The Spanish academic publisher Tecnos has just put out Teoría de las Relaciones Internacionales, co-edited by Celestino del Arenal and José Antonio Sanahuja, a handbook of IR theories that fills a conspicuous gap in the Spanish (and Spanish-language) literature. The volume enlists contributions by authors affiliated to six different Spanish universities, thus constituting something of a collective effort that might be said to represent a good deal of the Spanish IR community.

The book is organised in twelve different chapters. It starts with a chapter by Del Arenal, one of the co-editors, on the need for IR theoretical reflection to go beyond Western approaches, a point that, sadly, does not seem to have affected the structure of the book. Then a number of chapters follow, each of them devoted to specific schools of thought: realism (Leire Moure), liberalism and institutionalism (Rafael Grasa), critical theory (José Antonio Sanahuja, the other co-editor), constructivism (Josep Ibáñez), post-structuralism (Noé Cornago), feminism (Irene Rodríguez Manzano), and the English School (Caterina García Segura), plus a chapter on the neorealist-neoliberal debate (Esther Barbé and Juan Pablo Soriano). After that, two other chapters look at specific, well-structured subfields of the discipline, namely, security studies (Karlos Pérez de Armiño) and theories of integration (Gustavo Palomares Lerma). Finally, the last chapter argues about the existence of a shared intellectual history for IR scholars in Spain (Rafael Càlduch Cervera), which adds an interesting reflective twist to the interpretation of the book (more on this below).

The handbook will be a good companion to MA courses on IR theories, perhaps also to undergraduate ones on this same topic, and it will probably have a wide circulation in Spanish and Latin American programmes – if not for any other reason, because, to my knowledge at least, there is no equivalent book filling that role in Spanish. Although there are a number of handbooks designed for general IR courses, they all seem to fall short of providing enough background for syllabuses on IR theory. Spanish speakers will find it useful to have a readily accessible text on a wide range of IR theories and perspectives, particularly if they are less than confident with English language texts.
To be sure, the volume is not without shortcomings. In some particular ways, chapters look unduly diverse. A few of them look more like essays in which authors reflect upon their allocated schools of thought, while others present them in a more orthodox and systematic way, as you would expect in a handbook. There is also some diversity in the resources used by chapters to flesh out their arguments—some use cases, most do not; some use text boxes, most do not, etc. One could be forgiven too for missing cross-references along the volume. In addition, theories as described in their own dedicated chapters are not always located in the theoretical spaces they are associated with by the chapters that tackle other schools of thought. To be sure, part of this diversity is understandable, since it reflects some very real features of the theoretical debates in IR, and the distinct relationship that each theory has with the empirical world; however if, as Stanley Hoffmann said, IR theories are “like airplanes that fly at different altitudes and in different directions”, the handbook could have used some more heavy-handed air traffic control. Finally, if every scholar can be a reader, a user, and a producer of theory, any handbook from a peripheral IR community will feature a bigger share of the first two facets. At least as far as IR scholarly production remains hierarchically organised.

Nevertheless, none of these weaknesses makes the handbook less useful for students with a wish to navigate the necessarily troubled waters of IR theories, and the no less troubled ones of the debates among them. In addition, and perhaps more interestingly for readers that do not have a direct stake in Spanish-language courses, the book also sheds some light into the condition of the Spanish IR community. I will first comment briefly upon the chapters of the book, and after that I will elaborate on the latter argument.

The first chapter, by Del Arenal, defends the need to de-Westernise theoretical debates (and the teaching of theoretical debates) and makes the case that non-Anglosaxon traditions of thought are of global significance. The author has developed this point with more detail elsewhere, and it should be seen as a framework for the rest of the book (in spite of its Western flavour). Del Arenal manages to convey the perception, shared by many Spanish scholars, that non-mainstream, local theoretical approaches provide insights that are not accessible to those that stand too close to power. Leire Moure writes a great cartography of realism, probably the grand theory that has been more successful at shaping common wisdom on IR, which makes it easier to teach, but also one that has experienced a long evolution, remarkable theoretical shifts and internal debates, which defies the most popular depictions of what Realism is about. Moure’s is subtle and accessible. The chapter by Rafael Grasa is an essay with an underlying thesis. By tapping into the work of Gerald Holton, an epistemologist, Grasa elaborates on the need to provide both institutionalism and liberalism with separate paradigmatic status, an argument famously made by Andrew Moravcsik that is presented here in a new way.

