GLOBAL POLITICS NETWORK

A 'New' International Relations: More *Social* than Science

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Abstract

The question concerning the social scientific identity of International Relations has been vigorously discussed. Yet, despite reasonable and compelling arguments lamenting the stranglehold of positivism with regard to ontology, epistemology and methodology of International Relations as an academic practice, not much has changed. New labels such as 'constructivsim' have been employed to signal a fundamental change in direction. Nevertheless, the overall tendency among main stream internationalists is to continue their business as usual. Alerted by this problem and the intellectual defects associated with it, this paper calls for a 'new' science of International Relations. Problematizing fundamental flaws of International Relations as a social science, it does not rest content with assertion but tries to remedy and pave the way for a 'science' that is less formalistic and more responsible and sophisticated.

Introduction

The social scientific identity of main stream, i.e. American, International Relations has long been a contentious matter. Hedley Bull's legendary remark that "[…] our rejection of it stems much less from any reasoned critique than it does from feelings of aesthetic

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revulsion against its language and methods, irritation at its sometimes preposterous claims […] a priori confidence that as an intellectual matter it is bound to fail, and professional insecurity induced by the awful gnawing thought that it might perhaps succeed"[2] is still en vogue and resonates with many European internationalists who are anxious to finally overcome the stranglehold of science, i.e. what they perceive as the formal cast of a 'rational' and largely asocial exercise. Latter day European internationalists want to perform their academic practice in an intellectually more satisfying fashion. So this paper is primarily an attempt to deliberate on *a* direction that holds out the possibility for academic internationalists to do precisely this: to escape from the narrow confines of mainstream, or, American International Relations. It aims to show how to rediscover the social dimension of their practice and how to meet the criteria of a *social* science worth the name. Polemics is reduced to a minimum. The main purpose is to elaborate persuasive constructive proposals for how to practice International Relations in a more satisfying fashion from now on. And it is the fulfillment of this purpose by which the success of the following remarks should be judged. Nevertheless, construction is only secondary to critique. For it is the latter which highlights the matter of contention and which remains the primordial step on the way to effectuate change.

Aiding the critical/constructive purpose so far sketched, the argument develops through the following stages: I first elaborate a short empirical account of the situation in Europe after the Cold War as it is the relevant 'facts' social scientists are concerned with in the process of inquiry. More precisely, it is a picture of what happened from which questions are usually derived regarding the 'reality' of international politics, and how 'it' is to be dealt with methodologically. The problematization of this account of a world 'out there' is meant to shed light on the difficulty for academic internationalists to actually investigate empirical matters as they proclaim, to pose interesting reasearch questions, and to structure the investigation of what are often called 'data' in a plausible fashion. In a second step, I am going to deal more specifically with this methodological difficulty and trace its origin. This will lead me to pose fundamental questions regarding not only methodological commitments but ontological assumptions and epistemological persuasions of modern social science. The third and last step will be undertaken to find answers to these questions. The most important findings of this section are twofold, namely: on the one hand, that the conventional status of reality needs to be taken much more seriously by intellectually ambitious social scientists, and on the other hand, that the social character of international politics needs to be

[2] Hedley Bull, "International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach", World Politics 18:3 (1966) p. 361.

rediscovered and emphasized. The conclusion of this paper has it that an intellectually satisfying and progressive practice of academic internationalism cannot circumvent these issues.

Features of the 'Real'

For many, if not most, inhabitants of the European Continent, the year 1989 was associated with pathbreaking developments. To be sure, the overwhelming majority of Europeans had taken for granted that the practice of security diplomacy was hitherto essentially a matter of deterrence aimed at preserving a relatively peaceful state of coexistence between two mutually exclusive forms of political – and above all economic – organization. But between 1989 and 1990, the common sense underwent a profound transformation. The hysteria with which the Soviet Union's head of state, President Mikhail Gorbachev, had been greeted at his visits in various capitals in Western Europe is only one of many more instances of this shift. The newly awakened interest among the more educated public in Slavic languages, notably Russian, and a broader media coverage of issues associated with the Soviet Union as well as other parts of Eastern Europe were to mention, too. Accompanied with this newly awakened interest in, if not fascination[3] with, the Eastern hemisphere of all-Europe was a heightened awareness of two different but interrelated things and events: societal problems lurking beyond the surface of what had been tightly ordered societies in Eastern Europe and a different rhetoric on the side of Western diplomats vis a vis their colleagues from the East.

Ethnonational Conflict

Regarding the former, the issue of ethnonational conflict became a very prominent theme. What many Europeans meant to witness in all-Europe were dramatic consequences of a belated attempt by Gorbachev and his circle to reform the politico-economic system in the Soviet Union and its satellites: a rapidly declining rate of economic growth, maldistribution and shortage of fundamental goods, collective feelings of inferiority among the people, resuscitation of suppressed ethnic and/or national identifications and, as a consequence of this, resurgence of ethnonational rivalries and civil unrest. Especially the latter phenomenon had been received with

[3] The estimation that there had been a significant degree of what can be termed 'fascination' with the Eastern part of Europe is perhaps confirmed by the explosion of tourist travels to East European cities like Moscow, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Prague, Budapest and so on. This fascination is perhaps explained by what Western Europeans have perceived as the re-invention of democracy. In the words of Slavoj Zizek, Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) p. 200: "The real object of fascination for the West is thus the gaze, namely the supposedly naïve gaze by means of which Eastern Europe stares back at the West, fascinated by its democracy. It is as if the Eastern gaze is still

some anxiety in Western Europe, probably due to the fact that it was so widespread. Armenia, the Baltics, Bjelorussia, Georgia, Moldova, and Uzbekistan, were all zones of ethnonational conflict and even turmoil. 'A revolutionary period', so Gorbachev had been reported, 'is no comfortable situation'.[4] And indeed, the situation in many parts of the Soviet Union was such that it justified the fear held by many members of the political apparatus in the Kremlin that the Soviet Union as it had been known might soon cease to exist. Various separation movements turned more and more violent. The casualties incidental to protest in Baku, Stepanakert, Riga, Tallin, Chisinau, Suchumi, and other places had above all the effect that calls for self-determination gained ever more fervor thus accentuating the cleavages between minorities and the respective titular nations, and diminishing the prospects for a peaceful settlement of these conflicts out of their own midst.

Security Diplomacy

Regarding the rhetoric of security diplomacy, the public got more and more the sense that the language, which diplomats and heads of states entertained, underwent a significant change of direction. Instead of mutual allegations, which had for a considerable time been the most characteristic features at numerous meetings involving representatives from both sides, the language resorted to by diplomats from East and West contained more 'friendly' words embedded in phrases emphasizing much more than before actual and possible commonalities in political views and plans. In the context of this diplomatic rhetoric, the CSCE came to serve as a very prominent point of reference, namely: as an arena in which common views and plans were to be discussed, and as a political organ in its own right. This could be learned by the public from statements made at the highest levels of state diplomacy. French President Mitterand, for example, went public with the idea of a European Confederation made up of various arrangements between states in all-Europe and organized under the umbrella of the CSCE. German foreign minister Genscher saw the CSCE as a comprehensive framework for stability, if not the institutional basis for a unified and liberated European Continent. Swiss diplomats repeated their calls to develop the CSCE into a forum responsible for the peaceful settlement of disputes as well as for conflict prevention and crisis management.[5] Checoslovakian President Vaclav Havel made

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able to perceive in Western societies its agalma, the treasure that causes democratric enthusiasm and which the West has long lost the taste of."

