



**Universidade de Brasília
Instituto de Relações Internacionais**

Frederico Seixas Dias

**A SPECIAL TURN OF MIND
“Realpolitik” and the history of the Germanic
conceptual foundations of the anti-realist global/
American discipline of International Relations**

BRASÍLIA

2023

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American discipline of International Relations**

Doctoral thesis presented to the Graduate Program in International Relations of the Institute of International Relations of the University of Brasília, as part of the requirements to obtain the title of Doctor in International Relations.

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Para o amigo de uma vida, Daniel Nunes Goulart.

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Es gehört eine eigene Geisteswendung dazu, um das gestaltlose Wirkliche in seiner eigensten Art zu fassen und es von Hirngespinnsten zu unterscheiden, die sich denn auch mit einer gewissen Wirklichkeit lebhaft aufdringen.

It takes a special turn of mind to grasp formless reality in its essential nature and to distinguish it from the figments of the imagination which, all the same, thrust themselves urgently on our attention with a certain semblance of reality.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Maxims and Reflections, 1833.

ABSTRACT

Dealing with the pre-history of disciplinary International Relations, the research elucidates the constitutive entanglements between the invention and reception of the concept of “Realpolitik” in the second half of nineteenth-century Germany and the foundational debate on “political realism” in the mid-twentieth century global/American discipline of IR and even the language of the American foreign policy imaginary still in current use. More specifically, the problematization is two-fold, with a historical and a theoretical dimension. Historically, it identifies meanings, situational usages, and performative functions of the central concepts of this debate in IR as they first manifested in what appears to be their cradle: the effervescent German society of the half of the eighteenth hundreds up until the early twentieth century. More specifically, as this *Begriffsgeschichte* (History of concepts) merges with a contextualist intellectual history, the narrative on the concept of “Realpolitik” gets centered around the figure and books of Ludwig von Rochau, a liberal nationalist trying to avoid the depoliticization of his partisans after the failed March Revolution of 1848. It reveals the linguistic-semantic context surrounding the appearance of central meanings and their label-words. The most distorted of them will consolidate as the standard concept and will be carried to the United States in very recognizable forms to the later realist-idealist debate. Meanwhile, the original proposal mostly vanished. From these historical findings, the subsequent work deals with theory-building. It critically explores the conditions of possibility of the realist-idealist debate for playing the dominant self-image of IR and the scientist and the particular kind of scientist and materialist development the realist tradition has experienced in the global/American discipline as residing in the historical path of “Realpolitik” from Teutonic invention through migration and integration, even if a contested one, into the American foreign policy imaginary. From a selection of the most important themes developed in the polysemy, never without contradictions, already opened by the first historical interpretations of the concept, the work systematizes an internally consistent and externally relevant proposal to identify the best descriptions, explanations, and prescriptions in theorizing world politics. In recovering the original concept's impacting but forgotten meaning and spirit, even recurring to the appeal to “the real” embedded in its invented label, this approach is to be called the “*real*” realpolitik.” Before assumptions and hypotheses, it offers parameters for developing adequate theoretical efforts to understand and confront the most urgent political issues of the present, local and global.

Keywords: Realpolitik; political realism; History of Concepts; German political thought; American political thought.

Título em português (para referência): Uma peculiar mudança de mentalidade: “Realpolitik” e a história das fundações conceituais germânicas da disciplina global/Americana anti-realista de Relações Internacionais

RESUMO

Trabalhando com a pré-história disciplinar de Relações Internacionais, a pesquisa explora os emaranhados constitutivos entre a invenção e a recepção do conceito de “Realpolitik” na segunda metade do século XIX na Alemanha e o debate fundador sobre o “realismo político” na disciplina global/americana de RI de meados do século XX, conectando-se com a própria linguagem que define o imaginário de política externa estadunidense ainda hoje. Em termos mais específicos, a problematização apresenta-se em duas dimensões, uma histórica, outra teórica. O desafio histórico é a identificação dos significados, usos situacionais e funções performativas dos conceitos centrais desse debate em RI na forma como eles se manifestaram pela primeira vez naquele que parece ser seu berço: a efervescente sociedade alemã da metade do século XIX até o início do século seguinte. Mais especificamente, na medida em que esta *Begriffsgeschichte* (História dos conceitos) funde-se com uma história intelectual contextualista, a narrativa sobre o conceito de “Realpolitik” concentra-se na figura e nos livros de Ludwig von Rochau, um nacionalista liberal tentando evitar a despolíticação do movimento após a fracassada Revolução de Março de 1848. Revela-se o contexto linguístico-semântico em torno do aparecimento de significados centrais e suas palavras-rótulo. O conceito já significativamente distorcido é levado para os Estados Unidos em formas muito reconhecíveis para o debate realista-idealista de RI de décadas mais tarde, enquanto a proposta original foi praticamente esquecida. O trabalho histórico sobre o conceito de Realpolitik alimenta a dimensão subsequente do objetivo desta pesquisa que é o da construção de teorias. Exploram-se de forma crítica as condições de possibilidade do debate realismo-idealismo como autoimagem dominante das RI e o desenvolvimento cientificista e materialista que a tradição realista experimentou na disciplina global/americana na trajetória histórica da “Realpolitik”, de invenção teutônica à migração e integração, ainda que contestada, do imaginário estadunidense de política externa. De uma seleção dos elementos mais importantes desenvolvidos na polissemia, nunca sem contradições, já aberta pelas primeiras interpretações históricas do conceito é sistematizada uma proposta que se pretende internamente consistente e externamente relevante na identificação das melhores descrições, explicações e prescrições resultantes do esforço de teorização da política mundial. Recuperando o impactante mas esquecido significado e espírito do conceito original, além de engajar no seu recurso provocativo de apelo ao “real” contida no desde seu rótulo inventado, esta abordagem autoproclama-se a “‘real’ realpolitik.” Antes de premissas ou hipóteses, ela oferece parâmetros para o desenvolvimento de arranjos teóricos adequadas ao entendimento e enfrentamento dos mais urgentes temas políticos da atualidade, locais e globais.

