2014, 6). It also extends to “conceptualizing and implementing new approaches to development, security and ecological justice” (Acharya 2014, 6). By adopting Global IR’s wide and varied notion of agency, the roles of the South in, and subaltern perspectives about, global order are revealed and opened for further study.

In addition to these foundational premises, central to Global IR has been its core idea of multiplexity. A multiplex world is comprised of:

...a variety of plots (ideas, worldviews), actors, producers, and directors of world politics...*multiple* key actors/producers/directors (including shape-shifting villains like terrorist groups) whose relationships are defined by *complex* forms of interdependence (Acharya 2014, 7)<sup>3</sup>.

Interdependence in multiplexity is not just complex but also “multidimensional, comprising not just trade, but also financial flows and transnational production” and “multiple layers of governance, global, inter-regional, regional, state and sub-state” (Acharya 2014, 7). Furthermore, multiplexity is the key descriptor of the “emerging world order” (Acharya 2014, 7). More recently, as a measure of multiplexity, Global IR scholars have suggested interaction capacity – or “the relative ability of nations to exercise leadership and organize cooperation” (Acharya, Estevadeordal & Goodman 2023, 2339). This measure, and the notion of multiplexity, are intended to replace economic and military power, and the old concept of multipolarity, as analytical tools for the contemporary world order.

Since the publication of the seminal work on Global IR, many scholars have sought to answer its call, producing new IR knowledge in new ways. Examples include the introduction of a relational theory of world politics (Qin 2016); applying insights from global history in ways that challenge IR’s conventional understanding of the spread of the sovereign state system (Phillips 2016); bringing Latin America-sourced ideas on regionalism into Global IR (Decianco 2016); developing strategies and methods for advancing Global IR (Bilgin 2016; Yong-Soo 2019; Gelardi 2020); and showing how a Global IR approach can shed light on new possibilities with regard to understanding the agency of middle powers (Efsthopoulos 2023).

Other, more critical voices have questioned various dimensions of Global IR. For instance, it has been argued that the uncritical use of ‘global’ as a descriptive category is problematic on a number of grounds, such as its obscuring of Global IR’s Eurocentrism (Barkawi, Murray & Zarakol 2023); its perpetuation of IR’s ‘globalisms’, and its failure to consider the ideational origins and distributional impacts of the ‘global’ (Anderl & Witt 2020). Others challenge Global IR’s emancipatory potential, given data on disciplinary practices which reflect dependent development (Aydinli & Erpul 2022). Another critique examines how knowledge and methods recognised as legitimate and/or scientific by mainstream IR themselves pose a challenge to a truly global IR (Tickner 2016; Eun 2023). Yet others challenge what they perceive as a conceptual and methodological narrowing of Global IR, championing instead a wide diversity of perspectives and approaches (Eun, Kristensen & Shahi 2025).

Thus, the Global IR framework has sought to reinterpret and restructure the study of IR in response to changes in the international system and to stringent criticisms of the various limitations of traditional IR. It advocates for a widening of IR’s disciplinary boundaries, in historical, geographic and agency terms, to better capture the lived experiences of IR worldwide, across time and space. It recognises a special role for the study of regions, or area studies, as a means for achieving Global IR. Finally, it develops the

notion of multiplexity and interaction capacity as a fresh way to approach understanding the current international realm.

## 2. Area Studies and Critical Arctic Studies (CAS)

Although Global IR openly embraces area studies, in Acharya's more in-depth discussion, it becomes clear that, just as Global IR challenges traditional IR, some of what Acharya calls for poses a direct challenge to the foundations of conventional area studies. This has subsequently been recognised within area studies itself. Thus, in 2019, a "crisis of legitimacy" in area studies was analysed, revolving around three main issues: (1) the 'territorial trap', referring to the inclination in area studies to want to name and define an area as a specific, bounded "spatial category"; (2) essentialism, exceptionalism and "traitism", which concerns the way area studies has been "structured, practised and taught"; and (3) imperialism and orientalism, remembering area studies' provenance as a "colonial and Western project", driven by the geostrategic priorities of Great Powers, Dean, Engseeng, Chong, Rigg & Yeoh 2019, 35-42). Acharya identifies these three issues operating within IR as well and presents a Global IR framework as the remedy. Thus, what Global IR (in Acharya's formulation) is aspiring to is not simply the wholesale import of the tradition of area studies as is, but a significantly reconstructed one.

