

What We Teach When We Teach IR

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Overview:

A search for our de facto canon of ideas and content to be included in the intro International Relations course, pursued through comparative analysis of leading IR textbooks.

Abstract:

Using leading international relations textbooks as a representation of the most commonly taught ideas in international relations courses, we compare leading texts through several means to assess the degree to which we, as a discipline, have a unified understanding of the canon of ideas we teach in this course. Our content analysis will include comparisons of Tables of Contents, Glossaries, definitions of key terms and perspectives on central ideas. Where we find unity, we articulate what is in our de facto canon. And where diversity is found, we seek to provide a framework for understanding and categorizing these differences.

Political Science is the “granddaddy” of the social sciences with a literature that dates back millennia to the writings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Yet in spite of this long history the discipline still struggles to come to grips with the terms we use to define and advance our field. Modern Political Science in the United States is divided into four main sub-fields: Theory, International Relations, Comparative Politics, and American Politics which is in reality a sub-field of Comparative Politics as is any domestic study of politics.

Every year hundreds of graduate political science students sit for comprehensive exams testing their knowledge of the political science “canon” in their chosen subfield (s). Important questions arise in that while some undergraduate political science students continue to pursue doctoral degrees in political science, most do not. We must ask ourselves what parts of the “canon” do we need our undergraduate students to know and how this knowledge will help them to be productive citizens and community members. A further question arises as to what is the “canon” of knowledge of International Relations and how we get students from an intro class to the point where they are conversant in the field of study.

This paper explores the question of what we teach when we teach in the sub-field of International Relations. It is our intention to explore what is being taught rather than to prescribe what should be taught. We started where Evans and Lindrum left off,

in learning how to effectively compare textbooks, and where to discern our differences¹. Our findings will show that there is a tremendous lack of consistency in what is taught in International Relations core courses.

Our primary methodology explored the content of the most widely used textbooks in courses introducing students to the International Relations sub-field. As we examined these texts, we found remarkable diversity in concepts presented and in definitions given, illuminating a distinct ideological variance of how textbooks teach International Relations. This paper seeks to present some key differences and similarities among textbooks of International Relations, as well as to suggest some useful means through which to compare them. It is hoped that this will lead to a future conversation of what should be taught at the intro level to all.

The question of what we are teaching in IR is important because this class is a cornerstone of the study of political science and a class on which we build an understanding about what political science teaches us about global politics. Furthermore it is a class most political science majors are required to take as it is foundational to the discipline. Clearly we, as a community of scholars, have implicitly agreed that the contents of this course are important because we require it of most students. As such, it would be helpful to define what this core content includes and to note the topics in which it varies. In the end we must give our IR students the proper tools to evaluate global events through the knowledge that political science has provided us.

¹ Evans, Jocelyn and Lindrum, David. *Examining the Content and Perspective of Introductory Texts in American Politics* (January 30, 2010). 2010 APSA Teaching and Learning Conference Paper. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1544929>

METHODS & ANALYSIS

Textbooks provide a framework or infrastructure for faculty to teach courses. Most faculty are never really satisfied with their choice of textbook but see it as the better option than writing their own. With this being said it is implicit that faculty approaches to teaching courses tend to be very individualistic with the need to compromise busy schedules with control over content. The faculty member is thus in their minds often choosing a textbook in order to save themselves class preparation time and the need to write a custom textbook. Textbooks, however, do not define the content of a course, but as the students' primary reference for learning the assigned text needs to support the instructor's efforts. They are a readily accessible and stable guide to what the instructor has declared in-bounds content for the class. Any student can challenge a grade by arguing "the textbook says...". The textbook thus becomes the course "bible" if you will, having authority in disputes. For the purposes of our study we wanted to focus on the most widely assign IR texts that would capture the lion's share of the IR textbook market. We selected the following volumes:

- "International Politics on the World Stage" 12ed, by Rourke (Rourke)
- "Perspectives on International Relations" 2ed, by Nau (Nau)
- "Essentials of International Relations" 4ed, by Mingst (Mingst)
- "World Politics: Menu for Choice" 9ed, by Russett/ Starr/ Kinsella (Russett)
- "International Relations" 9ed, by Goldstein/ Pevehouse (Goldstein)

As our intent was to select those textbooks which are most widely used we wanted to verify that these five texts were truly representative of the majority of the market. Definitive data is unavailable as to which IR textbooks are the most popular

and the most used. The texts we have chosen are widely agreed upon as leaders in the field, based on conversations with professors, editors, publishers. In the search for definitive market numbers we looked at data from R. R. Bowker's PubTrack. Pubtrack totals reported sales from some college bookstores, and is the most prominent provider of textbook data. However, in confidential conversations with editors at major publishers it became clear that the Bowker data was erratic and sometimes off on total units sold by a factor of 80%². Furthermore, because sales shift from year to year as new editions are released one year's best seller is almost never the top seller for the following year. The books we selected top the list year in and year out and, in anecdotal evidence from editors and sales people, these books were most often mentioned. Each of these five books comes from a different publisher and all five publishers represented are among the leading publishers in political science³. For these reasons, we are confident this is the best representative sample and these titles are well suited to answering our questions about what leading IR texts have in common, and where they differ.

TABLES OF CONTENTS

With books selected, we started by comparing Tables of Contents (*TOC*). Unsurprisingly, most were about 14 chapters long, with a few slightly longer (See Table #1). This understandably reflects that most American academic institutions are on the semester system which is 15 weeks in length with a week of final exams tagged on at

² Data collected in conversations with editors of major publishers (2009).

³ Most of the leading publishers have multiple core texts in their stable of offerings for any given field or discipline of study.

the end, and the fact that these books were written for use in support of a semester length class. The Karen Mingst textbook stood out in its 10 chapter length possibly indicating that her textbook is target marketed at the minority (but still significant number) of colleges that operate on the 10 week quarter system.

There is an obvious implication of this affordance in that the books set the pace for the course. It is given that individual professors can teach in a different sequence, teaching two chapters in one week, or observing two weeks for one chapter, but these are intentional deviations. By default, the book determines what is included, in what order, and to what depth. This is an unavoidable and practical reality of the American academic system and we are not criticizing it. Of the TOC's we looked at, no two IR textbooks chose the same chapter content in the same order. Few texts overlapped pedagogically in chapter title, content, or theme.

TABLE 1
Survey of Tables of Contents

| | Rourke | Goldstein | Nau | Mingst | Russett |
|------------------|--|--|--|---|---|
| Chapter 1 | Thinking and Caring About World Politics | The Globalization of International Relations | How to Think About International Relations | Approaches to International Relations | World Politics: Levels of Analysis, Choice, and Constraint |
| Chapter 2 | The Evolution of World Politics | Realist Theories | Perspectives on World History | The Historical Context of Contemporary International Relations | Thinking about World Politics: Theory and Reality |
| Chapter 3 | Levels of Analysis and Foreign Policy | Liberal Theories | World War I | Contending Perspectives: How to Think About International Relations | International Actors: States and other Players on the World Stage |

