

MINERVA'S OWL FLEES FROM GUNFIRE:  
AN AFTER ACTION REPORT  
FROM A VETERAN OF THE SCHOLARLY WARS  
ABOUT EX-YUGOSLAVIA

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Anthropologists who do research in regions in which armed conflict breaks out between ethnic or religious-heritage communities are often called upon to give opinions on the events there. When such a conflict becomes the subject of international moral discourses, the pressure on scholars to conform to dominant positions is acute, and can lead to analyses that are not well grounded in what can be reasonably understood as facts on the ground, but that adhere to moralizing discourses that not only favour one side over another, but that depict as illegitimate, and often immoral, discussions that do anything more than condemn the other side. In the 1990s, the wars in ex-Yugoslavia led to conflicts between scholars that were too often phrased as *ad hominem* moral disqualifications of those taking unpopular positions, even when the latter's views were well grounded in what could be learned about the conflict. This article is a reflection by a veteran of such *ad hominem* attacks by scholars whose concerns were not with the accuracy of the writings they attacked, but rather with whether the positions assailed were supposedly in conflict with moral(ising) stances. The issues are not new, or unique to the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia, so perhaps this personal account can be of some relevance to others who may face similar issues.

KEYWORDS: Wars in Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, scholarship during conflicts, ethics of scholarship, *ad hominem* attacks in scholarship

INTRODUCTION

The Call for Papers for this thematic issue refers to the war being waged by Russia against Ukraine, and frames issues in that specific context, such as NATO enlargement, the (im)possibility of cooperation with Russian academics, and an obligation

to respond to unprovoked violence. Not being a specialist on Ukraine or Russia, I cannot address that specific context. Yet, despite the specificities of each case, the issues of how scholars should respond to armed conflicts are not new, nor delimited, so perhaps there may be relevance in some reflections on how these issues looked during the last international conflict in Europe that was a *cause célèbre*, the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, 1991-95 in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and 1999 in NATO's war against Serbia. The armed conflicts split the academic communities within what had been one country, and also those of the non-Yugoslavs who studied the place. On a panel at a conference in the USA in 1993, the chair looked at the audience and passed a message to the participants: *Pazi! Snajperi!* (Watch out! Snipers!). This warning quoted graffiti on "sniper alley" in Sarajevo but the reference on the panel was to the partisans of all of the various sides who were in the room. The scholars who had been studying Yugoslavia for years before it broke up often found themselves in strongly worded opposition, which was often abetted by academics new to the topic, most of the newcomers without such experience but with passionate conviction, if not generally local language competence, fieldwork experience, or even awareness of the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina or Croatia before 1991-92. Wanting to avoid being such a participant in discussions of the war in Ukraine, I will stick with the ones I was involved in, although I make some more generalized comments in conclusion.

I should note that these comments on participant observation in the academic conflicts over the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s are situated in their own ethnographic present: the late 1980s until very early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. My colleagues and I were observing, analysing and writing about the wars in real time, as they were taking place, and thus without knowing what the outcomes would be even in the short term, let alone in longer perspectives. This time frame is appropriate for comparisons to scholarly discourses/disputes while the Russian war against Ukraine is in progress, but it means that I do not address theories now in vogue, such as decoloniality (Kušić, Manolova, and Lottholz 2019), which were not part of our discourses then.

#### AN UNTRAINED DRAFTEE IN AN INTELLECTUAL CONFLICT

The Call for Papers for this thematic issue referred to scholars' "obligation to respond to unprovoked violence." In my experience, some scholars with expertise on Yugoslavia were paralysed, unable to formulate responses to events that they had not anticipated and were not trained to deal with. Others did feel an obligation to respond to the violence, although the extent to which it was "unprovoked" itself became an issue. Still, anthropologists, historians, sociologists and political scientists had been studying Yugoslavia because it was seen as a successful case of a multi-ethnic state and the most prosperous and open socialist state in the world. After all, after 1945

