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# Editing (I)nternational (R)elations: A Changing World



## INTRODUCTION

THE SINGULARITY OF THE EVENTS OF 11 SEPTEMBER 2001 HAS OPENED UP THE POSSIBILITY FOR PROFOUND CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS.<sup>1</sup> While it is still too early to finally judge whether a change in historical dimensions has been triggered by the “fall of the twin towers,” we can already note some trends which may well accumulate to foster such fundamental change: a dramatically increased sense of vulnerability in the United States (US) that has given a faction within the US government, the neo-conservatives, a window of opportunity to push its strategic vision; a far-reaching convergence of views among decision-making elites around the world on what the main threats to (national and international) security currently are; a moderate realignment among major powers revealed, for example, in the development of a new quality of relations between the US and Russia or the unprecedented co-operation in the security field — such as exchanges of intelligence information — between China and the US, or the US and India. Events such as these need not add

up to a new quality of international relations. However, they are stunning indeed and are also obviously related to the impact of 11 September 2001 and its aftermaths, particularly some dramatic political shifts within the most powerful actor on the global stage, the US. Therefore, they require our persistent attention.

Behind these observations some major questions loom: is 11 September 2001 the sign of a generic loss of relevance of the nation-state and the ascendancy of some darker forces of civil society in shaping world politics? Is it a sign of the “New Wars” with increasing chaos and anomy entering the fortresses of the advanced “North” of the world? (Kaldor 1999; Kaplan 2000; Münkler 2002) Or is it, in contrast to these expectations, an indication of reassertion of the state’s monopoly of power, and the start of rebuilding the authority of “failed states” as bulwarks against the violent movements which globalisation — supported by the dissolution of traditional mechanisms of social control — had set free?

In this essay, we briefly discuss these questions and what they imply for International Relations (IR) scholarship

generally and the editing of IR journals in particular. In order to establish our perspective on world politics, we first sketch competing scenarios for international politics. The point in doing this is not that we see a need to come to a judgement as to their probability of instantiation in the “real world”. Rather, we want to emphasize that the future of international politics is open — in spite of the fact that options have obviously been narrowing after 11 September 2001. Yet if the future is contingent (as a matter of principle) and, moreover, likely to be different from the past in this particular moment in history due to the seminal impact of 11 September 2001 this might also have significant implications for the academy and its prevailing instrument of informed and high-quality debate, *i.e.* peer-reviewed journals.

Are we up to the job? In the second half of our article, we note, self-critically, that 11 September 2001 was as little predicted as 9 November 1989 — the fall of the Berlin Wall — and the ensuing end of the East-West conflict. We discuss the relationship between the self-referential academic discourse, where themes and debates follow the internal logic of theory-development and ever greater specialization and professionalization, to the policy-oriented discourse that aims at providing orientation and praxeological guidance for mastering the challenges and tasks of current politics. If the relationship between science, politics, and society is undergoing a seminal change, as we think it is, it is necessary that the academy takes the initiative in shaping these events rather than merely reacting to them. Otherwise, we run the risk that the key parameters will be set by others — for example, on a purely commercial basis.

In order to cope with these challenges, one of our first tasks as journal editors is to reassess the instrument of peer review. We believe that peer review — as general-

ly practiced in our key journals as the pivotal instrument of quality control — has some structural weaknesses we need to address. Research on peer review as well as our individual experience as editors shows that peer review may contribute to the cognitive closure of the discipline and a “theory-driven” negligence of some of the key issues that present the main challenges to the political practitioner as well as to our societies more broadly. We then offer some suggestions as to how high-quality IR journals can address some of the inherent weaknesses of the peer-review process thereby contributing to the creation of a more transparent and self-reflective relationship between academic and public discourse. So the key challenge is to preserve the achievements of quality control while at the same time making our profession more responsive to the legitimate questions of society (which, after all, provides us with the resources to do our job).

## SCENARIOS OF A CHANGING WORLD

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM — THE WORLD OF STATES — CANNOT BE IMAGINED FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE WITHOUT DUE REGARD TO THE SUPREME POSITION OF THE US. Its military expenditure is approaching 50 percent of the aggregated global military budget, and its gross national product is about equal to that of the European Union (EU) which assembles fifteen of the world’s most developed economies but which neither represents the unity of will nor capacity for quick and decisive decision-making that is generally associated with the nation-state. On the basis of current US public opinion which continues to support a global American engagement with impressive majorities (as it has done for

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decades) and which is mirrored in an elite consensus embracing the same attitude, we can expect that the US will — whichever party resides in the White House — remain an internationalist, engaged power. This is not to say that isolationism, a long-standing minority position in US foreign policy discourse, will evaporate. However, if current threat assessments focusing on international terrorism and states trying to acquire (and possibly use) weapons of mass destruction are accurate then simply retreating from global engagement would stand in stark contradiction to the legacy of building the American empire based on a “quest for absolute security” or “invulnerability” (cf. Chace 2002). Therefore, it is highly likely that the US will keep its unique ability to project superior power into every corner of the planet, and to prevail against the armed forces of every state enemy with relative ease, while deterring the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) — the one possibility to equalize the dramatic asymmetries in conventional power — with the threat to use its own ones.