[4] See Der Spiegel 39/1989, p. 164.

himself heard with the vision of a European order based on multilateral diplomacy and characterized by inclusivity. And Mikhail Gorbachev's metaphor of a 'common European house' was clearly rooted in the idea of the CSCE being the all-encompassing framework for diplomacy and political action.

The underlying subtext of such phrases was understood to be the confidence among state officials that the agenda of security diplomacy would in the not so distant future encompass to a much lesser extent issues giving rise to inter-state military conflict. In light of more and more commonalities on either side regarding views of the actual and the possible, a sense was dawning in the public that the CSCE might become the most important stage at which to decide on both the long term unification of what had been an artificially divided continent and the more immediate organization of the European society of states and nations through cooperative and peaceful means.

'Reality' according to mainstream International Relations

From a perspective that is concerned with matters of diplomacy and international politics for a professional academic interest both of these issues, i.e. what had been perceived as the emergence of societal problems triggered and reinforced by the dissolution of what wanted to be communist state organizations and a changed rhetoric on the side of diplomats and state representatives, are highly relevant. It is, generally speaking, the foremost responsibility of those who are in a position to do so to take up and facilitate understanding of pressing political issues. And owing to their 'nature' and political importance, the two different but somehow interrelated issues constitute vital phenomena for the academic practice concerned with diplomacy and international politics. For it has ever since been the task of those practicing diplomacy and international politics from an academic point of view to concern themselves with matters that are relevant for the establishment of a peaceful international/world order. That is to say, from the very beginning, academic internationalists have been devoted to the analysis and understanding of such and similar issues as the ones just sketched. During the formative years of the discipline, what had been referred to as the problem of national minorities went hand in hand with a focus upon the style of post World War I diplomacy and the prospects for international organization.[6] And now as then, a very important question for academic internationalists is *whether diplomatic attempts to*

[5] See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 21. August 1990.

[6] For the manner in which academic internationalists have re-presented theses issues in the interwar period, see Nathaniel Berman, "'But the Alternative is Despair': European Nationalism and the Modernist Renewal of International Law", Harvard Law Review 106:8 (1993) pp. 1792-1903, and David Kennedy, "The Move to Institutions", Cardozo Law Review 8:5 (1987) pp. 841-988.

organize the realm of interstate relations can be considered as successful in light of problems brought about by conflict between competing ethnic and national groups. Just how important this question is can be seen in the fact that it touches upon the hotly debated status and function of 'the political' in the realm beyond states, that it requires to thematize topical normative issues like 'order' and 'governance', and that it relates to the more general and unsettled question that plagues any reflection about the goings on between and beyond political spaces of 'the state', namely: whether and to what extent problems related to inter-state/-national security can be dealt with successfully by state officials.

The Perspectivism of International Relations

As a consequence of these, i.e. the knowledge constituting interests of the discipline IR, it is within the thematic confines delimited by questions about peace, stability, and order where the discussion of issues such as ethnonational conflict and the practice of security would have to be embedded. This, however, would not in and of itself suggest by resort to which conceptual scheme and its corresponding argumentative style the discussion could be developed most successfully. A short genealogy of the academic discourse on interwar diplomacy is interesting at this point as it reveals that, despite the similarity of themes and concerns among academic internationalists in the past and now, there have been competing conceptual schemes amounting to different kinds of arguments which were repeatedly considered – mainly by British and US American academics – to provide convincing answers to the above mentioned questions.

If we consider the academic conversation during the discipline's formative period and reconstruct the main course of argumentation between the two world wars, we learn that liberal academics who were committed to the perspective of *international institutions* have emphasized the potential of norms and formal organization. From this perspective, codification of international law and establishment of the League of Nations had been portrayed as the most appropriate steps towards a more peaceful society of nations[7]. Especially what had been perceived as a 'new' character of diplomatic practice, i.e. transparent multilateral diplomacy and publicity of treaty agreements instead of bilateral diplomacy and secret protocols, came to serve as

[7] See Pitman B. Potter, An Introduction to the Study of International Organization (New York: The Century Co., 1921) pp. 357-375; see Felix Morley, The Society of Nations. Its Organization and Constitutional Development (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1932); and see Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law (London: MacMillan, 1936) pp. 1918-1935, 277-285.

evidence in support of this estimation[8]. The drafting of regimes for the protection of national minorities and the creation of distinct political organs to supervise implemention of the respective treaties' provisions were the most popular concrete instances of this example. Those academics who approached things from a conservative perspective[9], phenomena were more amenable to be re-presented under labels such as *power politics*. Academics more attuned to this perspective have emphasized the struggle for survival as the enduring pattern underlying all politics. Academic internationalists committed to this perspective have made a strong case for what they considered as lawlike regularities in the realm of dipomacy and international politics. According to their view, the organization of international politics would not be available through the establishment of formal organizations. As had been remarked, "[…i]nternational society is not organized"[10]. Formalized arrangements were only epiphenomena concealing the true nature of diplomacy, i.e. the maximization of power and influence.

Perspectivist Heuristics

At a first sight, either perspective offers suitable concepts and allows to mold a reasonable argument on the matter at hand. Problematizing status and function of politics in the realm between/beyond states, order and governance are conceivable to be brought about either by international institutions or by state power. Peace and stability might be established either by coordination or by subordination. More precisely, it might indeed be the case that academic internationalists who are rooted in the institutionalist tradition, and who prefer to thematize formal organizations and processes of multilateral decisionmaking, have a notion that is descriptively accurate and normatively appealing with regard to the above sketched phenomenon. They might be capable of facilitating understanding and offer the most convincing account of things and events in post Cold War Europe. They might be most suited to chroncile and explain the CSCE's role as a framework for action and/or as an agent in its own right in the context of ethnonational conflict. At a first glance, the institutionalist perspective does seem to allow for a plausible re-presenation of the things and events that

[8] See Woodrow Wilsons Address on Presenting the Draft of the Covenant of the League of Nations to the Third Plenary Session of Peace Conference at Paris, February 14, 1918, American Journal of International Law 13: (1919) p. 574.
[9] Popular conservative internationalists at that time were Walter Lippman, The Stakes of Diplomacy (New York: Henry Holt, 1915), Frederick Schuman, International Politics: An Introduction to the Western State System (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), Georg Schwarzenberger, Power Politics: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations and Post-War Planning (London: Jonathan Cape, 1941).
[10] Hans J. Morgenthau, Scientific Man vs. Power Politics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946) p. 99, where he continues that "[…] 'international organization' – in its abstract rationality a kind of legal counterpart to the utopian systems of eighteenth-century philosophy – became the scientific formula which, since the leading pacifist and Nobel Prize winner, A.H. Fried had propounded it at the beginning of the century, has been the credo of a whole school of thought. Others would look rather to material remedies."

occurred in post-Cold War Europe. However, if confronted with arguments from academics working in the power politics tradition, the institutionalist perspective might as well be taken to mislead the whole discussion. The approach of institutionalists might appear to be premised upon mistaken views of how, that is, on what basis and in light of which viewpoints diplomats and state representatives do their job. Institutionalists might be considered as totally wrongheaded as they fail to see that the world of international politics does not at all rest on normative but on pragmatic grounds.

