A Commentary

The title of this habilitation thesis is an immediate reference to Der Derian's edited volume *Critical Investigations* (2005). The reason for this reference to a set of studies by both conventional and critical theorists in the field which at that time remained, the many tensions notwithstanding, a discrete and visible *discipline*, is threefold. The first source of inspiration is the volume's dialogical nature, activated in a timeless encounter between the classical and – in the narrow sense of the term –, critical investigations of the limits and possibilities of theoretical realism, and by extension key concepts for thinking international politics such as anarchy and sovereignty, power, reason, and history. Even though the studies assembled in this habilitation thesis have been written by a single author – and in one case two –, they too seek to build their argument from clearly defined and embraced, yet at the same time plural theoretical positions. Their aspiration is of pragmatic openness to the diverse ways of critical exploring of society and building knowledge formations, or *savoirs*, through which society is explained with manifest effects on the political life and the constitution of human subjectivity. In addition to this fundamental openness, these studies moreover seek to establish a dialogical relationship between theoretical and empirical worlds. With the exception of the study of instrumentalisation of the presentist, decontextualised interpretations of the *oeuvre* of Thomas Hobbes in IR, these studies always build their theoretical arguments on concrete empirical foundations – from the ethnopolitical conflict field in the South Caucasus, a subject of the author's long-term academic interest, to the global regulation of flows and consumption of drugs.

The studies included in this habilitation thesis reflect the ambition to achieve theoretical pluralism, unbound by a single, narrowly defined paradigm – and its jargon. At the same time, and this is the second source of inspiration by Der Derian's volume, these studies seek to embody the generally critical ethos characteristic

of the otherwise remarkably diverse perspectives encompassed there.[1] This ethos, and the related 'courage to knowledge' (Kant's *Aude sapere*) should naturally belong to science as such; and, as a matter of course, also to *social* science. Such ethos, or a fundamental relation to knowledge, may well be considered the legacy of Europe's Enlightenment – to follow Foucault, one that is not necessarily appropriated by rationalism, but is conceived as a collective process of the historical ontology of the autonomous human subject, which does not confront us with a blackmailing choice between authoritarian, simplifying *rationalism / irrationalism* binary, and is rather a permanent critique analysing and thinking through the limits of knowledge. It should certainly not be neglected that for Immanuel Kant as the philosopher of the critical Enlightenment, it was important to know the limits of knowledge so that they be not transgressed. For Michel Foucault, on the other hand, writing nearly two centuries later, the archaeological and genealogical expedition to the frontier („*il faut être aux frontières*") was important *precisely* because it opened the possibility of their transgression (Foucault 1994). Be that as it may, this fundamental ethos expands the space of possibility for not affirming the *status quo* and the seemingly inevitable historical processes, for it challenges the false, ideological objectification and universalisation; as much as it opens the space for articulation of social alternatives against the sedating argument about the impossibility of change – whether this normative articulation is metaphorically related to transgression of the limits or, in the spirit of another, classical philosophical tradition, to the leaving and return to Plato's cave – as was the case with the thought of one of first truly modern theorists of international relations, and at the same time a truly virtuous academic, G. Lowes Dickinson.[2]

Thirdly, the presented studies – with the exception of the last two that have as their subject general, theoretically strictly unbounded explorations of the dominant *epistémé* for thinking the global, in the case

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[1] There is no better testimony to this diversity than the inclusion of Robert Keohane's article 'International Institutions: Two Approaches' (originally Keohane 1988), an edited version of his Presidential address at the International Studies Association Annual Convention in which he warned that the reflectivist approach would be marginalised lest it accepted the method of positive empirical testing of causal hypotheses. Der Derian (1990) himself expressed himself critically regarding this disciplining gesture. At a research seminar convened at Frei Universität in Berlin and attended by the author many years later, Der Derian reflected on the development of the discipline in the 1980s in strikingly romanticised terms as the strife between coercive power of the mainstream on one hand, and the dissent 'kicking through the door of the field' on the other. It needs not be related where did the narrator of this story stand, and where did Robert Keohane.