| | Rourke | Goldstein | Nau | Mingst | Russett |
|-------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Chapter 4 | Nationalism: The Traditional Orientation | Social Theories | World War II | The International System | The World System: International Structure and Polarity |
| Chapter 5 | Globalism: The Alternative Orientation | International Conflict | The Origins and End of the Cold War | The State | Relations Between States: Power and Influence |
| Chapter 6 | National States: The Traditional Structure | Military Force and Terrorism | From 11/9 - 9/11 | The Individual | Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Society and Polity |
| Chapter 7 | Intergovernmental Organizations: Alternative Governance | International Organization, Law, and Human Rights | Terrorism and the World After 9/11 | Intergovernmental Organizations, Nongovernmental Organizations, and International Law | Individuals and World Politics: Roles, Perceptions, and Decision Making |
| Chapter 8 | National Power and Statecraft: The Traditional Approach | International Trade | History of Globalization | War and Strife | Military Conflict: Why States and Other Actors Resort to Force |
| Chapter 9 | International Law and Justice: An Alternative Approach | Global Finance and Business | How Globalization Works in Practice | International Political Economy | The Security Dilemma: Armament and Disarmament |
| Chapter 10 | National Security: The Traditional Road | International Integration | Trade, Investment, and Finance | Globalizing Issues | International law and Organization |
| Chapter 11 | International Security: The Alternative Road | Environment and Population | Miracle and Missed Opportunity | | Causes of Peace and Nonviolent Transformation |
| Chapter 12 | National Economic Competition: The Traditional Road | The North-South Gap | Foreign Aid and Domestic Governance | | Political Economy of National Security and Defense |

| | Rourke | Goldstein | Nau | Mingst | Russett |
|-------------------|---|--|---|---------------|---|
| Chapter 13 | Preserving and Enhancing Human Rights and Dignity | (*Bonus Section: Empowering the Global South: an OXFAM look at a Rights Bases Approach to Development) | Global Inequality, Imperialism, and Injustice | | Interdependence and Economic Order |
| Chapter 14 | Preserving and Enhancing the Biosphere | International Development | World Environment | | Regional Economic Integration and Globalization |
| Chapter 15 | | | Global Civil Society | | Development and Underdevelopment: The North-South Gap |
| Chapter 16 | | | Global Governance | | Limits of Sovereignty: Humanity and the Commons |
| Chapter 17 | | | | | Which Global Future? |

The Tables of Contents had many similarities including chapters about international trade and finance, military conflict, global environment, and globalization. This content overlap indicates a discipline wide consensus on the importance of student understanding of these concepts in relation to the study of IR. These findings are borne out in a more extensive comparison⁴ of Tables of Contents across 19 titles which found nine topics given at least a full chapter's consideration in more than half of the books surveyed. The TOC's we surveyed varied in emphasis of topics and level of focus as different theories received more or less time as well as explanations of historical events like the Cold War and phenomena such as the North-South gap. The Henry Nau

⁴ Ediger, Ruth M. *The Creation of an Undergraduate International Relations Canon: Beginning the Dialog* (March 22, 2006). 2006 International Studies Association Conference

textbook stood alone in its historical approach to IR verses the topical approach of the other four texts. One commonality of all five texts was the introductory chapter that emphasized the importance of “thinking” about global/world politics/international relations by putting the textbook and thus the course in the context of important knowledge for the student. Ediger’s findings support this as well, noting that 15 of the 19 texts she surveyed included such introductory chapters. All the texts, with the exception of Nau’s, have chapters dealing in one way or another with IR theories and the Levels of Analysis. Ediger found 13 of 19 texts included a chapter on theories.

Based on solely on the TOC we can conclude that all IR texts regard the following topics as essential:

1. Place IR in the context of why IR is important to the student
2. IR theory (the amount and number of theories covered varies but Realism and Idealism dominate as is especially evident in the John Rourke textbook).
3. The Levels of Analysis
4. Security/Conflict/Peace
5. International Political Economics/Globalization/Poverty-Wealth Gap
6. Environmental issues
7. Human Rights

In sum, the TOCs indicate, in a highly abstract and concentrated form often only obvious in hindsight, that each book offers an arrangement of ideas, tailored to presenting IR through different frameworks. The TOCs offer very different approaches

to the subject in both the micro and the macro framework, providing for a distinctly different understanding and function of important concepts within an IR class.

BOLD WORDS

With the similarities and differences between the TOCs noted, the next question is one of content. It is one thing to title a chapter but it is another thing to adequately cover the material that the chapter title suggests. One chapter consistent through each textbook is an introductory chapter offering perspectives, history, and framework through which to study IR. In an effort to further understand the pedagogy of this basic and introductory knowledge, we compared terms presented in bold in the first chapter of each text or in the case of Russett the second chapter (See Table #2). We hypothesized that since the words were in bold that they would reflect significant IR concepts and thus would be comparable across IR textbooks. Our content analysis of the bolded words indicated clearly this was not the case.

