International Relations and American Dominance
A diverse discipline

Helen Louise Turton
International Relations and American Dominance

This work seeks to explore the widely held assumption that the discipline of International Relations is dominated by American scholars, approaches and institutions.

It proceeds by defining ‘dominance’ along Gramscian lines and then identifying different ways in which such dominance could be exerted: agenda-setting, theoretically, methodologically, institutionally, gate-keeping. Turton dedicates a chapter to each of these forms of dominance in which she sets out the arguments in the literature, discusses their theoretical implications and tests for empirical support. The work argues that the self-image of IR as an American-dominated discipline does not reflect the state of affairs once a detailed sociological analysis of the production of knowledge in the discipline is undertaken. Turton argues that the discipline is actually more plural than widely recognized, challenging widely held beliefs in International Relations and it taking a successful step towards unpacking the term ‘dominance’.

An insightful contribution to the field, this work will be of great interest to students and scholars alike.

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Historically, the field of International Relations has established its boundaries, issues and theories based upon Western experience. This series aims to explore the role of geocultural factors in setting the concepts and epistemologies through which IR knowledge is produced. In particular, it seeks to identify alternatives for thinking about the “international” that are more in tune with local concerns and traditions outside the West.

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International Relations and American Dominance
A diverse discipline

Helen Louise Turton
For Spencer
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This book argues that the discipline of International Relations (IR) is much more diverse and plural than many state of the art accounts depict. It empirically demonstrates the plethora of international scholars with diverse research interests that are contributing to the discipline, hence it is only fitting that I begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to the many individuals and institutions that have influenced, encouraged, inspired and enabled this work.

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Helen Louise Turton
### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJIA</td>
<td>Australian Journal of International Affairs</td>
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<td>APSR</td>
<td>American Political Science Review</td>
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<td>APISA</td>
<td>Asian Political International Studies Association</td>
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<td>BISA</td>
<td>British International Studies Association</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Cooperation and Conflict</td>
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<td>CEEISA</td>
<td>Central Eastern European International Studies Association</td>
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<td>DPT</td>
<td>Democratic Peace Theory</td>
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<td>EISA</td>
<td>European International Studies Association</td>
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<td>EJIR</td>
<td>European Journal of International Relations</td>
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<td>JCR</td>
<td>Journal Citation Report</td>
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<td>JIF</td>
<td>Journal Impact Factor</td>
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<td>JIRD</td>
<td>Journal of International Relations and Development</td>
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<td>IO</td>
<td>International Organization</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>IRAP</td>
<td>International Relations of the Asia Pacific</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>International Security</td>
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<td>ISA</td>
<td>International Studies Association</td>
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<td>ISQ</td>
<td>International Studies Quarterly</td>
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<td>ISP</td>
<td>International Studies Perspectives</td>
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<td>NSS</td>
<td>National Security Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NISA</td>
<td>Nordic International Studies Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGIR</td>
<td>Standing Group on International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNAC</td>
<td>Project for the New American Century</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIS</td>
<td>Review of International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>WISC</td>
<td>World International Studies Committee</td>
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<td>WMD</td>
<td>weapons of mass destruction</td>
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1 Introduction

Is International Relations an American-dominated discipline?

Scholars addressing the question of whether the discipline of International Relations (IR) is an American-dominated discipline tend to respond in some shape or form to the seminal article written by Stanley Hoffmann in 1977. Hoffmann was arguably the first recognized academic to draw explicit attention to the alleged American dominance of IR in mainstream circles. The question had first been raised by Alfred Grosser in 1956, in the French journal Revue Française de Science Politique, where Grosser explored the provoking possibility of whether the discipline was becoming an ‘American specialty’. The response to his stimulating review was minimal in France and non-existent in America. In the 1950s, the issue failed to attract scholarly attention both in America and other IR communities, and as such, no further questions were posed regarding the spatial dimensions and geographical composition of IR until 1977. However, in the decades following the publication of Hoffmann’s article, there have been multiple scholarly works claiming that IR is an American-dominated discipline (Alker and Biersteker 1984; Crawford and Jarvis 2001; Friedrichs 2004), so many indeed that the depiction of American preponderance operates as a disciplinary truism.

