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Terrorism in the textbook: a comparative analysis of terrorism discourses in Germany, India, Kenya and the United States based on school textbooks

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Terrorism in the textbook: a comparative analysis of terrorism discourses in Germany, India, Kenya and the United States based on school textbooks

Abstract:

This study traces the (geopolitical) knowledge on terrorism circulating in Germany, India, Kenya, and the United States based on an analysis of school textbooks. It contributes to the existing literature in three ways. First, it transcends the Western-centrism of International Relations by analyzing discourses from the Global North and the Global South. Second, it introduces school textbooks as a crucial object of research in constructivist terrorism studies and International Relations. School textbooks indicate the (geopolitical) knowledge deemed essential in a given society, but also are also widely distributed among young people. Third, I address the debate about a presumed homogenization and internationalization of terrorism discourses in recent years. Results show that all four discourses depict terrorists as evil, focus on external non-state groups as perpetrators, and associate terrorism with Islam. But there are also considerable differences regarding the relative importance of terrorism as a security threat, the referent object affected, and the countermeasures deemed appropriate.

Keywords:

terrorism, discourse, postcolonial, security, school textbook

1 Introduction

'In a relatively short space of time, terrorism emerged as arguably the single most important security issue' (Jackson 2007b, 394). Recent attacks in Orlando, Paris, Istanbul, or Ouagadougou have steered the attention of policy makers, security experts, academics, and the broader public. According to the Global Terrorism Database (START 2016), terrorist attacks caused 43,512 deaths in 2014 and 38,430 deaths in 2015.¹ These numbers are as depressing as they are alarming. However, at least in terms of pure statistics, they clearly demonstrate that terrorism is not the biggest problem the world faces nowadays. In 2014 alone, around 1.3 million people were killed by road injuries, around 1.5 million by HIV/AIDS, a nearly 7 million as a consequence of hunger (FAO 2015; WHO 2014).

Despite the fact that terrorism has only caused around 0.08% of worldwide deaths in the last years, it had (and continues to have) a tremendous political and societal impact. Military interventions in Iraq and Mali, drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen, extra-legal detention centers, and the tightening

¹ START's definition of terrorism is: "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."

of internal security laws are just some of the measures conducted in the name of combating or preventing terrorism. This illustrates that the discursive construction of problems can have a significant influence on how policies are designed and carried out.

This insight is not particularly new. For years, International Relations scholars have investigated the social construction of international and foreign policy issues by states (Wendt 1992), political elites (Bevir and Daddow 2015), the general public (Jenkins-Smith et al 2004), and popular culture (Weber 2010), as well as the real world consequences of these constructions. To give just two examples: Scholars of critical geopolitics investigate dominant geopolitical knowledge and geo-spatial identities, how such geographical imaginations are received, and how they enable or constrain (especially violent) foreign policies (Dalby 2010). They particularly aim ‘to examine the ways in which geopolitics circulates between formal theorizing, practical statecraft and popular domains’ (Ingram and Dodds 2009, 4). Securitization theory, by contrast, focuses less on the impact of the continuous circulation of knowledge on international politics. Rather, it is interested in when and how certain developments are constructed as an essential threat to a valued referent object, thus legitimizing exceptional (foreign) policies to protect the respective referent object (Buzan et al 1998).

A constructivist turn also took place in terrorism studies in recent years (Hülse and Spencer 2008). Particularly in the field of critical terrorism studies, scholars have taken up the task of revealing the contingency of knowledge about terrorist threats, actors, and motives, and of highlighting the practices and policies these forms of knowledge render acceptable (Breen-Smyth et al 2008; Jarvis 2009). Studies have, for instance, analyzed the counter-terrorism discourses in the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) (Baker-Beall 2014; Jackson 2007a), the evolution of expert knowledge on terrorism (Stampnitzky 2013), the representation of terrorism in US popular culture (Croft 2006; Dodds 2008), or reports about terrorist events in the news media (Gerhards and Schäfer 2014; Schaefer 2005).

This study analyzes the discourses on terrorism in school textbooks from Germany, India, Kenya, and the US. By doing so, it contributes to the existing literature in three ways. Firstly, it introduces school textbooks as a crucial object of research in constructivist terrorism studies and, more generally, in constructivist International Relations – a point that will be further explored in the next section.

Secondly, many constructivist studies on terrorism focus only on particular countries (Ahmad 2016; Pinfari 2016) or on the depiction of particular events (Gerhards and Schäfer 2014; Schaefer 2005). By contrast, this study systematically compares discourses on terrorism in countries from four different continents with considerable differences regarding their level of economic development and their position in the world system. It thus traces the general (geopolitical) knowledge on

terrorism circulating in various societies, which provides a supportive discursive context for securitization dynamics (Mavelli 2013). The study also addresses the debate about a presumed homogenization and internationalization of terrorism discourses in recent years. Along with others (e.g. Croft and Moore 2010; Stampnitzky 2013), Jackson (2007a, 238) diagnoses the emergence of a ‘rhetorical canon and accepted ‘knowledge’ of terrorism discourse in the international system.’ Other scholars, by contrast, find important international differences regarding the strategic culture (Rees and Aldrich 2005), threat perceptions (Meyer 2009), and self-conceptions (Katzenstein 2003) related to terrorism (Holland 2013).