Palavras-chave: Realpolitik; realismo político; História dos Conceitos; Pensamento Político Alemão; Pensamento político estadunidense.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States must lead by the power of our example ... Our success will be a beacon to other democracies, whose freedom is intertwined with our own security, prosperity, and way of life.

We must also contend with the reality that the distribution of power across the world is changing, creating new threats. ...

But, despite these steep challenges, the United States' enduring advantages — across all forms and dimensions of our power — enable us to shape the future of international politics to advance our interests and values, and create a freer, safer, and more prosperous world.

*Joe Biden, **Interim National Security Strategic Guidance**, 2021.*

Since the demise of Marxism, political realism has come under increasing attack from many political liberals.

*Robert Gilpin, **No One Loves a Political Realist**, 1996.*

The “realist” school of foreign policy, which Kissinger personifies, has had a terrible press recently, most of it richly deserved.

*Edward Luce, **What the CIA thinks**, 2022.*

The foreign policy of the United States and the discipline of International Relations developed in that country share two very curious discursive traces. First, in general terms, both can be (and often they are) depicted as a continuous debate between more realist and more liberal idealist currents of thought, with an eventual, necessary coexistence forming each of these social activities' identities. On the one hand, most of the great thinkers of IR in the US and many other countries study and teach foreign policy and world politics from some level of attachment to (and not necessarily in plain awareness of) this divisive intellectual line. On the other, the US foreign policy community – primarily political leaders, media pundits, intellectuals, and academicians – has analyzed and criticized the great strategies presented by presidents and their foreign policy practices through their specific mix of realism and idealism. As John Mearsheimer pondered in his classic *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001, p. 14):

Liberalism and realism are the two bodies of theory that hold places of privilege on the theoretical menu of international relations. Most of the great intellectual battles among international relations scholars take place either across the divide between realism and liberalism, or within those paradigms.

Alternatively, consider the former President, the populist Donald Trump, using the same semantic structure – as Joe Biden's extract in the epigraph above also does – to describe his foreign policy (TRUMP, 2017):

This strategy is guided by principled realism. It is realist because it acknowledges the central role of power in international politics, affirms that sovereign states are the best hope for a peaceful world, and clearly defines our national interests. It is principled because it is grounded in the knowledge that advancing American principles spreads peace and prosperity around the globe. We are guided by our values and disciplined by our interests.

Political analysts, media pundits, and journalists working on American foreign policy also share this discursive apparatus to frame their analysis and enter the debate to at least that specialized community's audience. As Joshua Shiffrin and Stephen Wertheim wrote to compare the former administration with the new one: "although his predecessor, Donald Trump, gave voice to similar impulses, it is Biden who offers a more coherent version of pragmatic realism." (SHIFFRINSON; WERTHEIM, 2021). These quotations highlight the prestige enjoyed in identifying one's thoughts or policy with the realist label.

Nonetheless, both fields also share a second discursive trait. Not only is realism central to the thinking and the practice of foreign affairs. People at the same academies, media outlets, and government posts (when not the same people) refer to realism – if contradictorily to all those quotes above – as incompatible with the American national identity, liberal institutions, and values. As realists themselves have accused – or maybe complained –, "realism is unpopular in the United States because it runs counter to the widespread belief in American exceptionalism—the idea that the United States is uniquely moral and always acts for the greater good of humanity." (WALT, 2022). Presidents should not be proud of it. Bureaucrats in foreign policy making should protect the government from it. Academicians and pundits arguing from this stand should be ignored if not ostracized. This is a phenomenon to be later called the "anti-realism" of American international political thought – or at least the assumption of its existence and relevance. In this sense, realism has been called "the school of no hope, the curmudgeon of international relations thought." (POAST, 2022).

Things got even worse with the War in Ukraine, especially for the prominent figure in the contemporary realist camp, John Mearsheimer. Since the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Chicago professor has cumulated accusations for supposedly apologizing for Putin's aggressive resistance against the expansion of liberal democracy in Eastern Europe under the legitimate demand of domestic liberal movements. With Russia's new aggression in 2022, the foreign-policy liberal-internationalist elite in the US has taken their rage against realism to a new, maybe agonizing level. Mearsheimer was their preferred (or the most obvious) target. The Pulitzer-winning journalist and historian of Soviet Russia

Anne Applebaum practically suggested treason on him for feeding Russians – their foreign Minister had directly cited Mearsheimer – with the justification for their (in liberal eyes) unjustifiable war of aggression.¹ A pundit in the liberal online magazine Slate, trying to answer *Where Realpolitik Went Wrong*, also threw the most acid critiques on the realist icon (KAPLAN, 2022):

for all of Mearsheimer’s allegiance to “realism,” it is a decidedly *unrealistic* view of the world. ... In his scheme, it makes no difference whether a country is a democracy or a dictatorship; it doesn’t matter whether Moscow is run by Stalin, Khrushchev, Gorbachev, or Putin, or whether Beijing is run by Mao, Deng, or Xi. Great nations behave like great nations, period.

By then, Mearsheimer had given a now infamous interview in the first week of Russian violation of Ukrainian territorial integrity to the also liberal *New Yorker* magazine (CHOTINER, 2022). The main message he wanted to send was the confirmation of his longstanding engagement in the critique against Western expansionism over the once undisputed old Soviet zones of influence, if not under Moscow’s sovereignty. However, the result was a public disparage in traditional media and social networks against – though he also drew relevant sympathetic attention to – his political thought on power politics. An ironic commentary registered the moment in the famous political blog *The Duck of Minerva*: “It’s been a rough week for John Mearsheimer.” The Chicago professor was experiencing a “barrage of criticism” for arguing that the West held the blame for Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. The blog also made explicit that the fire was not only pointed against Mearsheimer – it involved the whole realist theoretical tradition he belongs to (HENNE, 2022). Even for someone disagreeing with Mearsheimer’s theoretical position, those critiques did sound exaggerated, missing many arguments or even reducing them to a mere straw man.

