

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Perspectives 2, no. 7, 2001

Social Science as Propaganda? International Relations and the Question of Political Bias

Well, it may be the devil,
or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.

—Bob Dylan

I thank the editors of *International Studies Perspectives* who have offered this forum to debate the question of political bias in the profession. Since *ISP*'s focus is partly on teaching, I will begin my discussion with an observation regarding the teaching of international relations: It is one of the most basic rules of social science methodology that researchers must retain a sense of objectivity, to ensure that the demands of science, rather than ideology, guide their analyses. Concomitantly, we must present our empirical findings in a balanced manner, without omitting facts that conflict with our ideological predispositions. This is fundamental and obvious, and it is drilled into our students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

What is surprising is how often these rules are violated in practice. In the United States, now the trend-setter in academic research, the main problem is what I will term political bias. By and large, mainstream scholarship is written from the ideological and normative standpoint of the makers of U.S. foreign policy. Political bias has long been a problem in the social sciences, and it was especially obvious during the early period of the Cold War. Consider these excerpts from a 1949 speech by Conyers Read, then president of the American Historical Association:

We must clearly assume a militant attitude if we are to survive. . . . Discipline is the essential prerequisite of every effective army whether it marches under the Stars and Stripes or under the Hammer and Sickle. . . . Total war, whether it be hot or cold, enlists everyone and calls upon everyone to assume his part. The historian is no freer from this obligation than the physicist. . . . This sounds like the advocacy of one form of social control as against another. In short, it is. (quoted in Chomsky, 1982:71)

This is an extreme statement, but it points to a more general problem. And political bias is not confined to the history profession, which is if anything more independent of U.S. foreign policy than political science or international relations. Nor is the problem of bias confined to the Cold War era; indeed, it has increased considerably since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Author's note: I thank Jacqueline Sharkey, who commented on an earlier draft. I also thank Ronald W. Cox, Valentine M. Moghadam, Laura Neack, and William I. Robinson, who cosigned my original letter of criticism to the editors of *ISQ*, which triggered the controversy and led to the present debate. All the usual caveats apply.

To illustrate the problem of political bias, I will explore the way scholars analyze the phenomenon of covert operations, practiced by the Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence services. Covert operations were clearly a major component of U.S. policy during the Cold War. In the course of these operations, the CIA helped overthrow governments in Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Brazil in 1964, the Congo in 1960, Indonesia in 1965, and Chile in 1973, to name only a few. Elections were influenced through covert CIA manipulation and propaganda in France, Italy, and Japan, among many other countries.¹ The CIA also plotted to assassinate several foreign leaders, including at least one who was democratically elected.² And in the post-Cold War period, covert actions are known to have been undertaken against the Aristide government in Haiti during the early 1990s (see Morley and McGillion, 1997). The United States has continued covert support for political repression on a sizable scale, most recently in Turkey and Indonesia (see Johnson, 2000:ch. 3). The occurrence of these operations is not seriously debated; some of the best documentation on the subject is from hearings by the U.S. Senate (1975a, 1975b) and former intelligence officers (e.g., Marchetti and Marks, 1980; Moynihan et al., 1984). Indeed, in the Iran case, past U.S. interventions have become so well known that Madeleine Albright recently felt compelled to apologize to the Iranians (see Risen, 2000). What is interesting is how completely these facts have been forgotten and buried in mainstream political science. The problem is not that the mainstream seeks to *justify* covert operations; it is that covert operations are rarely mentioned at all.

The question of covert action has been the object of a recent debate, which I will now address. The debate began with an article by Robert Snyder (1999) on U.S. intervention in Third World countries. Snyder analyzes cases of U.S. relations with Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, and Zimbabwe to illustrate a general point: that U.S. interventions have been caused by the practices of specific Third World regimes, rather than by the United States. Snyder argues that the internal dynamics of revolutionary Third World states causes them to undertake provocative actions against the United States, leading to a U.S. backlash against these states. The publication of the article resulted in an extended controversy, which was later published (in several installments) in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and a follow-up story appeared in the November 2000 issue of *Lingua Franca*.³ The Snyder article is a useful illustration of political bias and the selective use of facts to establish an ideological point. In what follows I present only the most glaring examples of this bias. To underscore the problem, I emphasize sources cited by Snyder himself.

Cuba

Snyder (1999:273–276) argues that in the initial phase of the Cuban revolution, January 1959–March 1960, the United States was relatively open to the Castro regime, but that Castro consistently made unreasonable accusations against the U.S., refused U.S. aid, nationalized American property, and moved increasingly close to the Soviet Union. The only potentially provocative action by the United States during this period—U.S. efforts to encourage domestic opposition to

¹ For a reasonably complete listing of covert operations, with an excellent bibliography, see Blum, 1995; for an overview see Moynihan et al., 1984. See also sources in footnote 5.