TABLE 2
Survey of Bolded Words in Chapter One

| Rourke 23 terms | Goldstein 26 terms | Nau 72 terms | Mingst 4 terms | Russet 7 terms |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| anarchical international system classic liberalism classic realism constructivism direct democracy economic internationalism economic nationalism economic structuralism <i>feminism</i> fiscal year <i>intergovernmental organizations</i> intermestic liberalism neoliberalism neorealism <i>nongovernmental organizations</i> non-zero-sum-game political theory postmodernism realism sovereignty states zero-sum game | Cold War collective goods problem conflict and cooperation containment Cuban Missile Crisis dominance globalization Gross Domestic Product identity international political economy <i>international relations</i> international security international system <i>intergovernmental organization</i> issue areas League of Nations Munich Agreement nation-states <i>nongovernmental organization</i> nonstate actors North-South gap proxy wars reciprocity Sino-Soviet split state summit meeting | absolute gains agent-oriented constructivism alliances anarchy balance of power bandwagoning beliefs belief systems bipolar civil society collective goods collective security compromise construction of identities constructivism deconstructivists deterrence diplomacy disarmament distribution of identities extended deterrence external identity failed states <i>feminism</i> geopolitics global governance hegemon hegemonic stability hegemony human rights human security identity interdependence <i>intergovernmental organizations</i> internal identity | anarchy behavioralism <i>international relations</i> <i>normative</i> | assumptions empirical theory evidence hypotheses <i>normative theory</i> radicals reflectivism |

| Rourke 23 terms | Goldstein 26 terms | Nau 72 terms | Mingst 4 terms | Russet 7 terms |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | international institutions international law international regimes legitimacy Marxism minimum deterrence modernization multipolar mutual gains <i>nongovernmental organizations</i> non-zero sum norms path dependence polarity postmodernists power power balancing power transition preemptive wars preponderance of power preventative wars prisoner's dilemma psychological studies reciprocity relative gains relative identities rouge states security dilemma self-help shared identities social constructivism soft power, states technological change tripolar values <i>zero-sum</i> | | |

Of the terms that received bold status, a dramatic divergence occurs. Where Mingst offers a mere 4 words, Russett/Starr/Kinsella provides 7 words, Rourke 23 words, Goldstein 26 words, and Nau topping at 72 words. As one can easily identify, the bolding of words within a chapter varies greatly from text to text.

For the most part there is very little overlap in which words each author chose to highlight. Only six terms were emphasized with bold in more than one text. These are feminism, intergovernmental organizations, international relations, nongovernmental organizations , normative and zero sum. One possible explanation, for a large percent of words, is that authors highlight the most unfamiliar in conjunction with the most important terms. A strategy of using bold to highlight new and potential obscure terms would do much to explain why there is so much diversity among the texts. As instructors, it is useful to notice that an author is using bold to indicate “new and perhaps obscure” as well as “key term” or “essential concept.” Tests and quizzes made from bold terms might test fringe terminology as well as, or instead of, core concepts.

Our conclusion from the content analysis of bolded words was that they did not provide much insight into the content of the chapter. The diversity in which words were identified seems to indicate more about how bold is used than it does about what is presented. The terms that are bolded showed enough variance to suggest that the function of bolded words does not necessarily offer the same contextual approach across texts and is thus not particularly useful in our quest to understand what we teach when we teach IR.