Anti-realism is a curious phenomenon, even if primarily restricted to a discursive existence. That motto is frequently repeated, even by realists themselves, as Walt’s passage above already indicates. Mearsheimer wrote a trendy quote about that issue today in his classic (2001, p. 22-3):

Whatever merits realism may have as an explanation for real-world politics and as a guide for formulating foreign policy, it is not a popular school of thought in the West. ... Realism is a hard sell. Americans appear to have an especially intense antipathy toward balance-of-power thinking.

¹ Tweet on March 1, 2022. Twitter. Available at: <https://twitter.com/anneapplebaum/status/1498623804200865792?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1498623804200865792%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ftheintercept.com%2F2022%2F03%2F06%2Frussia-john-mearsheimer-propaganda%2F>. Accessed on: April 28, 2022.

This kind of argument does not seem coherent with Biden's and Trump's quotes just above. Nor is it with the consistently available pronouncements of the same kind in all post-Cold War presidents at least. Still, the opposite seems obvious to Mearsheimer: "It should be obvious to intelligent observers that the United States speaks one way and acts another." (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 26) What he meant here was that US presidents pretend to carry idealistic goals, but they have been consistent with realism in their practice. But, as it is clear, they do speak realism. They do not simply dodge it. Barack Obama has been frequently criticized during his government for relativizing exceptionalism – the American brand of idealism – while openly declaring his realist view of international politics and even his love for classic realist writings. In fact, the racist birtherism movement took it, if not as proof of foreign birth, as a demonstration of his lack of commitment to American most cherished ideals. It is difficult not to see the contradiction between them and Mearsheimer's insistence on the theme as part of a mythology about Americans in their foreign affairs. Over the years, as he and other realists repeated the slogan, research on the assumption discarded it was true against a series of different institutes' mass public opinion surveys (DREZNER, 2008; KERTZER; MCGRAW, 2012). Still, it apparently allows realists to call attention to their theoretical approach through a supposed ignorance or distaste of his compatriots. Years later and he is still repeating the motto (probably already given in that it is a feature limited to an elite grouping): "it is still a tough sell, mainly because many in the foreign policy elite are deeply committed to liberal hegemony and will go to enormous lengths to defend it." (MEARSHEIMER, 2018, p. 29).

These similarities are thus well constructed in US twentieth-century history when it cumulated the material resources and designed ideational stands to deepen and widen its engagements in the international political system. The realist-idealist semantic structure that seems pervasive there, was much more than a foundational moment. In fact, a well-established majority "knows" that its academic foundation took place with the charges made by a group of thinkers against the dangerous naivety that reigned in the earlier academic study of world politics founded in the aftermath of World War I, the infamous first great debate between realists and idealists. However, far from remaining an old relic of the 1940s and 1950s, the following debates in the traditional disciplinary (hi)story will reenact the core issues of that realist debate, availing its foundational place in the discipline. Therefore, despite

focusing on other issues, the methodological clash between traditionalists and the proponents of a more rigorous scientific approach exposed the same disenchantment with the liberal scientific hope of progress for humankind to be delivered by knowledge advancement and the introduction of new technology to the political sphere. Then, the discord between transnationalist and state-centric approaches revisited that same ontological basic problematic of how empirically relevant is the concept of state and the national interest in world politics. Next, the inter-paradigmatic debate briefly introduced an alien theme to that semantic structure through its much more conflictual view of economic globalization, which prioritizes the role of economic elites of the global north in sustaining the underdevelopment of the global south.

Opposing realist or idealist critiques could not frame the historical-materialist approach – for that matter, nor even the lenses of traditionalism or scientism. Alleged incommensurability before the empirical contests of the mutual engagement of the renewing versions of realism and liberalism led it back to the margins. Neorealists and Neoliberal institutionalists brought the field back to refining issues of the reality or not of the conditions of power politics in the world, much of which was already implicit in the realist-idealist continuum: the nature of anarchy and state interests; the relativization (or not) of gains from rational actors; the weight of international regimes, institutions, law, and the relevance of moral values in the international order. Moreover, it is present in the more metatheoretical debates between positivism and post-positivism, pushed by the critique against the claimed intellectual poverty of the dominant neorealism. All along, post-positivist demands to reform social scientific inquiry wound up in the rediscovery of the richness of classical realists by the new wave of critical disciplinary history, spread in the field during this new century.

So it is when it comes to the political quarrels in American society regarding their government's international engagement. Those oppositional conceptual poles have long played a forefront role in communicating foreign policy strategy or evaluating it among the foreign policy community, which, in a democracy, obviously means communicating with/for the broader public opinion. The presidential quotations above attest that the latest twentieth-first-century presidents have used this semantic structure. As one goes back in time, the more abundant availability of public debates, essays, and investigations on each administration confirm the need of the powers that be to justify their approaches to international affairs in

terms of a particular stand concerning the realism-idealism duality – from Truman to Bush, Carter to Obama.

Harry Truman rose to power from vice-presidency after the death of Franklyn Roosevelt at the very end of World War II. Still, he was the one to determine the nuclear attacks on Japan and to lead the formation of the United Nations. In order to dissipate a persisting relevant portion of isolationist attitudes at home and ensure containment of any Soviet expansion over Western Europe, Truman anchored the US foreign policy on a narrative of liberalism defense and promotion in the world with its multilateral institutions. It was the time of the greatest classical realists' publications. As the word-concept itself was consolidating in the specialized foreign policy language, Newsweek immediately recognized the idea as the new foreign policy standard in the Truman Doctrine, for it “had clearly put America into power politics to stay.” To American ears, it sounds like embedding liberalism into Old World international politics once and for all. Truman's strategy was not simply a necessary reaction to bipolarity constraints but wise engineering of new international institutions based on his country's liberal political identity. It made a more robust guarantee to the American public that Europeans would not drag their young soldiers' lives into a new war in the Old Continent that had nothing to do with the country's vital interests. Somewhat made consistent with the country's liberal soul, anti-communism was the rhetoric that Truman found helpful in communicating the new strategy at home. Still, he did not evade linking it explicitly with the realist critique in his farewell State of the Union, closing his term in January 1953:

But if the communist rulers understand they cannot win by war, and if we frustrate their attempts to win by subversion, it is not too much to expect their world to change its character, moderate its aims, become more realistic and less implacable, and recede from the cold war they began.

