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Worldviews and their Role for GPE Scholarship

Box 1.1 Learning Objectives

- Understand what worldviews are and why they matter for how scholarship is done in Global Political Economy (GPE).
- Discuss where worldviews come from and reflect on how your geographical location and real-life experiences shape what you “see”, think about and engage with, thus what GPE means for different people in different contexts.
- Appreciate how specific political, economic and social conditions shape how scholars interpret and apply concepts or theories in GPE.

Introduction

GPE, like many fields in the social sciences, is diverse. While all scholars agree that GPE examines the interactions between politics and economics globally and their uneven effects, there is no consensus on its disciplinary basis and how it should be conducted. These differences arise from philosophical positions, not theoretical disagreements. This diversity does not hinder knowledge acquisition or global discussions about the political and economic connections in the global economy. However, it is important to understand how to situate scholars and their various philosophical perspectives to acknowledge the diversity of the field and better understand the contributions and limitations of different approaches.

These different approaches are at least in part related to the specific environment where research takes place and under what structural conditions (Tickner, 2018). As a result of these conditions and the affiliation with specific academic, political or social communities, scholars hold specific views regarding what GPE is based on and how and for what aims it should be pursued. We call these fundamental beliefs **worldviews**. They refer to unexamined, pre-theoretical foundations of the approaches with which we understand and navigate the world (Katzenstein, 2022). Worldviews make the complex and uncertain world of GPE intelligible for a researcher about to embark on exploring it in theoretical and empirical detail.

This chapter explores the relevance of worldviews for GPE scholarship and provides some basic divisions based on the philosophy of science. While these divisions might seem abstract or arcane for students at first sight, they have real consequences for how to approach a specific topic or phenomenon in GPE such as regional integration. They even tell different stories about the origins of the field as a whole. Therefore, this chapter makes the case for the importance of worldviews and as an introduction to the often only implicit philosophical positions of GPE scholars before we turn to specific problems in the second part of the book. On the other hand, the role of worldviews should not be made into an absolute either according to which we can conveniently classify scholars in exclusionary boxes. Rather we posit that thinking about worldviews helps to generate a necessary (self-) reflection about where one stands as a GPE scholar *vis-à-vis* the overall purpose of research and the analytical instruments with which to conduct it.

Worldviews in GPE

Worldviews matter for the study of GPE because they inform what scholars consider as a problem worth studying (**ontology**) and how to obtain knowledge about it (**epistemology**). Based on different answers to these questions, fundamental philosophical differences, leading to literally “seeing” different issues, actors, processes and ways to study and explore the connections between specific phenomena in the global political economy, emerge (Hollis & Smith, 1991).

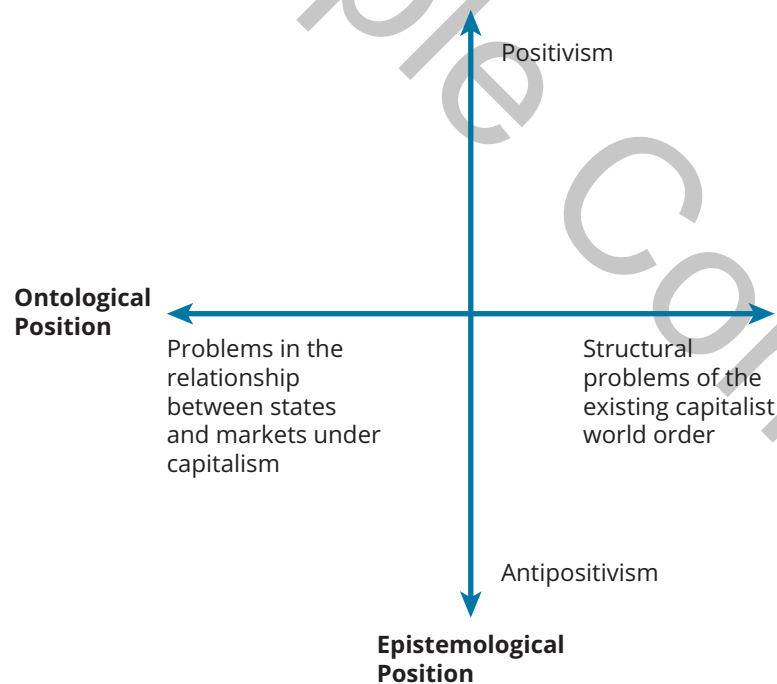


Figure 1.1 Worldviews in Global Political Economy

The matrix presented in Figure 1.1 provides a mapping of ontological and epistemological positions that frame contemporary scholarship in GPE. We wish to emphasise that the spectrum of scholarship takes place along a continuum between the various poles instead of trying to box individual scholars or entire theories into irreconcilable or mutually exclusive philosophical camps (Blyth, 2009; Katzenstein, 2009). However, the distribution of worldviews along ontological and epistemological lines structures contemporary scholarship in important ways as we demonstrate at the end of this section using two examples of GPE theories or analytical frameworks.