Critical Arctic Studies (CAS) is thus well placed to facilitate such reconstruction where Arctic studies is concerned, and, in so doing, to make a useful contribution towards the achievement of Global IR's aspiration. This is because CAS is driven by theoretical reflection, in an attempt to uncover and address those matters that are either treated only in passing by conventional Arctic scholarship (including Arctic IR) or are omitted altogether. Thus, CAS' starting point is to approach the region with "conceptual ambition" in mind, unburdened by the task of responding to "empirical phenomena" that is typical of regular Arctic studies (Lindroth, Sinevaara-Niskanen & Tennberg 2022, 7).

In addition, what makes CAS critical is its stubborn refusal to ignore the links between power and knowledge relations. What is presented as an "easy, simply or neat" solution often conceals "nuances, silences and exclusions" which, once uncovered and analysed, reveal a very different understanding of the process, content and/or referent object of the 'solution' – including whether it can be considered a solution at all (Lindroth, Sinevaara-Niskanen & Tennberg 2022, 5). As a consequence, CAS scholars generally choose to remain at arm's length from the Arctic agendas of states, corporations, and other centres of power. Where generating Arctic ideas, knowledge, science and narratives are concerned, CAS recognises the historical intertwining of political, economic and scientific activities in the region, and the impact of this intertwining on the type and content of ideational and material products generated (Dahl 2012; Petrov 2019; Doel, Wrakberg & Zeller 2014). Many of these historical legacies of the Arctic remain, and are perpetuated, today (Woitkowitz 2021; Greenberg 2009). Moreover, as the Arctic continues to change and become increasingly of interest to actors inside and outside the region, there is growing pressure on the Arctic academic and scientific community to use their skills and expertise in the service of powerful actors. For instance, given the size

of the subfield, it is not uncommon for Arctic social science scholars to participate in national government-led Arctic initiatives, or to hold government advisory or research appointments related to Arctic policy. By contrast, CAS scholars remain wary of such entanglements, seeking out instead research projects less threatening to their critical orientation, intellectual independence and academic freedom.

Regarding Arctic and Global IR, CAS makes plenty of useful conceptual interventions. For instance, Tennberg's treatment of two dominant *narratives* told and re-told by Arctic IR: Arctic exceptionalism, and the Global Arctic. She points out that these Arctic narratives are always told from the perspective of the Arctic Eight states, and that this state-centrism is "bound up with" the region's history (Tennberg 2022, 189-190). Thus, from the outset, priority is given to the state as the primary Arctic actor, despite the Arctic region being geographically, mentally and politically remote from the southern-located seats of Arctic state power. Meanwhile, those actors actually living in the region – namely, local and indigenous populations – are deprioritised by these narratives, as are their ongoing efforts towards greater self-determination and decision-making power over their own affairs. In addition, other important, local, considerations – such as nature – are ignored.

With this context in mind, the 'exceptionalism' of the first narrative is more easily understood. It starts with Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech in which he called for the Arctic to become a 'zone of peace' via greater scientific and environmental cooperation. This, plus the subsequent end of the Cold War, permitted the Arctic to be transformed from a strategic militarized area - an unexceptional feature of the international system – into a cooperative one, where sustainable development and environmental protection became the central focus. It was these regional qualities – and the assumption that they acted to isolate the Arctic from wider political and economic issues - which made the Arctic exceptional, special, and unique (Tennberg 2022, 190-191). Changing geopolitical realities – notably the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, intensifying worldwide interest in the Arctic's economic potential, and efforts by the Arctic Council to find ways of maintaining cooperation – now challenge the peaceful, collaborative and self-contained view of the region at the heart of the 'Arctic exceptionalism' narrative. However, no matter where one stands on the current status of the 'Arctic exceptionalism' narrative – that is, whether one considers the Arctic an area of peace or conflict – the worldview remains that of the narrators themselves (Tennberg 2022, 191).