The peculiar presence of realism in the discourses of American foreign policy, urges the critical eye to investigate it in the most diverse array of problematizations. It is about a supposedly exceptional anti-realist national foreign policy culture and a supposedly realist, less American, more universal endeavor. It is not any ordinary coexistence, indeed. It confuses the performative language of the foreign policy of the most powerful country in the international system – which, in relative terms, had concentrated more power than any other political unit in history by the mid-2000s – with the specialized vocabulary of the science of international politics – predominantly claiming for objectivity and universality of the

knowledge to be generated from practical experience. Therefore, to start with, what is the relation between the historical domestic and transnational processes in the constitution of the discursive structures framing the American international political meaningful experience and the conceptual arrangements of the foundational debate of the global/American² IR? How relevant are those similarities in comprehending world politics and its academic discipline today? What possible new ways of thinking world politics may emerge from historical discoveries of hidden crucial concepts and/or meanings today?

This concern is intimately related to two agendas recently emerging amidst IR's post-post-positivist debate hangover. One is the renewed interest in the classic theories of the field, developed before the behavioral revolution in the American social sciences – with an intense contribution from approaches descending from the history of ideas (SCHMIDT, 1994; 2002; 2012a; BELL, 2001; 2009; KEENE, 2005; 2017; ASHWORTH, 2014; For a very recent review on the contributions of this intellectual history turn in IR, see SCHMIDT; GUILHOT, 2019). The other is the post-colonial interdisciplinary research, breaking the silence on underprivileged voices around the non-Western world to identify new alternative universalities to Western hegemonic ones. Post-colonialism proposes looking for them in the affluence of genuinely local social and political thought, which may not always be understood as “theorizing” activities happening in (what the West takes as) traditional spaces of research and education (ACHARYA; BUZAN, 2009 [originally published in 2007]; 2017; TICKNER; WÆVER, 2009; SETH, 2011; INOUE; TICKNER, 2016). Still, a parallel effort in this research agenda must contribute to understanding how parochial the theoretical positions of traditional IR can be despite their epistemological commitment to the objectivity of knowledge and the explanation of regularities across cultures and time. In order to do so, it must elucidate and specify the historical contexts and purposes from which these

² “IR” generally refers to the American mainstream, for its worldwide influence in the study of world politics up to this day, yet surely, not without interacting with other national and local contributions and institutions in different IR academic communities (LOUIS, 2016; MALINIAK et al., 2018). This notion is spread in the discipline for a long time, since Stanley Hoffmann’s definition of IR as an American social science (HOFFMANN, 1977). Ole Wæver outlines this as “the unbalanced relationship between American and non-American IR in terms of patterns of publication, citation, and, especially, theory borrowing. All other national IR communities are running huge balance-of-trade deficits against the United States.” (WÆVER, 1998, p. 689); Steve Smith (2002) links the hegemony of US in world politics to its hegemony in these academic patterns in the discipline, and for that he refers to the “global/American” IR. In accordance with this understanding, the term “global/American IR” is used throughout the text to explicitly emphasize this conceptual meaning. John Jacobsen refers to the “American – virtually synonymous with ‘mainstream’ – international relations.” (JACOBSEN, 2003, p. 40) And Duncan Bell states that, more than IR, the post-World War II United States has been “the centre of gravity for the social sciences.” (BELL, 2009, p. 4).

alleged transhistorical, value-neutral perspectives spawned, which may effectively open a legitimate space for non-Western emancipatory research.

There have been two main narratives regarding the historical overlapping of “realism” in American foreign policy discourse and academic IR. They stand in complementary relation to one another, feeding a historical imprecision that serves to lay a scientific cloak over a parochial origin. One is the mid-twentieth century innovation of the consolidating discipline, led by the intellectual contributions of Edward Carr’s *The Twenty Years Crisis*, published in 1939 (and especially its second edition in 1946) and Hans Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations* in 1948 (but more precisely its second, 1954 edition) smoothly translating to pragmatic foreign policy uses by decision-making figures like George Kennan and his *American Diplomacy* in 1951. Tradition is the other most incident narrative. Fed by this same literature above, tradition holds that the realist language of international political thought and American foreign policy is way older. It is said to descend from Machiavelli, if not Thucydides, in more comprehensive intellectual history terms. As an American instance, it could not reach farther in time. This argument reaches none other than George Washington, among the founding fathers, and his essential lesson on why America should avoid enmeshing in pledges to foreign powers that had nothing to do with America’s vital interests.

Notwithstanding, the presence of “realism” as an international political language cannot be too old, and neither can it be so new. Conceptual evidence indicates that “realism” as a political jargon in English is not older than the very late eighteenth hundreds. Vestiges of political leaders’ public usage of the concept are to be found in the ferocious foreign policy debates of the 1910s, from the disagreements over the possibility of the country’s involvement in the European war to the ratification process of the Treaty of Versailles in the US Senate. In fighting for or against the legal instrument that would establish the League of Nations and commit America, Woodrow Wilson and his great rivals at the time – one of them former President Theodore Roosevelt – had already some need to deal that realism-idealism language as different ingredients of a national consolidating position in foreign affairs, resonating with their contemporaneous discursive community. The US was engaging with their first significant experience in great power conflict – remember, they did not even have a standing mass conscripted army when Wilson sent the declaration of war to Congress in early April 1917. Two years earlier, the President who had promised to keep the US out of the war

raised the demand for the debate on America's international standing as a new active balancing power in the international order: was the League of Nations and US participation in it a correct strategy in dosing elements of realism and idealism for the effective advancement of (American) interests?