The overarching power position of the US — measured by the superiority of its resources and operative capability to use them successfully — should not, however, lead to the expectation that Washington possesses unlimited power to achieve its political, societal and economic objectives. This exaggerated assessment of America’s capabilities is the main flaw in the worldview and the resulting strategies of the presently prevailing neoconservative ideology (Müller 2003; also Nye 2002). Unfortunately, America as a whole is beginning to pay a heavy price for this ill-conceived strategy. There is a distinct difference, extremely important in the practice of international politics, between power based on superior resources and the capability to deter opponents from or compel them to adhere by a certain type

of behaviour on the one hand, and power over outcomes on the other, *i.e.* the capability to shape circumstances to one’s will. Going from one to the other requires a different understanding of power, namely the one embraced by Hanna Arendt, who emphasized the capacity to mobilize and co-ordinate many individual wills and minds in support of a common.<sup>2</sup> Ironically, while being conducive to the rules of the world of states the application of “hard power” (Nye 2002) engenders counterintuitive effects as to the impact upon, and co-ordination of, the many wills needed to achieve America’s chosen goals. Iraq and Afghanistan are clear cases in point.

Whereas the military dominance of the US is not in doubt for the foreseeable future, it is an open question how America will interact with the rest of the world (and *vice versa*) and what will result from it. Three scenarios are conceivable. A bad-case scenario (but by no means the worst one imaginable) pictures a re-polarization of international politics along the familiar lines of multipolarity, somehow mitigated through the integrative forces of economic and communicative globalisation. It would be based on the assumption that some of the potential competitors of the US could either maintain or even improve their relative position in the balance of power, for instance, faster than expected integration of the EU which might even acquire certain attributes of a nation-state (possibly even as a result of US hegemony, at least in part); a recovery of Russia and Japan; rapid growth by the People’s Republic of China and India; and relative stagnation in the US, possibly as a result of imperial overstretch. All of this could provide America’s competitors with opportunities to reduce the resource gap that presently exists. Whereas the prerequisites for this scenario are quite demanding, the latter is not inconceivable. The conflict potential in this setting would be

relatively high, measured by past experiences with multipolarity. Regional rivalries in East Asia (Russia, Japan, US, China), South Asia (China, India, US), Central (Russia, China, US, India), and the Middle East/Persian Gulf region (everybody) would certainly flare up and create and maintain the need for concerts, regimes, permanent consultancy, and possibly changing alignments.<sup>3</sup> The transatlantic area would still be expected to be the calmest region, with economic competition mitigated by continuing common political and security interests.

A second scenario could be built by focusing more narrowly on the “Western” world. It would picture a “soft balancing”<sup>4</sup> of the US by a strengthened and more self-confident EU that would get its defence act together. However, in doing so the EU would not seek to create a military counterweight to Washington, but try to send the message to Washington that European views must be taken into account.<sup>5</sup> On specific issues, the EU might choose to side with other powers than the US (such as France and Germany did in the Iraq crisis when joining forces with Russia). Such divergences, however, would not put the relationship at risk as common interests (and economic interdependence) would still be strong enough to control the centrifugal forces among them. Still, these disputes could be strong enough to prevent the successful joint management of conflicts such as in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf or Africa. Lacking external containment, strong concerted influence or even intervention, such conflicts could develop their own dynamics with certain risks of flare-ups, even including escalation to the WMD level.

A third — and in many respects best-case — scenario would envisage a concert dominated by Western democracies and converging around strategic visions which

are at least compatible.<sup>6</sup> It would emphasize the historical uniqueness of democratic preponderance on a global scale as well as the enormous gains to be derived collectively in a globalising world based on co-operation. This concert dominated by the West would be in a strong position to suggest solutions especially to those conflicts where continuation would contain too many risks of escalation. It would also be strong enough to push such solutions through against reluctant players. Moreover, given the preponderance of Western democracies in this effort there would be a good chance of socializing other rising powers such as China into responsible positions of participating constructively in world management. In order for this scenario to materialize two prerequisites would have to be met. First, Europe would have to pool and improve its political and defence capabilities in such a way as to be able to influence events at a truly global level.<sup>7</sup> Second, the US would have to get rid of both its counterproductive ambitions for “absolute security” and unilateralist habits.

One of the shortcomings of these three scenarios is that they remain committed to the image of the world of states. As our discussion of different notions of powers has shown, however, this image does not give us a sufficiently differentiated picture of global politics today, and still less so for the future. 11 September 2001 has demonstrated the “chaos power” (a term coined by Dieter Senghaas) of non-governmental forces of the less benign kind. However, non-state actors of the more benevolent as well as malign kind (to use these moral terms for a very rough distinction) will become ever more important in the future (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002). We should not underestimate a scenario where a coalition of non-governmental organisations rallies around a common vision of a non-neoliberal international order that becomes

powerful enough to coerce Western governments into a change of politics emphasizing a global social state and comprehensive efforts at conflict management. While this idea seems far-fetched now, it is not out of the question once the one-sidedness of the neoliberal ideology and its political repercussions results in an ideological recoil in which greenish, leftist, religious, and conservative forces converge around the idea of a global socio-ecological community, forcing governments to adopt at least pieces of such a vision. The inclusion of conservatism in such a coalition might look strange at first sight. However, it is conservative values that are threatened, together with those of the welfare state, as globalisation maims and dissolves traditional glues of societal cohesion and time-honoured established values. It is thus by no means taken for granted that conservatives must always side with neoliberalism. If such a development coincides with the “Western concert” in the world of states, it could become a quite powerful driver for policies.