Thirdly, this study connects critical/constructivist terrorism studies to the postcolonial literature in International Relations and security studies (Laffey and Weldes 2008; Sharp 2011). Many of the comprehensive cross-country comparisons of terrorism discourses focus solely on Northern countries (for example Holland 2013; Jackson 2007a; Meyer 2009). They thus run the risk of reproducing the Western-centrism of much research on international politics (Bilgin 2010). By contrast, although I am a Western scholar, I reconstruct and analyze the discourses of India and Kenya. This allows me to illustrate how knowledge dominant in two core states of the current world system (Germany and the United States) is challenged and/or adapted by the discourses of two subaltern states (Gerhards and Schäfer 2014; Sharp 2011). I also examine whether borders between the Self and the (Orientalist) Other are drawn by textbook discourses on terrorism (Baker-Beall 2014; Stump and Dixit 2013)

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: In the next section, I discuss the rationale for analyzing school textbooks and the insights terrorism studies and International Relations can gain from them (2). Afterwards, the methodology (3) and core results (4) of the study are presented before leading to the conclusion (5).

2 The case for studying school textbooks

There are two reasons why International Relations in general and critical/constructivist terrorism studies more specifically can gain insights from studying school textbooks.

The first reason relates to their status as seismographic indicators of dominant societal discourses. At least in democratic states (which are analyzed here), textbooks ‘reflect the knowledge and values defined by a given society, and particularly its political elites, as essential’ (Lässig 2009, 2). Broadly conceived, school textbooks pick up and integrate discursive fragments from various societal domains. They are frequently shaped by political elites, who decide on the relevant curricula, examination content, and admission procedures. Simultaneously, school textbooks are usually written by scholars or people with academic training. Finally, they pick up issues discussed in the mass media and the general public in order to remain attractive to their buyers (mostly parents and

teachers, who will usually purchase those books they deem most appropriate – and interesting – for the students) (Otto 2013).

Consequentially, school textbooks are strongly influenced by – and thus reflect – the three domains of knowledge circulation identified by critical geopolitics as relevant for international and foreign politics: the practical discourses of policy makers, the formal discourses of scholars and intellectuals, and the popular discourses of mass media and the wider public (Mamadouh and Dijkink 2006). Indeed, Ide (2016) recently found that German school textbooks reveal the dominant discourses on environmental conflicts circulating within and between all three domains rather well. Their status as seismographic indicators makes school textbooks quite suitable for analyzing dominant societal discourses in a given country.² This is especially the case for terrorism studies, which have so far largely focused on news media rather than on other types of media (Conway 2012).

The second reason to study school textbooks is their wide distribution and privileged access to young people during an important phase of their political socialization. Kallio (2014, 211) emphasizes that young people are highly relevant as *'political beings* active in their everyday lived worlds and as *political becomings* whose agency unfolds also in the future societies.' Regarding their status as political beings, studies on children in international relations and in critical geopolitics has revealed how young people actively participate in (international) political activities, such as demonstrating against the war in Iraq (Hörschelmann 2008) or supporting armed groups (Jacob 2015).

The impact school textbooks have on students' political worldviews is contested. Some researchers find evidence for a strong impact (Christou and Spyrou 2016; Voigtländer and Voth 2016). Other studies, by contrast, highlight that 'schoolteachers regularly contextualize, rethink, and change textbook contents' (vom Hau 2009, 130), that students are well able to challenge textbook contents (Fukuoka 2011), and that the impact of formal education is low vis-à-vis the students' peer-groups and socio-political milieu (Porat 2004). A recent study found that guidelines for preventing extremism and terrorism by school education in the UK are implemented rather subjectively by teachers, and at times even ignored (Quartermaine 2016). In Kenya, many textbooks might be not readily available, especially in rural regions. Still, we cannot rule out the possibility that school textbooks, due to their wide distribution and privileged access to young people, influence political worldviews.

² One should note that just as with other media (Campbell 2007), the representations revealed by school textbooks can be distorted by the economic and technological context in which they are embedded. In the US, for instance, the curricula of California and especially Texas have a considerable influence on most of the textbooks in the country. This is the case as these two states represent the by far largest textbook markets in the US (Walker 2010).

The study of textbooks also contributes to the recent vernacular or everyday turn in security studies (Jarvis and Lister 2016; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens 2015). Analyses in this tradition share a common concern with how larger political discourses and structures are experienced, perceived, reproduced, and challenged by non-elite actors and everyday practices. Popular perceptions and routine practices ‘set the table for macropolicy initiatives [...] by rendering large segments of the public receptive or unreceptive to them’ (Connolly 2002, cited in Solomon and Steele 2016, 14). Several authors conclude that counter-terrorism policies can only be properly understood if dominant cultural constructions are taken into account (Croft 2006; Holland and Solomon 2014), while non-elite people are well able to resist elite discourses (Jackson and Hall 2016). Investigating school textbooks fits this vernacular research agenda rather well, since textbooks are largely written by non-elite actors and used in everyday contexts.

Before presenting the results of the empirical analysis, I will now explain the methods used for this study.

3 Methods

This study focuses on discourses in Germany, India, Kenya, and the US for several reasons. Comparing countries with different cultures from different continents and different positions in the world system serves to uncover quite different – or, to the contrary, broadly converging – ways of conceiving terrorism. The selection also enables an analysis of how knowledge on terrorism differs between states of the Global North and the Global South, at least for the four states discussed here. Furthermore, all four countries experienced instances of national and international, as well as political and ‘Islamist’, terrorism in the recent past, thus ensuring comparability between the cases. Finally, in all four countries, textbooks are approved by the state, written by persons with an academic background, and produced by private companies competing with each other to publish the most attractive textbooks (EDU.DATA 2015). Therefore, the textbooks are likely to mirror dominant political, academic, and public discourses in the countries under study.