Obviously, it is somewhat difficult to decide from which perspective the problem under investigation is best understood, and by resort to which ontological concepts and assumptions the question should be pondered. The available perspectives seem both destined to structure the investigation and deliver plausible results, even though they are mutually exclusive and generate totally different findings. Now, in order to 'demonstrate' that institutionalism or, alternatively, the perspective with a focus upon power is better suited to make sense of what had been going on in Europe after the end of the East West conflict, modern academic internationalists would maintain that 'the facts' themselves decide. The facts would tell what really happened and suggest from which perspective the world should be investigated. According to mainstream academic internationalists, it would suffice to get a concise picture of what happened. After all, this is not surprising, because all modern knowledge paradigms, i.e. rationalism, empiricism, and pragmatism are strongly biased in favor of this strategy.

The Intellectual Dilemma

However, as a fair number of progressive academics have pointed out, testing the adequacy of theoretical perspectives against the 'world out there' poses a rather serious intellectual dilemma. For it appears as a quite quixotic attempt to judge the heuristics of the respective perspectives on the basis of more and/or better factual evidence, since the pieces of this very evidence are themselves impregnated by theory, i.e. the ontological assumptions and concepts pertaining to a certain worldview[11]. Without a new strategy, there is no easy escape from this impending deadlock. Yet, if and to the extent certain conditions are met, it is still possible to

[11] Illustrative in this regard is John G. Gunnell, Philosophy, Science, and Political Inquiry (Morristown: General Learning Press, 1975) p. 206: "The assumption of most political scientists that there is more than a pragmatic distinction between theory and fact is not supported by an analogy with maps. Although there is always a difference between a map (or a theory) and its object, it is a mistake to assume that the latter is conceptually autonomous and that a map (or a theory) is only a figurative device for selectively organizing the independent facts of reality."

proceed this way instead of choosing a perspective at random. For in the end, taking factual matters into account may turn out helpful and legitimate – provided that this undertaking is not implemented in the way modern social scientists have hitherto been used to. The crucial thing is to reckon with that there is no way to 'observe' factual matters as they are, to claim to 'know objectively' what they mean, and to call for 'neutral' or 'scientific procedures' that regulate how they could/should be investigated. Now, in order to implement a more progressive strategy succesfully, it is first of all necessary to understand why science is so destined to fail and to learn about the consequences entailed by the insight that the facts of political life are not autonomous and separated from theory. In order to find a way out of the intellectual trap of modern social science, a few questions regarding fundamental aspects of modern academic practice need to be answered.

Fundamental Questions

As things regarding modern social science stand, the quest for sufficiently determinate factual knowledge about what happened, say, with regard to ethnonational conflict in former Soviet states as well as with regard to the practice of security diplomacy in and around the CSCE is not unproblematic. At least not anymore. The notion of 'fact' touches upon the wider and hotly debated notion of 'reality': what is 'it', what can be known 'about' it and how? To begin with, serious academics/scholars have known for quite a while that the 'reality' they are concerned with *for professional reasons*, whether it is taken to be of a natural or as a social kind, is not 'out there'. This is not to deny that natural and social phenomena do exist and have properties of their own, irrespective of the paradigms, theories, and conceptual frameworks employed to account for them. But the existence of such phenomena is not the decisive point. Natural and social phenomena are not at all relevant for academic professionals in their quality as things and events 'out there'. They are relevant only, if and to the extent to which they are meaningful[12]. And the meaning of things and events is not a quality of these things and events. Meaning is an attribute that things and events are endowed with by human beings involved in communicative exchange of whatever sort. Because

[12] It could be said that, even though there is a sort of material reality that exists whether or not we think and talk 'about' it, it is impossible for this reality to constitute itself in this or that fashion outside the realm of communication, that is, "[…] outside any discursive conditions of emergence." Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985) p. 108.

meaning is inextricably linked with language[13] as it hinges on concepts, and because language is a social phenomenon[14], at the very moment things and events are meaningful, they have entered the realm of societal intercourse and have thereby lost their pristine status as phenomena out there.

Ontology and the Problem of 'Meaning'

The idea that there are *meaningful* objects that continue to exist independently of those thinking and writing 'about' them has unfortunately been very popular for some time. Inherited modern knowledge paradigms, above all dogmatic rationalism and sensualist empiricism, which are still in place and whose intellectual shortcomings have apparently not been understood with regard to their deleterious consequences for academic work, revolve around this very idea. It has therefore often been taken for granted that theory can reveal the essence underlying all phenomenal reality, which is presumed to be strictly reasonable and amenable to be expressed with the help of correct concepts. Alternatively, it has also been frequently held that the world out there determines the meaning of whatever is observed as an object by the respective social scientist. According to the first, the rationalist view, reality is out there and its singular essence is the object of all theory. According to the second, the empiricist view, reality is unitary and immediately given to observation from which knowledge can be derived. The crucial thing is that both views rest on questionable essentialist epistemologies. Where rationalism makes meaningful concepts and theory the essence of reality, empiricism holds the inverse position as it warrants the meaning of any theory by means of its essence in observed facts. In either case, theory stands apart of, or in opposition to, reality as it is 'out there'.

To be sure, this modern view has ceased to be intellectually plausible a hundred years ago. Nowadays academics are born too late for holding this view to be self-evident. There has been a good deal of thinking going on. Serious academics and scholars agree that viewing the world as an essence, as a substance that has meaning, that is given and immutable, and that waits to be observed and analyzed, is a discredited and

[13] In a similar vein, C. I. Lewis, "Realism or Phenomenalism", Philosophical Review 64: (1955) p. 234: "Meanings are something entertained by individuals in the privacy of their own minds; but any conveying of them depends on language."

[14] For the sociality, in the sense of 'interindividuality', of language and meaning, see Michail M. Bakhtin, Speech Genres and other late Essays (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) pp. 121-122: "A word (or in general any sign) is interindividual. Everything that is said […] is located outside the 'soul' of the speaker and does not belong to him. The word cannot be assigned to a single speaker. The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener has his rights, and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it also have their rights (after all, there are no words that belong to no one)."

illegitimate position. Serious academics and scholars consider this position as a modernist illusion at best. This is not to say that this position has already been abandoned. Especially in backward academic settings, which are mainly to be found in 'rationalistic' societies, where good researchers of all couleur pride themselves for knowledge that is 'scientific' and 'about' things, and where the predominant views belong to a modern sociology of knowledge that is still premised on dated rationalist and/or empiricist persuasions with ontological assumptions of the kind just hinted at, this position is still en vogue. Especially among many US American social scientists practicing International Relations, it is fashionable to stick with such ideas. In the modernist academic circles of the discipline IR, intellectual primitivism still predominates and a fair number of academics still adhere to dogmas according to which the criterion of 'reality' as a generic term to denote a totality of meaningful phenomena is, by and large, reducible to reasonable concepts and/or sense perceptions of what are taken as given corporeal bodies.

The most recent cultivation of this dogma has become manifest in the instrumentalist image of theory, i.e. the assumption that theories are conceptual constructs, inherently neither true nor false, for economically describing and explaining a distinct and, in some form, experientially given and epistemically privileged realm of 'facts'. Allied with the deductive model of explanation and the notion that theoretical explanation can be equated with the subsumption of singular statements under generalizations, proponents of this view in the social sciences have insisted on there being *a* scientific method making it possible for, say, economists, psychologists, and political scientists to distinguish a class of facts peculiar to their respective social science, and to champion the nomothetic form of scientific explanation in a similarly successful fashion as their colleagues in the natural sciences[15].