Both interconnected narratives may conveniently silence that historical imprecision that could denounce the American roots of this conceptual (re)invention by linking it to less intersubjective contexts. One narrative does it by relating the conceptual origin to the maturing of a scientific engagement in international politics. The other does it by relating the existence of the concept to the very history of international politics. A more consistent history of "realism" as a political lexicon – one which may weaken (or maybe make clearer) the universal pretense of this contextualized perspective – should look for the moment the concept was introduced, clarifying the previous situation in which it was not linguistically or semantically available to contemporaries. The investigation herein suggests it to be somewhere in the second half of nineteenth-century US politics, when a new vocabulary to understand world politics spread from Germany through the large mass of its migrants in America, as well as academic and trade travelers between those countries. It happened at the country's engagement as a great power infancy, much before mid-century émigrés fleeing from the Third *Reich*, one of the most relevant theses recently in production (RÖSCH, 2014). As concept means more than a word, the themes of realism certainly precede the craft of "*Realpolitik*" and its arrival in America – and here is where a tradition going back to Thucydides may make sense. However, the definite semantic innovation of "realism" as a political concept came from the need to emphasize its claim as the objective discourse of the essence of the political – reality as it is – right from its label. And that innovation happened through the coinage of "*Realpolitik*" in German lands in the year 1853.

This dissertation deals with the period known as the pre-history of disciplinary IR. It precisely focuses on foreign policy debates before the consolidation of the field, with its leading training and research centers, specialized journals, and congresses by the midcentury, parting from the first undergraduate major in IR in the US, the School of Foreign Service established by Georgetown University in 1919 (the same year that Woodrow Wilson was honored by naming the first chair in IR at Aberystwyth University in Wales). This context undoubtedly makes the presence of the concept of realism in the debates over American

participation in the War, and later, in the fight for the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, a legitimate part of the discipline's pre-history, indeed. Yet, the investigations roll back in time even more, while crossing the Atlantic to evaluate the origins of the concept of political realism in the invention of the term "*Realpolitik*" and its doctrine in the mid-nineteenth century. Assuming politics is mostly about power relations and recognizing the permanence of conflict in social relations, the concept would migrate to the liberal society of America. It came through the transnational social relations directly established by the extensive local German migrant community, generally translating to the English "political realism." Progressively, it became stereotyped as the violent face of Germanic *Kultur* in the US with the fire of the guns of August in Europe, which turned into hysteria after the United States declared war.

The overall goal of the investigation is to elucidate the constitutive entanglements between the invention and reception of the concept of "*Realpolitik*" in the second half of nineteenth-century Germany and the foundational debate on "political realism" in the mid-twentieth century global/American discipline of IR and even current debates on American foreign policy. In more specific terms, the problematization worked here is two-fold. It pursues two relatively independent paths, one through the history of concepts and intellectual history, and the other through political theory and IR theories. The historical challenge is the identification of meanings, situational usages, and performative functions of the central concepts of this debate in IR as they first manifested in what appears to be their cradle: the effervescent German society of the half of the eighteenth century up until the early twentieth century. In which context did the concepts and their label-words appear? What were the intentions of the authors projecting them? How was it received by contemporaries? How has it progressively incorporated or lost meanings through the years? What performative effects they had for being deployed in the political debates of the time?

From these historical findings, the subsequent work deals with theory-building. It draws a set of the most important themes developed in the polysemy of historical interpretations that may form an internally consistent and externally relevant approach to serve better descriptions, explanations, and prescriptions in the theorization of the present. It reconstructs a historic community of intellectuals, each reflecting on the political bets of their age from their many more or less common or particular endowments and constraints. Current

political theorists and IR theories students may benefit from understanding this personal experience and identifying sharing problematization, solutions, silences, and so on. In the case here, the dissertation asks how that debate makes possible the contemporary, pervasive realism x idealist self-image of IR and American foreign-policy debates. Which meanings available in that German debate are (selectively) forgotten in favor of other equally historically manifest meaningful references when using *Realpolitik* and/or political realism today? How have these emphases, silences, and distortions made possible the peculiar kinds of development the realist tradition has enjoyed in the global/American discipline of IR? The answer to these questions will progressively supply the construction of what is to be called the “‘real’ realpolitik,” a set of assumptions that may further inspire the development of an adequate approach to effectively offer solutions for the most urgent themes of the day.

Even in the now waning debate on the “myth” of the first debate in IR between realists and idealists (KAHLER, 1997; WILSON, 1998; ASHWORTH, 2002; SCHMIDT, 2012a), skinny is the presence of archeological efforts on the political concept of realism before the development of the discipline. In the case of this revisionist disciplinary historiography, their proposed internalist take isolates the more interpersonal and institutional academic dynamics – like the university system organization, the opportunities at and competition for the most prestigious training, teaching, researching, publishing, speaking venues, research grants, and the patterns of representation in terms of theoretical approach, methodologies, issues, nationalities, genders, races, and others – that move the discipline through time (SCHMIDT, 1994, 2002). Nevertheless, in not considering the external social-political context, it is to ignore the intellectual output on the concept of realism taking effect in the absence of a consolidated academic discipline of IR. The dissertation addresses the limited consistency of an internalist approach to such an issue that seems to play a crucial constitutive role in the content and form of studies produced in this discipline.

Although this literature has grown for over three decades (SCHMIDT, 2012a; WILSON, 2012), very little has been said about the apparently obvious connection between those languages. Plus, historians of American political thought, even those specializing in presidents who explicitly made realism/idealism a central part of their vocabulary, seem not interested in how it is linked to such an external (and, in the viewpoint of social sciences, a marginal) academic discourse, so that “ ‘few satisfactory definitions of *Realpolitik* exist...

because scholars of international relations, with a few notable exceptions, have remained largely uninterested in its historical origins.” (BEW, 2016: 5). Still, the stakes are high: it is about the debate that the global/American discipline of IR introduces new generations to the field – even if revisionists identify it as being mythical. Meanwhile, it is about the internal debates of American society on the foundation and maintenance of the discursive basis of its new expected role as a great player in world politics, carrying the myths of its past experiences and its horizon of expectations. The development of a constitutive historical explanation between the dominant discourses in American foreign policy and IR is just the spirit of this work.