Similarly, the 'Global Arctic' narrative is told by Arctic outsiders, who essentialize "it as a resource region to respond to global demand" (Tennberg 2022, 193). While different versions of this narrative exist, the shared, central idea is "increasing global interest in the Arctic beyond regional boundaries, recognition of its economic and environmental significance, and its diminishing political agency" (Tennberg 2022, 192). Thus, the focus of this narrative is geoeconomics, rather than geopolitics; material considerations relevant to the operation of the global economy are foregrounded; and governance becomes instrumentalised, only concerned with maximising the positive impacts of the global economy, while minimising its negative impacts (Tennberg 2022, 192-193). En-

tirely lost is “the diversity, complexity and multiplicity of issues, actors and concerns” actually in the Arctic (Tennberg 2022, 194).

The limitations of these Arctic IR narratives lead Tennberg to call for a fresh ‘worlding’ of the Arctic, one that recasts human-nature relations, and acknowledges the role of the Anthropocene – or the current era, in which human activity has exerted a dominant influence on climate and the environment. Post-anthropocentric IR queries the way in which mainstream IR approaches nature as a passive background to human activities, and “opens up new ways of understanding and being in relations, human and non-human, in the world” (Tennberg 2022, 196). This includes moving beyond human-centred approaches, to recognise a world “with an increasing awareness of complex, entangled human/non-human relations, non-anthropocentric agency and power, and diverse modes of governance” (Tennberg 2022, 196). Thus, according to this school of thought, a relational status exists between the human and non-human.

Building on this insight are two ideas from post-anthropocentric narratives of IR: multiplicity and pluriversality, which focus on how to understand human-nature relations globally. The first positions the world “as multiple but connected”; humans are not separate from, but part of nature (Tennberg 2022, 196). Multiplicity helps to reveal the limitations of Arctic IR’s separatist approach, which has resulted in ‘Arctic governance’ studies that do not address well diverse, human encounters with nature, and ‘Arctic change’-focussed approaches that foreground ecology and the natural sciences but treat “the world essentially as a single entity, ignoring its societal complexity” (Tennberg 2022, 196-197).

By contrast, pluriversality frames the Earth “as a living whole that is always emerging out of the manifold biophysical, human and spiritual elements and relations that make it up” (Tennberg quoting Escobar 2022, 197). From this perspective, recognition of “multiple worlds beyond anthropocentricity” is needed, instead of the commonplace premise of regular IR that a single world exists, containing multiple voices (Tennberg 2022, 197). The objective of pluriversal IR would then be to acknowledge and study different worlds and the connections between and among them.

Another useful CAS intervention comes from *critical geopolitics*, which challenges the way in which IR approaches geography. Whereas IR pins down geography by reference to a particular definition before moving on to study the Arctic in terms of politics, governance and conflict/cooperation, political geography frequently centres on “how the geographical works in language, practice and performance” (Dodds, Woon & Xu 2022, 86). This also distinguishes critical geopolitics from traditional geopolitics, which approaches the geopolitical as “something ‘out there’ that can be objectively observed and analyzed” (Dodds, Woon & Xu 2022, 93). Thus, critical geopolitics manifests in three ways: performances (“the ‘when and where’ of geopolitics”, and by whom, often involving “highly symbolic objects”); imaginaries (“the ‘why’ of geopolitics” – “the images, stories and fables which underpin how people imagine their collective social and political life”); and practices (“the ‘how’ of geopolitics” – drawing on the “lived experiences and socio-material technologies”)(Dodds, Woon & Xu 2022, 83).