The problem with this traditional and rather unsophisticated understanding of 'reality' as a world of given corporeal bodies, the associated epistemological assumption that the production of meaning is a more or less mechanical process – in which things and events are expressed by recourse to a logical scheme as they correspond to the purely theoretical essence of reality (rationalism); or because they leave their imprint on the senses and come to be represented as objects by the mind (empiricism) – and the methodological assumptions of deduction and inference to which proponents of rationalist and empiricist social science have been attached is its dubious intellectual

[15] For illustrative examples in this regard, see Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); see also Kenneth R. Hoover, The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

character. The problem of a social science with a modernist identity has two dimensions, an ideological or political, and an intellectual.

Two Dimensions of the Problem

The *political* problem consists in modern social scientists reifying a concept of 'reality' that is static, predictable, objective, given and true. What is thus precluded by definition is a 'reality' that is constantly changing and even amenable to be changed. In other words, the problematic ideological dimension of modern social science is its implicit conservatism: the world just is and can be known as it really, meaning essentially, is. The severity of this problem becomes manifest when some of the consequences entailed by such epistemically conservative academic practices are considered. For instance, despite years of training and recourse to immense material and mental resources, mainstream analysts of international politics, i.e. predominantly American based academics claiming to observe things and events belonging, for example, to international security, did not perceive the beginning of a rather profound transformation shattering the all-European order. Unlike emphatic European social scientists[16], they did not predict either the scale or the speed of the changes that happened in the Soviet Union during the 1980s. Specialists whose whole careers had been dedicated to the study of superpower conflict and the Soviet Union's role in international security were all found wanting. They were all found to have been working to repeat and reinforce the erroneous view that the world will always be as it is right now – 'now' meaning a situation above time and space with things and events in some mysterious way corresponding with available theories and/or supposedly presenting themselves in their 'true' meaning as corporeal entities out there. As to the reasons that possibly brought about these consequences, it can be said that the Americanized profession as a whole had suffered from a comprehensive bias and a total lack of imagination. That is, professional academics devoted to analyzing things and events pertaining to international security in a 'scientific' fashion 'observed' the phenomena in question in a highly partial manner and lost thereby any sense for what ultimately took place. Antipathetic to the Soviet system, the self-declared experts on international security believed that the totalitarian party system would survive endlessly based on the same mixture of habit, consent, and coercion that was assumed to keep such regimes alive most of the time in most parts of the world.

[16] Highly perceptive European social scientists were Stjepan Mestrovic and Slavoj Zizek.

More insidious and fundamental than the political bias is the *intellectual* defect, however. This defect has itself two interrelated features. There is, on the one hand, the feature of objectivism. A characteristic feature of academic practice in materialist cultures such as the US, the conservatism of modern social science is ultimately a consequence of this feature. This is because for metaphysical realism there is an antecedently fixed fact wherever there is anything to be cognitively discovered through experience, and modern social scientists consider this independent facticity as the element that determines truth and falsity in the world, either because it corresponds with theory, or as it presents itself. The external world is in any case a world which is as it is and not otherwise, and to be apprehended as it is by rationalist/empiricist knowledge. Now, for modern social science what is implied by this status of rationalist/empiricist actuality is knowledge of an object that is persistent in form and/or character. The process of change in the form and/or character of this object is, if at all conceded, considered as never too abrupt or too pervasive. So what is recognized by modern rationalist and/or empiricist social scientists is an object that is so recognizable only by some persistence of form and/or character. In order to know anything at all, modern social scientists must either find in the object they are concerned with something which persists unaltered or, if a process of change is conceded, they must penetrate to some lawlike mode of such alteration, arguably characteristic of the kind of thing the object in question is recognized to be.

More progressive minded academics have not at all found it per se plausible that and why things and events under investigation have a form and/or character that is either persistent or subject to lawlike, and therefore predictable, alteration. In other words, for those who have found good reasons to doubt the intellectual integrity of dogmatic 'rationalist' pretensions that phenomena can be known as they are in and of themselves, for those who have not been content to ascertain as fact what appears to superficial 'empirical' observation, and for those who have neither been satisfied with the 'pragmatic' postulation that things and events ought to be considered as analyzable objects because academic practice must proceed, modern social scientists have barely been convincing. For scholarly academics, there is an antecedent and fundamental choice between Heracliteanism and Platonism in this regard[17]. And without some explication of the decision to opt for the latter, there is no sound reason to believe that the form and/or character of phenomena modern social scientists are

[17] See fragements 30, 51, 53, 88, and 91 of Heraclitus, where figures of fluidity and constant evolution through inherent oppositions are developed into what can be termed an early 'process philosophy' with a sensitivity for the problematic relationship between 'being' and 'time'. Compare this notion of substance with the one later adopted by attic philosophers (Sokrates, Plato, Aristotle) as it was formulated by Aristotle, Metaphysics A, 6; M, 4.

able to recognize is necessarily stable and a property of the things and events under observation. In fact, the opposite is much more plausible. It is also by no means clear that things and events present themselves as meaningful. The question of which side, the world out there or social scientific observers, is actually doing anything to resolve the problem of meaning is far from settled. This brings me to a second and closely related intellectual defect of modern social science: objectification.

As their fixation upon what are taken as material objects suggests, modern social scientists have been unaware or unable, because of their commitment to rationalism and empiricism, to acknowledge that the 'reality' they are concerned with is always and inevitably made and not observed/found. In other words, another vital intellectual feature of the problem stated above lies in the failure of many social scientists to fight off their dogmatic slumber, overcome their alienation from the environment they inhabit, and abandon the somewhat dated metaphysical dualism between (academic) man and world, the unfounded rationalistic separation between subject and object, according to which there is an 'I' that is passively waiting for phenomena to present themselves. For it is not the world out there that appears as it is, supposedly exhibiting precisely those formal and/or character traits rationalist and empiricist/positivist social scientists identify as meaningful when they analyze things and events as objects by employing scientific, meaning methodical, techniques and procedures. It is rather the social scientists themselves who bring a specific form and character to the events and things they are concerned with when they imagine phenomena as pervasive and predictable, i.e. when they objectify as meaningful, lawlike, and immutable what is essentially vapid, at variance, and in flux.

A short illustration of this problem is provided by the failure of modern American social scientists to anticipate even the possibility of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it the dissolution of the East West conflict. This failure among the most influential proponents of rationalist and empiricist social science exposed the inability to recognize that there is more to knowing 'about' things and events than what is recognizable after objectification of what are posited as given and immutable phenomena out there, through intellectual abstraction of essentially 'political' phenomena, and by analysis of data arguably generated through a systematic and methodical process of research.

Leaving aside the political dimension of the problem and concentrating on the two features of the intellectual defect, the methodological question that needs to be answered by progressive social scientists is not how the world can be known and observed as it really or apparently is, the question is how the world social scientists are

concerned with is ultimately made and amenable to plausible re-presentation. Given that it is a categorical mistake to take (academic) man as an individual that is in some way separated from the world he is professionally concerned with, the question is how reality comes into being as a meaningful context of facts and relations that are of interest for professional social scientists. Vital aspects of this question touch upon important ontological, epistemological, and methodological dimensions that have barely been recognized in their importance, but that are firmly tied to a sophisticated concept of 'reality' in the 21st century. And it is only views that avoid a primitive materialist metaphysics of the kind just described that provide keys for a credible answer to this question.