² This is the plot against the first prime minister of the Congo-Kinshasa, during 1960–61 (see U.S. Senate, 1975a:ch. 3). Though it is now forgotten, there is no question that Lumumba came to power through elections that were regarded by nearly all parties as free and fair.

³ The controversy appeared in Monaghan, 1999. It was followed by a lengthy series of letters to the editor, which appeared in two separate installments (see *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1999a, 1999b). The letters were from Robert S. Snyder, Douglas MacDonald, Mark Falcoff, Larry George, Ronald W. Cox, David N. Gibbs, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. The *Lingua Franca* article was written by C. Mooney (2000).

Castro—is viewed as being counterbalanced by other, more conciliatory U.S. actions. The argument rests on the evidence that Castro undertook provocative and hostile actions before the United States was itself hostile toward the revolution. This conciliatory period continued until February–March 1960, when Castro welcomed Soviet Deputy Prime Minister A. I. Mikoyen to Cuba, and then Castro followed up with a strongly worded criticism of the United States. Only after this did the United States become hostile.

The first problem is that Snyder simply omits some significant acts of provocation by the United States. These acts are noted in many sources, but let us first consider Morris Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution*, which Snyder himself cites. Morley (1987:412) writes, “In early 1959, the CIA set up a front organization in Miami to recruit pilots to fly anti-Castro missions over Cuba.” In addition (Morley, 1987:95, emphasis added): “During the winter of 1959–1960, there was a significant increase in *CIA-supervised bombing and incendiary raids* piloted by exiled Cubans.”⁴ CIA recruitment of pilots was undertaken by the Double-Chek Corporation of Miami, which was established in May 1959 (for background see Bonafede, 1963). Former intelligence officers Victor Marchetti and John Marks (1980:125) note that Double-Chek was an “agency proprietary” and was “used by the agency to provide air support to Cuban exile groups.” Thus, the CIA was actively recruiting pilots to bomb Cuba, beginning in 1959. Surely actions of this type would constitute major acts of provocation, and they occurred precisely during the period when, according to Snyder, *Cuba* and not the United States was acting provocatively. Curiously, the only air activity mentioned by Snyder is an incident that involved the dropping of *leaflets* by a Cuban exile plane operating from Florida; the bombing and incendiary raids are simply omitted from mention.

And there were further U.S. provocations against Cuba: In December 1959 (according to Morley, 1987:97–98), “CIA Director [Allen] Dulles approved an internal agency memorandum recommending that ‘thorough consideration be given to the elimination of Fidel Castro.’ [In January 1960] Dulles acknowledged the importance of timing an assassination.” The State Department demurred at this point from endorsing these assassination plots; nevertheless, Castro’s tendency to assume the worst about American policy clearly had a strong basis in fact. Snyder makes no mention of these CIA-sponsored assassination plots or bombing raids and argues that Castro’s claims of U.S. intervention were baseless and inflammatory. This grossly distorts the historical record.

Snyder acknowledges that, after a long period of hesitation, U.S. policy turned belligerent. As evidence of belligerence, Snyder notes that “Eisenhower authorized the CIA to work with anti-Castro exiles.” No other evidence is presented of military or paramilitary U.S. action against Castro other than this one sentence. This is a bit of an understatement, given that the CIA began to operationalize its assassination plots mentioned previously, and sought to kill Castro. These plots have been exhaustively documented by a U.S. Senate (1975a) investigation, published under the title, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, widely available in research libraries. Surely assassination plots against a head of state deserve mention in this case study. Snyder deals with these assassination plots through the simple expedient of ignoring them.

In the ensuing debate, which followed the Snyder article, the Cuba case study emerged as a point of contention. Mark Falcoff (one of Snyder’s defenders) claims that the assassination plots only began during the Kennedy administration, that is, long after Castro accepted support from the Soviet Union (in

⁴ Even the *New York Times* (1960a, 1960b) coverage of the era reported unidentified planes dropping “incendiary bombs” over Cuba in January 1960. These reports contradict the implication in Snyder’s article that air activity over Cuba during this period entailed only *leaflet* droppings.