The analysis presented here focuses on the period from 2003 to 2014. As it aims to analyze current discourses, the start year of the analysis was chosen so that the events of September 11 could be incorporated. In order to ensure comparability, I analyzed civics/social studies textbooks of all four countries for ISCED levels 2 and 3 (secondary and higher secondary education)³ (UNESCO 2016). An initial analysis of curricula revealed that terrorism is supposed to be an issue in this subject and at this learning level in all four countries under study.

³ ISCED levels 2 and 3 refer to what is commonly known as ‘high school’ in most countries, covering grades 5-13 in Germany, 6-12 in India, 7-12 in Kenya, and 7-12 in the US.

To create a sample for the analysis, I used the world's largest collection of school textbooks in the library of the Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) in Braunschweig, Germany. As the GEI is a German institution and the German federal states are responsible for educational matters, I initially identified 2,764 books for all 16 of Germany's federal states. To keep the sample manageable, I restricted the analysis to the state of Hesse, which is considered representative due to its central geographic location, its combination of highly urbanized and very rural areas, and its frequent alternation of political parties in power in recent years. For India and the US, the study analyzed textbooks from various federal states⁴, while in Kenya the education system is centralized. All textbooks from these three countries available in the GEI library were analyzed.⁵

Altogether, the sample contained 113 textbooks: 24 from Germany, 45 from India, 23 from Kenya, and 21 from the US. Once the relevant textbooks were identified, I searched them for chapters or text passages containing the terms 'terrorism' or 'terrorist'. This search yielded 225 pages from 40 textbooks (see appendix 1 for a list of these textbooks).

All of these pages were subjected to a quantitative content analysis inspired by the guidelines of Krippendorff (2004). Two persons coded each page independent of each other. Afterwards, dissonances between the coders were resolved by discussion and, if necessary, by consulting a third person. To ensure comparability, the content analysis focused on the textual level, as the number of illustrations per page varied strongly among the countries studied. The dimensions and categories for the content analysis were developed in accordance with (i) the existing literature on the social construction of terrorism (for example Ditrych 2013; Jackson 2007a; Patrick 2014; Powell 2011) and (ii) the school textbooks under analysis. Appendix 2 provides a full list of the dimensions and categories used for the content analysis.

The quantitative content analysis was supplemented by a qualitative investigation of all textbook pages mentioning terrorism for each of the four countries. This was inspired by the Grounded Theory procedure (Corbin and Strauss 2008) and Keller's (2013) sociology of knowledge approach to discourse. In a first step, I closely read all textbook pages in order to get an overview, after which I formulated hypotheses, for instance about the referent object threatened by or the moral evaluation of terrorism (macro-analysis). As the results of the content analysis revealed some potentially relevant categories and hypotheses, they partially inspired this part the qualitative investigation. Afterward, particularly representative, striking, and contrasting textbook pages were examined in detail in order to verify, falsify, or specify existing hypotheses as well as to develop new ones (micro-analysis). These new hypothesis were then used to re-read all relevant textbook

⁴ For India, only textbooks written in English have been analyzed.

⁵ The GEI library does not possess all Indian, Kenyan, and US textbooks, but its collection is comprehensive and not biased toward certain years, publishers, federal states, or types of school.

pages again (though with a different perspective), which shed light on the validity of the hypotheses and revealed interesting pieces of text for another round of micro-analysis.

During the analysis, I utilized the coding technique recommended by Grounded Theory (Corbin and Strauss 2008), that is, I developed codes summarizing the textbooks' statements on a conceptual level and wrote accompanying memos reflecting upon the code and its (potential) relationship to other codes. In the final step, the codes were synthesized to categories and set in relation to each other. After several alternating phases of macro- and micro-analysis, categories emerged that were well developed in terms of their attributes, dimension and inter-relationship to provide elaborate insights on the depiction of terrorism in the school textbooks of all four countries.

4 Results

In this section, I present the integrated results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses for each of the four countries, followed by a discussion section that sums up and contextualizes the main findings. Table 1 provides an overview of the main results of the quantitative content analysis.

		USA	Germany	Kenya	India
	Number of textbooks analyzed	21	24	23	45
	Textbooks referring terrorism	57%	50%	13%	31%
	Total number of pages referring to terrorism	93	70	3	59
Perpetrators	unspecified	49%	50%	67%	41%
	Al Qaeda	32%	27%	0%	8%
	other Islamic groups	6%	24%	33%	12%
	Pakistan-based/-supported groups	6%	1%	0%	29%
	Indian nationalists	0%	0%	0%	14%
	Palestinian groups	8%	3%	0%	2%
Target countries	unspecified	22%	47%	0%	15%
	USA	61%	36%	0%	24%
	Kenya	4%	0%	100%	3%
	India	6%	1%	0%	73%
Events	none	27%	29%	0%	54%
	9/11 attacks	57%	66%	0%	29%
	1998 American embassy bombing	4%	0%	67%	3%
	2005 London bombings	5%	4%	0%	0%
	2004 Madrid train bombings	1%	7%	0%	0%
	2001 Indian parliament raid	2%	0%	0%	19%