Fundamental Answers

According to a more progressive understanding, things and events become social scientific facts to the extent they are relevant to practicing academics and can be referred to as meaningful and spoken 'about'. The factual quality of things and events is thus a matter of professional interests and concerns, which affect how phenomena are produced in a process of naming things and events by recourse to terms available and in use within a specific context. This context is a context of practical use of language in which phenomena are literally made by recourse to terms and concepts whose meanings are negotiated between speaker and audience or, if communicative exchange is not interpersonal, between source and recipient. Depending on the peculiarities of context, which can be conceived in cultural and/or ideological terms, phenomena take on different meanings. However, this does not mean that meaning and facticity are solely matters of a specialized context like professional social science. Rather, professional social scientists ascribe meaning to things and events in the manner that is typical for their practice *after having become aware* that those phenomena were already 'named', and thus brought to appearance[18], by non-specialists and the interested public. In short, they are aware of the fact that the things and events they find problematic and worthy of consideration have already been made meaningful as important political goings on. They know that the world they are concerned with for professional reasons comes already mediated. It cannot be otherwise because, after all, academics are still human beings, and "[h]uman beings do not process information into what is known in necessarily 'rational' or instrumental

[18] On the constitution of 'facticity' through naming, cf. Roberto M. Unger, Knowledge and Politics (New York: The Free Press, 1975) p. 80: "Because facts have no intrinsic identity, everything depends on the names we give them. The conventions of naming rather than any perceived quality of 'tableness' will determine whether an object is to count as a table."

ways. Instead, our mediating conceptual systems are shaped by lifestyles, work experiences, customs, language, mythologies – by cultures."[19]

The failure to recognize this has been one of the most serious setbacks of a modern social science like American International Relations. In any case, before they go about their job to thematize, conceive, and explain pressing political issues, even the most specialized academics have already gotten a sense of what count as vital phenomena in the broader societal context in which they themselves as well as their profession is embedded. It is on this basis that what are widely seen as important phenomena become issues that are of interest and concern for a practice involving academic speakers and an academic audience. What is often called a scientific fact is thus the result of translating a relatively general notion of problematic political goings on into a more specific professional manner of speaking. And I shall hasten to add, it is this translation of what are perceived in the public as pressing political issues that renders academic activity a problem-oriented social science.

Similarly, it is the concession that what are taken up are issues that are in some sense meaningful and that are widely seen as problematic that renders social science responsible. And this latter point is of considerable importance, too. For, as progressive social scientists also know, their practice is not isolated from but relevant to the environing social context. It is often this context where money for social scientific practice comes from, and where justified expectations in a responsible performance of professional academics prevail. As a consequence, progressive social scientists are not alienated from their societal context but participate in and are sympathetic with it. What is meant thereby is the fact that social scientists, who perform their job in a progressive fashion know about their dependency and are concerned with actual political problems, because they see themselves as privileged and obligated to contribute a considerable share to the solution of political problems haunting the socio-cultural context in which they thrive.

Having stated this, the important thing here is not only that any context of a specialized social scientific practice is parasitic upon a more encompassing process of meaning making that takes place in what may be called 'the public sphere' of a society at large[20], it is also that any social scientific practice worth the name is called upon to live up to its professional responsibility.

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[19] Edward Comor, "The Role of Communication in Global Civil Society: Forces, Processes, Prospects", 45 International Studies Quarterly 45:3 (2001) p. 395.

[20] For a helpful depiction of what can be taken as ‚the public sphere', see Michael Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject" in The Phantom Public, Bruce Robbins ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) pp. 235-6: „The public in this sense has no empirical existence and cannot be objectified. When we understand images and texts as public, we do not gesture to a statistically measurable series of others. We make a necessarily imaginary reference to the public as opposed to other individuals."

Professional Responsibility

The qualification of an academic practice as *responsible* is quite significant if its conception of and search for 'reality' is compared with *rationalist, empiricist*, and/or *pragmatist* ways of doing academic work – practices that characterize main stream International Relations as a modern social science. Unlike rationalists, responsible social scientists are not concerned with the 'truth' of the matter. They don't try to gain knowledge 'about' some realm of facts for its own sake. That is, they are not motivated by the possibility to subject supposedly given phenomena to the rationality of a conceptual scheme they consider true and they are already familiar with. And they tend to see no heuristic value in the elaboration of arguments that are based on rational principles and that prove, in a tautological fashion, that and how phenomena abide by the logic of a distinct and preformulated scheme. Unlike empiricists, they are not satisfied to posit sense impressions as facts that are analyzable. And they do not subscribe to the argument that findings gained by the proper kind of analysis can be generalized so as to reveal what are supposed to be lawlike patterns underlying all such and similar phenomena. And unlike pragmatists, who claim to have overcome the problems of, and who like to steer the middle ground between, rationalists and empiricists, responsible social scientists do not strive to gain knowledge that is useful for purposes that are held dearly within the profession only, and that are usually shielded from reconsideration by the most influential circles. Purposes, that is, which are defined and go without saying within the context of academic practice they are involved. Responsible social scientists are not convinced that it is sufficient to gain knowledge about how to solve problems that are perceived as such from an academic perspective only. What sophisticated and responsible social scientists aspire to are precisely those things that are despised by rationalists, empiricists, and pragmatists: to take into account that the meaning of things and events is not given and that their essence is always in flux, and to retain a connection with their societal environment – "to stand close and listen rather than stand back and observe"[21] – in order to get a sense of what are perceived as problems and what sort of consequences are entailed by various practices of meaning-making.

To elaborate on the latter point: according to their self-understanding as human beings and members of a sociocultural context, responsible academics are always aware that they have access to arenas of dicourse with a considerable degree of power to ascribe

meaning to social phenomena; that the meaning they produce is always available to and subject to be acted upon by political actors; and that those actions can always have serious consequences for the larger socio-cultural setting which they inhabit[22]. Owing to this awareness, responsible academics are not reducible to role players and functionaries of a social scientific system. They are not merely, not even primarily, the willing executioners of rules and utility calculations prescribed by an inherited disciplinary code. Much more than modern social scientists like, say, main stream academic internationalists in the US, they are always also human beings that act as agents of their societal environment and that are committed to understand, maintain, and improve the condition of this context. Thus, far from being rational, detached, and passive observers of international politics, responsible social scientists are active participants in them, which is to say that they are cognizant of their being implicated in the process of perpetuating international politics, if they do not promote alternatives to it[23].

Having clarified the notion of responsible academic practice and a corresponding view of how things and events relate to it, the questions that need to be answered next are, first, what, more precisely, are the conditions making it possible that certain things and events can be referred to by social scientists at all? And second, given these conditions are met, how can/should things and events be re-presented to an interested academic audience as relevant and meaningful?

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[21] This phrase is from Ralph Pettman, Common Sense Constructivism, or, The Making of World Affairs (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2000) p. 64.

[22] The confusion that supposedly arose in arenas of NATO upon the willingness on the side of Soviet diplomats to sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty is a good illustration of how concepts and assumptions pertinent to academic practices can have consequences for diplomatic practices. See Robert B. McCalla, "Nato's Persistence after the Cold War", International Organization 50:3 (1996) p. 453: "The confusion within NATO about the implication of this and other changes was such that it failed to come to agreement on its annual intelligence assessment that year: many thought that too much attention was paid to capabilities and not enough to changed intentions."