GLOSSARY DEFINITIONS

Finding that chapter titles showed only surface differences, and the significance and identification of bold words varied by author resulted in little added knowledge to what we teach when we teach IR, we turned to the glossaries to find each author's most concise definition of important terms. We selected ten terms of which we felt were central to IR and contemporary global politics. We then sought to compare each textbook's glossary definitions. We did substitute similar terms like "security" for "national security" when needed in order to capture various renditions of the concept encapsulated in the 10 words we chose. (See Table #3)

TABLE 3
Definitions of Key Terms Across Texts

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Democracy | A system of government that at minimum extends to citizens a range of political rights and a range of civil liberties that are important to free government. (Rourke) <i>note: texts which did not define this term are not listed.</i> |
| Fascism | An ideology that advocates extreme nationalism, with heightened sense of national belongings or ethnic identity. (Rourke) |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| <p>Globalization</p> | <p>A multifaceted concept that represents the increasing integration of economics, communications, and culture across national boundaries. (Rourke)</p> <p>The increasing integration of the world in terms of communications, culture, and economics; may also refer to changing subjective experiences of space and time accompanying this process. (Goldstein)</p> <p>1.0--one of three periods of globalization; it lasted from 1492 to 1800 and was characterized by mercantilism and colonialism; 2.0--last from 1800-1950 and was characterized by the emergence of multinational corporations and institutions; 3.0--started the second half of the 20th century and continues into the 21st and is characterized by the flattening of the global playing field and reliance on the knowledge economy more than military power or big institutions. (Nau)</p> <p>The process of increasing integration of the world in terms of economics, politics, communications, social relations, and culture; increasingly undermines traditional state sovereignty. (Mingst)</p> <p>A process whereby economic, political, and sociocultural transactions are decreasingly constrained by national boundaries and the authority of national governments. (Russett)</p> |
| <p>Human Rights</p> | <p>The rights of all people to be free from abuses such as torture or imprisonment for their political beliefs (political and civil rights) and to enjoy certain minimum economic and social protections (economic and social rights). (Goldstein)</p> <p>The most basic protections against human physical abuse and suffering. (Nau)</p> <p>Rights possessed by individuals because they are human, not because they are citizens of one state or another. (Russett)</p> |
| <p>Idealism</p> | <p>(idiosyncratic analysis): an individual-level analysis approach to decision making that assumes that individuals make foreign policy decisions and that different individuals are likely to make different decisions. (Rourke)</p> <p>An approach that emphasizes international law, morality, and international organization, rather than power alone, as key influences on international relations. (Goldstein)</p> <p>(Identity Perspective) - a perspective that emphasizes the importance of ideas that define the identities of actors and that motivate the use of power and negotiations by these actors. (Nau)</p> <p>Label applied to the view, popularized during the interwar period, that envisioned the construction of a new and peaceful world order, especially among democratic nations. (Russett)</p> |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| International System | <p>An abstract concept that encompasses global actors, and the factors that cause those interaction. The international system is the largest of a vast number of overlapping political systems that extend downward in size to micro-political systems at a local level. (Rourke)</p> <p>The set of relationships among the world's states, structured by certain rules and patterns of interactions. (Goldstein)</p> <p>(international regimes): A network of international institutions. (Nau)</p> <p>(international society): The states and sub-state actors in the international system and the institutions and norms that regulate their interaction; implies that these actors communicate, sharing common interests and common identity; identified with British school of political theory. (Mingst)</p> |
| Nationalism | <p>The belief that the nation is the ultimate basis of political loyalty and that nations should have self-governing states. (Rourke)</p> <p>Identification with and devotion to the interests of one's nation. it usually involves a large group of people who share a national identity and often a language, culture, or ancestry. (Goldstein)</p> <p>A sentiment, emerging in the 1800s, that sees nations as the core unity of identity (Nau)</p> <p>Devotion and allegiance to the nation and the shared characteristics of its peoples; used to motivate people to patriotic acts, sometimes a group to seek dominance over another group. (Mingst)</p> <p>The set of psychological, cultural, and social forces that drive the formation of a nation and sustain national identity. (Russett)</p> |
| National Security | <p>(security)- The prerequisite for a stable domestic economy that government not be engulfed in civil or guerilla war. (Nau)</p> |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| <p>Realism</p> | <p>The view that world politics is driven by competitive self-interest, and therefore, that the central dynamic of international system is a struggle for power among countries as each tries to preserve or, preferably, improve its military security and economic welfare in competition with other states. (Rourke)</p> <p>A broad intellectual tradition that explains international relations mainly in terms of power. (Goldstein)</p> <p>(Realist Perspective)-A perspective that sees the world largely in terms of a struggle for power in which strong actors, especially states, seek to dominate weak ones and weak actors resist strong ones to preserve their interests and independence. (Nau)</p> <p>A theory of international relations that emphasizes states' interest in accumulating power to ensure security in an anarchic world; based on the notion that individuals are power seeking and that states act in pursuit of their own national interest defined in terms of power. (Mingst)</p> <p>A perspective that emphasizes the importance of self interest, power, and the competitiveness of states in an anarchic international system. (Russett)</p> |
| <p>Terrorism</p> | <p>A form of political violence conducted by individuals, groups, or clandestine government agents that attempts to manipulate politics by attacking noncombatants and nonmilitary targets in order to create a climate of fear. (Rourke)</p> <p>The use of violence against innocent civilians to advance political aims. (Nau)</p> <p>The use of violence by groups or states usually against noncombatants to intimidate, cause fear, or punish their to achieve political goals; a form of asymmetric warfare. (Mingst)</p> <p>Shocking acts of violence in which the principal purpose is not destruction itself but the dramatic and psychological effects on populations and governments. (Russett)</p> |