Reasons for terrorism	unspecified	59%	53%	67%	31%
	Islamic fundamentalism	18%	27%	0%	8%
	other religious issues	4%	11%	0%	17%
	social/economic grievances	6%	19%	0%	17%
	domestic political motives	15%	23%	33%	41%
	international political motives	19%	23%	33%	47%
Consequences	decline in tourism	3%	1%	100%	5%
	economic trouble	2%	6%	33%	15%
	domestic policy changes	17%	17%	0%	5%
	foreign policy changes	30%	44%	0%	12%
Related issues	other	28%	19%	0%	29%
	weapons of mass destruction	18%	23%	0%	8%
	state support of terrorism	19%	16%	0%	39%
	organized crime	0%	10%	0%	15%
	international sympathy/support	3%	11%	0%	12%

Table 1: Main results of the quantitative content analysis⁶

4.1 United States

The US school textbooks analyzed provide seven different definitions of terrorism, six of which refer to the use of violence for political purposes, while four mention civilians as the key targets. Beyond this, there is little common ground among the definitions. However, the discourse revealed by these textbooks makes quite clear the US as severely affected by terrorism. 61% of all textbook pages analyzed mention the US as a target of terrorism and the September 11 attacks are the most discussed single event (57%). More specifically, the referent object of the threat is the national security of the US. Terrorism is almost always described as a challenge/problem for ‘the United States’ rather than for specific groups or sectors.

The qualitative analysis shows that the threat of terrorism to the US is serious (justifying its discussion in 57% of all textbooks) and has a high priority (probably only trumped by the rise of new powers challenging US hegemony): ‘In the 21st century, the United States face different challenges [...] Among the challenges that must be faced are the growth of new economic and military powers, the threat of terrorism [...]’ (Schmidt et al 2014, 558). The seriousness of the terrorist threat to US national security is underscored by the outstanding ‘resources and organizational structure’ (Boyer and Stuckey 2003, 823) of Al Qaeda and the capability of international terrorism to act globally and to ‘touch all the regions of the world’ (Rourke 2008,

⁶ If not stated otherwise, percentages in the Table and the subsequent text refer to the number of textbook pages referring to an issue out of the total number of pages analyzed for the respective country.

419). The threat is further amplified by the support terrorists receive from rogue governments (19%) and the fact that ‘future possibilities are even more disturbing. Now there are new, more terrible threats – radiological terrorism and nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) terrorism’ (Rourke 2008, 419).

When it comes to the perpetrators of terrorism, 49% of the textbook pages analyzed do not specify any perpetrator. Al Qaeda is the most prominent terrorist actor in the US discourse (32%), while Palestinian groups (8%), Pakistani groups (6%), and Islamic groups (6%) are also sometimes discussed. Therefore, if the US discourse mentions a perpetrator at all, groups from the Middle East and predominantly Muslim states are most common. By contrast, textbooks are largely silent on terrorism from the extreme right or from environmental groups, which are far from irrelevant in the US ((Hirsch-Hoefler and Mudde 2014). This underscores Patrick’s (2014, 379) observation that because US ‘media frames equate terrorism with Islam and Muslims, the [Middle] East collectively assumes this negative stereotype.’ The following schoolbook text on the 2005 London bombings, for instance, is rather brief and thus omits a lot of relevant information, but it prominently mentions the supposed Middle Eastern descent of the terrorists:

‘On July 7, 2005, terrorists carried out synchronized bombings on the London Underground (subway) and bus network. Four suicide bombers, believed to have been of Middle Eastern descent, claimed the lives of 52 people and wounded hundreds more in the attacks.’ (Schmidt et al 2014, 560)

Only two textbooks provide definitions of terrorism that explicitly conceive it as conducted exclusively by non-state groups. However, states are never mentioned as direct perpetrators of terrorism in the US textbooks under analysis.

Beyond some abstract definitions of terrorism as political violence, causes of terrorist actions or the goals of terrorist organizations are hardly an issue in the US discourse and left unspecified by 59% of the textbook pages. If reasons for terrorism are stated, Islamic fundamentalism (18%) is emphasized most often, thus further strengthening the association between the Middle East, Islam, and terrorism. But international political motives (19%), such as US support for Israel, and domestic political motives (15%), such as separatism, are also sometimes mentioned.

Concerning the consequences of terrorism, US school textbooks primarily mention domestic policy changes (17%), such as the Patriot Act, and especially foreign policy changes (30%), mainly the Bush Doctrine and US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The new unilateral and preemptive orientation of US foreign policy is depicted in a rather balanced way, often by simultaneously citing voices supporting and criticizing it:

‘Supporters of the new strategy argue that rational discussion and deterrence do not work in a world of suicide bombers, terrorist groups, and outlaw nations [...] Critics charge that

preemption ignores international law [...] They worry that if other nations claimed the same right, wars between longtime rivals might break out all over the world.' (Remy 2007, 613)

Nevertheless, the textbooks primarily discuss military responses to terrorism, while development initiatives or political negotiations are not an issue.

Finally, with the exception of a few direct quotes from (mostly US) policy makers, there are no text passages explicitly condemning terrorism. This fits the rather descriptive and factual writing style of US school textbooks. Instead, terrorism is portrayed as unethical by reporting 'facts'. For example, one textbook quotes Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (an Al Qaeda cadre killed in 2006) stating that it is acceptable 'if armed infidels and unintended victims – women and children – are killed together' (Rourke 2008, 316). Definitions usually also characterize terrorism as directed against innocent victims (civilians). By contrast, the causes of and reasons for terrorism are hardly discussed. Terrorists are therefore portrayed as unscrupulous actors who are cruel without reason rather than as part of a (political) movement employing various violent and non-violent strategies (Gunning 2007).