In Arctic context, this leads to significant differences of interpretation of the same set of facts. For instance, the issue of how to understand Russia's reopening and modernisation of military bases in the region from the late 2000s onwards. As Dodds, Woon and Xu point out (2022, 85-86), through an IR lens, many framed this as Russia's 'militarization' of the Arctic – the implication being that the actions were driven primarily by military intentions. This then led to analyses of the military intentions and assumptions behind such actions, and the political consequences of such 'militarization' (Boulegue 2022; Petersen & Pincus 2021; Piechowicz 2025). However, more geography-centred approaches highlighted other factors, such as Russia's dominant territorial presence in the Arctic; the aged condition of Russia's Arctic military bases and equipment over decades; and the impact of climate change on accessibility to the Northern Sea Route (Kjellen 2022; Byers 2020). From this perspective, Russia's renewed Arctic military investments were more a reflection of its major geographic regional status, changing environmental realities, plus its recovery from the end of the Cold War – not an overt change of military posture *per se*.

A third CAS intervention comes from *governmentality* studies, where governmentality is concerned with:

“how we think about governing...or [a] way of thinking about, calculating and responding to a problem, which is more or less systematic, and which might draw upon formal bodies of knowledge or expertise...It emphasizes the way in which the thinking involved in practices of government is explicit and embedded in language and other technical instruments but is also relatively taken for granted, ie it is not usually open to questioning by its practitioners.” (Russel quoting Dean 2022, 210).

Existing work on governmentality in Arctic context has forced a reconsideration of how power actually works in practice, whose Arctic understandings are prioritised and “what practices are normalized and justified” in support of this underlying thinking (Russel 2022, 212). Russel's study of *neoliberal governmentality* specifically examines the workings of neoliberal concepts, such as economic value and “the promise of freedom”, plus resistance to these, in the Canadian Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. In this way, she demonstrates how a particular “mentality of rule” shapes both the issue/problem, and the design and implementation of policy meant to address it (Russel 2022, 223). Similarly, Sejersen discusses the transformation of fish in Greenland into profit-maximising “resource rents” via the introduction of a neoliberalism-driven fishing management regime, and the political, economic and social implications of that from the perspective of *moral economy* (2022, 177-178).

Finally, *socio-legal studies* challenge Arctic studies, including Arctic IR, to consider “how legal frameworks and ideas of legality can be employed for ends that are far removed from their express aims” (Lindroth 2022, 263). Specifically, socio-legal studies:

“see[s] the potential of legal recognition, rights-granting and the ‘rule of law’ being harnessed as political tools through which the state safeguards its own economic interests.” (Lindroth 2022, 263).

Thus, from this perspective, law and rights are inseparably entrenched in a wider social and political setting. This is in direct opposition to more conventional legal studies, which treat law and rights as distinct objects of study (Lindroth 2022, 248). Through her discussion on the status of Arctic indigenous peoples, particularly in Canadian context, Lindroth demonstrates how a reconsideration of rights in terms of their state-centrism, their colonial foundations, and as a practice of governmentality leads to richer, more nuanced conclusions than those produced by conventional Arctic scholarship.

### 3. Findings and Future Directions: Synthesising CAS and Global IR

The contributions made to Global IR by these CAS interventions are rich and valuable. Tennberg’s work on IR’s ‘Arctic Exceptionalism’ narrative reveals that what is framed as ‘exceptional’ is largely determined by realist IR theory. As such, cooperation on environmental matters among state- and non-state actors in the Arctic – in other words, signs of a more liberal regional order - were painted as a deviation from the general rule. Hence, contemporary debates about whether the ‘Arctic exceptionalism’ narrative still applies in practice – namely, whether conflict or cooperation are more prevalent in the Arctic – are, in essence, simply another manifestation of the old IR theoretical argument between realism and liberalism, with little relevance to the nuanced, multifaceted, lived experiences of the Arctic.