Yugoslavia had been a land at peace and one of relative prosperity, compared not only to the countries of the Warsaw Pact but also to Greece or Portugal. Politically, the uniquely Yugoslav system of “self-management socialism” may not have been exactly democratic (Rusinow 1977), but then again, Greece had been under military dictatorship from 1967-74, while fascism ended in Spain only in 1975, and in Portugal in 1974; Cyprus was invaded and partitioned by NATO member Turkey in 1974 following a failed coup staged by Greece; and Turkey experienced military coups in 1971 and 1980 (so much for NATO being a guarantor of democracy: fascist Portugal, Greece under the colonels, and Turkey under the generals were all NATO members, as are Orbán’s authoritarian Hungary and Erdoğan’s authoritarian Türkiye today). Yugoslavia had no violent political organizations within the country like the Red Brigades in Italy or the Red Army Faction in West Germany. Internationally, Yugoslavia was a founder and leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the alliance of the recently decolonized states.<sup>1</sup> Ironically enough, considering the events of the 1990s, Yugoslav military personnel were in demand for UN peacekeeping missions.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, the former Yugoslavia underwent a mirror inversion of the processes taking place in the rest of formerly socialist Europe. As borders opened between these other countries, facilitating trade and travel, new ones were created in what had been Yugoslavia, so that driving the length of the former country required crossing at least three borders where before there were none. As the rest of Europe celebrated “multiculturalism,” the most multi-national and multicultural country in Europe was broken up into much more homogenous states. As the European Union celebrated the end of the Cold War, much of Yugoslavia went into hot wars. With the end of those conflicts, the principle that borders could not be changed by force and without consent had been modified: that can indeed happen, as long as it is done by NATO.<sup>2</sup> And as most of Eastern Europe became more prosperous (at least until 2007-2008), most of what had been the most prosperous

1 The importance of Yugoslavia’s support to these newly independent states has been captured in two documentaries in 2022 by Mila Turajlić, *Non-Aligned: Scenes from the Labudovic Reels* and *Ciné-Guerrillas: Scenes from the Labudovic Reels*. Turajlic uses outtakes from the massive corpus of films made by Tito’s cameraman, Stevan Labudović, during Tito’s travels to Asia and Africa and during the founding meeting of the NAM; and of Labudović’s year working for the Algerian independence movement as their primary propaganda film maker.

2 Following Russia’s invasion on Ukraine in 2022, we have seen the odd spectacle of NATO supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine while denying the territorial integrity of Serbia, while Russia supports the territorial integrity of Serbia but not that of Ukraine or Georgia. Serbia and Ukraine officially support each other’s territorial integrity, the only stance congruent with the UN charter and one also taken by China, India, South Africa, five EU members and many of the post-colonial states of Africa and Southeast Asia; but this puts Ukraine in opposition to NATO’s stance on Serbia and Serbia against Russia’s position on Ukraine.

country of the region became impoverished, with the so-called Federal Republic of Yugoslavia experiencing hyperinflation of 65% *per day* in early 1994 (Lyon 1995), meaning that prices doubled every 1.4 days. While other post-socialist states in Europe saw high inflation, none of them came remotely close to this level, which is the third highest inflation rate ever recorded.

And this was all accomplished in part through war. In my view, at the time and since, the best studies of the violent breakdown of this peaceful country were written immediately, during the wars, by people such as Susan Woodward (1995), Steven Burg and Paul Shoup (1999), Xavier Bougarel (1996b, 1996a), among a few others, who had been studying Yugoslavia for years or even decades, and who got their information mainly in Serbo-Croatian from local sources. Not knowing what the outcomes of the processes would be, our analyses could not be teleological — we had to look for causes of events that had not been expected. Scholars who became interested in the region largely because of news reports of atrocities in what was billed as the first war in Europe since 1945 (Cyprus was apparently not part of Europe in 1974, during the Greek coup and the subsequent Turkish invasion and partition of the island), tended to write teleological accounts, analysing events as part of a pre-assessed process of criminality by Serb, Croat, or occasionally Muslim/Bosniak leaders.<sup>3</sup>

