Book Review


The Book under review is a real mentor for researchers pursuing studies in international relations. The research methods and methodologies have been used as building blocks allowing us to understand and interpret the world around us. The Chapters beautifully illustrate that though the research methods may seem inaccessible at times, they form the basic foundations for the design of research projects. It helps the reader to build a bridge between research and methods and integrate them into a set of choices that one has to make during the course of the essay, dissertation, or thesis writing (Qualitative & Quantitative). Overall the book is a must for researchers to explore their field in more fruitful manner. This book systematically unravels the steps involved in research writing. It supports the fact that no matter how skillfully one collects data, if it is unable to communicate, then the contribution to the field will remain either unintelligible to our audience, or will be simply remain ignored. The guidance necessary to navigate the multitude of research choices which one confronts during the research process like Internet, Media, Television, Newspapers, Expert Interviews, or large datasets. These tools help us hone our ability to make an impactful contribution to these debates through research essays and dissertations. Mention is made of realists, such as E H Carr and Hans Morgenthau who rightly accused the early 20th-Century liberals of describing a World as it ought to be as opposed to as it is. During the description of the work (Chapter one), the author clearly mentions that the research methods mentioned recognize the plurality of methods useful for the field of research. Predominantly at two instances, the author stresses use of quantitative methods which are deeply rooted in North American Political Science, where training in research methods forms a core part of the curriculum across various political science programs (page nine and page fourteen). Three relevant tables have been used in this chapter along with set of fairly straightforward questions like “What is your topic of interest?, What is the purpose of your study?” The following chapter (Chapter two) provides with a practical guide to research question formulation and research design in International Relations that highlight the plurality of research agendas and traditions within the discipline. The Empirical research questions like “Should NATO continue its eastward expansion to include more countries that were once part of the Soviet Union? and Should European Union enlargement processes continue and allow for
states in the Western Balkans, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, or Kosovo to become full Members? attempts to explain a puzzling past event, which in turn helps one to project our understanding of current event and trends into the future. Also the puzzling question like “Will NATO and EU expansion contribute to widening the geographic area of Europe, that enjoys pacific relations or will expansion contribute a renewed Cold War by antagonizing Russia? helps one to juxtapose the lessons of the past against the shadow of the future. Research Ethics (Chapter three) is focused on how a student of International Relations is confronted with ethical dilemmas at every stage of the research process. Plagiarism and self-plagiarism are discussed well on page fifty two. The author suggests taking precaution during note taking either digitally or on paper to avoid unintentional plagiarism. The Harvard and Cambridge style of references is elaborately discussed. The relevant example of Nuremberg Code for medical research ethics has been dealt with.

Chapter four deals with the question of writing a literature review. The two essential purpose of a literature review namely to situate your research question in the context of existing scholarly literature on your topic and secondly to justify why the question you posed remains at the center of a scholarly debate or why it is of policy interest are made clear. The author further states that Literature review is both organizational and analytical and to explain this fact a table has been appropriately inserted in this chapter. Chapters five, six and seven thoroughly examine the Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods strategies which are to be developed by the researcher to explore his research field systematically. Personal experience of the author in field research in Croatia, especially in its turbulent transition years (1999-2008) using triangulation method for data collection as an unique idea has been discussed. The author has used : For only One Player- Decision trees, Two Player- Game Matrixes, Common Game- US-Soviet Arms control Prisoners Dilemma, Nash Equilibrium- No single player can gain unilaterally. Common types of survey questions and scales with example have come very effective on pages 106-107.

Mixed methods seeking to combine quantitative and qualitative methods in IR have been dealt with briefly. Case study research in international relations (chapter eight) covers the key terms like process tracing, causal Mechanism and Causal effects. The chart showing focused study on a historical event e.g. US-Mexican War?, Understanding a particular concept or idea for example... What role does Japan’s Yasukuni Shrine play in shaping public memory on the Second World
Exploring History: A Bi-annual UGC Approved Peer Reviewed Journal, exploringhistory.mc@gmail.com

Exploring History: (ISSN-2230-8490) 
December , 2018 ,Vol. IX, No. 2  
https://www.maldacollege.ac.in/exploring-history.php

Reviewed by: 
Dr. Neeta M. Khandpekar 
Associate Professor, Department of History 
University of Mumbai, India.

War? and the Hypothesis Testing like Why do states comply with international criminal tribunal orders? have been illustrated.

The most interesting chapter nine on Field Research in International Relations deals with the broad range of dilemmas and challenges which are faced by the researchers while going to the field. The process of planning in field research highlighting some of the common practical, ethical and security dilemmas one encounters is given in tabular form. Similarly the field research activities with examples like Archival Research, Source Documents, Participant Observation, Interviews, Focus Groups, Questionnaires and Surveys. Gains and limitations of snowball sampling discussed with examples in yet another table. How to write a brief research summary or carry out field research in a foreign country is dealt with. The relevant examples in oral history are also covered here. I would like to quote here Elizabeth Ann Danto’s book entitled Historical Research where she gives a comparative chart on the primary and secondary Sources, highlighting Alamo Navajo Oral History Project 1977-1984 at the Center for Southwest Research at University of New Mexico. The Akan (Ghana) proverb ‘Ancient things remain in the Ear’- speaks of the marvel of oral tradition here.

Finally the book concludes with tips of writing up the final research dissertation, editing, proofreading which is as just as important as collecting and analyzing the data. Academic writing is thus projected as the continuous process that requires one to constantly revise his work. The core components of an International research invariably includes Abstract, Introduction., Literature review, Methodology, Data Analysis, Conclusion, Bibliography/References (with a caution not to mix styles, or inconsistency in bibliographic information). For further reading, a 6 page glossary and a long list of references is included at the end. The cover design by Jen Crisp is effective with flag of Syria (showing something written in Arabic), the use of red white and black colours make it still more effective. But no where I could read a two line description of what the cover of the book is trying to say. Maps convey something definite to the reader, it aids the written text in clarity and precision, its use in international relations is unavoidable, the author missed this tool.