The prestigious Institute of International Relations of the University of Brasília sets the institutional context for this dissertation. It inherits from a prime moment of the institute’s history when it allied academics in the History of International Relations and in International and Comparative Politics. The lines that now organize its research programs align them with themes – planetary themes and Anthropocene, global interconnections, asymmetry and conflicts, and government and foreign policy – which clearly should be an intended next institutional step for the consolidation of a historical-theoretical synthesis to the study of international politics. When it comes to the history of ideas of any social compound, that becomes utterly urgent. Professor David Armitage – advisor of this research in its fellowship year at the History Department of Harvard University –, even saluted this institutional history of bringing together the historical and political science perspectives on world politics in a single academic unity. In a memorable graduate course he offered in 2013, proposing to investigate International Relations Theory from the standpoint of the History of Ideas, he taught how the study of international politics was a much more intellectually vast project than what happened to the US, British, or European disciplinary engagements of the post-Great War. In particular, it revealed more of the appropriation of this intellectual effort by political science in the American scene, away from longstanding contributions originating in Philosophy, History, and Law, that marked previous productions. That movement constituted a current situation that he once complained about as the insistent mutual ignorance between intellectual historians and scholars in IR in the study of international political thought (ARMITAGE, 2004). However, his chosen readings for the classes and commentaries indicated an end to this distancing, which he publicly confirmed in another journal piece a

year later (ARMITAGE, 2014). Armitage would find that institutional approach to IR at Brasília interesting, how it historically evolved, and how it could open space to just such kind of interdisciplinary effort he had also envisaged. This work presented herein is one more product of these institutional and personal projects, along with the broader contemporary movement in the study of historical ideas in international politics.

Hence, in trying to define it more precisely, its subject and approach could fall as a matter of the discipline of History. It investigates the foundational history of the contemporary discipline of IR, importing much of its approach from the advancements in the History of Ideas. However, its goal is a theoretical one. Again, it aims at bolstering the critical assessment of knowledge production in this historical IR, particularly that which, explicitly or not, finds support on that conceptual duality. That cannot be a universal standpoint, for it cannot escape being a product of the Western, Teutonic, Anglo-Saxon, and American historical experience. Therefore it is on our reflexive possibilities to understand the constraints we set on ourselves when supporting that conceptual standpoint without a proper theoretical-historical critique. For a considered peripheral national academic setting like ours, it means the opening of intellectual venues to construct discursive frameworks more concerned with local issues, social demands, worldviews, and trajectories. This critical awareness, does not entail disengaging with the commitment to what may be possible of universalist descriptive and explanatory conceptual systems to explain world politics expressing the idea of a genuine global IR. Otherwise, it means being aware of the presence of determinate normative inputs and their consequences on the study and practice of international relations, such as the limits of mainstream theories of the global/American IR to the more autonomous and valuable understanding of issues that challenge societies out of the core of this world system.

This descriptive, explanatory, and prescriptive exercise is interpretive in its two main theoretical-methodological venues: the History of Ideas and the constructivist argument on constitutive explanation. Although it remains seriously concerned with the empirical consistency of the proposed explanations offered, the rules of causal inference, positivist social science (KING; KEOHANE; VERBA, 1994) cannot properly assess the kind of investigation conducted. There is no empirical demonstration of a causal mechanism between independent political, external variables and consequential results of later academic, internal

discourses. The goal, in explanatory terms, is constitutive, as posited by Alexander Wendt (1998). It is an argumentative effort to locate contemporary IR foundations in the discursive environment of the German political debates on the international system, but before, on national unification and liberal progress. Conceptual possibilities for that clash were constituted much before and much farther from the occurrence of the “first great debate” in IR between realists and idealists decades later. It strives to demonstrate through arguments in recent literature and documents of the time that the second part of the eighteenth century in Germany was the moment and the place that the language of political “realism” entered the public argumentation as a conceptual innovation adopted to criticize the conduct of politics in general but in a second moment international relations and foreign policy in particular.

In terms of intellectual traditions present in the contemporary academic debates of what is more broadly called the History of Ideas, the proposed approach dialogues contributions of the contextualist history of political thought, known as the Cambridge School, starring figures as Quentin Skinner and John Pocock with the contributions of *Begriffsgeschichte*, or the history of political and social concepts lead by the German professor Reinhart Koselleck. This dialogue has been going on in the academic debates for some five decades (JASMIN and FERES, 2006). The leading Cantabrigian Skinner led the dialogue with the German contributions and made them much more complimentary with time (SKINNER, 1969; RICHTER, 1987; SKINNER et al. 2001; KOSELLECK, 2004). The lessons of this dialogue urge the contextual reading of historical political texts, understanding political language not merely as a referential of the facts of reality but, first and foremost, constitutive of it. It is not to be confused with ontological idealism – i.e., the primacy and sufficiency of explanations based on ideational causes and their material effects. On the contrary, it is an explanation that may only exist in co-constitution with investigations advanced from social and political history. While it is concerned more with resources, production, violence, and behavior in general – the more evident traces of historical happenings – intellectual and conceptual history reveal the meanings of each of them in terms of the encounter between the past experiences and the horizons for the future. Moreover, the concept of “*Realpolitik*” was all about dealing with or even creating possibilities, which is absolutely the prime time of actual politics.

More than simply referential, concepts carry the eminent temporal sense of political

action. They tell us not only about past experiences but also about the horizon of expectations that should guide us into the future, constituting political power while describing these political relations. They carry, for example, the indication of what kind of actions – including thought, speaking, and writing – constitute the possibilities for human intervention in social reality. Recent research in IR has introduced this kind of approach bearing much from those dialogues in the History of Ideas in consistency with the now mainstream language of social constructivism. An influent intellectual peer in this same research agenda, Stefano Guzzini (2005) proposed a genealogy of “power” as it is used today in IR, indicating its origins in the context of the post-March revolutionary moment in the German Confederation, when the conceptual (re)invention of politics as the “art of the possible” took place. *Realpolitik* was this new discourse. Guzzini shows how the reference to “power” as the determinant of the dynamics of a particular political question is performed as a constitutive act implying that the unfolding process of that particular issue could end up differently than what the actual interactions effectively came to be. Proceeding from the conceptual problem to the intellectual one, Guzzini has later explored how Morgenthau developed this concept of power to alert the public of his new country against the dangers of ignoring it in the name of liberal principles (which he also admired) and a-critically taken as the indisputable foundations of American society, which for him was a political move in itself (GUZZINI, 2018). Constructivism, generally defined, can be consistently seen as the logical host for developing intellectual and conceptual history in IR.