4.2 Germany

With one exception, German school textbooks do not define terrorism, but rather use descriptions of perpetrators, events, reasons etc. to specify their understanding of it. The terrorism discourse of Germany is certainly the most international among the discourses under study, probably because Germany (in contrast to Kenya, India, or the US) has not experienced larger-scale terrorist attacks in the recent past. German school textbooks are the only ones that do not portray their own country as the prime target of terrorism, but rather focus strongly on the US and, to a minor degree, on other Western countries. Only 3% of the textbook pages analyzed mention terrorist acts in or against Germany, while 36% refer to the US as a target.⁷ Similarly, by far the most often mentioned event is the September 11 attacks (66%), which is even more frequently discussed in German than in US textbooks (57%).

In line with this, the German discourse does not frame terrorism as a threat to a particular country or sector. Rather, the referent objects threatened by terrorism are either international peace and security or the international community as a whole: 'Ever since September 11, 2001, not only the US considers itself threatened by international terrorism, but also the UN and the entire international community' (Heither et al 2007, 152).⁸ However, it should be noted that when it

⁷ In many German school textbooks, the term '9/11' is frequently used in an abstract way without reference to the US or any US city or institution. In such cases, the target country was coded 'unspecified' since (especially younger) German students cannot be assumed to have prior knowledge of the event. If the target country had been coded 'USA' in such cases, more than 50% of the analyzed German textbook pages would refer to the US as a target.

⁸ I have translated all quotations from German textbooks into English.

comes to concrete countries or regions, German school textbooks largely focus on the US or Europe. Only 13% of the textbook pages mention non-OECD countries. In other words: The international community is mainly imagined in a Western-centric way as a community of European and North American countries, and the relevant reference objects of international peace/security are precisely these countries.

The discourse (re-)produced by German school textbooks considers terrorism to be a grave threat (which is discussed by 50% of all textbooks). Terrorist actors are portrayed as receiving support from states (16%) and seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (23%), with the latter being particularly worrying: ‘Chemical, biological, radiological or even nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists are one of the biggest threats of our time’ (Heither et al 2012, 354). Furthermore, terrorism ‘has become considerably more international/transnational’ (Hameister 2013, 426). As a consequence, ‘international terrorism, which so far took place far away from our borders, has reached Europe and Germany’ (Forster et al 2010, 316). In other words, the recent globalization of terrorism, which has been an element of Western terrorism discourses since at least the 1930s (Ditrych 2013), makes it a particularly serious threat.

Like their US counterparts, German textbooks most often do not specify any perpetrator of terrorism (50%). Al Qaeda (27%) or other Islamist groups (24%) are mentioned most often. Actors that conducted major terrorist attacks in Germany, such as the Red Army Fraction (RAF) or the National Socialist Underground (NSU), are not discussed. Again, this causes an association between Islam and terrorism, although several textbooks explicitly differentiate between Islam and radical Islamism in this context. This implicit association between Islam and terrorism is further strengthened by textbooks’ depiction of the reasons for terrorism. When the reasons are not left unspecified (53%), Islamic fundamentalism is the reason most often mentioned (27%), followed by domestic and international political motives (each 23%).

Foreign policy changes, especially the Bush Doctrine and the associated military interventions, feature most prominently as consequences of terrorism in the German terrorism discourse (44%). This connects well to a strong criticism put forward against militarized, preemptive, and unilateral actions. German school textbooks highlight that the US War on Terror violates human rights and divides the international community. Consequentially,

‘[d]espite the ‘War on Terrorism’, terrorism increased worldwide; in Afghanistan, the Taliban are on the rise again [...] The broad international solidarity that came into existence after the attacks of September 11, 2001, collapsed with the US invasion of Iraq (2003).’ (Forster et al 2010, 266)

As in the US case, the negative moral evaluation of terrorism is accommodated to the descriptive style of the textbooks by selectively emphasizing ‘facts’. For instance, textbooks most often do not

specify terrorists' motives, but constantly emphasize that they (apparently without reason) 'aim to cause as many civilian victims as possible [... and] spread dread and horror' (Forster et al 2010, 316).

4.3 Kenya

Kenyan school textbooks, like their German counterparts, hardly define terrorism explicitly. They portray Kenya as the key target of terrorism (100%). Accordingly, the 1998 American embassy bombing in Nairobi is the most important event, but several other attacks in Kenya, Egypt, and Morocco are mentioned as well. Countries and events from the Global North are not an issue. The main referent object threatened by terrorism is, according to the Kenyan discourse, tourism. Two out of three textbooks mentioning terrorism discuss the topic in a chapter on tourism, and the remaining one clearly states: 'Such attacks [the 1998 embassy bombing in Nairobi] scare away visitors into Kenya, thus affecting our economy' (Omwoyo 2006, 158).

Overall, the fact that terrorism is discussed in just 13% of the textbooks (and even there only briefly), and that the threat is conceived as affecting primarily one specific economic sector, leads me to conclude that terrorism is seen as a minor threat in the Kenyan discourse. Surprisingly, terrorism is the only form of violence after the independence struggle that is explicitly mentioned, although pastoralist conflicts and post-election violence have arguably caused greater losses of life and damage to the tourist reputation in recent years.