The more pessimistic non-governmental scenario, in contrast, would put a transnational terrorist actor like Al Qaeda against the supreme world power, the US, in a new, strange form of asymmetric bipolarity. Al Qaeda’s efforts would be largely focussed on trying to destroy existing states that do not live up to its political theology (that is, practically all of them) and to undermine and shatter the image of US power wherever possible, using all instruments at hand (*cf.* Gunaratna 2002). The US, increasingly desperate, would in turn try to bolster the power of all states that join in the fight against Al Qaeda, their lacking commitment to human rights and good governance notwithstanding. The “Patriot Act” would only be the first step in a series of measures to dismantle the key elements of modern statehood which were influ-

enced by the ideas of enlightenment, and to strengthen the forces of that classical core of the state, the monopoly of power, against the checks and balances of modern democracy which had been added for the preservation of human and citizen rights. A vicious spiral of destruction of democratic principles, repression, rebellion and violence could follow. Two worlds, one of hierarchical state order and one of illegal networks of violence would coexist, conditioning, empowering, and constituting each other. Borders would lose their meaning, not in the positive sense of globalisation, but as curbs on violence. The permanent possibility of violent intervention by the “forces of order” would be paralleled by the permanent possibility of trans-border violence exercised by the “forces of chaos”. Further, state decay in the non-industrialized world would occur side by side with the further strengthening of authoritarian states elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

If we compare the scenarios built on a world-of-states paradigm with those including non-state actors, the increase in complexity is easily recognisable. 11 September 2001, though, can hardly be understood on the basis of a state-centric view alone. It is for this reason that IR theory — measured by the reactions of our key journals — had obvious difficulties accommodating this pivotal event. This is not unfamiliar, unfortunately — we remember the degree of helplessness catching the discipline when the Berlin Wall fell and the East-West conflict faded away. With it a “structure” disappeared which had informed IR theorizing for four decades. It is not that bits and pieces of our theories would not be helpful as roadmaps in certain sections of today’s complex world. There are too many parts of *terra incognita*, however, to which 11 September 2001 opened the door without providing sufficient guidance as to how to

walk through it. Few available IR theories are helpful in this regard.

What follows from this discussion for IR scholarship in general and IR journal publishing in particular? First, the positivist-induced drive to sacrifice complexity for “parsimony” appears to be a principle we should interpret and practice more cautiously. Parsimony is certainly a virtue in theory-building. However, it reaches its limits if we are ignoring important facets of the events we want to explain (and for which society legitimately requests interpretations from us). Second, linear causality, still the ideal of much of our theoretical and empirical work, might not be good enough to explain events that move in vicious feedback circles, jumps, chaotic-like trajectories or law-exempt singularities. Finally, and in connection with these doubts, the very peculiar attributes of human agency should not escape our attention. Human beings, individually and as groups, have a degree of freedom of action that defies all inquiry that is — explicitly or implicitly — orientated towards the ideal of Newtonian physics. As the pragmatist tradition has been emphasizing ever since the early 20th century — a tradition long ignored in IR and which has only recently been rediscovered — human agency is based on creative intelligence with individual as well as collective actors being capable of creating the never-seen, the Big Surprise, the sudden turn which neither the “laws of history” nor even probability calculations allow for. All our theories that rely heavily on structure (*i.e.* almost all them) have a hard time coming to grips with this. Even constructivism which takes pride in looking at the co-constitution of structure and agency has shown in practice, if not in theoretical deliberation, a remarkable bias in favour of structure over agency. The impact of the picture of the falling twin towers of 11 September 2001, howev-

er, may have been such a seminal effect of human agency on events, and possibly, in the long term, on structure.

The scenarios we have sketched above can only serve as rough road-maps as to some likely paths the future might be taking. Yet, as such, they provide some general guidance as to how to frame our research agendas. Thinking in terms of scenarios is crucial for policy-making as well as theory-building — “theory” here being defined in a rather broad and inclusive Gadamerian sense emphasizing insight based on “contemplating observation” rather than merely causality (Gadamer 1980). However, in contrast to “forecasting” or “prediction” this type of scenario-building takes a possibilistic, rather than an explanatory (or deterministic) view of the future (*cf.* Bernstein 2000).<sup>9</sup> It acknowledges that we know quite a bit about “the world” we are currently dealing with, while at the same time emphasizing that this knowledge is CONTINGENT on past constellations and experiences as well as extrapolations into an open future which is equally contingent and therefore unlikely to merely replicate the past. To be sure, mainstream IR “theory” — *i.e.* theory built according to standard methodological directives as issued, for instance, in the most influential textbook on research design by King, Keohane and Verba (1994) — directly feeds in here. But our knowledge is certainly not thereby exhausted. Accounting for contingency does not only acknowledge the principally probabilistic character of political processes. It also gives pride of place to agency: human actors have the capacity to choose between the options before them — and they always do choose. The circumstances in which they act constrain and enable, but they do not determine. Human beings are no billiard balls, and it is one of the fundamental flaws of some versions of positivist theory to discuss

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politics as if individual or collective decision-makers were subject to deterministic laws.