On the *ontological axis* we deal with the **nature of problems** in GPE. On the left-hand side, scholars seek to analyse problems in state–market relations *within* the existing capitalist world order. They consider the field basically as a combination between the disciplines of Political Science and Economics. As a result, the key concepts of both disciplines – states and markets – frame the universe of GPE and must be studied in permanent interaction. In turn, both states and markets rely on a different logic – power vs. efficiency – for the distribution of resources. The resulting tension between these divergent logics constitutes the ontological basis on which problems in GPE are defined and solutions are to be found.

In addition, within the left-hand side of the ontological axis, problem-solving occurs based on the rational behaviour of actors. Confronted with multiple choices for action, actors are assumed to be able to calculate the consequences of their actions with unrestricted precision based on expected gains and losses. As a result, decision-making for actors in the global economy is characterised by individual and collective utility maximisation. In other words, actors pursue specific, usually material goals and choose a strategy that corresponds to the rational calculation of costs and benefits of different courses of action.

Finally, problem definition for scholars located towards the left-hand side of the ontological axis departs from the assumption that the world of GPE consists of regular patterns of relations between phenomena open to researchers' observation and thus susceptible to systematic study. These regular patterns, based in turn on causal relations between phenomena, that characterise the world of GPE are assumed to be independent both from the person of the researcher and the specific spatial and temporal context in which an observation occurs. In other words, researchers can analyse these phenomena and their links as neutral observers irrespective of their specific normative position on the problem under consideration.

Towards the right-hand side of the ontological axis, scholars consider *structural problems* of the existing capitalist order. These problems arise out of the internal operation of the capitalist order in its various political, economic, cultural or environmental articulations and multiple effects for humankind. The focus is on the existence and impact of deep-seated social structures inherent in capitalism instead of specific problems that arise out of the tension between states and markets within a given or fixed overall framework.

These social structures are usually “hidden” and man-made (or socially constructed), and are therefore not open to objective observation, let alone regular, causal patterns that are independent from the time and the geographical space where an observation is made. Instead, social phenomena and their relations are created in a specific geographical and temporal context that give meaning to “reality”.

As a result, rather than looking for objective causes or rational solutions to specific problems that characterise the contemporary capitalist order, these scholars base problem definition on the very existence of that order. In other words, problems exist because the logic and operation of the capitalist order itself generates them. Scholars employ different conceptual lenses or categories such as class, gender, or race that transcend both the analytical focus on the state–market dichotomy and political science and economics as the disciplinary pillars of GPE. Take, for instance, the change of focus from a state-based to a class- or gender-based perspective for analysing the global economy – completely different actors, processes and interests come into play. Finally, the analysis of structural problems requires a holistic or inclusive approach where all social sciences, including history, sociology, anthropology, law, geography, etc., are brought to bear for the study of the global economy.

On the *epistemological axis*, scholars are divided about **how to acquire knowledge** about the world of GPE. On one extreme, the commitment to positivism is based on the assumption of a reality characterised by regular patterns of relations between observable phenomena in the social world. In other words, there is an objective basis for knowledge that is available to any researcher who follows the standard procedure of scientific research. According to this procedure, researchers form concepts to analyse the complex reality, then proceed to establish hypotheses on how these concepts are linked with each other based on a specific theory. After transforming the concepts into variables that can be observed or empirically measured, the final step involves the development of a research design by which the hypotheses can be tested, and the underlying theory be confirmed or rejected (King et al., 1994). Scholars who are committed to this form of knowledge-acquisition search for observable or measurable causes of specific phenomena in global political economy, e.g., what are specific factors such as the political orientation of governments that help to explain the occurrence of national and global economic crises.

As we move down the epistemological axis, the scepticism towards the use and applicability of the standard procedure of scientific research increases. Scholars become more hesitant to apply it to obtain knowledge about the phenomena or relations that they are studying. They question the assumption that the observation of reality and the creation of relations between phenomena is neutral or obvious to the observer. Instead, what counts as knowledge depends on the **researcher's standpoint**, i.e., knowledge claims are the product of a specific time and space, which in turn are framed by “hidden” social relations and the existence of so-called hegemonic ideas about what counts as legitimate knowledge and what lies outside of it. The latter view is associated with the extreme position of anti-positivism, i.e., the wholesale rejection of the traditional scientific method as the basis for acquiring knowledge about the social world. For example, scholars working in this epistemological tradition analyse how discursive constructions, say the discourse of free trade in the global economy, help to create and sustain specific political structures or orders.

However, it is important to reiterate that epistemological positions represent a continuum and not a strict dichotomy between positivism and anti-positivism. For example, some scholars engage in the search for meaning that social agents attach to their actions, thus transcending the assumption of rational or utility-maximising behaviour. In their view, social

agents in the global political economy are driven by a variety of motivations beyond the narrow pursuit of material interests or goals. Social structures and social agents are seen in permanent, inseparable connection – in other words they are co-constitutive for the construction of social reality. Interpretive scholarship assumes that reality is socially constructed but so-called **situated knowledge** can still be obtained through the application of specific social science methodologies.