The first surprise was that not every text included these very common terms. While some might argue that “Fascism” is more historical than contemporary, “democracy,” “national security/security,” and “human rights” are unarguably essential IR concepts to define. While there is some dispute within the field of IR as to the exact

meaning of these terms, the authors of these texts should at least define how these terms are used in their text while noting the arguments over definition.

The glossaries on the whole did seem to be a listing of key terms and core concepts that the author(s) thought relevant to include in this guide for the student. However, here we found a wide discrepancy amongst the texts and the words which were chosen. The terms that are defined showed enough diversity to suggest that the location of glossaries does not necessarily offer the same contextual approach across the spectrum of important concepts.

This is very troubling for us as scholars as we would expect that as our students graduate from one college they should be able to converse in the same “IR language” as a student from another college. The variation in definition of even the common terms is troubling as political science considers itself a science and science requires precision and commonality in how things are defined in order to advance knowledge. For terms that are defined throughout each glossary, the definitions themselves vary, such as the case with “globalization.” While each definition does define globalization in terms of integration of economics, communication, and culture (this is good), each goes further by adding other concepts such as “space and time,” historical periods of globalization (this is confusing without context), and byproducts like the threat to sovereignty.

In conclusion, we noted that perhaps glossaries are not attempting to collect and define all the key concepts that are important to the study of IR. They serve, rather, as a quick reference for terms that are easily defined in the author’s mind or are important to concepts that the authors are trying to teach in their respective textbooks, while omitting others that perhaps are not easily broken down into a few short sentences.

This leads us to the question of what is taught by the textbooks when we look closely at a particular concept. To do this we conducted a focused content analysis of one concept.

FOCUSED CONTENT ANALYSIS

Each of the methods we have presented so far sought to find a simple, effective way to easily and unambiguously compare the texts. While each method revealed something, none successfully provided an easy way to compare textbooks. So we undertook the more labor intensive and subjective task of doing a focused content analysis. We choose “terrorism” as our topic, given that each text gave it more than a page but most less than a chapter. We used the index as a map of each text to determine where the author, or at least the indexer, felt terrorism was addressed in the text and, unsurprisingly, the coverage varied (See Table #4). It was noticed that the page counts differed substantially between texts. It was also interesting to note that when a pre-9/11 edition was consulted⁵, terrorism was mentioned on only two pages; however the current edition of the same text has a dramatically higher count on the topic (16 pages). This leads us to hypothesize that there is the possibility that much of what we teach in IR is based on popular issues rather than general principles.