The scholars named above, and others, certainly responded to what they saw as an obligation to bring their expertise to bear on the conflict, even though none had trained for that role. For my own part, I certainly never intended to study a war, up close and in real time, or ethnic cleansing and its tools of targeted killings, mass sexual violence, and forced expulsions. Nor did I ever intend to study the construction and successful implementation of constitutional and legal systems of discrimination against minorities, in European states that were presumed to be democratic after the fall of communism. As for interventions, had anyone told me when I finished law school that in about two decades I would be an expert witness in the first trial of the first international criminal tribunal after Nuremberg and Tokyo, I would have wondered what hallucinogen the questioner was on. The same would have been said if someone had predicted that I would be a sherpa at a summit conference, as a personal advisor to the last prime minister of Yugoslavia, the Serbian-American

3 One scholar who did have long experience in Yugoslavia did pursue an explicitly teleological approach grounded on the position that scholars must assess guilt for atrocities rather than attempt to find social processes that led until-then normal people to commit them (Ramet 2005). This position of itself is unexceptional, except that the author made the false statement that Woodward, Burg, Shoup, and several others, myself included, were “moral relativists” who “tended to be more sympathetic, in the 1990s, to the arguments made by Milošević, Karadžić and their collaborators”, an outrageously untrue statement meant to disqualify the work of those scholars most highly qualified by training and experience to analyse events in Yugoslavia as they occurred.

businessman Milan Panić, in London in August 1992; engage in fact-finding for international organisations in a war zone in Europe; do advance work for a peace conference; or participate in meetings, seminars and discussions with a range of US governmental figures: ambassadors, politicians and their staff, and a variety of people in various roles from various units of the government. After all, when I started to do research in Yugoslavia in 1981, it was the “communism with a human face” that the Czechs had longed for in 1968, but which had been crushed there by the Soviets, and a model for the world of how a multilingual/religious/national society could overcome the terrible legacies of a ghastly war, the one from 1941-45 (see, for example, Rusinow 1977). Yugoslavia had open borders, and Yugoslavs in the 1970s had a standard of living higher than that of most Portuguese and Spaniards, though there were increasing tensions caused by foreign debt and IMF mandates (see Woodward 1995). And I was studying workers’ courts in a socialist system (see Hayden 1990). What could have seemed more stable and progressive? I was a research scholar, not involved in politics or policy making.

But post-socialism in Yugoslavia experienced what Michael Mann (2005) has called “the dark side of democracy,” in which majority group politicians proclaim a territory to be that community’s exclusive homeland and build support by portraying the largest minority as the enemy. Yugoslavia’s disintegration began in 1989-90 as a constitutional crisis, with the victorious nationalists in various republics rejecting federal authority, and I was among the very few non-Yugoslav scholars who understood the constitutional and political issues involved (Hayden 1999a). When the constitutional system then broke down, so did the federal state, leaving no mechanism for resolving issues between the Yugoslav peoples other than threat, *fait accompli* and, ultimately, wars to bring ethno-national homogeneity by expelling minorities through “ethnic cleansing” (Hayden 1996). When the wars started, I was one of the few scholars in the English-speaking world who knew the main language, the legal and political systems, and the players — some of the latter personally, as in Serbia, at least, many opposition leaders were young PhDs of about my age. And I then spent the war years monitoring it all, very closely, and taking part in a really large variety of efforts to deal with it — including a very great deal of scholarly publishing on the forms of violence mentioned above (see Hayden 2013).

My personal crisis was acute: the country in which I had been doing research for nearly ten years, where my wife was from and my oldest child was born, was suddenly moving towards a breakup that everyone knew would be violent — the common phrase was “we’ll be in blood up to the knees” (*bićemo u krvi do kolena*). I felt that I did not have the option of not responding; and in any event, if I could not say something now, what was all of my training, research and experience in the country worth? But that position inevitably raised complications and questions.