With the exception of one general reference to Muslim extremists and a similarly brief mention of 'political reasons' (Ondieki et al 2011, 200), the perpetrators of and reasons for terrorism play no role in the Kenyan textbook discourse. Similarly, Kenyan textbooks only mention a decline in tourism and economic trouble as consequences of terrorism and discuss no measures to combat/prevent terrorism. Like in the US and Germany, the Kenyan discourse hardly discusses the reasons behind terrorist actions. But it also largely refrains from highlighting seemingly negative 'facts' aside from mentioning that people were killed/injured and that the economy was harmed.

4.4 India

Indian school textbooks provide eight explicit definitions of terrorism, with three elements constituting a common ground among them: Terrorism is (i) an act of violence, (ii) politically motivated, and (iii) directed against governments, groups or individuals. The Indian discourse is the only one that does not refer to a particularly important event (54%). 29% of the textbook pages analyzed mention the September 11 attacks and 19% the 2001 Indian parliament raid. India is most frequently discussed as the target of terrorist attacks (73%), followed by the US (24%).

When it comes to the referent object of the terrorist threat, two narratives co-exist in the Indian discourse. The first argues that '[t]errorism is a serious problem which our country and even the world is facing today' (Singhal et al 2005, 308). Here, terrorism is understood a worldwide phenomenon affecting the international community, but also the Indian nation (and its national security) as a whole. The second narrative highlights the strong negative impacts of terrorism on economic development in India. Economic trouble and a decline in tourism revenue are mentioned on 20% of all pages analyzed, and textbook authors frequently make statements like '[t]errorism demobilises capital and populace and retards the process of development' (Pant 2003, 156).

Despite being mentioned by only 31% of all textbooks, terrorism is conceived of as an especially severe threat in the Indian discourse. This is firstly indicated by statements such as '[t]errorism [...] is [...] threatening the very existence of humankind today' (Segupta 2004, 201). Secondly, textbooks portray modern terrorism as receiving support from hostile states (39%) and as being deeply intertwined with well-organized criminal networks (15%). Thirdly, the Indian discourse reproduces a narrative of the increasing global nature of terrorism: 'There was a time when some countries lived in the fear of war for some time but now almost every country is exposed to the spectre of terrorist violence' (Malik et al 2005, 279).

As with the other three countries under analysis, the Indian discourse mostly does not specify a perpetrator of terrorist attacks (41%). But when a concrete actor is named, groups supported by Pakistan are by far the most prominent (29%). Pakistan is frequently depicted as being responsible for terrorist attacks (especially in India), which connects well to the negative othering of Pakistan in most dominant Indian discourses (Nair 2010):

'Pakistan's continued support to terrorism in Kashmir and other parts of India is a very big hindrance in keeping good relations [...] It is hoped Pakistan will avoid any future war, and cooperate with India in the solution of more pressing economic problems rather than encourage terrorist activities.' (Kher and Sharma 2004, 211)

In addition, the Indian discourse mentions a large number of Indian groups as perpetrators of terrorism (around 20%). These groups are usually associated with or even identical to insurgency movements fighting for separation or greater autonomy. Furthermore, India is the only country under analysis where violent activities by national liberation/unification movements are discussed under the label 'terrorism' (14%). Such discussions refer to radical Indian nationalists who murdered British officials during the first third of the twentieth century. However, in contrast to other forms of terrorism, textbooks always mention the reasons, justification, and popular support for these actions.

The Indian discourse is also the only one in this study that most often specifies the reasons for terrorism, especially domestic (41%) and international (47%) political issues. Also, political motives

are already part of the definitions of terrorism provided. Textbooks thus frame terrorism in political rather than in religious terms or as a phenomenon without concrete reasons/causes. But despite this politicization, terrorism is heavily and (in contrast the Germany and the US) explicitly criticized by the Indian discourse. Textbooks either directly condemn terrorism, frequently already in their definitions of the phenomenon, which conceive terrorism as ‘always unlawful, inhuman and antidemocratic’ (Pant 2003, 153). Or they use strongly negative metaphors like ‘tentacles’ or ‘cancerous growth’ (Sengupta 2004, 201) when referring to terrorism.

The Indian discourse is also vocal in criticizing the unilateral and militarized anti-terror campaigns of the US. It emphasizes that a mixture of political, developmental, and military responses to terrorism is necessary. Even more importantly, the Indian discourse insists that international coordination and cooperation are of crucial importance.

4.5 Discussion

Table 2 summarizes the terrorism discourses in Germany, India, Kenya, and the US as discussed in the preceding sections.

	USA	Germany	Kenya	India
Perpetrators of terrorism	unspecified, often Al Qaeda	unspecified, often Al Qaeda or other Islamist groups	unspecified	unspecified, often Pakistan-supported groups
Main target of terrorism	USA	USA	Kenya	India
Problem for ...	national security of the US	international (Western) community	tourism in Kenya	security of India and the world/development in India
Most important event	9/11	9/11	1998 American embassy bombing	unspecified
Reasons for terrorism	unspecified	unspecified	unspecified	political motives
Political response	foreign policy adaptation	foreign policy adaptation	none	unspecified
Associated issues	state support, WMDs	WMDs, state support	none	state support, organized crime
International solidarity ...	is not discussed	exists, but is undermined by the US	is not discussed	is needed
Moral evaluation	negative, through description	negative, through description	largely absent	negative, through judgment and metaphors

Table 2: Overview of the terrorism discourses analyzed

With regard to the debate whether a largely homogenous international terrorism discourse has emerged in recent years or whether strong national particularities remain, my findings provide partial support for but also qualify both positions.