Chronicle of Higher Education, 1999a). This is clearly incorrect, and the facts are readily accessible. Let us go to the original source on this subject, the U.S. Senate investigation (1975a:92–93): “On December 11, 1959, J. C. King, head of CIA’s Western Hemisphere Division, wrote a memorandum [which included a recommendation that] ‘thorough consideration be given to the elimination of Fidel Castro. . . . Many informed people believe that the disappearance of Fidel would greatly accelerate the fall of the present Government.’ [CIA Director Allen] Dulles, with [Deputy Director Richard] Bissell’s concurrence, approved the recommendations.” And in January 1960, in “what was apparently the first Special Group discussion of a covert program to overthrow Castro,” assassination was one of several options discussed; Dulles noted that he did not favor “a *quick* elimination of Castro” (emphasis added). While it is true that these assassination plots were not implemented until later, the plotting was itself a significant provocation. And let us consider the counterfactual: If a high-ranking official of Castro’s cabinet had been plotting to assassinate President Eisenhower, surely this would have counted as a serious provocation against the United States. Accordingly, there is no excuse for Snyder’s failure to mention the CIA’s assassination plots against Castro.

Iran

Snyder (1999:276–279) argues that the United States adopted a reasonably benign and passive policy vis-à-vis the Iranian revolution of 1979, only to be provoked into hostility by the Iranian revolutionaries themselves. The United States, it is again argued, took no action that reasonably could account for the intense anti-Americanism that followed. There was no U.S. military or material support for the Shah (“The U.S. had not intervened to support the Shah during the revolution”). The Carter administration provided only “advice” to the crumbling regime of the Shah, and even this advice “provided no clear direction as to how [the Shah] should respond.” Following the revolutionary takeover, according to Snyder, the Carter administration was perfectly ready to accept the new regime. The Iranian revolutionaries *alleged* that the United States was intervening, but Snyder dismisses these allegations. He writes that “one cannot plausibly claim that the Shah’s arrival in the U.S. foreshadowed Washington’s intervention”—as if this was all the evidence of intervention the Iranians had.

The Snyder account of the Iranian case is far from balanced. Consider, for example, James Bill (1988), *The Eagle and the Lion*, cited by Snyder. While Bill acknowledges confusion and inconsistency in U.S. policy during this period, he notes: “It is also clear, however, that the major foreign policy making forces in Washington had determined that the Shah was to be supported at all costs and that his regime could be protected through the application of enough military force. Nothing was going to change their minds” (251). There can be little doubt that American support for the Shah and his military—which was U.S. supplied to a considerable extent—was viewed by many Iranians as a provocation. These facts are omitted by Snyder.

Immediately after the Shah fled the country, there were additional U.S. provocations. According to Bill (1988:286), there was a “CIA plan designed to establish close working relationships with the moderate faction within the Iranian revolutionary establishment.” In addition, the CIA made repeated efforts to “recruit” a top figure in the revolutionary movement, Abol Hassan Bani Sadr. The latter case was especially sensitive, since Bani Sadr was a close advisor to the Ayatollah Khomeini and became the first president of the Islamic Republic. These CIA attempts to meddle in Iranian politics were inept and ultimately counterproductive to American objectives. However, they demonstrate that the United States was *not* simply a passive bystander in the revolution, and that

Snyder's claims to the contrary are erroneous. The interventions in Iran during and immediately after the revolution certainly contributed to the anti-Americanism of the revolutionaries. The Iranians overstated these interventions, but it was an overstatement that held a substantial kernel of truth. Snyder's approach to dealing with these inconvenient facts to is avoid mentioning them.

Nicaragua

Snyder's (1999:279–282) treatment of the Nicaraguan case makes arguments similar to those in the Cuba case—and with similar flaws. He argues that immediately after their seizure of power in 1979, the Sandinista front began provocative anti-American acts. The Carter administration and even to some extent the Reagan administration made efforts to propitiate the revolutionaries, without success; only after a long and sustained period of Sandinista provocation did the United States act in a consistently hostile manner. A critical point in Snyder's argument is that the United States took no actions during the Carter presidency that reasonably might have triggered the antagonistic acts of the Sandinistas. The anti-Americanism of the Sandinistas, he argues, was unprovoked.

Once again, Snyder's account distorts the historical record and omits facts pertaining to U.S. intervention, which commenced shortly after the Sandinistas came to power. Consider Morley's *Washington, Somoza, and the Sandinistas*, a source cited by Snyder. According to Morley (1994:293): "[T]he [Carter] White House authorized a CIA political action program in support of anti-Sandinista political, labor, and media forces." According to the *Los Angeles Times* (Toth and McManus, 1985) covert political support during the Carter period was approximately \$1 million—a considerable sum for a country with only 2.5 million people. A comparable figure for the United States would be approximately \$100 million. Again consider the counterfactual: Surely, if a foreign intelligence service were to spend \$100 million to influence U.S. internal politics, this would be regarded as a major affront to American sovereignty; and there is no reason to believe that the Nicaraguans regarded the CIA intervention any differently. Snyder is correct that the U.S. offered economic aid to the Sandinista government, but this was coupled with a covert program aimed at weakening the Sandinistas. Snyder's account emphasizes the economic aid—but makes no mention of the inconvenient covert funding.