WHAT DO SOCIAL SCIENTISTS UNTRAINED IN STUDYING CONFLICT OFFER AND  
TO WHOM?

The most fundamental, threshold question, for me at least, is: *what can a field-experienced anthropologist actually offer, and to whom?* Or any other social scientist, for that matter. It seemed and still seems to me that the most important answer to that was and is: *the ability to make clear to foreigners why matters were developing as they were and how they seemed likely to go;* and that these explanations had to be made on the basis of analyses that were as objective and fact-based as one could make them. I followed Max Weber's ethics of science as a vocation, and specifically the *ethics of responsibility*, assessing situations not on the grounds of what one might wish would happen but rather making accurate observations of what was actually happening, and why (Weber 2020).

Lest this seem self-evident, I was constantly confronted with well-meaning people who grounded their work instead on what Weber had called the *ethics of conviction*, basing analyses on pre-determined moral determinations of who had been victimized and by whom, and letting their preferred outcomes drive the analysis. I have referred to such work as engaging in the analysis of "wished-for counterfactuals," and ignoring what Weber called "uncomfortable facts" (Hayden 2007). Tzvetan Todorov, explicitly neo-Weberian and perhaps the most discomfiting moral philosopher since Hannah Arendt used Karl Jasper's phrase "the banality of evil" to such telling effect, has put it well: "Truth, it seems, is often incompatible with inner comfort, and most of us prefer comfort" (Todorov 1996, 257).

Some of the most noteworthy forms of such work were driven by the view that the primary goal of analysis should be to determine who bore criminal guilt for massive human rights violations, a determination that could then determine what should be done next in the pursuit of justice; and also that could lead to what soon came to be called "transitional justice," as a way to forge "reconciliation" and thus peace — a presumption for which there is very little reliable evidence (see Hayden 2011). Even acknowledging the seriousness of the crimes, this approach always seemed to me to be analogous to letting moral views influence epidemiology (although this actually has become popular amongst some right-wing politicians since 2020, in the USA and elsewhere); and ignoring that the crimes were the result of social processes rather than, in most cases, the desire (or even willingness) of the people committing them. It became particularly perverse when organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International called for economic sanctions to be imposed in order to force regimes to honour human rights — inevitably, this actually meant calling for the increased impoverishment of the weakest sections of societies already devastated economically, while actually increasing the powers of the regimes since in an economy of scarcity, the power to allocate resources is crucial (see Hayden 1999b, 2007).

Note that I saw, and still see, the task as *informing foreigners* about what was happening and why the Yugoslavs were acting in ways that they themselves knew would bring terrible consequences. The ethics-of-conviction people pretty much wrote off the Yugoslavs themselves as with rare exceptions being misguided fools misled by evil elites; although these enlightened Westerners were also very interested in teaching the natives the errors of their ways — essentially missionary activity by post-theistic humanists. Inspiring for those rare exceptions who quickly came to form the choir but were not often successful in converting many of the rest of the supposedly heathen, although some of the latter were very willing to become acolytes in the new Church of Human Rights,<sup>4</sup> and reap the material benefits of such a position by founding NGOs and getting funding from Western governments. Many such projects were admirable, but they were driven not by what local people defined as their needs, but rather by whatever programs the international determined that the locals needed even if the latter might have thought otherwise (see, for example, Stubbs 2013).

### **Negative consequences for scholarly discourse**

*Negative consequence 1 – ad hominem attacks:* Trying to ground analyses on basic principles of empirical social science instead of parroting human rights accusations gets one labelled as an apologist for the crimes and thus “complicit” in them (“complicit” being one of my favourite terms of opprobrium, since it imputes criminal guilt without looking either at the actions or intentions of the accused, and thus cannot be denied or defended against). In anthropology, one can be attacked in print without advance warning or opportunity to respond – a violation of journalistic eth-