⁵ Essentials of International Relations. By Karen A Mingst. c. 1999/ Terrorism reference per index: p 191-192.

TABLE 4
Index References to Terrorism

| | Index Listing, as it appears in the textbook |
|------------------|--|
| Rourke | Terrorism: 13-14, 316, 337-338. <i>See also, domestic terrorism; international terrorism; Oklahoma City bombings; state terrorism; Tokyo subway station terrorism attack; transnational terrorism; transnational terrorism groups; USS Cole; war on terrorism; World Trade Center/ Pentagon terrorist attacks//// as asymmetrical warfare, 57; biological, 320-321; cause of, 321-322; chemical, 320-321; children and, 316; combating, 322-323; conventional weapons, 319; defined, 316; as “heroic martyrdom”, 300; individual-level cause of, 322; international data, 318f; LDCs and, 316; nature/limits of, 315-317; radiological, 319-320,320f; record of, 318-319; sources of, 317-318; state level causes of, 322; system level causes of, 321-322; weapons/ tactics, 319-321; Web site, 317, 329</i> |
| Goldstein | Terrorism: 201-210. <i>See also September 11, 2001; terrorist attacks; War on terrorism; specific countries/// balance of power coalition against, 53; definition of, 207, 209-210; effects of 207-208; intelligence gathering and, 205; international law and, 263; Islamic, 175-177; military force and, 194-231, and NGOs, 16; by nonstate actors, 208; Obama policy on, 203; proliferation and, 218-220; psychological effect of, 207-208; purpose of 207-208; revolution in military affairs and, 206-207; state-supported, 209-210; as tactic, 207; technology and, 205-207</i> |
| Nau | Terrorism and War on Terrorism: asymmetric warfare and, 223-225; critical theory perspective, 8, 9t; “global war on terror”, 239; human rights and, 508; identify perspective, 7-8, 8t, 244-248, 248t; liberal perspective, 6-7, 7t, 235-238, 238t; local and regional roots of conflict, 250-252; major attacks against US targets (1993-2000), 224-225, 226b; radical Islam and, 246-248, 249-250; realist perspective, 5-6, 6t, 238-244, 243t; UN intervention and, 517 |
| Mingst | Terrorism: airline hijackings, 188; as asymmetric warfare, 225-29; choice of weapons, 226-28; debate over term, 193; defined, 225, 237; elements of, 225; Islamic fundamentalism and, 132; organized listed, 227; post-Cold War era, 51; September 11, 2001 attacks, 51, 132; United Nations on, 180; war on, 51, 241,321; <i>see also Al Qaeda</i> |
| Russett | Terrorism: 12, 46, 218, 219-222, 221, 222, 245; state, 221; state-sponsored, 221 |

We further noted that the definitions presented in the chapters revealed more about the author’s perspective than we had found in the glossaries (See Table #5). All of

the authors cited other sources for their definition of terrorism, however none of the textbooks cited the same source for the definition. Some of the textbooks chose narrow definitions while others chose much broader and more general definitions enabling the authors to broadly constitute actions as terrorist in nature.

TABLE 5
Glossary Definitions of Terrorism

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Terrorism | <p>A form of political violence conducted by individuals, groups, or clandestine government agents that attempts to manipulate politics by attacking noncombatants and nonmilitary targets in order to create a climate of fear. (Rourke)</p> <p>The use of violence against innocent civilians to advance political aims. (Nau)</p> <p>The use of violence by groups or states usually against noncombatants to intimidate, cause fear, or punish their to achieve political goals; a form of asymmetric warfare. (Mingst)</p> <p>Shocking acts of violence in which the principal purpose is not destruction itself but the dramatic and psychological effects on populations and governments. (Russett)</p> |
|-----------|--|

There were some threads common to each author’s treatment of the concept but these were overwhelmed by the differences. Commonalities included a focus on violence against civilians and the overall purpose to be something other than destruction or conquest. More notably the differences were striking. Some authors focused in on fear as a defining element of terrorism while others never mentioned it. One (Rourke) even saw terrorism as the possible action of state actors which traditional definitions of terrorism have limited to actions of non-state actors as a form of asymmetric warfare (Mingst). Such general definitions serve only to cloud the concept rather than to define

it. Furthermore it magnifies the problem when students using different texts interact with each other.