Snyder also neglects to consider evidence submitted to the International Court of Justice, in support of Nicaragua's legal case against the United States, including the following testimony by David MacMichael, who worked for the CIA during 1981–83. This testimony provides important insight into Agency motivations. According to MacMichael, it was anticipated that (CIA-supported) operations by counterrevolutionary forces

would provoke cross border attacks by Nicaraguan forces and thus serve to demonstrate Nicaragua's aggressive nature. . . . *It was hoped that the Nicaraguan government would clamp down on civil liberties within Nicaragua itself, arresting its opposition, demonstrating its allegedly inherent totalitarian nature and thus increase domestic dissent within the country, and further that there would be reaction against United States citizens, particularly against United States diplomatic personnel within Nicaragua and thus serve to demonstrate the hostility of Nicaragua towards the United States.* (quoted in Kornbluh, 1988:138; emphasis added)

The evidence that the CIA *hoped* the Sandinistas would use repression, and sought to provoke this, is especially relevant, given the emphasis on domestic repression in Snyder's overall argument. Surely, the information that Snyder provides regarding Sandinista repression would look very different if one were aware of MacMichael's testimony. Unfortunately, this too is omitted from the case study.

Snyder emphasizes the salience of Nicaraguan support for left-wing rebels in the Salvadoran civil war and this is seen as a highly provocative action against the United States. He neglects to note an important point: The United States was also intervening in the Salvadoran civil war, during the same period, and the Sandinistas surely regarded this as a provocation against their country. Snyder's identification with the objectives of U.S. foreign policy is transparent.

Zimbabwe

This is presented as a "control" case, where a purportedly revolutionary party seized power and implemented a political revolution—yet it remained on relatively cordial terms with the United States. The case study (Snyder, 1999:282–284) focuses on Robert Mugabe and his ZANU party, which fought against the white minority government in the country. ZANU was ultimately successful in its struggle and came to power in 1980. A key point of Snyder's argument is that ZANU initiated radical changes after its rise to power. He states that ZANU "implemented some socialist measures" and he notes ZANU's "increasing radicalism" during the 1980s. Despite this alleged radicalism, the Reagan administration furnished significant foreign aid to the country. Snyder cites this U.S. support for Zimbabwe to sustain a key point in his overall argument: The United States is capable of acting with toleration toward revolutionary regimes, provided they do not excessively provoke American hostility.

There are two problems here. First, there is no concrete evidence that Mugabe undertook any radical or socialistic actions. Snyder *claims* that Mugabe undertook socialist actions, and he cites only an article by Shaw (1986) to sustain his point. On checking Shaw's article, however, one finds that it was misrepresented by Snyder. Shaw's article states that "even a preliminary assessment of the relevant empirical evidence is beyond the scope of this article, which is concerned merely with probing ZANU (PS)'s commitment to one party rule, in light of its Marxist ideology" (394). In other words, the article discusses Mugabe's *theoretical and rhetorical* Marxism, but there is no mention of the "socialist measures" that Snyder attributes to it. Second, Snyder's contention that ZANU implemented socialist or radical measures is contradicted by evidence that he supplies. At one point, Snyder concedes that Mugabe's government "refrained from large scale nationalizations," "sought to keep the bourgeoisie content," and "sought to gain considerable capital from abroad." Snyder's argument that the ZANU regime was radical in practice is self-contradictory. It should also be pointed out that the case study of Zimbabwe is based on sloppy research. It claims, for example, that Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence from Great Britain occurred in 1963; the correct date is 1965. It also claims that Jonas Savimbi's UNITA organization was "Marxist" during the 1980s; this is very misinformed (see Cowell, 1985).

Robert Mugabe has been widely viewed as a figure who used revolutionary, Marxist rhetoric—while he followed orthodox economic policies (see sources in Shaw, 1986:394, n. 2). Indeed, Snyder himself provides ample evidence for this interpretation, as we have seen above. Reagan's cordiality toward the regime seems easy to understand in light of Mugabe's lack of radicalism. Snyder presents Zimbabwe as a "critical case," which demonstrates that the United States is capable of establishing businesslike relations with radical Third World regimes. Once one corrects for Snyder's errors of argumentation, however, what we are left with is the following: The United States established businesslike relations with a regime that was radical in its *rhetoric*, but orthodox in its practices. Snyder claims a great deal for his findings in the Zimbabwe case; on reflection the case proves very little.