Therefore, from the indications offered by introducers and developers of these approaches, this interpretative exercise employs research strategies focused on both primary and secondary sources of information to enhance its empirical consistency appeal. A history of ideas must avoid two most common mistakes: presentism (knowing the past in function of the present needs) and antiquarianism (understanding the past for its own sake). In this sense, before accessing the primary sources that reveal the specific object of inquiry, secondary sources such as handbooks, textbooks, and the specific contributions on the issue by the recent literature on the disciplinary history and the first great debate of IR with its most representative intellectual figures are to establish the precise analytic parameters for our present understanding of that narrative of the nature of realism as a theory of international

politics. The same goes for the significance of this opposition between realism and idealism in US foreign policy. Its academic references indicate how close they are to the very realist debates in IR when categorizing the performance of different presidents, strategies, and policies. Again, they serve as the parameter the historical concept must reckon with so that proper historical knowledge gets drawn. That is when it comes to primary sources intended to open the possibilities of understanding the appearance of the language of realism in mid-to-late nineteenth century Germany and its evolution till it was incorporated by the American political discourse in the early twentieth century. The different editions of dictionaries of the English language during the period point to the precise timing of conceptual innovation in the language of politics represented by the reception of “realism” as an analytical concept appropriate to the issue. Works responsible for this reception are reviewed and organized in a historical narrative. It also reviews the previous origin of this language in the mid-nineteenth century German liberal insurgencies and unification process, and the distortions aggregated to it still in that context, that set many of the interpretation possibilities of that concept in its arrival in Anglophone environments. It works with the writings, public speeches, correspondence, personal journals, and other direct expressions of figures involved in this process.

Five chapters organize the text ahead. The starting one lays the theoretical and methodological questions developed in the field of the History of international political thought that help to define the research design and the explanatory approach of the present investigation. First, it discusses how IR went through an ideational turn marked by the post-positivist incursions in the discipline – from Critical Theorists to feminists and poststructuralists –, and which, as a result, took (a thin form of) Constructivism to the mainstream of its theoretical debates. Still, it shows that only a thick form of Constructivism, much closer to poststructuralist insights is able to make a full turn in this ideational issues of social research. This stand opens fruitful channels to incorporate the contributions from the History of international political thought, a field originally dominated by historians themselves, but which has increasingly seen IR scholars making fundamental contributions with the support of these interdisciplinary dialogues. In this sense, different contributions from the Cambridge School and the *Begriffsgeschichte* project, and their engagement with Foucauldian problematizations and Barthes’s mythological approach enable an investigative-

analytical framework to sustain the consistency in dealing with the context of ideas in which actors engage, thus being relevant not merely to the ideas they produce but to any satisfactory understanding of socio-political historical events.

The second chapter deals with the study of American foreign policy, identifying the main arguments on its constitutive foundations and the main disagreements over their expressions in historical practice through the typologies created to deal with such variations. As such, two main concepts seem to both define the mainstream thought and the marginal critical instances against it in the American foreign policy elite community and among its academic specialists. First, there is the theme of exceptionalism. Then there is the liberal “absolutist” character of the United States. Both themes have gone through discredit and caricaturization, accused to be mere ex-post justifications ready to be used in every situation the country seems to contradict such expectations. However, those terms really deliver most of the consensus in the study of both political science, political theory, and foreign policy in that country, while, furthermore, media and the community square candidates and presidents to publicly commit themselves to those American foundational values, scorning those who defy any relativization of them. Therefore, the chapter proceeds from the investigation of those narratives about the US in the world to the disagreements that were allowed inside this bigger pact. Through evidence from textbooks and handbooks, as well as seminal arguments on the topic, it presents the available typologies defining different administrations over time, from the -isms related to some political value, like that of isolationists, anti-imperialists, internationalists, exemplarists, and missionaries, hawks, and doves, and Wilsonians, and Jacksonians, and Jeffersonians and so on. All supposedly share a major consensus about America’s exceptionality in the world, differing in a particular interpretation of its application to the historical challenges of their times.

Following this discussion, the third chapter places the conceptual opposition between realism and idealism as another set of typologies defining the country’s traditions in American foreign policy. The connection with the global/American IR debates seems evident, as the same time it gets a particular content and shape in this realm. Realism, once dominant in the major field, is generally treated as the always insufficient explanation here, serving as the justification of a whole new, sister, subfield to political science, to be called Foreign Policy Analysis, with a clear behavioral tone. Still, the field has to deal with the insistence of

not only academicians, media pundits, and even the presidents, but the large population as well which seems more sympathetic to realism than the elite of American foreign policy decision-making bureaucracy wished it to be. Thus, the last theme in this section is the assumption of anti-realism in American foreign policy, an argument, as seen above, repeated throughout the spectrum of the foreign-policy industry in the country. Despite all the evidence available to the contrary, it keeps being repeated in a mythological process that feeds the terms of the debate – “realists” and “idealists” – with meanings and functions in the social interactions they are engaged in by referring to concepts linked with spaces of experiences and horizons of expectations about civilization, politics, science, and America itself.

Chapter four ushers the proper analysis of the reception/early development of the concept of realism in the United States political discourse by identifying the ideational context in which the use of the concept of “realism” in the political game appeared in the US. It promotes a lexical history of the evolution of the entry “realism” and related terms in American English references. The most referenced dictionaries of the language at a time are essential primary sources for the context under investigation. Thence, the chapter follows the various dictionary franchises that competed in that incrementally competitive market, from the efforts by Noah Webster in the early eighteenth century and his untiring American rivals’ alternatives, trying to transcend the pioneering work of the British Samuel Johnson in the half of the previous century with specific Americanisms of the English language. It also follows the standard reference to the English language, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, with its meticulous job overall, particularly registering usage differences in the US, Britain, and other main regional variations of the language, besides offering the best in etymological studies on their origins. Together with the puzzle of aggregating the different editions of these warring American dictionaries, the solid reference of the *OED* makes possible the investigation of the transformations of meanings from the usage of words through time, from its first published fascicles starting in 1884 till the consolidation of the complete 1933 first edition, not sparing a check its most recent editions – the second in 1989 and the current online version, mainly the basis of its long-expected third edition. The chapter still offers work on big data for word frequency analysis – through *Google’s N-gram Viewer* –, exploring at this massive level the diachronic history of the concepts of realism, realpolitik, and other interconnected terms,

revealing many of the contextual discursive specificities such as their appearance, their relative relevance, and their increasing use or decay. This forms a contextual linguistic structure from where an investigation of the usages of those terms in any period – meaning, intentions, silences – may show more interpretative intersubjective coherence.