4 The Church of Human Rights is an ideological field with sacred texts, commentaries on the sacred texts, prophets, martyrs, saints, heretics and passion plays, and is fighting the Powers of Evil, which seem never to sleep. It also claims universal jurisdiction superior to that of states, with decisions of its courts not subject to appeal to secular courts – a superiority claimed by all church courts, notably including the Inquisition. (Interestingly, the European Court of Human Rights says that it lacks jurisdiction to hear appeals of the actions of the international tribunals located in the Hague, and which has some rules and procedures that violate fundamental standards of judicial human rights; see Hayden 2000). As of the Kosovo war in 1999, human rights organizations were also openly urging NATO to go to war — one can almost hear a new version of the old Protestant, Imperialist anthem, becoming “Onward humanitarian soldiers, marching as to intervention” though calling in fact for war. And yes, there were humanitarian war crimes, but those cannot be prosecuted. This is not to say that many human rights organizations did not engage in worthwhile activities, just as many religious organizations do, or to imply that adherents of the Church of Human Rights were any less true in their faith than are many adherents of religious denominations.

ics, but apparently not anthropological ones.<sup>5</sup> Or human rights ones, either – what is often justified as “naming and shaming” is quite literally defamation, both libel and slander; and it works because it is presented in ways that not only do not offer an opportunity for denial, but treat denial itself as further evidence of moral culpability.

But another question was: *should a scholar even talk to officials of The State? And especially the American state?* This is a long-standing issue for anthropologists. Franz Boas was censured by the AAA in 1919 for having published a letter accusing four unnamed anthropologists of being spies, although he was uncensored in 2005.<sup>6</sup> In 2007, an AAA Task Force on the Engagement of Anthropologists with the US Security and Intelligence Communities issued a Final Report arguing that in “localized conflicts pitting culturally divided groups” anthropologists can “contribute to” the suddenly increased need for cultural knowledge. Specifically, they can help “shape kinds of engagement and directions of policy; alternatively they can abstain from involvement *and condemn the involvement of others*” (Peacock et al. 2007, 24, emphasis added). This last phrase seems to envision open season on anthropologists who take the first option and do feel an obligation to respond to the start of a war, and virtually invites the kinds of *ad hominem* attacks mentioned above through its endorsement of “condemning” others.

In crisis situations, this can all get very real very quickly. Thus, in late 1990 and early 1991, as war seemed increasingly likely, the last US Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, several times invited me for informal coffee, late in the day — I was in Belgrade as a Fulbright senior fellow, and he knew that I was likely to have some ground-level experiences that his political officers could not have. When the country fell apart, calls came to me from people in different parts of the US government, plus some European ones.

My view was that these were the people involved in advising those making decisions, and that almost everyone I was talking to seemed really to be trying to help avoid the catastrophe, and later on, to mitigate it. So why wouldn't I talk to them? Actually, a common ground was that we often shared dismay (and worse) when the highest-level politicians routinely ignored the reports and well-informed advice of the people talking to experts like me. For that reason, the CIA's unclassified military history of the Yugoslav Wars, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, was written explicitly to counter the inaccuracies in most popular and political invocations of events there (see Central Intelligence Agency 2002, xi-xii). For what it's worth, when the government's analysts call you, identifying themselves as such and asking your views on a situation,

5 I will not publicize any such scurrilous attacks by discussing or citing them, but Bette Denich (2005) wrote a dignified response to one such attack for those wishing to see an example.

6 <https://americananthro.org/about/policies/uncensoring-franz-boas/>

take it as a compliment — many of their analysts also generally hold to the ethics of responsibility and look for the most reliable information they can find, mainly from open sources, like scholars. They have read your work and take it seriously!

However, talking to the people who try to inform the politicians who make the decisions in order to steer those decisions towards realistic ways to bring hostilities to an end, brings one a lot of criticism, and again can lead to personal attacks. Oddly enough, these attacks often come from the same people who accuse one of being complicit in war crimes.