Furthermore, Tennberg’s analysis of the ‘Global Arctic’ narrative is highly prescient, in drawing attention to the ways in which its assumptions infuse present-day and future-oriented mainstream stories of the Arctic, and shape how the region is understood. This is well illustrated by comparing the role of ice in this narrative, versus its actual presence in the Arctic. Parts of the ‘Global Arctic’ narrative emphasise the climate change-driven ‘opening up’ of Arctic waterways, and the economic opportunities this presents (Finger & Rekvig 2022; Li & Peng 2019). Arctic ice is melting, and to the extent that ice gets in the way of actors pursuing their economic interests in the region, the answer is the use of technology, such as icebreakers, strengthened port facilities, and so on. From this perspective, ice is an inconvenience of the natural world that can and should be overcome through the application of human ingenuity in pursuit of economic gain. This is, however, not the perspective of those who live with, and around, Arctic ice. They consider it “a fluid, dynamic material entity in motion”, with agency, the ability to control, and living qualities (Kangasluoma 2025, 7). How (if at all) can this perspective be reconciled with the idea of a Global Arctic? How does the economic thinking that informs and supports versions of the Global Arctic narrative legitimise certain perspectives, while delegitimising others? *Whose* perspectives are legitimised and delegitimised? What other material, Arctic realities – and local experiences of them – challenge what is narrated about the Arctic? Pushing forward with this line of thinking highlights the way

in which the Arctic proves Acharya's characterisation of regions as "dynamic, purposeful and socially constructed spaces" that are not "purely extensions of global dynamics" (2014, 4).

As acknowledged by Tennberg herself, the post-anthropocentric IR narrative she discusses transforms the 'world' of IR from something that is 'global' to 'planetary' (2022, 196). Thus, the post-anthropocentric narrative challenge Global IR to clarify its parameters (if any) – whether in terms of subject-matter, geophysical scope, actors or some other measure. By contributing ideas of multiplicity and pluriversality as analytical tools, the post-anthropocentric IR narrative also provides alternatives to – or perhaps a sparring partner for – Global IR. There are obvious parallels between multiplicity, which stresses a multiple but connected world, and Global IR's 'multiplexity', which highlights a multiple and complex world. Given the notion of multiplexity has only quite recently started to be fleshed out in detail, comparing and contrasting these two terms is likely to lead to more incisive analysis and sharper analytical tools. In addition, Tennberg's pluriversality acknowledges multiple worlds – an idea which is tacitly acknowledged by Acharya in his reference to the "other worlds" and "other world-pictures" generated in and by the regions (2014, 4).

Similarly, Sejersen argues that the advent of the Anthropocene is a good opportunity to re-engage "with moral thinking at all scales" (2022, 179). For instance, analyses of the 'Global Arctic' narrative from a moral economy perspective would yield fresh findings on the sorts of moral obligations practised and expected via the current and future economic transactions anticipated by that narrative. To the extent that such obligations and interactions also shape and help legitimise the wider social order, they also provide new information on the nature of that order. Moral economy thus offers a pathway for considering and comparing the moral backbone of different economic visions of the Arctic, with a view to better understanding which (or whose) moral values, are prioritised, how and why. For instance, drawing on an example mentioned earlier: what moral imperatives – and whose – are revealed by an economic regime in which ice – one of the characteristic features of the Arctic – is positioned as a nuisance to be conquered, in pursuit of profit?

Given presently high levels of global economic interdependence, plus shifts in world order, this approach also promises to produce more human-centred analyses of international economic practices that highlight the moral/social context in which regular economic measures (such as GDP and foreign direct investment) are situated. Economic practices represent a form of agency, and so work along these lines directly feeds into Global IR's insistence on acknowledging multiple kinds of agency.

The analysis of China's Arctic role at the 2019 Arctic Circle China Forum (ACCF) in Shanghai through the three-part schema of performances, imaginaries and practices also represents a useful CAS intervention on Global IR from critical geopolitics. The non-Western geographic location of the study, focussed on a non-Western actor on its own home turf, chimes well with Global IR's focus on greater inclusion of non-Western ideas, practices, and voices. Moreover, the developed schema extends and advances "the

multiple forms of agency beyond material power” to which Global IR aspires. The study by Dodds, Woon and Xu finds that a diverse range of Chinese Arctic performances and Chinese Arctic imaginaries presented at the ACCF set the scene for the discussion of Chinese Arctic practice, which centred on the Polar Silk Road project. As such, the study also provides useful data gathered outside the West on which Global IR’s multiplexity notion could be tested. If multiplexity rests on an actor’s interaction capacity, then what does China’s performances, imaginaries and practices at ACCF tell us about its “relative ability to exercise leadership and organize cooperation” (Acharya, Estevadeordal & Goodman 2023, 2339)?