The brief descriptions of two influential approaches in GPE contained in Boxes 1.2 and 1.3 are meant to illustrate how specific ontological and epistemological positions – or what we have called worldviews – shape the formulation of analytical or theoretical perspectives in contemporary GPE. Chapters 2 and 3 provide a more detailed discussion of different worldviews in GPE, distinguishing between an interaction-centred and a social-structural analysis. While Open-Economy Politics falls into the first category, neo-Gramscianism is an example of the second category of worldviews in GPE.

Box 1.2 Open-Economy Politics

Based on neoclassical economics and modern international trade theory, scholars working in the Open-Economy Politics tradition use material interests and formal political institutions to explain national economic policies (Lake, 2009; Rickard, 2021). Departing from a liberal view of international politics (Moravcsik, 1998), they give pride of place to forces in domestic society in order to explain economic policy results. They start with an identification of a rather narrow set of organised domestic interest groups' preferences *vis-à-vis* a specific economic policy, say trade liberalisation. These divergent preferences are deduced from a strictly material basis, i.e., whether a specific group in society stands to gain or lose from trade liberalisation. In a second step, interest-group preferences are shaped and channelled by the structure of domestic political institutions such as the political or electoral system of the country. These institutions aggregate and transform preferences into economic policy outcomes. For example, export-oriented sectors of the economy prefer trade liberalisation. Depending on the specific characteristics of the electoral system (majoritarian vs. proportional representation model) and of the political system (presidential vs. parliamentary), domestic interest groups are able (or not) to influence the decision-making process and thus determine policy outcomes in line with their interests.

Box 1.3 Neo-Gramscianism

Based on the ideas of the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci et al., 1971), neo-Gramscian scholars in GPE seek to **understand** "the structures that underlie the world", as their main protagonist Robert Cox has put it (Hoogvelt et al., 1999). They transcend the narrow materialist vision of orthodox Marxism with its focus on the bourgeoisie's

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control over the means of production as the essential building block of capitalism. Instead, neo-Gramscianism emphasises the importance of ideational underpinnings of the contemporary capitalist system and international order. For example, certain economic policies benefitting the bourgeoisie, such as trade liberalisation or free trade, have become part of a discursive structure that reaches deep into contemporary capitalist societies, thus amplifying and consolidating the power base of the bourgeoisie. In addition, a new transnational capitalist class has emerged as a result of globalisation starting in the 1970s, whose power base has both material and discursive foundations. Making use of a novel conceptualisation of hegemony – understood as a stable configuration of material power, ideas and institutions (Cox, 1983), neo-Gramscian scholars offer a nuanced interpretation of the pillars and possible breaking-points that characterise contemporary capitalism and the international economic order.

Which Factors Drive Scholars to Adopt a Specific Worldview?

While all scholars share the same interest in analysing GPE problems generated by the tensions that arise from the interaction between globalised markets and fragmented political authorities, their understanding of these problems varies significantly depending on the historical, geographical, cultural and even personal context in which they are immersed. For example, climate change was hardly an issue for GPE scholars in the 1970s, though it is now one of the main global problems addressed by researchers. Similarly, looking at the global development of digital technologies from California offers a different picture than what it looks like from developing countries, where internet access is limited. Finally, the issue of gender in contemporary capitalism has been brought to the attention of the field mainly by GPE scholars who experience the effects of patriarchy in their daily lives as well as in their academic careers.

As a result, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of GPE scholarship. All GPE scholars and schools of thought highlight crucial elements and dimensions of global political economy problems. However, their perspective necessarily includes blind spots. Thus, it is vital to maintain a critical stance on GPE scholarship and to adopt a self-reflexive attitude as to why specific scholars privilege or exclusively work within specific worldviews.

Positionality and Reflexivity

We all have different backgrounds and unique identities. These experiences and identities are not merely individual. They locate us within societal and historical structures of domination. Our identity includes dimensions of race, class, gender, sexuality and ability status that partly define our lived experience of domination and exclusion. In this book, we adopt the

non-positivist view shared by many GPE and social science scholars according to which our understanding of the world is mediated by our identity, and our worldviews are influenced (or even biased) by our position along these dimensions. In this view, the researcher and the object of research cannot be completely separated.