*Negative consequence 2 — Defendants before international criminal tribunals apparently should not have access to qualified experts and are thus to be denied a fair trial:* The Yugoslav and Rwanda conflicts led to the creation of the first international war criminal tribunals since Nuremberg, which leads to another issue: *Expert Witnessing: To Be or Not to Be One — for the Defense?* The field of transitional justice has been a growth industry, spending lots of money and creating lots of jobs for lawyers from North America and Western Europe (mainly) to bring war criminals to justice and thus foster reconciliation. At least that was the theory, and in 1996, when the Yugoslav Tribunal got going, the invocation of Nuremberg as inspiration made it seem plausible (it is not very plausible now [see Hayden 2011], but that's another story).

Obviously, being an expert witness for the prosecution would generally be seen as admirable — is there a link here to those stirring calls for anthropologists to be witnesses more generally? The problem for me was that I was called to be the first expert witness *for the defence* in the first war crimes trial since Nuremberg. The issue had nothing whatsoever to do with the crimes charged, but was rather jurisdictional, concerning what kinds of crimes actually could be charged in the Tribunal, and hinged on rather technical issues of Bosnian constitutionalism and laws.

I did it — the defence lawyer beat down my initial refusal by saying that he only wanted me to say on the stand what I had already said in print. I decided that the Tribunal could not provide real trials if qualified witnesses could not testify truthfully for the defence, in connection with legitimate issues. And I still believe that.

However, once again, the same kinds of people who criticize one for trying to provide objective analyses, and for speaking with people in government who are involved in making real decisions, criticize one for trying to take an international tribunal seriously as a real court, instead of as a show trial, or “process” as per Kafka (*The Trial* in English being *der Process* in the original German).

*Negative consequence 3 — being beaten into submission:* At what point, though, do you ignore your own ethical principle rather than testify? In my case, turning away the feelers from Slobodan Milošević's lawyers was easy and instantaneous, and based mainly on my knowledge of how deeply responsible he was for the hardships of people throughout Yugoslavia. More troublesome was turning down requests from

counsel for some Bosnian Croat politicians, when I thought that I could provide information that could aid their defence, and that they were being tried unfairly, at least in regard to some charges. But being perceived as a repeat witness for the defence in the Tribunal would clearly come at great cost to my professional reputation.

That is where I found that I had been beaten down by Negative Consequence #2 — the strident criticisms I received for having been an expert witness on a technical constitutional issue in the first case. It seems that if you take seriously the position that defendants have the right to a real defence instead of only a token one, you have to be prepared to sacrifice your reputation and maybe much of the rest of your academic career. I could not do that.

#### MINERVA'S OWL FLEES FROM GUNFIRE

In trying to deal with all of this I was able to draw on the thoughts of others who have faced such dilemmas, which are not new. Weber's classic lectures "Science as a Vocation" and "Politics as a Vocation" were written during World War I and published after his unsatisfactory experience as support staff to the German delegation at the Versailles negotiations, which produced what has been called "the peace to end all peace." John Maynard Keynes' brilliant *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* ([1920] 2019) was one of the first major attempts at a social science intervention into policy, arguing very convincingly against the punitive economic provisions of Versailles, and saying prophetically that imposing them would impoverish not only Germany but thereby, all of Europe. The attempt failed, of course. His arguments against what we now call "sanctions" have also been largely forgotten, including by human rights organizations:

The policy of reducing Germany to servitude for a generation, of degrading the lives of millions of human beings, and of depriving a whole nation of happiness should be abhorrent and detestable, — abhorrent and detestable, even if it were possible, even if it enriched ourselves, even if it did not sow the decay of the whole civilized life of Europe. Some preach it in the name of Justice. In the great events of man's history, in the unwinding of the complex fates of nations Justice is not so simple. And if it were, nations are not authorized, by religion or by natural morals, to visit on the children of their enemies the misdoings of parents of rulers. (Keynes [1920] 2019, 173)

We might bear those words in mind the next time we hear for calls for sanctions in the name of enforcing human rights, at least, if not as a means of warfare.