Tendentious Reasoning

Overall, these case studies are marred by both subtle and overt ideological biases. The empirical sections systematically omit virtually all facts that present U.S. foreign policy in an unflattering light. In addition, the interpretation of these facts is predicated on the following assumptions: Whenever a Third World state seeks to break out of the American sphere of influence and establish an independent foreign policy, this constitutes a provocation against the United States. The fact that the U.S. used military force and other forms of intervention to establish these spheres of influence in the first place, and that such interventions occurred over a period of decades, is considered nonprovocative. It is understandable that diplomats might adopt such assumptions while defending themselves in their memoirs, but this stance does *not* seem appropriate for an independent scholar writing in a refereed journal. The article also contains ideologically charged language: Castro's accusations of U.S. intervention are referred to as "Castro's *tirades* against the U.S." and "anti-American *diatribes*" (Snyder, 1999:275, 276; emphasis added). Such language is question begging, and assumes that these charges were unjustified. Surely if the reader were informed that the CIA was plotting Castro's assassination during the period under study, and that the assassination plots were documented by congressional investigations, then the "tirades" would appear in a different light.

It is of course true that no scholar can present all the facts, and reasonable scholars will disagree about which facts are relevant and which are not. This does not apply to the Snyder article, however, since it omits facts that are *clearly* relevant to the case studies. These one-sided case studies raise disturbing questions. When one reads an academic article, one assumes that the author has presented a reasonably fair and balanced account and has not stacked the deck. A reader who lacks specialized knowledge of the cases may assume that Snyder's presentation is balanced and accurate, while being unaware that he has omitted a considerable body of information at odds with his thesis. Once one corrects for the misuses of source material and the errors of argumentation, Snyder's conclusion—that the "breakdown in relations between the U.S. and these Third World revolutionary states was caused primarily by the revolutionary states" (Snyder, 1999:286)—falls apart. With the publication of the Snyder article, a scholarly imprimatur is placed on an effort to rewrite history, by omitting unflattering details pertaining to the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, and thus altering the record.

Appeal to Authority

The Snyder article is thus marred by serious errors, which go against some of the most basic standards in social science. In the ensuing debate, which followed the article, additional errors appeared. It is well understood that argument by appeal to authority (argument *ad vericundium*) is a classic fallacy, one we regularly caution our undergraduates to avoid. But this fallacy appears repeatedly in the debate over the Snyder article. In response to my criticisms, *ISQ* editor James M. McCormick (1999) insists that the Snyder article "was recommended for publication by a number of highly respected and accomplished reviewers"—without addressing the substance of my criticisms. In his own defense, Snyder (in *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1999a) writes, "Gibbs is wrong in his claims that the Central Intelligence Agency was plotting to assassinate Castro and was supervising the raids of exiles before March 1960." To sustain his point, he appeals to the authority of "Jorge Dominguez, of Harvard University, and Wayne Smith, of the Johns Hopkins University." These gentlemen "are the leading scholars on U.S.-Cuba relations"—and their views are therefore correct. Douglas J. MacDonald (in

Chronicle of Higher Education, 1999a) defends Snyder and cites “Timothy Lomperis, Robert Kaufman, Aaron Friedberg, Samuel Huntington, Lucian Pye,” to support his views. And MacDonald finds “Snyder’s work to be closer to some recent intellectual trends in the field . . . than anything I have seen Gibbs write.”

This is not just a question of appeal to authority per se, but rather an *unjustified* appeal to authority. There is nothing wrong with citing authorities to buttress one’s argument; the problem here is the omission of easily available primary sources that contradict the authorities. Consider the case of Cuba: The assassination plots against Castro are fully documented by U.S. Senate (1975a) investigations during the 1970s. No one questions the accuracy of the Senate report. Snyder and his defenders deal with this report by the simple expedient of ignoring it and pretending it does not exist. Snyder is correct that many prestigious scholars omit covert operations from their analyses, but this seems a very weak defense of his article.

In essence, the above arguments by Snyder et al. are an exercise in circular reasoning: To validate a mainstream argument, all that is needed is to show that the mainstream agrees with it. The mainstream is by definition correct, since one can always cite prestigious authorities who “validate” it, while critics are automatically incorrect, since the authorities “invalidate” their criticisms. Substantive arguments and primary sources are rendered irrelevant; appeal to authority is what counts. The mainstream thus emerges as a tightly bound tautology that cannot in principle be challenged. The result with regard to U.S. intervention has been a major distortion of the historical record.