Hoffmann’s image of the field as an American-dominated enterprise has been adopted and seamlessly reproduced by academics time and time again. Heavily cited examples include Steve Smith’s (2000: 396) statement that “the discipline remains a US dominated one”, and Arlene Tickner’s (2003a: 297) claim that “[t]wenty five years after Stanley Hoffmann’s critical depiction of IR as an American social science, the basic contours of IR have changed surprisingly little”. Claims such as these and more recent ones by Michael Lipson et al. (2007), J. C. Sharman (2008), Thomas Biersteker (2009), J. Ann Tickner (2011), Arlene Tickner (2013) and Peter Marcus Kristensen (2014, 2015) occupy not only the literature, but also the collective disciplinary mindset. The disciplinary self-image of American disciplinary dominance has become deeply embedded within the discipline and is treated a priori and rarely questioned; as Richard Little (2004: iii) argues, “It has become almost a cliché to argue that during the course of the twentieth century the study of International Relations developed into a quintessentially American discipline”.

The number of scholars who treat the alleged American dominance as a given is surprising. Sections of the discipline’s literature are rife with assumptions about
America’s supposed disciplinary dominance. For instance, articles examining the state of the discipline in different national communities (Chong and Hart 2009; Hadiwinata 2009; Yaqing 2011; Taylor 2012; Makarychev and Morozov 2013) often begin by unquestioningly declaring that America is disciplinary preponderant. This readily adopted premise is then used as a foundation from which to launch their own investigations into national IR communities. Likewise, research examining sets of sociological practices within the discipline, such as citational and definitional practices (for example Hamati-Ataya 2011; Kristensen 2012) also often use the self-image of American dominance from which to begin their respective analyses. Overall, one does not have to take an in-depth look into recently published research within the discipline’s journals etc., to see the continued reproduction of this disciplinary characterization.

While the self-image of IR as an American field has become widely disseminated in the disciplinary consciousness, many of the assertions that the discipline is hierarchical are often empirically unsupported, lending the body of work to be largely impressionistic as opposed to detailed and systematic. Scholars have tended to solely justify their statements in relation to a relatively small body of research rather than providing empirical data. It is not uncommon for articles to state that IR is an American discipline based exclusively on citing the works of Kal Holsti (1985), Steve Smith (2000) and Ole Wæver (1998) in order to substantiate their allegations. It is rarely questioned whether the aforementioned works could be outdated and therefore inaccurate; for instance Holsti conducted his investigation into whether there was an American intellectual condominium in IR 30 years ago, and Smith’s article contained no systematic empirical investigation of his own. Instead, his claims are supported by the data produced by Holsti and Wæver. Considering the growth of the discipline in the last two decades, in global institutional as well as theoretical terms, the claims of the aforementioned need to be reassessed, which this study intends to do by empirically exploring the different claims in the literature.

However, this investigation will use the framing of IR as a ‘discipline’ instead of a ‘social science’ to examine the activities of IR scholars. When Stanley Hoffmann declared that IR was an American social science in 1977, he was arguing that IR was an American discipline because of the dominance of positivism. Hoffmann (1977: 42–45) spoke of tests, regularities, predictions, empirical analysis and laws as the basis for IR’s emergence as a social science in the United States following World War II. He used a context-specific understanding of social science and science, and went on to argue that the convergence of three factors (intellectual predispositions, political circumstances and institutional opportunities) (Hoffmann 1977: 45) resulted in this form of IR becoming dominated by the US IR academy.

Hoffmann’s understanding of social science is one in which social science is conflated with positivism because in the discipline of IR positivism was and is “the dominant account of what science is” (Kurki and Wight 2007: 23). Hoffmann’s use exemplifies how ‘social science’ has become a problematic and heavily loaded term in the discipline (Jackson 2011: 3). Because of the conflation of science with positivism, and therefore social science with positivism
(Wight 2003: 35), many have rejected the label and argued that IR should be ‘an art’ (Dyer and Mangasarian 1989). Instead of adopting the methods of the natural sciences and advocating a commitment to ‘rigour and empirical testing’ (Frieden and Lake 2005) in order to produce ‘evidence’ of regularities and laws, certain IR scholars have argued that the core concepts of the discipline are “simply not susceptible to the kind of austere data collection procedures advocated by the new model of science” (Kurki and Wight 2007: 18). Arguing that the social sciences are different to the natural sciences and therefore advocating an anti-naturalist agenda, certain scholars have sought to frame IR as a field of humanities study akin to history, or law, and thus predominantly adopting the method of interpretative judgments as opposed to systematic data collection and scientific inference.