It is therefore essential to adopt a reflexive standpoint as we study or research GPE problems. We can outline three dimensions of reflexivity (Amoureux & Steele, 2015). First, reflexivity entails positionality as a form of self-awareness and disclosure of one's position in the structures of domination outlined earlier. We must reflect upon and discuss where we speak from as GPE students and scholars. Second, reflexivity requires critique as a reflection on our role as knowledge producers. Feminist scholarship has discussed in depth the challenges of this dimension of reflexivity for GPE. For example, Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True (2008, p. 693) start their analysis of reflexivity in practice by asking: "How can we study power and identify ways to mitigate its abuse in the real world when we, as researchers, also participate in the projection of power through knowledge claims?" Indeed, reflexivity is not only a matter of individual intellectual honesty. It is also a responsibility of academics towards society since academic titles and scholarly legitimacy give us a position of power within society. Finally, reflexivity has also a practical dimension since we are not only observers of global reality but also political actors that make decisions based on our knowledge of the global political economy. GPE knowledge is not abstract, it informs the ways in which we vote, consume and engage in different political, economic and social causes and projects.

Box 1.4 Cox's Critical and Problem-Solving Theories

More than four decades ago, Robert Cox (1981) was already calling for reflexivity by stressing the fact that "theory is always for someone and some purpose". He famously distinguished between problem-solving and critical theories in International Political Economy (IPE) and the social sciences as a whole. Whereas problem-solving theory "takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action" (Cox, 1981 pp. 128–129), critical theory "does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing" (Cox, 1981, p. 129).

Geographies of Knowledge

We introduce a simple claim that is easy to verify at the individual level: What we see when we look at GPE problems depends, at least to a certain extent, on *where we are standing*. However, when we think about how the collective knowledge of a field of studies such as GPE has been constructed over decades, we face a much more complex construction that responds to global geographies of knowledge (Agnew, 2007).

Most of the theories, concepts and frames of reference that contributed to the establishment of GPE as an academic field emerged within a particular context. The two dominant worldviews that structure the field, namely the American (i.e., US) and British schools, stem from territories that share a language, a history of world dominance, and a favourable position in the global political economy. Thus, the situated character of knowledge that affects individual worldviews translates into a whole field of studies that rely primarily on knowledge from Europe and extensions of Europe overseas, such as the United States (Agnew, 2015). Moreover, this knowledge, like any scientific knowledge, is presented as *universal* despite its situated origins. Historically, “universal” concepts and theories have been forged within a *particular context* and then universalised, creating and reproducing dynamics of domination within and through the field of GPE. As a result, this knowledge shapes the way in which GPE scholars and students around the world perceive and study GPE problems.

Box 1.5 Foucault’s Concept of Power/Knowledge

We usually think of power and knowledge as two different concepts. However, philosophical debates have explored the relationship between the two concepts. The French philosopher Michel Foucault (Foucault & Gordon, 1980) argues that they are inextricably linked and that it does not make sense to think about power without thinking about knowledge and vice versa. Therefore, he forged the single concept of power/knowledge.

This concept is coherent with Foucault’s view of power as decentralised and diffused. Power/knowledge is produced and reproduced in any situation. It is not only a top-down relationship between different actors and knowledge, or a resource to be mobilised by powerful actors. Social settings constantly reproduce truths and knowledge and exclude others, thereby reproducing power relations.

For a discussion on the concept of power/knowledge in GPE and its relationship with Susan Strange’s power structures, see Langley (2009).

Scholars from subaltern and marginalised regions of the world have increasingly questioned the dominant position of certain types of knowledge – stemming from particular geographic and cultural contexts – that support and inform global hierarchies. Edward Said (1979) denounced *Orientalism* as a discourse and body of knowledge that presents Western civilisation as superior and Eastern civilisations as inferior. Echoing Foucault’s ideas on the power/knowledge nexus (see Box 1.5), he explains that Orientalism is not a product of European colonial rule in the Middle East, but rather precedes and justifies it. Following Said’s critique, scholars insisted on the plural character of knowledge and advocated for alternative knowledges about the world (Mignolo, 2000). This is a direct critique of the positivist view in which knowledge is unique and universal and different knowledge claims can be understood as attempts to construct this universal knowledge. For example, subaltern studies emerged in the 1980s as a reaction to the dominant narratives on the history of the Indian subcontinent. The objective was to offer an alternative knowledge “from below” (Guha, 1997).

Box 1.6 Global North and Global South

The expressions “Global North” and “Global South” describe a division of the world between developed countries integrated in the global economy and low- and middle-income countries that have been historically marginalised. This marginalisation is not strictly economic, but also social, political, and cultural. Countries in the Global South share a history of direct colonisation, or political and economic domination, by countries from the Global North.

This division corresponds to what was described in the 20th century as the developed vs. the developing worlds (see Farias, 2023); or the First (capitalist) and Second (communist) Worlds vs. the Third World.

It also corresponds to what World-System and Dependency Theories refer to as the centre vs. the periphery and semi-periphery in the global economy.

The division is not strictly geographical as illustrated by the Brandt line presented in Figure 1.2. It is also a distinctive political positionality and an ethical subjectivity (Tickner & Smith, 2020).