### THE ETHOS OF SCIENCE AND THE PRESSURES FROM SOCIETY

OBVIOUSLY THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE IS THE CENTRAL TASK AND KEY RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOLARSHIP. Accordingly, the main task of journal editors is the selection and dissemination of the best of these knowledge products. Yet, what is an APPROPRIATE MEASURE OF THE QUALITY OF scholarly work? In our view the *ethos* of modern science still applies here even though the PROJECT OF MODERNITY itself is increasingly in doubt.<sup>10</sup> As any other scholarship, IR has to MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR COPING: it HAS TO HELP US BETTER UNDERSTAND how the world works and it has to contribute to IMPROVING OUR LIVES.

At first sight, this commonsensical view clarifies as much as it obscures:

- WHO IS THE ADDRESSEE, THE "WE" THAT IS SUPPOSED TO DO THE COPING? The public of "our" (national?) societies? Policy-makers? The community of IR scholars? Humankind? The "oppressed and marginalized"?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "BETTER UNDERSTAND"? Explain events or processes? Build new theories? Provide alternative narratives?

- HOW DOES ONE DEFINE (AND WHO DOES THE DEFINING OF) THE "GOOD" THAT SERVES AS A YARDSTICK FOR "IMPROVING OUR LIVES"? Material well-being? Liberty? Conformity with religious norms?

From a "Western" point of view many of these answers apply even though not all of them are easily compatible. The normative answer referring to the *ethos* of modern science thus appears of only limited help in answering the question given to us by the editor of the *Journal of*

*International Relations and Development* on how IR journals in general (and our own one, the *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* - ZIB, in particular) ought contribute to our understanding of the world.

If a more explicitly "normative" answer is of limited use the normative force of the factual may take us a step further. Ole Wæver (2003) recently offered a "structural analysis" of the discipline of IR based on a sociology of science perspective developed by Richard Witley, which indirectly provides an EMPIRICAL measure of what is considered most valuable in terms of IR scholarship.<sup>11</sup> According to this analysis, IR as an "intellectual field" (rather than a more narrowly circumscribed "scientific discipline") is clearly defined by three characteristics. First, in order to make it into the upper tier of IR scholarship you have to establish a reputation as a theorist. Innovative theoretical work is assigned a premium over puzzle-solving or even mere policy-advisory work. Second, since the "attention space" of academic discourse is narrowly circumscribed by "the law of small numbers" and since, therefore, only a relatively limited number of noteworthy theoretical positions can thrive at the same time (Collins 2002:48), theoretical (or "great") debates tend to dominate the discipline, often leading to acrimonious exchanges in order to grasp a sufficiently large chunk of the contested space. Third, this space is filled above all by the leading academic journals which form quite a clear-cut hierarchy. The leading journals are the key gate-keepers: they set the academic agenda, they define professional standards by providing role models of acclaimed scholarship, and they establish scholarly reputations. Yet, this top tier of IR journals is not only heavily theory-based, but — in contrast to the lower-ranking academic journals or primarily

"policy-oriented" journals — also peer-reviewed. Generally speaking, the higher the intra-disciplinary reputation of a journal the more important rigorous peer-review standards become and the more likely it is to focus on theory.

These constellations have two additional effects: first, disciplinary agenda-setting is driven largely from WITHIN the scholarly community; second, since scholars have to establish an academic (*i.e.* theory-oriented) reputation first in order to climb the career ladder, eventually (perhaps) becoming eligible for an editorship of an academic IR journal, editors tend to be recruited from among the older, well-established scholars which — *ceteris paribus* — is likely to add a conservative bias (or at least render innovation more difficult compared to the situation in which younger scholars are just about establishing an academic profile). The recent *Perestroika* movement in APSA (American Political Science Association) can be taken as an indicator of frustration well beyond the charges relating to theoretical hegemony and the dominance of a "coterie" of faculty ... control(ing) APSA and the editorial board of APSR [American Political Science Review].<sup>12</sup> While the German IR community still seems relatively far removed from any such upheaval, we are observing an irritating tendency among the majority of the next generation of IR scholars of quite narrowly following established theoretical pathways (*cf.* Wolf and Hellmann 2003:597-98) — a tendency which may in part (and indirectly) result from the fact that younger scholars (who actually account for the bulk of submissions to ZIB) may already operate under an in-built conservative bias due to the fact that their work will most likely be judged by more senior colleagues assessing the quality of manuscripts on the basis of their own stakes in preserving current research

agendas which they fought hard to push through in the first place. If that were indeed the case it might provide a strong argument for more systematically including younger and unorthodox scholars on both editorial boards as well as our review panels.

Is IR as a discipline characterized by highly specialized and internally-driven agendas of theory-building and theory-contestation sufficiently well-prepared to meet current challenges? We believe that the changes currently taking place with regard to the status of science in Western societies will increasingly challenge the academy. These changes will in the medium and long term (say, over the next ten to twenty years) also reach those disciplines which have thus far been less affected. This includes the social sciences more broadly. We are also convinced that the discipline of IR in general and our most important instrument for publicizing scholarly work, high quality, peer-reviewed journals, in particular, will have to adapt in order to meet these new challenges. Before we turn to these challenges we briefly summarize the changes on which the subsequent analysis is based.