[23] This understanding of social science resonates in many respects with the one advanced by Michael J. Shapiro, "The Rhetoric of Social Science: The Political Responsibilities of the Scholar", in: The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs, John S. Nelson, Allan Megill & Donald N. McCloskey eds. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) p. 376: "Social science, then, is necessarily a polemical practice. Once we recognize that its value, the resources it lends, and the kinds of persons it presumes and creates come about through its rhetorical and grammatical strategies, we are in a position to rethink the relationship it has with its clientele. In one respect, the social science vocation is the same within this productive approach to discourse as it is in the representational approach: it is supposed to provide analysis. But the kind of analysis is different. Rather than accepting and reifying the subjects, objects, and surface relationships deployed by the languages of public policy and of everyday life, it makes available the practices that have produced the referents of that language." See also Ralph Pettman, Common Sense Constructivism, op. cit. at 65.

Intellectual Sophistication and the Conditions of the 'Real'

As to the first question, the problem to be solved is entailed by what has been ascertained above: that things and events do not speak for themselves. There are a lot of things and events going on in the world. But it is by no means possible even for the most sincere analyst to look out of the window, get to observe things and events as they are in and of themselves, and know what these things and events mean for the purposes of the practice he/she is involved for professional reasons. This is as true for sophisticated physicists as it is true for sophisticated social/political scientists. In both cases, things and events cannot be observed and grasped as meaningful objects, as it were, from outside without doing anything to these things and events, without making them into objects that are 'realistic' in the sense of being widely seen as unproblematic and self-evident. In the case of social phenomena, it is especially difficult to get a hold of things and events because they do not even have a minimum of material essence. Unlike most natural scientists, who are free to ascribe meaning to things and events that exist in material form, and that they have themselves chosen to focus upon, social scientists do not only have to deal with phenomena of a different, i.e. immaterial kind, they are at the same time influenced if not determined in their choice of phenomena by normative and conceptual fore-understandings pertinent to their socio-cultural context and the ubiquity of meanings generated by the media[24].

This influence of the media upon reasonable and sophisticated academic practice is an important aspect in this context. Because of their pervasiveness especially in Western societies, the media have become the primary source through which phenomena are widely perceived in a certain way as meaningful[25], which can be traced to two origins. There is, on the one hand, the popular perception that the media are connected with the center of society, wherever that may be, and that they 'know' what takes place at that center. According to this perception, the media 'know' what is most important and what is trivial, thus validating a certain version of reality that is credible or desirable, or both. There is, on the other hand, the assumption that the media attend to what is actual and immediate, a reality from which no one can escape. The information provided by the media represents a sort of 'objective' reality, as it were, awarded by the force of the present as opposed to a reality mediated either by interpretation, as

[24] According to Michael Warner, op. cit, p. 242-243, "[t]he public discourse of the mass media is a significant part of the ground of public discourse, the subjective apprehension of what is public."
[25] This is a matter that has for a considerable time been taken for granted even from a modern social scientific perspective. See e.g., Niklas Luhmann, Die Realität der Massenmedien (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996).

that of the past, or touched by uncertainty, as in the case of the future.[26] This may be lamentable, but it is undeniable. And it is precisely in this context that the proposition: the world social scientists are concerned with comes already mediated, finds corroboration. But I shall specify this point further.

It is through the signs of TV news and newspapers, which are encoded in accordance with specific conventions, that reality appears. And due to above all the media's potential to activate secondary readings of the things and events originally presented by TV news and/or newspapers, it is important to acknowledge that and especially how things and events are already being rendered meaningful objects in this sense. This may also help to get a sense of the extent to which the academic production of meaning is constrained by the publicity of phenomena, i.e. how things and events are widely perceived. In any case, what needs to be reckoned with is the extent to which the media have become the main source of a socially convincing sense of the 'real'. Again, the term 'real' has no connotation with rationalist/empiricist/pragmatist senses of 'reality' but is a matter of the discursive conventions by which and for which a sense of reality is constructed. And there can be no doubt that members of Western information societies get their sense of the 'real' to an overwhelming extent through the signs of a discourse of news and information "[…] that presents itself as natural rather than cultural, i.e. as an unmediated product of, or reflection of, an innocent reality."[27] So what is widely perceived to happen, say, politically is to a significant degree the effect of written and/or visual presentations of things and events through signs that can be easily deciphered by the respective audience. And although this is often not recognized, the presentation succeeds in their production of things and events as real only to the extent to which the signs employed by the media correspond with the actual regime of conventions regulating the process of apperception and understanding on the side of the interested public.

So, in order to get a sense of the 'real' that is continuously made and remade but always already there, to recognize the range of objects social scientists can focus upon and problematize at a given time and place, according to their own code of professional conduct, a progressive social scientific practice needs to bear in mind that vital phenomena are originally presented as meaningful objects by television and newspapers. Conceived as a primary source of meaning, the media need to be investigated with respect to their function as providers of content, or, meaningful

[26] See Gabriel Bar-Haim, "Media Charisma and Global Culture: The Experience of East-Central Europe" in Globalization, Communication and Transnational Civil Society (S. Braman & A. Sreberny-Mohammadi eds., Cresshill: Hampton Press, 1996) p. 142.
[27] John Fiske, Television Culture (London: Routledge, 1987) p. 41.

phenomena. According to a classical notion of mass communication, TV news and newspapers should be conceived as transmitters of messages[28]. But that is not enough. The media are also, maybe even more, important because of their potential to activate secondary readings of what has been widely perceived as politics. As a set of conditions making it possible that certain things and events can be referred to by responsible social scientists at all, the media enable and constrain the re-presentation of things and events by experts with a specialized professional interest. And it has this potential because of the more fundamental influence to build, maintain, and transform the conventions and conceptual lenses on the basis of which information is filtered and understood in a sociocultural context. Owing to its double function as provider of messages and as a set of conditions for understanding them, the media stand as an arbiter over attempts to describe and explain the daily goings on in a plausible and convincing fashion. To be sure, academic experts are left the freedom to re-present vital things and events according to the conventions of their professional practice and in a sophisticated fashion. Nevertheless, owing to their sensitivity that only publicized phenomena make for themes that are vital and important, it is precluded that anything goes, that responsible academics perform their practice in an a-social fashion, and that they are completely independent to make up what they want and portray things and events as they please – or as they are paid for by influential institutions[29].

A highly crucial aspect here is to recognize that the messages, or, signs dispersed by the media constitute only one dimension of what amount to publicly perceived problems. The second dimension is constituted by their circulation in a context in which these messages/signs can be understood. In order to grasp the publicity of phenomena as vital political issues, it is therefore not enough to focus only upon what can be termed the content of signs/messages. It is just as important to bear in mind that and how the content of messages/signs comes about, how what is signified by signs can be made sense of on the basis of conventions and conceptual lenses in a sociocultural context. And it is obvious that these conventions and conceptual lenses are not properties of the messages/signs. They are rather to be associated with the audience from which these messages/signs are received. For it is the audience that asks questions of the sort 'what does this or that phenomenon mean?', and it is the audience that tries to provide answers for them on the basis of conventions and normative criteria that it finds relevant. To put this differently (and more eloquently): "my concern is not with eliminating the general sort of considerations that go under the name of semantics, but, rather, with establishing a different order of (conceptual)

[28] See Harold Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society", in The Communication of Ideas, Lyman Bryson ed. (New York: Harper, 1948).

priority between them and the considerations usually associated with the area of pragmatics. It is in the latter area, I would argue, that the interesting questions about meaning arise: semantics is a pale concoction of rough generalizations, of rules of thumb that are usually much less informative and helpful than a proper sensitivity to the individual characters of the multifarious games actually played with language. […I]t is not that semantics must necessarily be dropped; it is enough if pragmatics comes first and semantics is conceptualized *in terms of it*."[30]