Conclusion

It is difficult of course to generalize from a single article. Nevertheless, I believe that the flaws in the Snyder article form part of a larger trend: The mainstream journals overwhelmingly publish on themes that flatter the U.S. foreign policy establishment, while they omit facts that the establishment finds distasteful. Consider the familiar discussion regarding democracies and war: This discussion is very flattering to U.S. foreign policy, and was even mentioned in President Clinton’s speeches (Bass, 1997). American officials must appreciate that the “democratic peace” literature omits some very embarrassing covert actions that the United States launched against other democracies, including support for the overthrows of the Arbenz government in Guatemala or the Allende government in Chile. The bromide that “democracies do not fight other democracies” would break down if covert actions were considered.⁵ The reality—that democracies do not fight other democracies through conventional warfare, but they *do* fight each other through covert action—may be unsettling, but it is true all the same (Forsythe, 1992). The democratic peace literature usually sweeps all this under

⁵ There are nine known cases where democracies undertook militarized covert operations against other democracies: U.S. actions against the government of Indonesia in 1958; U.S. actions against Guatemala in 1953–54; U.S. actions against Nicaragua after 1984; U.S. actions against Chile during 1970–73; U.S. actions against Brazil in 1964; U.S. and Belgian actions against the Congo in 1960–61; and U.S. and British actions against Iran in 1953. On these operations, see the following sources: Forsythe (1992); Gibbs (1991); U.S. Senate (1975b); Risen (2000); Muller (1985); and Moynihan et al. (1984). These covert actions involved either the support for paramilitary forces operating against the governments in question, or measures aimed at fomenting coups d’état.

Note that this figure of nine covert operations does not include cases where covert operations have been strongly suspected, but not yet proven. The latter would include suspected U.S. involvement in coups, undertaken against democratic governments in Ecuador in 1963, Greece in 1967, and Haiti in 1991 (see Blum, 1995:chs. 25, 35, 55).

The practice of official secrecy constitutes a major, if largely unrecognized methodological problem in assessing covert operations (and international relations more generally). In fact, the CIA has released very little documentation pertaining to covert operations, even for events during the 1940s and 1950s. This matter raises the possibility (or in my opinion, the near certainty) of selection bias, through the understatement of covert operations. On the methodological salience of secrecy see Gibbs, 1995, and the secrecy Web site by the Federation of American Scientists: www.fas.org/sgp.

the rug. On the rare occasions that covert operations are mentioned (in Bruce Russett's 1993 book, for example), the analysis is marred by basic errors.⁶

And the problem of political bias is certainly not confined to the issue of covert operations. It is easy to think of other instances of bias, including the popular (and very ideological) rational choice approaches; the omission of large corporations as major actors in shaping the U.S. "national interest"; the role of deception, manipulation, and propaganda, combined with the neglect of these issues by the mainstream; and the complicity of social scientists in helping the U.S. government to develop techniques in psychological warfare. The close connections between the social sciences and the U.S. intelligence services—a matter well documented for the period of the 1950s (see Cumings, 1997; Gendzier, 1998; and Simpson, 1994)—constitutes another aspect of history that has been buried and forgotten by large segments of the profession.

It really should come as no surprise that social science reflects the ideologies of the most powerful nations and social groups. It is after all a truism that the victors write the history (and, it might be added, the social science). Prior to 1945, the "sociology of knowledge" was recognized by such diverse scholars as Karl Marx, E. H. Carr, Charles Beard, and Karl Mannheim. Max Weber (1949:9) noted that the scholar "who speaks for the dominant interests has, of course, better opportunities for ascent due to the influence which these have on the political powers that be." Now, in a very different intellectual climate, challenges to the image of academic independence appear as sacrilege.⁷ Douglas MacDonald (in *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1999a) writes: "to argue that it is easier to get articles published that exonerate American foreign policy . . . than ones that criticize it is simply ludicrous." And he cites "the venerable Robert Keohane," who agrees with him.

But there is no intuitive reason to think that prestigious journals are immune from influence by the dominant societal interests. International relations scholarship reflects the dominant interests—which in our field means U.S. hegemony. And for those who disagree with me, the bottom line is simply this: There has been no extended discussion of covert operations in any article in any mainstream U.S. international relations journal *during the past ten years*.⁸

Can anybody explain this?

⁶ Bruce Russett (1993:121–124) discusses six cases where the CIA helped to overthrow democratic governments through fomenting coups d'état or other violent means, but dismisses these cases, partly because the six countries were not really democracies at the time of overthrow; they all were "anocracies," which are in between full dictatorships and democracies.