[2] His virtue consisted, above all, in the courage with which he defended a structural theory of armed conflict ('the crime is anarchy, Dickinson 1916: 10) during the WWI, when the *leitmotif* of the hegemonic discourse in the United Kingdom was the German guilt for the outbreak of the war; and the determination to bring to life the political project of the international organisation in the form of League of Nations, the name he invented (cf. Ditrych 2010).

of Hobbesian study inspired primarily by Skinner's contextualism, but also historicising Hobbes' philosophy by means of reading Foucault (2003) and suggesting, *inter alia*, an interpretation of Hobbes as an early theorist of liberal governmentality – refine the critical ethos mentioned above using critical theory in the narrower sense, particularly of French provenance, supplemented by Carl Schmitt's critical political ontology. These studies, therefore, underscore the processes of the constitution of knowledge on the premise that there is no unshakeable foundation, or an Archimedean point, from which social action could be made intelligible from safe distance. For that reason, they situate this knowledge of society in history, culture and constellations of power relations. It may be a part and parcel of an ethnopolitical conflict assemblage – whose novel ontology, inspired by the continental theory, is presented in the first study. It may also be a formation of knowledge that makes possible, including by means of an upload of biopolitical rationality to the international level, the establishment of a discrete domain of global governance in the realm of flows and consumption of narcotic substances; one that is subjected to analysis alongside the operation of compulsory, institutional and structural power in the related global security regime following Barnett and Duvall (2005)'s typology.[3] Together with the premise that making of meaning in global politics is conditioned on history and power, with the effects in terms including hierarchies and social injustice, these studies share with the continental theory the objective of denaturalising common sense(s) and seemingly incontrovertible moral imperatives; the preference for ideographic research documenting the particular and singular over the nomographic research that seeks to discover general laws; the focus on (synchronic and constitutive) conditions of change over (time-sequential) causality; and finally, an incredulity toward metanarratives such as emancipation (Lyotard 1984) married, however, with the socially engaged endeavour to open new 'thinking spaces (George 1989).

These are the cornerstones of the articles and book chapters included in this volume. The first, 'Georgia's Frosts: Ethnopolitical Conflict as Assemblage', proposes a reinterpretation of the 'frozen conflicts' as assemblages which together affix and strategically orient a diverse ensemble of material and nonmaterial

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[3] The translation of this biopolitical rationality, constitutive for both modern nationalism and colonialism, was first manifested in the possibility of emergence of the apparatus of international control of the dissemination of infection diseases, and later the constitution of the new subject of 'global population' (Bashford 2006; cf. Sanchéz-Avilés and Ditrych 2020).

actants enrolled in networks inhabiting the conflict field. It shows how this theoretical perspective can be mobilised in the case study of the ethnopolitical conflict in Georgia. The resulting analysis illuminates several significant processes that motivate the constant pulsing of the conflict field even when the guns are silent, and thus contribute to its dynamic reassembling and incessant becoming. It suggests how the assemblage's visibility function operates – endowing with meaning the structure of relations in the conflict field. It traces the historical transformations of the Georgia's society *bricolage*, particularly during the era of Mikheil Saakashvili, and its role also in the state-making processes inside the separatist entities. Finally, it shows that the materialisation of collective violence accounts for only a fraction of the action in the conflict field which is complemented by other forms of political and criminal violence, or regime changes and state formation and deconstruction processes enacted in contracting or expanding of heterogenous, hybrid *governscapes* including virtual ones, but always with very real political effects.

The second, earlier study 'Georgia: A State of Flux' is also concerned with Georgia's politics. This time, it approaches the subject from a different theoretical perspective, but again with an ambition to propose a reading that is firmly anchored both theoretically and empirically. It mobilises the critical political ontology of Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben to explore the political development in Georgia following the restoration of independence (1991), and articulates a thesis on these grounds that from the moment of its modern rebirth, Georgia as a political community has been found in a permanent state of exception. The successive regimes of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili may be effectively considered as sovereign dictatorships aiming to activate a new political order. Their utopian projects were formulated in different terms. However, they commonly entailed the restoration of territorial sovereignty, overcoming of internal stasis and – more recently – the imitation of the Western liberal state model. The study concludes that the realisation of the liberal utopia defined by sovereign power, yet one which at the same time reproduces the state of exception, is a tragic predicament of Georgia's contemporary politics.