In line with the homogenization thesis, there is international consensus about the non-state nature of the perpetrators of terrorism. This finding is well in line with other studies of media and policy discourses on terrorism (Baker-Beall 2014; Jackson 2007a). While the possibility of state terrorism might play a role in everyday understanding (Jackson and Hall 2016), it remains unexplored in textbook discourses. Further, with the partial exception of India, concrete terrorist actors as well as their motives often remain unspecified. Consequently, terrorist actors are conceived of as a phantom menace. They spread death, destruction, and fear among civilians, but it is not clear who (exactly) they are, nor do they have any (specified) reason for their actions.

Also in line with the homogenization thesis, textbooks for all four countries portray terrorism as highly objectionable in moral terms. This confirms the findings of many other studies on international and vernacular terrorism discourses (Gerhards and Schäfer 2014; Jackson and Hall 2016). Portraying terrorism as evil, faceless and unpolitical establishes a 'moral hierarchy of violence' (Dexter 2012, 123). Such depictions provide legitimization resources for securitization moves and eventually for exceptional and even militarized policies.

My analysis also reveals that, to different degrees, the Middle East and especially Islam is closely associated with terrorism in the discourses of all four countries studied. This is especially true for the US and Germany, but Kenyan textbooks also frequently refer to Islamist perpetrators (33%). In India, the imagined 'suspect community' (Breen-Smyth 2014, 223) is 'the Pakistanis' rather than 'the Muslims', but predominantly Muslim or Islamist groups are still frequently mentioned (51%). Forms of right-wing extremist, nationalist or ethnic terrorism, which took place in all four countries, are hardly an issue.

This finding is not only in line with other studies on the representation of terrorism (i) in international media and policy documents (Ahmad 2016; Jackson 2007b) and (ii) in scholarly discourses about a 'new terrorism' (Duyvesteyn 2004). The analysis also lends some support to Amin-Khan's (2012, 1595) diagnosis of a 'new orientalism', which describes people of the (Middle) East and particularly Muslims as a threat to the West, as associated with terrorism, and as irrational. Such depictions resonate well with the long-term trend of a securitization of Islam (Mavelli 2013). Finally, it is notable that while all four countries experienced significant occurrences of internal terrorism in the recent past, the discourses of Germany, Kenya and the United States focus strongly on international terrorism and attacks from the outside by Muslim groups. The Indian discourse prominently refers to internal political terrorism by separatist groups. However, the discourse also

construes Pakistan as the major external other. This finding is especially surprising for Germany as most studies on European discourses conclude that terrorism is conceived as an external and internal challenge simultaneously (Baker-Beall 2014; Jackson 2007a).

The German, Indian, and US discourses all conceive of terrorism as a very severe threat, partly due to its recent globalization and the support it receives from foreign states. At this point – contrary to Jackson (2007a) and Croft and Moore (2010), and in accordance with Meyer (2009) and Holland (2013) – some substantial rifts between the different national discourses become visible.

In German and especially in the US, terrorism is a prominent issue (mentioned by 50% and 57% of textbooks). In Kenya, terrorism receives considerably less attention (mentioned by 13% of all textbooks) and is also not portrayed as an essential threat to national or international security, but rather as a problem for a specific economic sector (tourism). In line with its political and economic status as a semi-peripheral country – and as a country harshly affected by terrorism as well as by other political, economic, and ecological challenges – India ambiguously conceives of terrorism as a threat to national security, world peace, and economic development. Also, the Indian discourse construes terrorism as a serious threat, but the issue is only discussed by 31% of all textbooks, while problems such as natural disasters or economic underdevelopment feature more prominently. WMDs are only an issue in the terrorism discourses of the states from the Global North.

The different referent objects as well as the different levels of urgency and attention in the four discourses analyzed therefore indicate differences in political culture, for instance between the German focus on the international community (which is essentially imagined as a community of Western states) and the US focus on national security. But they also reflect different positions in the international system and different economic realities. And, probably even more important, they show how discourses from the Global South can challenge knowledge that is taken for granted in the Global North (Gerhards and Schäfer 2014; Sharp 2011).

The discourses reconstructed from school textbooks usually do not advocate concrete countermeasures against terrorism. However, in the US discourse, foreign policy changes and especially military responses are frequently discussed, usually not in a very critical manner. Negotiations or development initiatives rarely receive attention. This resonates with textbook depictions of terrorist as evil and acting without a reason (see above) as well as with portrayals of ‘new terrorists’ as religious fanatics (Stampnitzky 2013). Such portrayals provide legitimization resources for (unilateral) military actions rather than, for instance, for negotiations with ‘terrorist’ groups (Jarvis and Lister 2016).

By contrast, the German discourse explicitly criticizes militarized and unilateral actions (especially by the US) and emphasizes the necessity of broad international cooperation. This is pretty much

in accordance with other studies highlighting the civil identity on which European (and especially German) counter-terrorism discourses are based (Baker-Beall 2014; Katzenstein 2003). However, political negotiations and measures to counter under-development and marginalization do not play a role in the German discourse either. Similar to its German counterpart, the Indian discourse is quite critical of unilateral US actions. It underscores the ‘need to [...] cooperate and coordinate’ (Sengupta 2004, 202) and, in line with its emphasis on terrorists’ political motives, advocates a mix of political and military countermeasures. The Kenyan (textbook) discourse discusses no countermeasures, again underscoring the low priority of terrorism vis-à-vis other security challenges.