First, the relationship between science and society (or science and politics) is currently undergoing a fundamental change. Among students of science studies, this change is usually discussed under three headings said to characterize modern "knowledge societies": the scientisation (*Verwissenschaftlichung*) of society/politics/policy; the politicisation/socialization (*Vergesellschaftung*) of science; and the medialisation ("*Medialisierung*") of science (Weingart 2001; also Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons 2001). If science were ever associated with a "quest for certainty", this quest has certainly come to an end. "Non-knowledge" ("*Nichtwissen*") in the face of ever greater risks is the most important characteristic of a "crisis of



knowledge” in modern knowledge societies (Willke 2002). Science is nevertheless called upon to provide knowledge which passes the Deweyan “relevance” test already formulated in the 1920s. According to Dewey (1981:256), research had to ‘end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful.’ If research were to instead render ‘the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before (...) depriving them of having in “reality” even the significance they had previously seemed to have’ it would have failed (*ibid.*).

Today this Deweyan relevance test translates into an attitude to science which (as Willke puts it) acknowledges both the “HUMBLENESS” derived from our knowing how much we do not know as well as the “ARROGANCE” necessarily associated with any quest for knowledge. These seemingly contradictory impulses, humbleness and arrogance, Willke says, are only reconcilable when scientists accept the role model of a “systemic ironist” — a perspective which systematically acknowledges the contingency of our current beliefs.<sup>13</sup> Thus, rather than performing the role of a LEGISLATOR due to some superior, generalisable and “objective” knowledge, the role-model of the scholar in contemporary knowledge societies is more akin to that of an INTERPRETER who establishes alternative connections between the theories (or “narratives”) resulting from academic analysis on one hand and the problems of society on the other (also Bauman 1995: chapter 1). This insight asks for a standard of pluralism and openness to new, unconventional approaches and ideas that major journals — the main channels for academic debate — have to provide. This consid-

eration alone implies that precautions ought to be taken to prevent the cognitive closure that may well go hand in hand with the established procedures by which we try to ensure quality control in peer-reviewed journals.

Second, the separation of knowledge and truth in modern knowledge societies has added to the demystification of science and ever louder calls for more social accountability and responsibility — Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons (2001) call this the need for “socially robust” knowledge. Science not only finds itself confronted with a changing conception of knowledge, but it also finds itself located in a new social context. Not only is it no longer possible for science “to speak truth to power”, the social “context” now even “speaks back” (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons 2001: chapter 4). Intermediary organisations between society and science have been proliferating, ranging from political committees overseeing research funding agencies to societal advisory councils being added to the top bureaucratic layer governing universities. In other words, societal scrutiny on spending for higher education and research has become more important and will continue to do so in the future.<sup>14</sup> In part this is the result of a changing understanding of the relationship between science and society. Partly it follows from the fact that research funding from state as well as private sources has become ever scarcer — a trend likely to accelerate rather than slow down or even be reversed.<sup>15</sup> All this will add to the pressures on science to face up to the “relevance” test. However, the definition of “relevance” must not be left exclusively to one side of the “market”. Demand for academic results may or may not exist. Buyers have their own criteria for what they believe is important or not, useful or not, profitable or not. But sellers have a

stake in the market as well. Moreover, the best of them will not only try to meet an existing demand out there but actually aim at creating it in the first place. This is another way of saying that what is considered “relevant” in modern “knowledge societies” ought to be the result of an institutionalised dialogue between society on one hand and the academy on the other. Given that the history of science is a success story, there is no reason whatsoever to enter this dialogue defensively. Rather, like any other academic discipline we can defend our record with some self-confidence in an open arena of competing standards for relevance and importance. There are quite a few examples showing that from time to time scholarly work at the academy has led to the development of concepts or theories that have been highly relevant even under a relatively narrow criterion of immediately visible “policy-relevance”. The “democratic peace” idea and notions of “enhanced security” or “civil society” are cases in point. All three have found their way into public and political discourse.

If this brief discussion properly summarizes some of the key trends in the contemporary understanding of science and its relationship to society and if the prior analysis of the key characteristics of IR as a discipline is also correct, it follows that IR is likely to face a series of new challenges in the years to come. Obviously these challenges will not only (nor even primarily) be directed at the flagships of the discipline (*i.e.* the top IR journals). However, given the key role played by the leading academic journals we as editors have a special responsibility in helping to transform our journals into engines of change shaping the future (rather than being merely shaped by forces beyond our control). In the following paragraphs we offer some suggestions as to what we think needs to be done and how it might be done.

## PUBLICATIONS OR PUBLICITY? CHALLENGES FACING PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

PEER REVIEW IS A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT WITH REGARD TO THE AUTONOMY OF SCIENCE AND PROFESSIONALISATION OF ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES. It is derived from the intuitively sound premise that the quality of scholarly publications is best judged by those working in the same field and according to similar methods. Moreover, if peer review is conducted under “double blind” conditions, the likelihood should be high that substantive issues (rather than mere prejudice) will guide the judgement of reviewers. While this sounds sensible at first, the underlying reasoning is much more problematic on closer inspection. Practically all of our most highly regarded peer-reviewed journals in IR operate on the assumption that scholars (as peers) are best equipped to pass judgement on both the QUALITY of academic work and its RELEVANCE. Yet this assessment has to be qualified in both respects.