The Call for Papers raises an additional issue, in its references to problems with “cooperation with Russian academics,” and the rhetorical question of “How will we engage in discussions if Russian scholars are unwilling to mention ‘war’ or invoke human rights fearing criminal persecution?” This is a rhetorical question because international law itself gives the answer in its frequent references to “armed conflict” rather than “war,” so that it is easy to conceive of phrasing issues in this way, and I might argue that it would be unethical not to do so with Russian colleagues, rather than putting them into possible danger.

Of course, there is also the question of how to deal with colleagues in Russia whose work has no connection at all to Ukraine, who themselves oppose the war, who are in constant touch with friends and family in Ukraine and would like to leave Russia but are held back by extended family and economic considerations. Experience from the Yugoslav wars indicated that those in Serbia who were most against the war were much more impacted by sanctions and shunning than were the supporters of the regime. But such subtleties tend to get lost in the oppositional rhetorics adopted during conflicts.

But the issue of how academics from nations involved in conflicts can communicate is also not new. Thomas Jefferson, that Virginia slave owner who nevertheless wrote so convincingly about the inherent equality of people and also about the necessity for democratic states to be secular rather than grounded in religion, was also a scientist engaged in vigorous international correspondence. He was criticized in 1808 for remaining in communication with scientists in England and France when the new USA was engaged in hostilities, if not declared war, with both. His response referred to organizations of scientists which “are always in peace, however much their nations may be at war. Like the republic of letters, they form a great fraternity spreading over the whole earth, and their correspondence is never interrupted by any civilized nation” (Jefferson [1809] 1984, 1201). Jefferson’s specific example was to vaccination as “a late and remarkable instance of the liberal diffusion of a blessing newly discovered,” which in view of the political success of anti-vaxxers throughout the world is now ironic. It is also ironic that since the Russian invasion of Ukraine international physics researchers at CERN have stopped publishing works with co-authors who work at Russian institutions (Petraou 2023). It seems that “civilized nations” now do interrupt the correspondence of scientists even when their own nations are not at war with that of the scientists being excluded.

It may thus be that the Call for Papers for this thematic issue reflects a view of science that would be rejected by classic writers on the ethics of scientific communication such as Max Weber, John Maynard Keynes, or Thomas Jefferson. For that matter, Franz Boas was censured by the American Anthropological Association in 1919 for an article that condemned scientists serving as spies because in so doing they

“have not only shaken the belief in the truthfulness of science, but they have also done the greatest possible disservice to scientific inquiry” and “raised a new barrier against the development of international friendly cooperation” (Boas [1919] 2005).

Yet after more than thirty years of engagement in discourses concerning the wars in the former Yugoslavia and conditions in some of its successor republics, I do not see how an academic can offer much of anything of value to the people and institutions responding to crises that is *not* grounded on the scholarly obligations of basing analyses (and thus recommendations) on reliable and accurate data, analysed without consideration of what might be considered the preferred outcome – preferred even by the academic making the analysis, I should add. Otherwise, what do we offer that is not already provided by journalists, who write better than most scholars do? Or international humanitarian workers, who actually have training and experience for these tasks? Or propagandists for one side or another, secure in their faith that if not God, then human rights are so securely on their side that any contrary argument must itself be unethical and immoral? Or those morally driven people who, knowing nothing at all about the region, still know all that is important to know about the crisis, and call for “something, anything” to be done, even militarily, with no thought as to what the effects of that might be. But then, how could we assess the likely effects of actions *without* adhering to the scholarly responsibilities towards accuracy and reliability? And how do we do this without communicating with those who hold other views?

The problem is that as Boas, Jefferson, Keynes, Weber and a host of lesser lights learned, warfare presumes, even necessitates, the division of the world, and thus of intellectual life and of intellectuals themselves, into those who support the different sides, without regard for whether in fact the academics concerned actually do support the actions of their governments. In this situation everyone’s ability to perceive difficult facts, much less analyse them, is impaired, because Minerva’s owl cannot wait for nightfall to fly, but rather flees from the gunfire.

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