From a postcolonial perspective, the results of the analysis indicate a hybrid internationalization of the terrorism discourse. Problematic representations (or geographical imaginations) of Islam and the Middle East are not limited to Western discourses. Similarly, all four discourses (like those analyzed by Gerhards and Schäfer 2014) converge towards a Western interpretation of terrorism as a non-justifiable phenomenon conducted by non-state actors. Until recently, a focus on state terrorism, Western actors as perpetrators/supporters, and the justification of some terrorist acts were not uncommon in the Global South (Ditrych 2013). It is well possible that such stereotypes ‘travelled’ from Western discourses to India and Kenya. Pinfari (2016), for instance, found that depictions of ‘oriental looking’ men as dangerous have been imported from the US to parts of the Egyptian discourse. Further, several textbooks designed to be used in the global South, most notably in India (e.g. Singupta 2004), are actually produced by Northern publishers or written/reviewed by Northern scholars (Bhattacharya 2009).

Such travelling and convergence contribute to the perpetuation of hierarchies of knowledge and power, as do imaginations of the international as a Western community (found in the German discourse). But at the same time, the lower importance attributed to terrorism, the importance on economic referent objects, and national particularities such as the focus on Pakistan (India) or on terrorism (Kenya), illustrate that the terrorism discourses do not just diffuse globally. Rather, they are re-contextualized through the lens of national/local discourses, thus producing hybrid global discourses. More research on the issue is certainly necessary and would allow for a productive encounter between terrorism studies and postcolonial theory (Stump and Dixit 2013: 57-64).

5 Conclusion

This study is based on the premises (i) that the social construction of (security) problems can have tremendous policy consequences and (ii) that school textbooks are worth studying because they reveal dominant discourses in a given society and transmit them in everyday contexts to young people (who can be seen as current and future political agents and as a vernacular audience). In

order to contribute to constructivist International Relations and especially to constructivist and critical terrorism studies, I comparatively analyzed the discussion of terrorism in school textbooks from Germany, India, Kenya, and the US.

The findings reveal some convergence between the various national discourses on terrorism. For instance, the US plays an important role as a target in all four discourses, while Middle Eastern and especially Muslim groups are usually considered the main perpetrators. Also, terrorism is portrayed as a particularly immoral form of violence, usually conducted by external non-state actors without a motive. However, there are also important variations among the different national discourses, for instance when it comes to the referent object of the threat and the countermeasures considered appropriate. Some of these differences can be traced back to the specific political and economic situations of the respective countries, while others are more likely to reflect North–South divides in the current world system.

The analysis presented above is beneficial for at least three reasons. First, from an analytical or problem-solving perspective, studying the dominant discourses in different countries can help explain different foreign policies related to terrorism as well as problems that arise when countries seek to cooperate on the issue (Katzenstein 2003; Meyer 2009). An obvious example of such a classical endeavor of constructivist International Relations is the reluctance of Germany to support the preemptive US military campaign in Iraq.

Second, from a critical perspective as advocated by critical geopolitics (Dalby 2008) or critical terrorism studies (Jarvis 2009), one can show that terrorism discourses are contingent but often contain specific geographical imaginations. These legitimize certain policies (such as military interventions or increasing surveillance) and contribute to the construction of a suspect community (for instance Muslims) or a negative other (for example Pakistan). The comparative study presented above can also be a starting point to analyze how some national discourses on terrorism become dominant in the international realm – but are also modified and contested – while other discourses are marginalized (Ditrych 2013; Jackson 2007a).

Such insights are highly relevant in the context of the debate about the homogenization of international terrorism discourses. They also pave the way for promising encounters between postcolonial perspectives and terrorism studies. As shown above, the latter can productively engage with the literature on orientalism, hybridity and subaltern others (whose knowledge is frequently marginalized in terrorism studies and debates) (Sharp 2011; Stump and Dixit 2013). Postcolonial approaches, on the other hand, would benefit from studying terrorism as a politically highly relevant and, at times, as a very discriminatory and imperialist discourse (Dexter 2012).

Third, from a practical or applied perspective, the results of such a comparative analysis of school textbook discourses might support policy makers, NGOs, and education practitioners in critically

reflecting upon, designing, and using teaching materials. For instance, the *Zwischentöne* project aims to counter stereotypes about Muslims by providing teaching materials to complement textbooks (GEI 2016). A similar, though more controversial example is the British *REsilience* program designed to support teachers when discussing issues of extremism and violence with students (REC 2016). In everyday classroom situations, teachers can make an important difference by critically re-contextualizing the textbooks available (Bhattacharya 2009).

Based on this study, I suggest four avenues for future research. First, the analysis of school textbook discourses can be extended to other issues relevant in IR or security studies. At the same time, the analysis of terrorism discourses in other countries or during different time periods is promising. Second, scholars should investigate whether the discourses expressed by school textbooks and other media – and particularly their changes over time – can explain (or rather reflect) foreign policy changes and decisions (Moshirzadeh 2007).

Third, in line with a sociological understanding of securitization (Balzacq 2011) and the recent vernacular/everyday turn (Vaughan-Williams and Stevens 2015), more research on the reception of school textbook knowledge is necessary. Analyzing how students and teachers appropriate, challenge, act upon, or simply ignore such knowledge connects to current education research (Fukuoka 2011) and helps to overcome security/terrorism studies' 'historic lack of engagement with (everyday) security politics' (Jarvis and Lister 2016, 288). Finally, the lessons gained from studying school textbooks should be utilized to improve the design and use of education materials.

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