It is due to the debates surrounding the term ‘social science’, its meaning, and whether or not IR is an art or science (Neufeld 1993) that the term ‘discipline’ is employed, and the relationship between the global discipline and the American IR community will be interrogated. While labeling IR as a discipline has also been contested (Kaplan 1961; Brecher 1999; Holsti 2002; Kennedy-Pipe 2007), there are sufficient grounds from which to argue that IR is a discipline – even in the United States where IR is often conceived to be a sub-discipline of Political Science – and subsequently experiences forms of disciplinarity.

There are two common ways of conceptualizing an academic discipline. One set of definitions draws on functional/consensual properties, which places an emphasis on independence from other disciplines, agreed academic purpose and subject matter, and a body of distinct and agreed-upon theory and methodology. From this understanding, to qualify as a discipline, a given area of academic inquiry would need to function in an independent manner from other disciplines, meaning that its subject matter cannot be dependent in part on another discipline. For example, from this perspective, astrophysics would be categorized as a sub-discipline of physics instead of its own academic field because it can arguably only be studied in conjunction with physics (Kaplan 1961: 465). An academic field would also need to exhibit consensus or conventions around subject matter, theory, methodology and purpose to be awarded the label of an academic discipline. This would thus result in the coherent functioning of the given field, for it would not be fragmented or fractured over what the subject matter is or what theoretical approach should be employed (Ransom 1968; James 1989; Kennedy-Pipe 2007).

Using such criteria, it would be difficult to maintain the claim that IR is a discipline. For instance, historiographies of IR often refer to its interdisciplinary beginnings. According to such accounts (see for example Olson and Onuf 1985), IR emerged from the existing disciplines of history, law, philosophy and diplomatic studies. This melting-pot of disciplinary ‘parents’ and influences has arguably constructed and conditioned IR’s ‘multidisciplinary’ present (Ashworth 2009: 19). IR is also organized and practiced as a sub-discipline of IR in certain geographical contexts and is therefore arguably dependent on broader ‘political’ debates and concepts. Hence it can be claimed that IR can only be, and has to be, studied and understood in conjunction with the analytical frameworks and debates stemming from Political Science.
IR is has also been depicted as a ‘divided discipline’ (Holsti 1985) as there have been numerous debates regarding its subject matter, theories and methods. Kalevi J. Holsti (2002: 621), for instance, stated that because of the lack of consensus regarding the field’s subject matter IR is not a discipline, it is too engaged in disagreements over what the limits to its subject matter should be, he argued as well being involved in ubiquitous disagreements over theory and method to constitute a discipline. More recently, David Lake (2011) argued that IR is organized in terms of competing academic sects, instead of a collegiate discipline, and this infighting between ‘academic religions’ has prevented the core function of a discipline, the development of ‘useful knowledge’ (Lake 2011).

However, if one were to apply the above criteria of what it means to be a discipline to other widely accepted/established disciplines their disciplinary status would also be in question. For instance, Andrew Abbott’s 2001 analysis of academic disciplines captured the fractured nature of most fields of study. Abbott argued (2001: 121) that there is a normal ‘chaos’ or rather lack of agreement to disciplines, and what he termed as the ‘special ferment’ is actually typical and normal to disciplinary reproduction (Holmwood 2010: 648). In other words, the lack of consensus regarding subject matter, theory, methodology or purpose, is not particular to IR, but is actually analogous to the majority of disciplines. Moreover, the claims that IR is too interdisciplinary or too integrated with other disciplines could also be applied to a number of other academic spheres, such as Sociology (Scott 2005) and Engineering, which are widely conceived to be disciplines. The actuality is that “[a]ll disciplines beg, borrow and steal from each other” (Buzan and Little 2000: 19), meaning that it is almost impossible for any discipline to be truly autonomous and independent from other realms of academic pursuit. Although different disciplines exhibit different degrees of integration from other disciplines (Whitley 2000), some explicitly embrace a ‘multidisciplinary’ or ‘interdisciplinary’ identity, and others resist importing ideas, theories, methods from other academic spheres; there is always transference and points of connection to other spheres of study even with the most ‘closed’ of disciplines, rendering the notion of autonomy somewhat unattainable.