First, as already hinted at above, it is an untenable position to exclusively reserve judgement on the relevance of research to scholars since it is society more broadly which: (a) funds research (in German IR, at least, this is typically the taxpayer); and (b) either derives benefits from or suffers the consequences of its results. Society, therefore, also ought to have a say in what is considered relevant (Wolf 2002:53-4). This reasoning is increasingly addressed by including societal representatives on the boards of foundations and universities, thereby adding voices beyond the academic disciplines to the processes of setting research agendas. However, to our knowledge not a single top IR journal (ours included) provides a voice for non-academic experts (*i.e.* competent representatives from society more broadly)

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in the peer-review process. The effect of this exclusionary practice is that ingrained habits are perpetuated — *i.e.* that IR as a discipline continues to put a premium on theory-building and theory-contestation *via* “great debates”, whose value is often hard to translate. Indeed, in most corners of the academy there is little effort in even trying to refer the results of theoretical debate ‘back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments’ (Dewey 1981:256). Yet, if our brief summary about the changing relationship between science and society is also relevant for IR, the discipline can no longer afford to evade societal demands. Principally, there are two ways to respond.

On one hand, one could accept the self-referential nature of the disciplinary debate. In order to generate the product which society demands, one could argue, the academy depends on its protected realm of internal discussion about self-chosen topics in a specialized language. Academic debate as it is conducted in peer-reviewed journals can, in this perspective, be interpreted as a language game of its own, related to but differentiated from the language games played in the political sphere and in the general public. The challenge for the discipline as such, then, is not only to master its own language but acquire, so to say, a trilingual capacity, *i.e.* knowing and being able to apply the translation rules between the language games of the academy as well as those of politics and the public more broadly. The pivotal task, hence, would be to train and educate people in these three language games. At present, few efforts are visible in more systematically addressing this demand. The world of relevant IR publishing is, often, worlds apart. It ranges from peer-reviewed journals to journals directed more immediately to public debate (such as *Foreign Affairs* in the United States or *Internationale Politik*

in Germany). Moreover, there are the increasingly important editorial pages of major newspapers. Clearly, there are scholars capable of moving from one to the other. However, it is no coincidence that the main think tanks devoted to consultancy avoid theory while the best centres of IR in the academy are often removed from more directly policy-relevant work. The division of labour between the three types of publication organs, then, is far from being the result of a well-thought-out system of communication and even less equipped to enable a productive dialogue. Instead, it stands for compartmentalization and closure — to the detriment of all sides concerned. If we do accept the principle of a division of labour, thereby maintaining, by and large, the character of the peer-reviewed journals as of today, we will have to think hard about building the connections between the compartments.

A second option is to bring practical relevance to bear in the peer-review process itself by reorganizing at least part of it. One way might be to include an additional layer of societal expertise. This might include former students of political science/IR who are, first, familiar with our academic debates and standards and, second, work in fields where IR knowledge continues to be relevant. Candidates here would probably be working closer to the policy establishment (*i.e.* in think tanks or as journalists, diplomats or military personnel). Realistically, due to the daily demands in their own professions these societal representatives could not be expected to participate in the regular review process. However, their judgement could be incorporated in at least three respects. First, they could pass judgement on the work that is eventually published. For instance, if there is an oversupply of manuscripts which have passed the acad-

emically driven QUALITY test, these representatives could be incorporated in making a final decision as to what might be considered MOST RELEVANT from a broader public point of view. Second, they could help in setting a longer-term agenda for publication and research. Finally, in addition to rendering IR journals more responsive to societal needs the inclusion of representatives from society would also help in recruiting and socializing critical voices from civil society to the needs of our discipline. Given the trends described above, this would help in solidifying the standing of the discipline both within the academy and in society more broadly and in a longer-term perspective.

A second problem with peer-reviewed IR journals involves the fact they are not only facing increasing pressures from outside as far as the “relevance” test is concerned but also from the inside as far as the “quality” argument is concerned. The “Perestroika” movement in APSA is only the tip of the iceberg pointing to some more fundamental problems. First, peer review is generally based on the expectation that publication decisions can be taken more efficiently and more effectively by relying on (or even delegating publication decisions to) external reviewers operating under double-blind conditions. At ZIB, for instance, it has been a long-standing practice to ask for three external reviews for each manuscript with reviewers being asked to provide a final summary judgement based on four alternatives: (1) publish as is; (2) publish after revisions; (3) resubmit; or (4) reject.<sup>16</sup> In the past, the overall judgement of the reviewers has seldom been overridden by the editor (or editors). Our own experience shows that if we see a convergence it is around the “rewrite and resubmit” judgement. This is somehow disturbing as it is the one recommendation that relieves the

reviewer of taking real responsibility for the fate of the manuscript. If no intervention by the editors is made, one could imagine an eternal circle of rewriting and resubmitting as a consequence of internal conflict avoidance on part of the reviewers. In addition, research on peer review across disciplines has led to some disturbing findings (most of which are confirmed by our own experience as editors) which have increasingly led us to question our past practice (Hirschauer 2003). This research has shown, for instance, that it is an illusion to expect that reviewers will be likely to reach a consensus on the quality of a manuscript even under double-blind conditions. Reliability tests across academic disciplines have shown that reviewers are likely at most to reach a common judgement as far as unpublishable manuscripts are concerned (Cicchetti 1991; for a summary discussion of diverse counter-arguments see Hirschauer 2003:7-8). Yet research also shows that many rejected manuscripts are eventually published somewhere else. Moreover, in some cases the standing of these journals of second choice did not always conform to the expectation of a presumably lower rank in terms of a discipline’s hierarchy of journals. All of this points to the crucial gate-keeping function of journal editors and a corresponding weakening of the point about external double-blind reviewing. Given that the review process is a semi-public exchange among scholars, editors have to take into account that reviews generally contain what reviewers want to CONVEY (not what they “think” — whatever that may be — about the manuscript at hand) (Hirschauer 2003:15). Moreover, since writing reviews is a costly business which not only subtracts from the time of being able to compete with manuscript authors but eventually may help them secure a competitive advantage due to the individualized nature of journal publica-