However, Russett uses a concept of what does and does not qualify as a democracy that is inconsistent. Two examples: Russett asserts that Guatemala during 1950–54 was an anocracy, not a democracy, mainly because "illiterate men had to vote in public rather than by secret ballot, and illiterate women could not vote at all." This is tendentious: During the same period, in the United States, much of the southern black population was *de facto* disenfranchised, but Russett does not consider the United States an anocracy. Russett also notes that the Allende government in Chile was one of several regimes that were "not fully democratic, according to the criteria that have been applied here for late twentieth century regimes." What evidence does Russett present? The "Allende regime harassed the opposition in minor ways, but the country is widely regarded as a democracy until the Pinochet coup in 1973." This is the only evidence presented to sustain the view that Chile was an anocracy. Apart from being self-contradictory, this claim sets a curious standard for a country to qualify as a democracy, since nearly every government in every country has "harassed the opposition in minor ways."

In a subsequent article on the democratic peace, Mansfield and Snyder (1995:9) uncritically accept Russett's claim that Allende's Chile was an anocracy, not a democracy.

⁷ However, the sociology of knowledge still elicits interest in scholarly circles outside of the United States. Susan Strange (1982) has assessed the international regimes literature, through the prism of the sociology of knowledge.

⁸ I base this conclusion on a survey of the following five international relations journals, from issue number 1 of 1990 to issue number 1 of 2000: *International Organization*, *International Security*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and *World Politics*.

Based on the above, I was able to find very cursory references to covert operations in a small number of articles. The most in-depth discussion of covert operations in any article in these five journals appeared in a *JCR* study by Yoon (1997:586, 588–589, 598–599). This article contains a number of sentences that mention covert operations, although these references are very brief and appear mostly in the footnotes. In *ISQ*, the most extensive discussion

Postscript

The above article notes: "The close connections between the social sciences and the U.S. intelligence services . . . is well documented for the period of the 1950s." As it turns out, this understates the matter. While my article was being reviewed and edited, new information became available, which reveals that distinguished social scientists have continued to work with the CIA, long after the 1950s. The academia-CIA connection is not just a matter of historical interest, but is, in fact, a very current issue. For analysis of recent information see David N. Gibbs, "Academics and Spies: The Silence that Roars," *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday Opinion Section, January 28, 2001. I have designed a Web site with full text links to all publications, which form the background to this debate (www.gened.arizona.edu/dgibbs/debate.htm).

David N. Gibbs
University of Arizona

References

- BASS, G. J. (1997) "The Sword of Democracy." *New York Times*, March 8.
- BILL, J. A. (1988) *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- BLUM, W. (1995) *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.
- BONAFEDE, D. (1963) "Flyers Paid by Latins." *Miami Herald*, March 5.
- CHOMSKY, N. (1982) "Intellectuals and the State." In *Towards a New Cold War*, edited by N. Chomsky. New York: Pantheon.
- Chronicle of Higher Education* (1999a) "International Relations Scholarship" [letters to the editor by Robert S. Snyder, Douglas J. MacDonald, Mark Falcoff, Larry George, and Ronald W. Cox], October 29.
- Chronicle of Higher Education* (1999b) "U.S. Cuban Relations During the Cold War" [letters to the editor by David N. Gibbs and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.], November 19.
- COWELL, A. (1985) "4 Rebel Units Sign Anti-Soviet Pact." *New York Times*, June 6.
- CUMINGS, B. (1997) Boundary Displacement: Area Studies and International Studies During and After the Cold War. *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 29(1). Available at csf.colorado.edu/bcas/sympos/sycuming.htm.
- FORDHAM, B. O. (2000) "Militarized Interstate Disputes and United States Uses of Force." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Los Angeles, March.
- FORSYTHE, D. P. (1992) Democracy, War, and Covert Action. *Journal of Peace Research* 29(4).
- GENDZIER, I. L. (1998) "Play It Again, Sam: The Practice and Apology of Development." In *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War*, edited by C. Simpson. New York: New Press.
- GIBBS, D. N. (1991) *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- GIBBS, D. N. (1995) Secrecy and International Relations. *Journal of Peace Research* 32(2). Reprinted by the Federation of American Scientists, Washington, D.C. (www.fas.org/sgrp/eprint/index.html).
- JOHNSON, C. (2000) *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

of covert operations was in Peceny (1995:373, 396), whose presentation consists of two sentences in the text, one of which states: "Cases of covert military interventions, such as the 1954 intervention in Guatemala, will not be discussed."

For a good survey of the methodological problems that covert actions pose for the militarized interstate disputes dataset, see Fordham, 2000:13-14.