Esther Barbé and Juan Pablo Soriano pull together some of the loose threads left by the previous two chapters and address two issues in one chapter—first, they present the debate between neoliberals and neorealists, and second, and just as important, they explore the ways in which that debate was instrumental in ‘re)building’ the ‘dominant discourse’ in IR. Twenty years after the end of the neo-neo debate, the

relevance of the first task probably depends on the second one, which perhaps could have been allowed some more space by the authors. José Antonio Sanahuja, Josep Ibáñez and Noé Cornago are the authors of three rather analogous chapters, on critical theory, constructivism and post-structuralism respectively. The three of them make a remarkable job at presenting in an accessible but meaningful manner a map of these three rich strands of theorisation, which students find sometimes more obscure than others that stand closer to popular conceptions about international politics. Perhaps one could say that, as explained by Ibáñez, constructivism is less of a mainstream theory than it looks like when it is referred to in other chapters of the book. Also in this regard some more air traffic control would have been useful. But yet again, the divergence probably has to do with Ibáñez’s preoccupation with the genealogy of constructivism and it seems legitimate to portray this theoretical approach in a way that allows students to reconstruct the unfolding of its successive versions.

Irene Rodríguez Manzano has written a chapter on feminist theorisation that will probably stimulate the interest of MA students, even if the text might at some points seem to rely too much on other explanations of feminism in IR. In this sense, the text is both valuable because of and is shaped by the relative lack of attention paid so far in the Spanish IR community to feminist IR theories. In contradistinction, the English School has always attracted the interest of Spanish scholars (for reasons I will outline below). Thus, Caterina García’s chapter presents material (analytical, conceptual and normative) that is less of a novelty in the Spanish literature. It does so effectively and thoroughly. Karlos Pérez de Armiño maps the evolution of the sub-discipline of security studies, from traditional approaches to critical ones, thus cutting through some of the grand theories presented previously in the book. Gustavo Palomares Lerma does the same with integration theories, although in a less theoretically engaging way. And finally, the last chapter, by Rafael Calduch Cervera, outlines a history of IR scholarship work in Spain. According to Calduch, there are a number of theoretical and methodological assumptions that underpin the research of most of the Spanish academia, to the point that one can speak of a distinctive school of thought, a Spanish School of International Relations.

This chapter invites a reading of the book not only as a handbook, but also as a glimpse into the state of the Spanish IR community, or as a book on the reception by Spanish scholars of IR theories. A brief description of this milieu is necessary here. This is a small community with only a handful of full professors that goes back as little as three generations (according to Rafael Calduch’s own account). In Spain, the development of IR as a discipline was a rather late process. A few dates might suffice to illustrate this point. The first professorship on International Law and International Relations was awarded in 1957 to Antonio Truyol y Serra, previously a professor in Philosophy of Law, at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Up until 1974, the only subject on IR was taught precisely in that university, under the label of International Public Law and International Relations. Moreover, the first IR scholars with a political science background date back only to the 1980s, and as late as 1983 there were courses on IR in four universities only, two of them private and relatively small (Deusto and Pontificia de Salamanca). At least three broad factors can be mentioned to explain this late and limited development of IR in Spain: socio-political factors associated with Francoism, the secular resistance of Spanish universities to change, and the hegemonic role of International Law in the development of international studies. At the same time, and in spite of being small
and of relatively recent development, the members of the Spanish IR community speak in the language (and quite often to the issues) of a much larger one. Latin American universities, networks and researchers have provided Spanish scholars with colleagues, means for internationalisation, readers and students. These connections have militated against the isolation of developments on this side of the Atlantic and have been a source of research agendas and theoretical inclinations. They might also enhance the circulation of the handbook.

These are the circumstances under which the Spanish IR community developed a particular intellectual and scholarly culture and a canonical narrative about itself. More to the point, this narrative revolves heavily on the concept of international society, in the lineage of Marcel Merle’s *Sociology of International Relations* as much as in that of the English School. Significantly, when Spanish scholars mention the first Spanish work on IR (short of the likes of Francisco de Vitoria), they refer to a 1943 contribution by Antonio Poch entitled *Comunidad Internacional y Sociedad Internacional* (International Community and International Society), on the communitarian or societal features of the international arena (along the lines of the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*). In other words, the Spanish tradition (if any) has a strongly Grotian orientation, with some room for Kantian approaches – perhaps an influence of the Salamanca school of *ius gentium*, after all.

Add to this that it sees history as the key auxiliary discipline and it rejects quantitative methods and of course all sorts of methodological formalism. In current parlance, the Spanish traditional approach to IR looks normative, sociological, cosmopolitanist and geared towards thick description. In a way, it looks awkwardly modern – and that is what lies behind the upbeat assertion that Spanish scholars anticipated the theoretical development of sociological approaches in IR (p. 366).

Nevertheless, as the book attests, this is changing rapidly. The narrative has become less relevant the more the community has grown and the more it has internationalised itself. The experiences of Spanish scholars are becoming more diverse. They have become less dependent upon the cultures and incentive structures of Spanish practices and institutions, and more embedded in international ones. Career paths are slowly changing and converging with the wider continental and international sphere, and they are increasingly articulated by a larger number of academic institutions both in Spain and abroad. In this sense, the handbook is a way for Spanish (and Spanish-speaking) IR scholars to register the change and take note of it – a way for the community to tell itself that it has become much more diverse and that its cultural and intellectual singularities are fading away under the weight of other layers of theoretical inputs.