To be sure, given the centrality accorded in the preceding sections to the public and the media as vital sources of the 'real', a few words of intellectual caution are in order. It is, first of all, dangerous to take any response by an audience at face value. Some segments of a larger societal context are always more interested and informed about things and events than others. Some segments are always better at processing bits of information than others. The significance of audience responses has always to be traced and understood from within the more interested and more informed segments constituting the signifying system of a culture. Since it is not clear beforehand which segments can/should be considered as more interested and informed than others, it may be suspected that the focus is ultimately arbitrary. But this need not be the case. Good taste and a proper faculty of judgment are reliable guides, even though (or, precisely because) they don't prescribe a decision on the basis of institutional rules. In any case, a focus upon what seem to a critical investigator more interested/informed segments of the public comes closest to satisfy the requirement stated above, namely to retrieve the common sense as it evolved in a spatiotemporally specific context. This also helps to avoid falling prey to the dilemma of modern, i.e. rationalist, empiricist, and pragmatist social scientists. Submitting to the rules of what they consider a discipline, they follow the route of professional solipsism all the way down as they portray their disciplinary phantoms as sociopolitical problems while remaining unconcerned and indifferent to whether and to what extent they bear any resemblance to the views held by informed members of the context for which the problems are (theoretically and discursively) solved.

A second and probably more important problem is that not all signs spread by the media ought to be considered as having the same or even a comparable information value. This might be the consequence of profound differences in quality between available media *within* a societal context. The thing is, though, that throughout Europe

[29] One may notice, for example, the working relationship between Robert Jervis and the CIA

[30] Ermanno Bencivenga, Looser Ends: The Practice of Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) p. 74.

it is more or less known by those who are interested in politics which print and visual media qualify as serious sources of information and which don't. The point is that within the European context there are serious sources of information, and that they can be distinguished by informed Europeans from not so serious ones. It is more the broader socio-cultural dimension that is relevant here. That is, it is relevant whether information about things and events in post-Cold War Europe and elsewhere have their origins in Europe, or whether they are spread from without, say the United States. This aspect is not only relevant because media of different socio-cultural contexts need to appeal to audiences with different political tastes and preferences. It is also because the respective media cultures exhibit different degrees of dependencies and vested interests among their members in the political status quo. As is obvious, media whose members are dependent on government officials and think tanks, and who have themselves close ties to the government cannot be deemed to perform their job in a serious fashion. The more they are involved in, and tied to, the political establishment, the less credible they are when they claim to report 'the facts' as they are. On the contrary, the more the media are involved in political practice the more reports are distorted by bias and the reigning ideology. Indeed, as sophisticated investigations of the media coverage of the war in 1991 between Iraq and a US led alliance as well as the one of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia in 1991 and 1992 have shown, the American media has done a very poor job of covering the respective things and events precisely because of said dependencies and vested interests.

In and around Kuwait, the happenings that were reported by major US newspapers and television networks like CBS, NBC, and CNN amounted to highly arbitray and fantastic presentations of a 'reality' which only Americans and naïve Europeans could believe. So, for instance, when highly diffuse green shaded pictures were portrayed as 'evidence' for surgical missile strikes against carefully isolated military targets in Tehran and other places. Seen in light of the 'give and take' attitude on both sides of the media-establishment alliance and the modus vivendi following therefrom, this is not at all surprising. Most members of the US American media considered voluntary submission to the regime of censorship and acceptance of the obligation to fabricate pro-war propaganda the elementary rules of the game. Of course, the range of choices for journalists was rather narrow, for "[t]o be admitted to the press corps in Saudi Arabia, the applicants had to sign a lengthy document promising to abide by the military rules, greatly restricting their movements away from the hotel. […T]he rules were fairly simple. Off-the-record and 'ambush' interviews were outlawed, for example. It would have been difficult to do either, in any case, since the rules clearly dictated

constant military escorts."[31] But coercion is certainly not the appropriate concept to characterize the condition under which information had been produced. In fact, the collaboration between the media and the politico-military establishment went far beyond the point of necessity, as can be understood with a view to what happened in the aftermath of the Gulf War. "CBS News hired General Schwarzkopf to host documentaries and NBC engaged General Tom Kelly (the Pentagon's military spokesman during the Gulf War) as a military 'analyst' in its news division. Then, in March 1993, NBC outmanouvred ABC for the journalistic services of none other than Pete Williams, the front man for the White House censorship apparatus and a hero of Operation Desert Muzzle. Not content with their acquisition of Williams, NBC simultaneously added to its news-department roster a former National Security Council staff member, Richard Haass. Haass's qualifications were no doubt enhanced by his co-authorship of the patriotic essay signed by George Bush and published with great fanfare in Newsweek in the fall of 1990." Seen in this light, docility and hypocrisy are far better terms than coercion to signify the position of the US American media. A second case in point is the manner in which CNN and major American newspapers have consistently covered the happenings in Yugoslavia. For exactly the same reasons that have just been ascertained, it did not matter whether one consulted *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, or the *LA Times* on the events in Yugoslavia. Owing to the close relationship between media and politico-military establishment, "[…] the coverage itself has often seemed to be misinformed and superficial, when not biased and racist. It has tended to focus on the sensational rather than the substantive; it has concentrated on personalities rather than issues; and it has tended to recast what is essentially a Balkan affair in terms of American policy or the role of such international organizations as the EC, the UN, and NATO."[32]

Disconcerting as these two examples are, there is no reason yet to give up on the goal to take the common sense of the informed and interested public seriously, to take the view that 'truth' and 'reality' are nowadays wholly indistinguishable from the kinds of wholesale simulation[33]. "For it is still possible to perceive the various blind-spots, gaps,

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[31] John R. MacArthur, Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) p. 165.

[32] James J. Sadkovic, "The Response of the American Media to Balkan Neo-Nationalisms" in Genocide After Emotion, Stjepan G. Mestrovic ed. (London: Routledge: 1996) p. 123. See also Gabriel Bar-Haim, "Media Charisma and Global Culture", op cit, at 143: "The American impulse for proselytizing […] must be mentioned. Missionary work can appear even in the guise of secular cultural events; perhaps CNN should be understood as a natural extension of televangelism."

[33] Cf. Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) p. 23: "What every society looks for in continuing to produce, and to overproduce, is to restore the real that escapes it. That is why today this 'material' production is that of the hyperreal itself. It retains all the features, the whole discourse of traditional production, but it is no longer anything but its scaled-down

contradictions, manifest non-sequiturs and downright lies that punctuate 'official' discourse, and which thus give a hold for constructing an alternative – more adequate and truthful – version of events. This applies just as much to those involved at the 'production' end – reporters, editors, programme producers, newspaper columnists, etc – as to those who 'consume' the resultant information and apply a greater or lesser degree of informed critical awareness."[34]

The Politics of Re-Presentation

As to the second question I posed above: given that conditions making it possible that things and events can be referred to are met, how can/should social phenomena be re-presented by responsible academic specialists in a sophisticated fashion?, the following consideration applies. Aside from the parasitism of academic work, the problem for social or political scientists eager to perform their job in a sophisticated manner is further complicated by the fact that the things and events they are concerned with are social practices involving human beings. Quite a while ago, it has been convincingly argued that, unlike natural phenomena, things and events of this kind depend "[…] entirely on their belonging in a certain way to a system of ideas or mode of living."[35] The important aspect here is that things and events of a social kind exist and are meaningful only by reference to conventions and criteria pertaining to this system of ideas or mode of life. Social practices that have been made into objects by academics need, if they want to be 'analyzed' in a sophisticated fashion, to be conceived in a manner that is empathic with their institutional context and its operational code. They must be studied with due regard for the logic according to which they operate, the implicit regime of rules and conventions to which interactions submit. "It follows that if the sociological investigator wants to regard them as social events (as, *ex hypothesi*, he must), he has to take seriously the criteria which are applied for distinguishing 'different' kinds of actions and identifying the 'same' kinds of actions within the way of life he is studying. It is not open to him arbitrarily to impose his own standards from without. In so far as he does so, the events he is studying lose altogether their character as *social* events."[36]

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refraction […]. Thus everywhere the hyperrealism of simulation is translated by the hallucinatory resemblance of the real to itself."