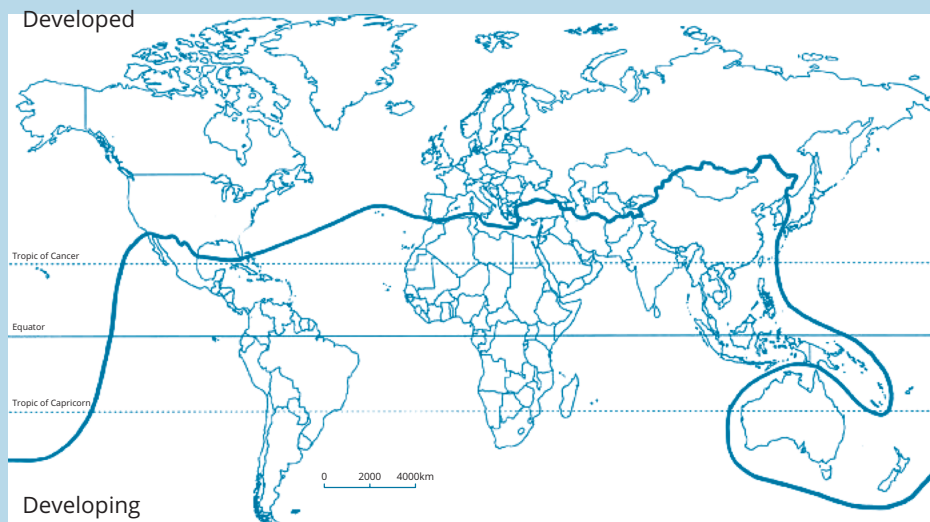


Figure 1.2 The Brandt Line, a Definition from the 1980s Dividing the World into the Wealthy North and the Poor South

Source: Jovan.gec – own work, CC BY-SA 4.0

The term “Global South” began to be used in the academic literature in the 1990s (Korany, 1994) and has become the main expression to group countries along observable socio-economic lines at the global level. Academics and observers now commonly use this term, though policymakers and international organisations tend to use more precise categories such as low-, middle- and high-income countries. However, this common approach

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is questioned by decolonial authors who define the Global South as an ensemble of “epistemic places where global futures are being forged by delinking from the colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 184).

In the same vein, Aníbal Quijano describes the coloniality of power as the concomitant diffusion of European colonial rule and of a knowledge that justified the superiority of Europeans around the notion of race. In Quijano’s view and in a similar fashion to Foucault’s analysis of the power/knowledge nexus, knowledge is not universal and is co-constitutive of power relations. In addition, the knowledge resulting from European modernity is part of a project of world domination. Thus, alternative knowledges are not only necessary to understand different world regions, but also to undermine this political, colonising project. As a result, several Latin American scholars have argued for a **decolonial turn** in the social sciences (see Maldonado-Torres & Cavaoris, 2018).

Box 1.7 On the Globalisation of GPE

During the last decade scholars became more conscious of the “provincial” character of GPE approaches and foundations. While claiming to address global issues, most GPE scholarship remains rooted in a European and North American tradition. Following the call by the former president of the International Studies Association, Amitav Acharya (2014), to build a “global IR [International Relations]”, GPE scholars started thinking about how to incorporate non-Eurocentric roots of the field to “globalise” GPE. For example, Helleiner (2021) traces the intellectual history of neomercantilism beyond the traditional focus on Friedrich List and Alexander Hamilton to include East Asian neomercantilists from Japan, China and Korea, and other theorists and practitioners in Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America. More generally, Deciancio and Quiliconi (2020b) argue that most of the main GPE questions were already debated in Latin America and other regions much before the canonical “birth” of IPE in the 1970s in the US.

The questioning of the universal character of knowledge in GPE scholarship is by no means a relativist negation of the possibility to create a global dialogue. It is rather a call for reflexivity in our study of GPE, which means a reflection on how the knowledge that we use to understand the world is influenced and mediated by the geographies of knowledge and our own identity. In this book, we stress the need for a critical perspective on GPE scholarship. As scholars trained mainly in Europe and teaching and doing research in Colombia, we are aware of the need to understand the dominant GPE narratives and worldviews but also of the necessity of questioning and complementing them. We do not offer an alternative – decolonial or otherwise – knowledge about GPE, but we instead emphasise the situated character of the concepts and approaches that are used throughout this book.

Along these lines, in the next section we discuss a range of perspectives and scholarship regarding a specific GPE concept in order to present a more pluralist and indeed global approach to the field.

Worldviews and the Study of GPE

Worldviews influence how scholars approach GPE phenomena and how they define, interpret and apply concepts – both over time and in different parts of the world (Helleiner, 2021; Hobson, 2020; Tickner & Blaney, 2012). This section discusses the example of regional integration as a global trend that has been analysed from different perspectives in recent decades. It also presents two so-called “origin stories” of the field of GPE that demonstrate the importance of worldviews in the definition of *what* GPE should analyse and *how* it should proceed.