Interestingly, all but one of the texts cited a source for their definition, but no two authors chose the same source. There is clearly a diversity of opinions in the field of IR about what terrorism is, what we know about it, and what we should be teaching about it in the intro course.

CONCLUSIONS

Our content analysis of terrorism revealed real and substantive differences between texts. Perhaps this is because terrorism is a fairly new and rapidly developing popular topic area. (Looking at editions of some of these texts from before 9/11 we saw far less space devoted to the topic.) Perhaps this is because terrorism is controversial and often tied to extreme groups. Or perhaps the diversity in introductory IR textbooks reflects a meaningful and persistent diversity in the field of scholarship. It is interesting to note that few even hint at the idea that the scholarship is contested, or portray IR scholarship as a discussion open to debate or in any way alive.

Clearly, the texts we investigated vary significantly in content, and do so in substantial and meaningful ways. Our attempts at sorting out these differences in a cursory look at the Table of Contents, the Glossary, Index, key terms or a few definitions failed. What really gave us the best sense of the author's perspective was a close reading of the textbook. The implications for instructors are, at the least, two fold. First, know the textbook you are teaching from. You cannot assume that the subject that you did your

doctoral exams on is treated the same way in the textbook. Second, choose your text carefully as there is a lot of variance between IR textbooks. It is commonly said that all texts are alike with none much better than the others. But it is clear that the topics covered varies, the weight given to particular topics varies, the way key concepts are defined varies, and the perspective offered to students for understanding International Relations varies.

There are few who would argue that we, as a discipline, should have widely agreed upon standards for teaching an introductory Political Science course in IR. A course in International Relations at one school should be, to a large degree, much like a course in IR at another school. Political science will not be seen as much of a science if we cannot define basic terms consistently. As hard as it may be for us to come up with agreed upon definitions we need to do so if we are to advance the discipline.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that we have found a lack of consistency in what we teach when we teach IR given that politics is in the Humanities and thus is the study of humans. We may never be able to define terrorism as precisely as we can define acceleration due to gravity but we can be clearer on what we mean by the label, thus enabling better and more accurate conversations to take place in order to advance our knowledge of IR. At the very least, we should acknowledge the differences and acknowledge that our students must be equipped to carry on conversations with their peers in a globalized world with some consistency in language. Perhaps the findings of this paper and our research should lead to a call for a larger conversation about what should be taught in an intro to IR course. Are we teaching statecraft, diplomacy, global

citizenship, compassion, tolerance, the importance of power, the effectiveness of alternative approaches or something else entirely?

If terms such as terrorism, globalism, democracy, and Fascism are used in different ways by different authors, it will be difficult for our students and even our fellow scholars to converse about these ideas. To illustrate this further, the communication problem here can be compared to helping my (Cooney) 10 year old do her math homework. In school I was taught multiplication and division by “borrowing” and “remainders” whereas students today use terms like “shifting,” “reordering,” and “leftovers.” As I attempt to help my daughter gain understanding we find that we are speaking different languages each causing the other confusion. The same is true as we teach IR. Our students are learning different, maybe even significantly, IR languages and this hurts their ability to communicate with each other.

In political science we have agreed sufficiently on a definition of International Relations that we have a field. We can tell whether a dissertation is on IR or Comparative in origin. We agree IR is a body of knowledge important enough to consistently require it of political science students. Perhaps we should go one step further and establish a widely agreed upon core curriculum to serve as a starting point for crafting an IR intro course. Like any textbook, this core curriculum could be molded to fit the situation in a given professor’s classroom while maintaining the integrity of a common language of communication between scholars and students of IR.

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