tions, reviewing is far from being an “objective” affair even under double-blind conditions. To put it mildly, paradigmatic bias is not an infrequent phenomenon in reviews. Therefore, in arriving at a final decision editors have to weigh diverse sets of arguments for and against publication, among which the arithmetic average of reviewers’ judgments can only play a part. This conclusion is also reinforced by peer-review research which has shown that the main strength of the peer-review process lies in adding a diverse set of expertise and arguments in judging the quality of scholarly work. However, if this is so it is highly problematic that there is so little public knowledge about decision-making processes in peer-reviewed journals.<sup>17</sup> To be sure, the more involved we become individually with disciplinary politics the easier it gets to gain access to insider knowledge about these issues. But this is precisely the kind of knowledge we often castigate as ethically problematic when we encounter it in the subject matter with which we deal professionally: insider knowledge exchanged *via* arcane diplomatic practices or derived from secretive “intelligence” sources. If we are indeed moving towards a “knowledge society” along the lines described above and if Ole Wæver’s analysis of the key role played by peer-reviewed journals in defining IR as the discipline more broadly is also accurate, this lack of transparency may well come to haunt us soon. Again, “Perestroika” may just be the beginning here.

What can be done? One measure which is fairly easy to implement would simply provide for regular and much more detailed reporting as to the rules of editorial decision-making, the number of articles submitted, rejected and published, and the procedures applied in arriving at decisions. Another more demanding measure might be to add “open peer commentary” to double-blind internal reviews. Apparently, this is only starting to be applied in the social

sciences.<sup>18</sup> To our knowledge it so far plays no role in IR journals. Presumably the community is invited (for example, via the Internet) to openly discuss the quality of manuscripts which have either been published or which have received starkly contradictory reviews. This could have several advantages. First, it would acknowledge that a published article in a refereed journal is a highly artificial act of individualization at the end of a collective communication process within the scholarly community — a process which actually PRODUCES scholars in the first place (Hirschauer 2003:13). Second, open peer commentary would also make visible the input of other scholars in improving an argument thereby redistributing benefits among the community of scholars more broadly. It would also allow authors to respond to reviewers. Finally, in addition to increasing transparency about editorial policy it would also add incentives for innovation since it would be easier to overrule a potentially uniform judgement among reviewers and less risky for editors to shoulder responsibility for either publishing or rejecting a controversial manuscript.

A third problem we have to face is the unsurprising fact that peer review is feeding rather than dampening the tendency for ever more specialization. The effect of this trend is that, even as far as the top journals of the disciplines are concerned, ever more experts read (and forget) ever more specialized manuscripts whereas the community as a whole — not to mention possible readers beyond the discipline’s confines — reads (and understands) ever less. This point is well made in a relatively stark experiment conducted by two peer-review researchers, Douglas Peters and Stephen Ceci, in Psychology. Peters and Ceci (1982) selected one article each which had been published in twelve highly esteemed psychology journals (with correspondingly high rates of rejection but without an anyony-

mous review process) during the preceding 2-3 years. After replacing the name of the (well-known) authors and some additional minor editorial revisions in the title, the abstract and introductory paragraphs, they resubmitted these articles to the same journal but under a different name. So the main point here was that name recognition (as far as the author or their institutional home were concerned) could no longer serve as a criterion for being selected for publication (in one case, for instance, “Harvard University” as the institutional home of the author was replaced by “Northern Plains Centre for Human Understanding”). One of the stunning results of this experiment was that only three out of twelve manuscripts were properly identified as having been published already by the journal in question. Another result was that eight of the remaining nine manuscripts which had previously been published were now being REJECTED by the same journal. In our context, this finding can certainly be taken as an argument in favour of double-blind peer review. Yet what is more important is the fact that neither the editors nor the reviewers could remember that the main arguments of these articles had been published in the very same journal during the last 2-3 years. The situation may not be as dramatic in political science/IR, but it is not altogether different either. Yet if this is the case what is the value of an academic “publication” if its “publicity” often does not even reach the editors and reviewers of the very academic journal in question? And could it mean that peer review is no more than a sophisticated way to ensure a random rule of decision that might be better than the intellectual dictatorship of an individual editor but is no real guarantee that what passes as high quality actually deserves this label? Why do we insist on judging

the quality of academic work primarily based on publications in peer-reviewed journals rather than, say, based on the fact whether or not a scholarly product eventually makes it into the textbooks of the discipline? (Hirschauer 2003:17) This question leads neither to the demand to eliminate peer review nor to minimize the importance of peer-reviewed journals. However, it emphasizes that we need to put our understanding of quality work on a somewhat broader basis.