Regional Integration

Like most concepts in GPE, regionalism was initially introduced in the context of the Global North, more precisely considering the Western European experience after World War II. The somewhat unique process of integration in Europe was interpreted as evidence of the forces of **economic interdependence** and how states have dealt with it (Keohane & Nye, 1973). The evolution from a free-trade area in the 1950s all the way down to a common market and a (partial) monetary union today was seen as the logical evolution of institutional forms driven by both internal and external factors and actors. In addition, the institutional trajectory of regionalism follows a somewhat pre-ordained path towards **supranationalism** or the pooling of national sovereignty (Moravcsik, 1998). Theoretical debates, e.g., between liberal intergovernmentalism and social constructivism (Cheekel, 2007) about the crucial factors behind the evolution of regionalism more often than not take the European experience as their point of reference against which all other regional processes are judged.

In contrast, perspectives outside of Europe usually take a different point of departure: for them regionalism is an instrument not just for enhancing their economic well-being in the context of globalisation but perhaps even more importantly a tool to achieve **political autonomy** in international politics. In fact, the pursuit of autonomy and broader developmental goals *vis-à-vis* more powerful actors in the world economy is an influential driver behind historical and contemporary attempts at regionalism in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Amitav Acharya, an Indian scholar, argues that there is necessarily a diversity of regionalism and no one-size-fits-all approach. He emphasises that the paths to achieve economic well-being and political autonomy require specific solutions that are appropriate to a country's or region's context – a context that should consider their unique historical, political and economic characteristics. Contrary to the belief that globalisation imposes a uniform institutional template on regions, Acharya highlights the influence of regional and local actors' aspirations, interests and strategies on regionalism. In addition, he suggests that regionalism can serve as a platform for norm-building and the dissemination of shared norms and

values, thus contributing to global governance – a process he calls **constitutive localisation** (Acharya, 2009).

Pia Riggirozzi and Diana Tussie, two Argentine scholars, maintain that Latin America is a specific case in comparison with traditional notions of regionalism. In this region, regionalism has transformed into a more complex and heterogeneous form characterised by multiple sources of power and influence. The existence of ideational factors such as social justice, national sovereignty and regional autonomy has played a significant role for regional integration initiatives like Mercosur or Unasur. In addition, Latin American regionalism is linked to the important role of non-state actors. Social movements, civil society and the interaction of the public and private sphere are influencing regional policy agendas (Riggirozzi & Tussie, 2012).

The change from “closed” to “open” forms of regionalism – considering the world market as an opportunity and not as a threat – was an important change after the end of the Cold War, leading, *inter alia*, to a proliferation of free-trade agreements between countries in the Global North and South (Manger & Shadlen, 2014). However, the more recent analytical and practical innovations have been trade agreements between countries in the Global South and the establishment of new regional organisations in the context of post-neoliberal or post-hegemonic models of regional governance. In fact, developing countries may act as responsible stakeholders and be interested in protecting the liberal international order from the mercantilist assault (Gamso & Postnikov, 2022).

Last but not least, in terms of institutional forms, the analysis of regionalism outside of Europe is much less focused on (achieving) supranationalism. In contrast, the **preservation of national sovereignty** remains sacrosanct for many countries, especially in the Global South. As a result, analyses of so-called shallow types of regional integration dominate in these regions (Doctor, 2013; Ravenhill, 2010; Schneider, 2017). Specifically, in the context of Latin America, regional integration tends to align more closely with the pursuit of domestic political objectives. Rather than focusing on supranational institutional goals, regional integration in Latin America is driven by various factors as well as competing or overlapping institutional frameworks (Quiliconi & Salgado Espinoza, 2017). These factors may include the pursuit of unpopular domestic policy measures, enhance economic performance and garner public support, or promote democracy. This is reflected, for example, in the case of Mercosur. Even though its initial purpose was to solve the security dilemma between Brazil and Argentina, it has transformed towards an integration scheme that aims to strengthen democratisation and economic reform programmes, as elites strongly believed that integration offered them the best chance to support their domestic political or economic projects (Kaltenthaler & Mora, 2002).

Box 1.8 Spotlight on Research

Eurocentrism in IPE

Recently, various scholars started to scrutinise and denounce the Eurocentric foundations of IPE, aiming to pave the way for fresh viewpoints and to decolonise the field. They have done so by either (re)discovering “forgotten” or overlooked scholars in the Global

South and their conceptual or analytical contributions to GPE scholarship, or by tracing the historical and multicultural construction of the world economy in non-Western contexts and with a conceptual apparatus above and beyond traditional Eurocentric categories (Hobson).

- Helleiner (2023)
- Hobson (2020)
- Hobson (2013)

Box 1.9 Key Concepts

- **Worldviews in GPE:** Unexamined, pre-theoretical foundations of the approaches with which we understand and navigate the world.
- **Ontology:** What scholars consider a problem worth studying.
- **Epistemology:** How to obtain knowledge about a problem.
- **Situated knowledge:** Knowledge that is shaped by the specific location and standpoint of the individual who possesses or generates it.
- **Decolonial turn:** A call for the social sciences to acknowledge that knowledge is intertwined with power dynamics stemming from European colonialism, advocating for alternative forms of knowledge to challenge and dismantle systems of political domination and colonisation.