[34] Christopher Norris, Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals & and the Gulf War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992) pp. 59-60.

[35] Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1958) p. 108.

[36] Ibid.

This argument has important implications as it precludes to approach things and events in the objectivist fashion that is characteristic of rationalist, empiricist, and pragmatist styles of modern social science. What is more, it has dramatic consequences if and to the extent to which it is acknowledged that the criteria that are applied by actors within a specific context in order to distinguish 'different' kinds of actions and to identify the 'same' kinds of actions can, but do not have to, withstand the test of time. In other words, the admonition to take into account the habitual and normative structure of a social context as it operates within this context is of great significance if this structure is subject to transformation, which is conceivable as a consequence of change in behavioral patterns, a shift in actor identities and preference orderings, and so on. How dramatic these consequences are for a progressive social scientific practice premised on professional values like intellectual sophistication and societal responsibility can be illustrated with the example I referred to above.

That is, claiming to investigate and represent the context of superpower relations in what had been portrayed as the most sophisticated approach available, the modern scientific analysis of international politics, American based nuclear strategists, security policy scientists and international relations theorists did almost take no notice of the coming into power of Mikhail Gorbachev and were continuing their business as usual[37]. Even after Gorbachev had made substantial reforms in Soviet domestic politics, including the relaxation of the state's central control of economic enterprise and the abolition of the Communist Party's monopoly in politics, and suggested at bilateral talks at Reykjavik 1987 that both superpowers abolish ballistic missiles, American social science internationalists did not 'observe' a transformation of international politics taking place. On the contrary, despite such goings on, the structure of superpower relations was taken to be stable and still made up by the distribution of destructive capabilities entailing a situation of existential threat. Because of their almost exclusive focus upon the aggregate of raw materials like cruise missiles, strategic bombers, and conventional forces, and because of their dogmatic insistence that the concept of politics needs to be understood in terms of such material elements, the things and events under observation presented themselves accordingly, supposedly leaving their imprint on the minds of analysts who described and explained the object of their investigation in familiar terms.

What had been precluded by this approach was any awareness of the possibility that the context of superpower relations was about to undergo a significant

[37] Evidence for this observation can be found in vols. 11-14 of International Security.

transformation[38]. No conceptual space was left for the idea that this transformation was a consequence of a changing corporate identity of one essential actor manifesting itself in the security diplomacy of Mikhail Gorbachev. Only Soviet specialists were more attuned to domestic politics and aware of the transformative scope of Gorbachev's reforms. They were thus better able to get a glimpse of the potential transformation of an international order. But even they could not discern the shape of this transformation to come[39]. Because of their dogmatic refusal to leave outtrodden paths, they could not go so far and project what they perceived as 'new thinking' on the side of the Soviet establishment into the future role of the Soviet Union vis a vis the United States[40].

Conclusion

So far, it has been problematized that and why a progressive social scientific practice can not be based on direct observation and fashioned to employ scientific procedures in the analysis of material objects. Sensitivity for this problem triggered the question regarding the basis on which certain things and events are, in their quality as distinct social practices, at all available for social scientists, and how, on this basis, they can be understood and taken as meaningful social scientific facts. In the course of the ensuing discussion, it has become obvious that and why social phenomena require a mode of investigation by professional social scientists that is different from the one physicists have recourse to in their dealing with material things. Taken together, these insights have been said to entail a procedure in which either of these issues are reckoned with.
Accordingly, progressive social scientists are well advised to pay attention to the manner in which things and events related to, for example, ethnonational conflict and security diplomacy have been presented to Europeans by the media. Not enough, since the publicity of phenomena is ultimately a result of secondary readings, of actualizations of what has been made possible by the media to be perceived as international politics, progressive academic internationalists need to consider further

[38] This observation had already been made by Rey Koslowski & Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System", International Organization 48:2 (1994) p. 217.
[39] See Hugh Gusterson, "Missing the End of the Cold War in International Security", in Cultures of Insecurity: States, Comunities, and the Production of Danger, Hugh Gusterson, Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey et al., eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) p. 328.
[40] According to Hugh Gusterson, ibid. 335, American social science internationalists like Jack Snyder, Stephen Meyer, and Mark Kramer stumbled in unknown terrain and wrestled with the unthinkable because "[a]ll three recall Krushchev's failure, a generation earlier, to make his liberalization of the Soviet Union enduring and self-sustaining. The narrative of Krushchev's failure haunts their attempts to make sense of Gorbachev's reformism so that, perceiving Gorbachev through the lens of this failure, they worried that the reforms of the 1980s were, like those of the Krushchev era, a prelude to a backlash and to a reintensification of Cold War."

what has been actualized by interested and informed members of the all-European context. This is tantamount to saying that what need to be investigated are the conditions that made it at all possible for the interested public as well as social scientists at the beginning of the 1990s to refer to phenomena of international politics as vital issues of international security, and the actualizations of these possibilities that constituted the normative and conceptual fore-understandings on the basis of which academic experts conceived and re-presented certain things and events and not others. The goal should be to understand the phenomena in question as vital issues of international politics from an academic perspective that lives up to its professional responsibility.

Once this has been achieved, it is important to find out how the phenomena that have been made available as vital issues of European security can best be re-presented in the idiom of academic internationalism. As has been ascertained above, two different perspectives, institutionalism and power politics, have delimited the field of academic internationalism and have provided competing conceptual schemes for such an undertaking. However, according to what has also been stated above, the task of progressive internationalists is not simply to translate whatever has been made available by public discourse into another idiom. In order to qualify as a sophisticated social science, it is necessary for academic internationalists to re-present ethnonational conflict as an issue of European security diplomacy in a manner that is sensitive to the criteria pertaining to this very diplomatic practice. This is because in order to qualify as a sophisticated social science, academic internationalism needs to preserve the social character of the things and events in question and to avoid imposing standards arbitrarily from without.

A problem that needs to be reckoned with in the course of doing this would consist in the lamentable fact that, even though the two overall perspectives are in order regarding the ontological concepts they offer, the hitherto steered course of modern academic internationalism has been wrongheaded epistemologically and methodologically. Almost all available criteria are defective if not utterly absurd. This defect would necessitate a 'destruction' of available conceptual schemes, by which is meant a freeing of academic internationalism from the objectivist aesthetic which dominates and determines both the practice and fulfillment of contemporary internationalism as a social science. Destruction would be eager to bring attention to the 'event', to precisely what 'it' is that happens, without 'it' being already the objectified construction of inherited conceptual schemes. Destruction in this context would not mean demolishing or destroying but dismantling, i.e. pulling down, taking

apart, and setting aside what might be in search of being differently conceived. This may serve as a solid basis for a 'new' scientific practice of International Relations, a science that is more sophisticated, more responsible, and thus more 'social'.

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