Fourth, all these considerations put more of a burden on the shoulders of editors than many of us would like to bear. It behoves us to ensure that pluralism guides our editorial choices, that original work and innovation are not only allowed for but actually welcomed and supported by our decision-making processes and structures and that our journals not only provide *fora* for specialized analytical work but for syntheses, overview articles and (what we at the ZIB call) “borderline walks” along what we implicitly consider to be the boundaries of IR on one hand and those fields adjacent to ours on the other (such as sociology, economics, philosophy, history, geography or psychology — to mention just a few).<sup>19</sup> It is our duty as journal editors to see to it that professionalisation and specialization do not eliminate what may seem to be daring grand theorizing. After all, it is the successes along these lines that actually fill the pages of disciplinary histories (*cf.* Hellmann 2003).

## CONCLUSION

ISSUES SUCH AS THESE RAISE SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR WORK AS EDITORS. Eventually they may well boil down to the message that we have to think hard about both broadening and increasing the readership

of our journals not only because this is mandatory to survive economically as an academic journal, but also because it is imperative to render our discipline fit for a very different future. We are convinced it is high time to start an open debate about all these issues. At ZIB we have decided to contribute to such a debate by devoting the "Forum" section of our journal to discuss these issues on the occasion of the tenth anniversary in 2004. We hope this will help in rendering our discipline 'safe for intellectual border crossers.'<sup>20</sup> In the end, it remains true that the academy needs its internal communication processes and that journals remain the main channel to conduct this communication in an organized and transparent way. However, we must become more conscious of the undeniable shortcomings, risks and dangers associated with the ways in which we organize this process. Among the most important we count cognitive closure and the development of sectarian knowledge. Against this we have to ensure pluralism and transparency as well as the openness of our journals to innovative, even irritating voices. At the same time, we have to recognize there is a legitimate division of labour between the more theory-oriented and the more practice-oriented IR journals, including a much more profound appreciation of the work of those who devote their efforts to translate the findings of the former into the language games of the latter (and *vice versa*). Humility, not arrogance, is the base attitude from which to start our editorial work.

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1 Our thanks for comments and suggestions go to Nicole Deitelhof, Christian Büger, Benjamin Herborth and Rainer Baumann. We dedicate this article to our colleague Lothar Brock who has shown throughout his academic career how to combine the highest academic standards with a strong commitment to peaceful international change.

2 Hannah Arendt developed this concept of power in Arendt (1970).

3 For a similar discussion, see Mearsheimer (2001).

4 On "soft balancing", see Pape (2003).

5 Interestingly enough, such a scenario can count not only on public support in Europe but also increasingly in the US.

6 For appeals to mend the transatlantic fences with a view to returning to this happy state of affairs, see Moravcsik (2003) and Asmus (2003).

7 For a blueprint along these lines, see Bertram (*et al.* 2002).

8 Robert Kaplan (2000) has taken the development of this scenario farthest.

9 For a detailed epistemological discussion, see Hawthorn (1995).

10 In Rorty's (1993:13-14, 16-18, 43-47) words, this modern ethos of science entails all the classical "Baconian" virtues such as experimentalism, openness to refutation by experience and discursive exchange with fellow scholars, curiosity, and adaptability.

11 The book Wæver refers to is Witley (2000).

12 'Perestroika Memo, October 15, 2000', reprinted in Caucus for a New Political Science (2001). *Newsletter of the New Political Science Section of APSA* 9(2), 6-7 (<http://www.apsanet.org/-new/NewsFeb01.htm>); for a background also see the collection of articles and contributions at

[http://www.btintenet.com/-pae\\_news/Perestroik.htm](http://www.btintenet.com/-pae_news/Perestroik.htm).

13 Willke (2002:41). Willke refers here to Rorty's (1994: chapter 4) concept of a 'liberal ironist', but extends it *via* Luhmann (1992:110-11) to a 'systemic ironist'.

14 For a discussion of these issues as they affect German and American universities in particular, see Müller-Böling, Mayer, MacLachlan and Fedrowitz (1998). As to the situation of state research funding institutions in Germany, also see *Forschungsförderung in Deutschland* (1999).

15 Recent figures for Germany were published in Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung (2003). According to these figures, overall state spending for students of the social sciences has been the lowest among all university disciplines with a tendency of shrinking further. Moreover, state spending per professor has dropped even more visibly whereas the procurement of external funding per professor has been rising (Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung 2003:79, 89).

16 For a more detailed statement as to our editorial policy and criteria, see Hellmann and Müller (2002:4-5).

17 This point is raised by both Wæver (2003) and Hirschauer (2003). Hirschauer (2003:19) writes that our lack of knowledge about editorial decision-making in peer-review journals (which he basically considers "black boxes" in this regard) is one of "the most surprising" observations about the results of peer-review research in general.

18 The *Electronic Journal of Sociology* is said to apply such a procedure, although a quick check did not reveal any details. See <http://www.sociology.org/mission.html> (15 November 2003).

19 For an elaboration of how we define this type of article, see Hellmann and Müller (2002:3-8).

20 This phrase was used by Susanne Rudolph, a University of Chicago professor *emerita* who earned her reputation as an "area studies" specialist at the 2001 APSA meeting. Rudolph currently serves as APSA president, apparently because she has been among those trusted to re-establish disciplinary authority after the Perestroika challenge. The quote is taken from an article on the repercussions of the "Perestroika" movement in Political Science, Stewart (2003).

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