Two Origin Stories of IPE

The discipline of IPE formally emerged in the early 1970s in different places and based on the work of diverse scholars. As a result, the establishment of IPE within the academic canon in the Anglosphere was not based on a single worldview. In fact, two distinct “**origin stories**” exist concerning where IPE came from, what its field of inquiry is or should be, how it should be conducted and where the disciplinary boundaries lie (Clift et al., 2022). Both narratives are built on classical political economy and its modern versions (see Chapter 4) in their consideration of international politics and economics within a unified framework of analysis. However, they emphasise different aspects of the tradition of political economy to describe the foundations and boundaries of the new discipline (see Table 1.3).

The first origin story about the formation of IPE as an academic discipline is centred around **fundamental changes in the capitalist world economy during the early 1970s** (Cohen, 2008). The collapse of the Bretton Woods monetary system and the resulting discussion about the alleged end of the hegemony of the US in the international economy, but also the various oil shocks and the concomitant rise of new state actors such as the

Organisation of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-state actors such as multinational companies challenged the conventional wisdom in the disciplines of political science and economics.

On the one hand, political scientists working on international affairs had to revisit a narrow notion of security, the exclusive focus on state actors located in the Global North, and the flawed analytical separation of domestic and international politics. On the other hand, economists during the waning days of the Keynesian hegemony and the rise of neoclassical economy in the discipline wondered about the notable relevance of political factors behind specific results in the world economy such as the oil crises in the 1970s.

US-based political scientists such as Robert Keohane, Stephen Krasner or Robert Gilpin conceptualised IPE as an academic discipline that is embedded in the **interaction between political science and neoclassical economics**. Drawing on authors from the mercantilist and liberal traditions in classical political economy, these scholars analysed how state power in the international economy is related to specific configurations of domestic state–market relations and how changing conditions within the world economy impact the exercise and nature of state power. As a result, IPE came to be defined as a **subfield of International Relations** that, in most cases, is in political science departments at universities. This means that IPE is institutionally and analytically separated from other fields of study such as comparative political economy, economic history or economic sociology.

The new area of academic study explicitly considers the political foundations of economic policies and the economic foundations of political outcomes, or “all work for which international economic factors are an important cause or consequence” (Frieden & Martin, 2003, p. 118). The congenial location for the new subdiscipline was seen within political science given that economics under the neoclassical influence is less inclined to incorporate political factors into its empirical analyses. However, locating IPE within political science has simultaneously implied a clear link to the epistemological foundations of neoclassical economics, namely “formulating refutable analytical claims and evaluating their fit with empirical regularities” (Frieden & Martin, 2003, p. 118). The commitment to a (neo)positivist epistemology and the search for and empirical proof of causal explanations are seen as the hallmark of how rigorous, “scientific” research should be conducted in IPE.

In sum, this first origin story of IPE is contextually bound to the evolution of US hegemony in the international economy and seeks to carve out an independent analytical space for IPE as a combination between political science and neoclassical economics. From the former it borrows the focus on state power in a capitalist world economy and from the latter the focus on utility-maximising actors operating according to an economic logic.

The second origin story rejects the narrow focus on the fusion of political science and neoclassical economics that forms the basis of the first narrative of what IPE is and where its boundaries lie. For scholars such as Susan Strange, Robert Cox or Samir Amin, IPE entails both a more interdisciplinary and historical effort across a variety of the social sciences (Strange, 1970). According to this origin story, IPE has resisted the fragmentation of the social sciences that characterises much of contemporary academia. The boundaries between academic fields are not clearly established, leading to a truly **multidisciplinary** and thus

ample basis for IPE. As a result, it transcends the fields of Economics, Political Science, and International Relations and draws on works and concepts from Geography, History, Sociology, Law and Cultural Studies (Cohen, 2019).

In addition, this narrative of IPE's foundations takes a decidedly **historical view**, establishing a clear intellectual connection with the insights of classical political economy and its focus on broad philosophical questions about the relationship between the state and the economy. In this contemporary reincarnation of classical political economy, IPE conceptualises the multiple links between the public and the private realm at the intersection between the national and the international level, using a variety of analytical approaches that transcend both the limits of political science and neoclassical economics as well as the commitment to a positivist epistemology (Clift et al., 2022).

The intellectual rationale for considering IPE as an essential part of the social sciences as a whole is “more multidisciplinary in scope and more normative in ambition, more critical of established orthodoxies and more engaged with social issues” (Cohen, 2019, p. 50). In turn, viewing IPE as a holistic exercise is related to the use of an **interpretivist epistemology** prevalent in the social sciences beyond political science and economics. As a result, innovative insights on state–market relations often come from disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and the history of economic thought. In this view, a foundational narrative that is limiting IPE only to a combination between political science and neoclassical economics allows “the gulf between international economics and international politics to grow yearly wider and deeper and more unbridgeable than ever” (Strange, 1970, p. 307).