Functional and conventional definitions, which reduce disciplinarity to consensus around an agreed subject, or method, overlook many other aspects and processes of any given discipline. Disciplinarity is far broader and more complex than certain definitions in IR account for (Turton 2015), and the second prominent conceptualization of what it means to be a discipline adopts this broader perspective and looks at the institutions, discourses, professional structures and academic identities that are an integral part of any discipline. Drawing of structural and sociological understandings of disciplinarity based on insights from disciplinary history and the sociology of knowledge (Whitley 2000; Abbott 2001), one can argue that IR is a discipline, globally and in national contexts. Using such a perspective, we can see IR’s ‘disciplinarity’ in action in numerous different sites of international relations and International Relations, in terms of the institutionalization, discursive constructions, professionalization of IR and the self-identifying practices of academics. If we adopt a more structural and sociological understanding of
what it means to be a discipline, then we can claim that whilst there might not be universal conventions, academic consensus or independence and autonomy from other disciplines, IR is still a discipline (Turton 2015).

Institutionally speaking, there are numerous professors of IR, chairs of International Relations, IR research centres and institutes, IR courses and degrees, and PhD programmes throughout the globe, all of which work to produce and reproduce IR’s disciplinary status, as does the departmental structure in which these institutional positions and practices are often situated or linked to (Abbott 2001). However, IR is organized in divergent ways in different national IR communities. For example, in the United States, IR is often viewed as a sub-field of Political Science, and certain scholars have used this fact to argue that IR is not a discipline (Schmidt 1998: 13–14). Yet disciplinarity still exists, in the United States, and other IR communities such as France where IR academics tend to be located within Law departments or schools of Sociology (Friedrichs 2004: 34–35; Giesen 2006), albeit in a weaker institutional form. In such cases, the arguments of disciplinarity cannot be supported by reference to a departmental structure, but they can still be made with reference to their engagement with the wider international institutional framework, and other aspects of IR’s disciplinarity. The degree of institutional disciplinarity may shift depending on the geographical context, yet disciplinarity remains due to its discursive, professional, and individual practices and aspects.

IR’s disciplinary status also presents itself discursively through collective understandings about IR. According to Michael Kenny (2004: 565), “[a]n important aspect of the identity of an academic discipline is its sense of ‘disciplinary history’”. The history of IR has been told through a number of different internal and external narratives (Potter 1972; Olson and Groom 1991; Knutsen 1992; Schmidt 1998), with the historiography of IR comprising a distinct body of thought within IR (Holden 2002: 253). The collective narratives and shared understandings about IR’s development do not only demonstrate the workings of a discipline, but they also perform certain ‘legitimating functions’, one of them being the embedding of IR’s disciplinary identity (Bell 2009: 5–6), as histories generate ‘a sense of purpose and belonging’ (Bell 2009: 21) for those involved in IR.

Linked to IR’s institutional and discursive presence is its professional one. There is an extensive body of networks, conferences, events, working groups, associations and association governing bodies, journals, editorial boards, publication presses and career hierarchies. Professional organizations, such as the International Studies Association (established in 1959) and its ever-growing regional affiliates, are comprised of academics partaking in ‘IR’. What should be studied, and how, may be under continuous debate, but there is an established professional structure to IR comprised of scholars worldwide who actively identify as being involved in a specific academic enterprise, an enterprise that is linked by scholars studying ‘the international’. There is a loose overarching research frame that brings scholars together and under which thematic conversations take place, and questions that only IR asks are asked (Turton 2015: 245). Disciplinarity furthermore finds itself due to scholars attempting “to provide authoritative knowledge about the subject matter of international politics” (Schmidt 1998: 12) within a defined structure. The
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various professional bodies have enabled and cemented a community of IR scholars by establishing and embedding distinct professional identities and providing a space for intellectual and discursive activities of disciplinarity.

According to Buzan and Little (2001: 19), IR “serves as a clear node of identity for an intellectual community comprising on many thousands of peoples” (Buzan and Little 2001: 19). The field of IR is a myriad of professional and institutional relationships all interacting within a social structure which academics crucially see and label as a discipline. If academics perceive themselves to be part of a specific scholarly enterprise, they aid the constitution of that discipline and embed its standing through founding further institutions, journals, networking opportunities and professional organizations for example. Academics perform their disciplinary distinctiveness not only through joining professional bodies and so on, but they also enact their disciplinary identity through the way academic outputs (journal articles, monographs, collected volumes, textbooks, blog entries etc.) are positioned, promoted and marketed. For example, academics use certain key words in their articles and online mediums to attract readers. But the use of such terms also creates a disciplinary space for IR as these mechanisms work to showcase and establish IR as a separate and distinct body of academic inquiry that is separate from other fields and the work of other interested parties.