The following chapter 'Afghanistan Now: A Study of the Microcosmos of Global Disorder' shifts attention to a geographically more distant Central Asia. Yet from theoretical perspective, it remains faithful to the critical political ontology inspired by Carl Schmitt – this time drawing inspiration in particular from his concept of the *nomos* and its historical transformation. Following an analysis of the period situation on the ground, it argues in more timeless and general terms that, metaphorically speaking, we all are found in the global 'Afghanistan' – defined by chaos and violence distributed by terrorists, insurgents and organised criminals but also the counterterrorist apparatuses. The Global War on Terror (GWOT) is theorised here as a Foucauldian *dispositif*, an apparatus that is a strategically oriented ensemble of discourses, institutions, regulations, administrative decisions and expertise – which, incidentally, conceptually inspires the later assemblage theory drawn upon in the first study included in this habilitation thesis.

The next chapter 'The International Drug Prohibition Regime as Security Regulation', a deliverable of the standard Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) grant *Global Prohibition Regimes: Theoretical Refinement and Empirical Analysis* (2013-2016), of which the author was the principal investigator, focuses the attention entirely to the global level. Here, it explores the operation of various types of power in the international drug control regime conceived as an advanced form of global security regulation. The regime could emerge as a result of changing perception of risks associated with the use of psychotropic substances, finding a balance between interests of key actors, and a particular distribution of power in international politics. In addition to the processes related to the emergence of the regime, which may be well captured by the first, rationalist generation of the international regimes theory, the chapter pays attention also to institutional processes and, in particular, broader cultural patterns that have sustained the regime – for instance, of domestic securitisation of narcotic substances that from the elites' viewpoints eroded social bonds or threatened industrial output in the capitalist economy; or universalisation of particular positions regarding the harmfulness of concrete substances in which postcolonial power relations have historically been inscribed through the moralising discourse of good and evil –, and the productive effects of the related practices for the constitution of normal / pathological subject using narcotic substances outside the delimited and controlled

spaces such as hospitals or research laboratories. The attention shifts, therefore, from the role of (compulsory) power during the regime's emergence toward the understanding of this regime as an established *field* for playing out of power relations.[4]

The following article, 'Forget Hobbes', is a critique of the dominant patterns of knowledge of international relations and the field's instrumentalisation of intellectual history. It focuses this critique on the person of one of the notional founders of political realism, Thomas Hobbes, credited with bequeathing to the discipline the concept of international politics as anarchy and the state of nature, commonly reduced to the image of *homo homini lupus*. It presents Hobbes *as constructed* by realists, but also many others, decontextualised and instrumentalised 'Hobbeses' created in IR as his challengers. Then, benefiting from the contemporary political theory literature, mostly of the Cambridge School provenance, and attentive to textual fidelity and authorial intentions in preserving the horizons of plausible interpretations, the argument is put forward that international relations were not a subject of significant interest to Hobbes and the few scattered remarks related to international politics in his *oeuvre* are functionally subordinated to the objective of proving the reality of (nonreduced) state of nature. Pointing to a 'security continuum' of different states found in his political theory, the article further challenges the reading of Hobbes as the author of the field's foundational *inside / outside* difference. Finally, it polemically concludes that the field would benefit from a cure of the 'Hobsession' from which it appears to suffer, and *forgetting* Hobbes that would expand the space for rethinking international politics.

The final study presented in this volume, 'Security Community: A Future for the Troubled Concept?', also relates critically to the knowledge of international relations – in this case, to its liberal stream. It is based on a paper presented by the author at a colloquium which he convened at the Institute of International Relations (2012) at a centenary of birth of Karl Deutsch, a leading U.S. political scientist who was born and raised in Prague. It commences with a commentary on the original formulation of the concept of security community

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[4] A neat division labour was established in the writing partnership between the author and Constanza Sanchéz-Avilés in which the latter supplied her considerable empirical expertise, and the former the theoretical reflection thereof.

by Deutsch and his collaborators. It continues with a critical review of its constructivist 'second coming' by Emanuel Adler, Michael Barnett and their colleagues. It argues that while the attempt at resurrection was noteworthy and valuable, in this new articulation the concept of security community emerged as both theoretically complex and methodologically superficial. Based on a constructive assessment of the empirical results of the security community research programme to date, the study asserts its future potential provided that it restores Deutschian ethos of rigorous, transparent, collective and transdisciplinary research; takes seriously the challenge of the realist paradigm inscribed in the concept of security community by focusing on both the internal processes of the modern state and what goes on beyond it; and pays more attention to the processes of disintegration of those communities aside to their integration.