Moreover, in the holistic narrative on IPE ideas related to systematic transformations and social developments come into clearer view. Authors such as Phillip Cerny (1990) and Geoffrey Underhill not only defends the idea of a “multidiscipline”, but also brought new dimensions to the interpretations of markets as social structures. For example, Underhill argues that “states and markets are embedded in wider and increasingly social structures. Therefore, they are part of the same integrated ensemble of governance... Also, IPE's emergence in the contemporary context was an answer to questions that... International Relations and economics were failing to address, let alone answer” (Underhill, 2000, pp. 820–824). In addition, a multidisciplinary approach to IPE highlights issues such as culture and identity, while also bringing non-state actors and factors into focus.

In sum, this second origin story of IPE locates the emergence of the discipline squarely within the intellectual tradition of classical political economy with its holistic view on state–market relations, i.e., beyond the confines of either political science or economics. In this view, markets constitute social structures above and beyond specific questions of state interference and thus require broader perspectives, both in terms of academic disciplines and epistemological foundations. As result, rather than searching for causal explanations for specific, observable phenomena, this origin story of IPE eschews a commitment to the scientific method as the only valid yardstick for research in the field. Understanding these phenomena in their inherent complexity and their associated “deep structures” is the essence of what IPE stands for in this origin story.

Table 1.3 Two Origin Stories About IPE's Foundations as an Academic Discipline

	IPE as a multidisciplinary, holistic social science enterprise	IPE as a subdiscipline of political science
Foundational pillars	<p>Interdisciplinarity in the social sciences</p> <p>GPE crosses the fields of economics, political science, International Relations and draws on work and concepts from geography, history, sociology, law and cultural studies</p>	<p>Political science and neo-classical economics</p> <p>GPE origins lie as a sub-discipline of International Relations, in turn rooted in political science. It encompasses political and economic phenomena at an international level. It merges political science with the methodology of neo-classical economics.</p>
Notable scholars	Robert Cox, Susan Strange	Robert Keohane, Stephen Krasner, Robert Gilpin
Political and economic context for the emergence of GPE as a discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origins date back to the first half of the 20th in the aftermath of World War I and the interwar economic crisis • Intellectual pedigree from the evolution of classical political economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collapse of Bretton Woods system and perceived decline of US hegemony in the international economy during early 1970s • Oil crises, rise of protectionism, increase in power of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) • Call for a New International Economic Order and culmination of the political decolonization in the Global South

Conclusions

- GPE scholarship is not homogenous worldwide. We have emphasised the important role of worldviews – unexamined, pre-theoretical foundations for the approaches with which we understand and navigate the world of GPE – that provide fundamental yardsticks to approach contemporary GPE scholarship.
- Worldviews are constructed along a continuum between ontological and epistemological poles. Specific GPE concepts or theories are then located on specific points on this continuum.
- Where do worldviews come from? We have pointed to the important role of reflexivity, positionality and the geography of knowledge as fundamental pillars for how scholarship is constructed and explanation for its differences over time and space.
- Positionality and reflexivity matter for how scholars see their place in and their contributions to the discipline. We have provided illustrations in terms of concept-formation and interpretation of concepts in GPE such as regional integration.

- There are two origin stories about how the discipline of IPE first emerged. The first story emphasises real-world events that threatened the US hegemony and thus required a new analytical approach to combine political science and neoclassical economics in search of explanations for these real-world changes in the world economy. The second story takes a much longer historical and multidisciplinary approach to the emergence of IPE – itself being more than the simple sum of academic disciplines but united by its preoccupation with understanding and eventually changing the operation of the world economy.

Box 1.10 Questions for Discussion

- Discuss the concept of “worldviews” in GPE and how scholars’ affiliations with specific academic and non-academic communities influence their beliefs. Can you identify any recent events that have caused shifts in scholars’ worldviews and research focus in GPE?
 - In the context of regionalism, how does positionality and reflexivity play a role in shaping the understanding and approaches to regional integration? Compare and contrast the European perspective, which often serves as a reference point, with perspectives from the Global South, such as Latin America and Africa.
 - How does the concept of regionalism reflect the complex interplay between global and local influences in GPE? Discuss the ways in which scholars from different regions and social contexts have contributed to the formation and interpretation of this concept, and how this diversity of perspectives enriches the study of GPE.
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Further Resources

- Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein’s documentary “The Take” (2004) provides an insightful portrayal of Argentine workers’ movements amidst economic crisis and corporate restructuring.
- The documentary “On Orientalism: Western Attitudes Towards the Middle East” (1998), directed by Sut Jhally, critically examines Western perceptions and representations of the Middle East, shedding light on Orientalism’s influence on geopolitics and cultural understanding.

SAGE Sample Content