Taking the above into account, we can clearly argue that IR is a discipline and its disciplinary status can be seen through the form of a “coherent conversation pursued by scholars who self-consciously understand themselves as participants in this particular field of inquiry” (Schmidt 1998: 12). It is this structure and body of scholars that this study will explore in order to examine the alleged hegemonic relationship between the US and other IR communities and IR scholars. The aim of this study is to empirically investigate the claims of American disciplinary dominance that populate the literature. Through employing an in-depth empirical investigation (which will be detailed shortly) exploring different realms of academic production, this study will generate a body of data that demonstrates the present inclinations and trends in the discipline. But first we need to unpack what it means to be dominant. It is often not clear what it means for the United States to exercise its dominance in the discipline of IR. Whilst there is a broad consensus within the discipline (especially in certain IR communities such as the United Kingdom) that American IR dominates, when asked to reflect on ‘how’ the United States dominates, different narratives emerge. Different conceptualizations of dominance are used leading to different accounts as to how and why the United States dominates. Resultantly, the US IR community may dominate in some ways and not others, and therefore depending of the understanding of dominance employed, one would arrive at a different answer to the question of “Is IR an American-dominated discipline?” Hence the empirical investigation that will follow is premised upon a disaggregation of the central concept of ‘dominance’. Through unpacking and revealing the different claims and workings of dominance in the discipline, this study produces an empirical account of the discipline that reveals an array of complex and competing dynamics, which give the field its current structure. By reconceptualizing dominance, this study challenges many
other disciplinary narratives and subsequently takes on a myth-breaking function as the empirical findings disrupt many prominent claims and images about the discipline. The need to systematically investigate this disciplinary characterization is imperative, because without empirically assessing the past and present, we tend to ingrain and reproduce disciplinary myths (Wæver 1998: 692): myths that condition negative academic practices and encourage marginalizing behaviours.

Before presenting the methodology and overview of the study, this introduction will disaggregate the term dominance and illustrate the different understandings of dominance in the literature. The different conceptualizations provide the empirical sites of investigation and create a framework for the exploration into whether there is a disjuncture between the self-images generated by IR scholars and the actual inclinations underway.

**Dominant conceptualizations of dominance**

To clarify, similar definitions of the term ‘dominance’ are employed to describe and imply a relationship of control and influence thereby limiting an actor’s choices. When making the claim that IR is an American-dominated discipline, academics are referring to the preponderant position of the United States vis-à-vis other IR communities. The US IR community allegedly has an authoritative voice in the discipline; it is in a hierarchical position from which it can coerce actors into adhering to the ‘American agenda’ and marginalize them if they do not, thereby subordinating ‘alternative’ or ‘dissident’ IR scholarship (Hamati-Ataya 2011).

Often the term ‘hegemony’ is used to depict the dominant relationships in action in the discipline. According to Andreas Bieler and Adam Morton (2004: 87) “[h]egemony is a form of dominance, but it refers more to a consensual order” rather than one that has been constructed by ‘brute force’ or coercion. Antonio Gramsci (Rupert 2009: 177) argued that the concept of hegemony captures a “special kind of power relation in which dominant groups secured their positions of privilege largely (if by no means exclusively) through consensual means”. Hegemony therefore implies consent and the shaping of one’s preferences to suit the mainstream’s interests (Cox 1993: 52). The outcome of this ‘opinion-moulding activity’ (Bieler and Morton 2004: 87) is the emulation of the hegemon’s preferred ‘way of doing IR’. Although the two terms (dominance and hegemony) draw on different processes (coercion and consent), they are used to capture the same power relations, in which the United States is in a primary position in relation to other IR communities and other IR academics.

Whilst similar definitions of dominance and/or hegemony are employed to capture similar unequal relations of power in the discipline, this does not extend to similarities in how dominance and/or hegemony is claimed to be exercised. When depicting these ‘dominant’ relationships, the term hegemony often depicts practices of scholarly emulation, whereas dominance (not specified as an instance of hegemony) is used to highlight relationships of marginalization and exclusion if one does not conform. For example, certain academics point to how the United States is able to shape the preferences of academics so that scholars follow mainstream