Note that the excellent article by Muller (1985) in *ISQ* is to the best of my knowledge the last time a serious article on covert operations has appeared in a mainstream U.S. journal of international relations. However, outside of the IR subfield, *Political Science Quarterly* has occasionally published detailed studies on covert operations (see Morley and McGillion, 1997). And in the Norwegian-based *Journal of Peace Research*, there have been a small number of articles on this topic (see Forsythe, 1992; and Gibbs, 1995).

- KORNBLUH, P. (1988) "Nicaragua: U.S. Proinsurgency Warfare Against the Sandinistas." In *Low Intensity Warfare*, edited by M. T. Klare and P. Kornbluh. New York: Pantheon.
- MANSFIELD, E. D., AND J. SNYDER (1995) Democratization and the Danger of War. *International Security* 20(1).
- MARCHETTI, V., AND J. D. MARKS (1980) *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*. New York: Dell.
- MCCORMICK, J. M. (1999) Letter to David N. Gibbs et al., July 8.
- MONAGHAN, P. (1999) "Does International-Relations Scholarship Reflect a Bias Toward the U.S.?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 24.
- MOONEY, C. (2000) For Your Eyes Only. *Lingua Franca*, November.
- MORLEY, M. H. (1987) *Imperial State and Revolution: The United States and Cuba, 1952–1986*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- MORLEY, M. H. (1994) *Washington, Somoza, and the Sandinistas: State and Regime in U.S. Policy Toward Nicaragua, 1969–1981*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- MORLEY, M. H., AND C. MCGILLION (1997) "Disobedient" Generals and the Politics of Redemocratization: The Clinton Administration and Haiti. *Political Science Quarterly* 112(3).
- MOYNIHAN, D. P., W. COLBY, R. W. MCGEEHEE, J. STOCKWELL, A. CODEVILLA, G. W. BALL, M. HALPERIN, L. GELB, AND R. S. CLINE (1984) "Should the U.S. Fight Secret Wars?" [panel discussion]. *Harper's*, September.
- MULLER, E. N. (1985) Dependent Economic Development, Aid Dependence on the United States, and Democratic Breakdown in the Third World. *International Studies Quarterly* 29(4).
- New York Times* (1960a) "Attacks upon U.S. by Cubans Cease." Jan. 29.
- New York Times* (1960b) "Cubans Assail U.S. after New Bombing." Jan. 30.
- PECENY, M. (1995) Two Paths to the Promotion of Democracy During U.S. Military Interventions. *International Studies Quarterly* 39(3).
- RISEN, J. (2000) "Secrets of History: The CIA in Iran." *New York Times*, April 16.
- RUSSETT, B. M. (1993) *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- SHAW, W. H. (1986) Towards a One Party State in Zimbabwe: A Study of African Political Thought. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 24(3).
- SIMPSON, C. (1994) *Science of Coercion: Communication Research and Psychological Warfare 1945–1960*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- SNYDER, R. S. (1999) The U.S. and Third World Revolutionary States: Understanding the Breakdown in Relations. *International Studies Quarterly* 43(2).
- STRANGE, S. (1982) Cave! Hic Dragones: A Critique of Regime Analysis. *International Organization* 36(2).
- TOTH, R. C., AND D. MCMANUS (1985) "Contras and CIA: A Plan Gone Awry." *Los Angeles Times*, March 3.
- U.S. SENATE (1975a) *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. SENATE (1975b) *Covert Action in Chile, 1963–1973*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- WEBER, M. (1949) "The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality in Sociology and Economics." In *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, edited by E. A. Shils and H. A. Finch. New York: Free Press.
- YOON, M. Y. (1997) Explaining U.S. Intervention in Third World Internal Wars, 1945–1989. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41(4).

Farewell to "Old Thinking": A Reply to Gibbs

I appreciate the opportunity that the editors of *International Studies Perspectives* have given me to respond to David Gibbs' remarks about bias and IR scholarship and his criticisms of my article titled "The U.S. and Third World Revolutionary States: Understanding the Breakdown in Relations" (1999b).¹ Gibbs makes three general points about bias and IR: (1) that IR scholarship is so marred by bias that its status as a social science is in question; (2) that "mainstream" scholars of U.S. foreign policy are too sympathetic to Washington; and (3) by implication, that an

¹ Gibbs chose the unusual route before his *International Studies Perspectives* piece of protesting my article by going to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Lingua Franca* as opposed to submitting a rebuttal to *ISQ*. Both *Lingua Franca* (Mooney, 2000) and the *Chronicle* (Monaghan, 1999) discuss this.