The intervention on governmentality – and particularly neoliberal governmentality – also offers rich insights and fresh research opportunities, in a core area of IR - namely, policymaking. While work on the contents and effects of national Arctic policy-making is abundant (Coates & Holroyd 2020; Kobzeva 2019; Osthagen 2021; Staun 2023), and the topic of governmentality is not a stranger to either IR or the Arctic (Albert & Vasilache 2017), the versions of governmentality and neoliberal governmentality used in the CAS intervention focus on “practices of government” in the form of policy (Russel 2022, 210). Via content, discourse and contextual analysis of a specific policy, Russel unearths the neoliberal ‘mentality of rule’ underpinning it, thereby making it possible to challenge its influence in terms of the policy’s framing of problems, objectives, initiatives and solutions. Given the proliferation of Arctic policy documents worldwide over the last decade, going beyond analysis of state interests, identities and preferences to seek out the ‘mentality of rule’ behind these documents is likely to reveal not only the prevalence (and limits) of neoliberal thinking. It may also reveal which actors inside (and perhaps outside) the formal state apparatus succeed in establishing the ‘mentality of rule’ underlying that state’s policy responses. This, in turn, contributes to articulating the “multiple foundations” comprising Global IR’s notion of “pluralistic universalism”.

Lindroth’s intervention on socio-legal studies is an important reminder that even in parts of the Arctic where Arctic people’s laws and rights are enshrined (or where progress towards the same is advanced), this does not necessarily mean values such as recognition, sovereignty, justice and equality have been achieved in practice. By approaching the method and content of law-making and rights-granting as political tools of the state, CAS challenges conventional legal approaches to consider the legal recognition of indigenous rights from the perspective of indigenous peoples themselves. Such legal recognition may be a milestone but is rarely the endpoint in an ongoing process of making space for diverse indigenous ways vis-à-vis an existing legal system with its own ways. This insight also holds true with regard to international law, and once again underscores Global IR’s acknowledgement of the “multiple foundations” at the heart of “pluralistic universalism” – plus the need to widen recognition of different types of agency. Building on this CAS insight from socio-legal studies, the study of Global IR has an opportunity to overcome its Eurocentric/colonial origins, and thus address some of its critics head-on.

## 4. Conclusion

Both Global IR and CAS share a wish to reconstitute their mainstream counterparts, IR and Arctic studies, respectively, in an effort to understand and account for more of the world more effectively. As demonstrated here, closer inspection of Global IR's call for the "integration" of area studies extends to critical approaches to that tradition. With that in mind, this article has sought to identify how CAS insights move Global IR forward, both through their existing, substantive contributions and the promising future research directions towards which they point.

The five CAS topic-areas discussed here – narratives, critical geopolitics, neoliberal governmentality, moral economy and socio-legal studies – have all showcased new and interesting ways to think about the Arctic. In so doing, they have also begun to forge a path towards Acharya's "two-way process" of creating a truly Global IR. Of course, CAS is not confined to these topic-areas alone; for now, it exhibits high potential for making further interventions of relevance in Global IR context. If Hurrell's view on how to study Global IR is correct, then more CAS interventions should not only be a welcome development, but actually needed:

...we need to understand far more about how different parts of the world have understood the global, the impact of Western globalization/globality, and the narratives that are told about how different regions, states and societies 'fit into' the global. Rather than bringing differently situated scholars into a conversation about the merits or demerits of an existing Western conversation about global order, we should aim to open up a far broader conversation that uncovers the production of differently situated accounts, narratives and stories about the global and its associated and related ideas and concepts. This will also involve asking how current frameworks for understanding global order have been shaped by, and constrained within, fundamentals of a social science that were created in the age of the European nation-state. The pathway to a global IR will need to look beyond 'IR' and is likely to require new models for organizing social science research and knowledge production. (2016, 3).

## Endnotes

- 1 Emphasis in original.
- 2 Emphasis in original.
- 3 Emphases in original.

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