The fifth, final chapter deals with the origins of Realpolitik and, for that matter, “*politischen realismus*” in the book of the German liberal progressive publicist August Ludwig von Rochau and the debates it triggered, eventually distorting it to much far than its original intentions to the point of leaving the original meaning to oblivion. Following that etymological knowledge, the pre-disciplinary conceptual and intellectual history follows the appearance of the concept and the meanings it incorporated of left behind and the individuals, their agency in dealing with their concepts in different levels of linguistic awareness and with a variety of personal and group interests. Reconstructing the genealogy of the concept before it was even invented as a label-word, it traces the initiatives in using a generic sense of “realism” in different areas of social activity, peaking together with the publication of Rochau’s *Grundsätze der Realpolitik*. Then, it follows the reception of the concept till the turn of the twentieth century with all the distortions it cumulated – in more general terms, its association with Machiavellianism and reason of the state doctrines, and even Bismarck –, some of them cleaned up, by the time American usages of the concept became available. The primary sources of this mostly nascent academic debates feed the interpretation and serve to analyze the agreements and discords present in the recent cumulating (re)rediscovery of Rochau’s *Realpolitik* in the last decade. The interpretations and interventions of the historical agents have both opened and closed up conceptual development routes on which the realist theory tradition in International Relations as a more specific part of the broader cultural process that consolidated the view of a Liberal America – but before it, anti-realpolitik – by the half of the twentieth century. The chapter’s analytical efforts demonstrate the presence of most if not all distinct meanings registered in the English lexical history and particularly developed as a specialized language in IR and American foreign policy.

And the current second-source literature, both in their consensual points and those more polemic dissensions, help with the secondary problem of this dissertation. A conclusive section faces the challenge of finding, in a somewhat original form from the rest of the proposals of the recent literature, to systematize the assumptions that may lead to the

development of that proper “*real*” *realpolitik*” that may confront the urgent complexities of the day. It develops this framework in the spirit of the original *Realpolitik* in Rochau, as a political strategy to advance the common good provisions humanity ultimately demand.

This research serves the academy, if not its author at all, in cleaning up some of the mess in the intellectual debates as they are taught to new (and old) generations of academics to develop new capacities of critical thinking about the possibilities of human intervention to engage with the most significant political challenges of our turbulent times. The more original lessons of *Realpolitik* were not against liberalism but advice for its best development. They were not “reason of state” theory. It arose in a context of empowerment of the middle classes, their democratization demands, and the consequent rise of public opinion dynamics in politics. Especially in foreign affairs, it was also about recognizing the power dynamics between states and the legitimacy of a plural world system. It reminds us of the domestic pressing realities of public opinion and the risk of extremist nationalism, mistaking parochial values as the ultimate universal ones. With time it ended up conceding more to *raison d’État* power politics as the fundamentals of these political realities and to a positivist science as a form to comprehend it than its original conceptual historical invention would allow. Therefore, it adds to the pieces of advice to which most realists like Morgenthau contributed, to the dangers of depoliticization fed by liberal overconfidence in the rational-institutional suppression of conflict in politics, the most recent of them, the failing certainty about a liberal end of history. It urges dealing not only with overstretching but tackling the increasingly indecent inequalities in wealth distribution between and inside the countries. The rise of illiberalism in the once most consolidated democracies of the West calls for the urgency of the fight for public opinion against the populism of authoritarian leaders. This theme was already urgent for this concept of politics in healthy liberal democracies.

Chapter I - Approaching the foundational ideas of International Relations: the dialogue between intellectual history, conceptual history, mythology

Complete objectivity about America is a characteristic only of God and Alexis de Tocqueville.

Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 1997.

The study of ideas in the IR mainstream – their content, form, constitution, and impact – has experienced a particularly turbulent life. Realists dismissed post-World War I moral debates and utopian projects through power politics concerns. With the merge of the materialist drive of power analysis with the methodological positivist-behaviorist boost from the 1950s on, idealism found itself estranged as an outer issue of political philosophy. It was only by the 1990s that investigations of ideas beyond instrumental, residual, or epiphenomenal understandings spread again throughout the discipline, conforming to a truly “ideational renaissance” in IR at the millennium turn (BERMAN, 2001, p. 247). Since then, ideational factors – broadly defined here for preliminary needs to include meaning, ideologies, consciousness, mental representations, images, beliefs, thoughts, memories, opinions, perceptions, preferences, ethical and moral prescriptions and judgments, norms, culture, notions, conceptions, and knowledge itself, subjectively or intersubjectively held by humans acting on and being integrated by them in the reality we live in – ceased to be investigated only as a secondary issue to the essential material dynamics of power politics, usually bounded to a role as an intervening variable between causes and resulting phenomena. Many have turned their intellectual efforts to what is now claimed to be a central question addressed for its causal effects but, further, for its constitutive and permanent status in the unfolding history of world politics.

One avenue of research that has strived along these more comprehensive developments now remembered as IR’s “ideational turn” is the one dedicating itself to the ideas that have constituted this social practice. Scholars sharing that interest came to group themselves into overlapping labels such as intellectual history, the history of ideas, the history of international political thought, international political theory, and disciplinary history. It was an obvious interdisciplinary effort that has drank much from History but also from sociology and political theory in the search of contexts, institutions, persons – and ideas – that made

possible the ideas about world politics and foreign policies currently held from within particular social settings. The history of international political ideas – the widest and, for that, lesser precise term to gather those different labels – is the object of this chapter. It is its major goal to reach a proper framework of analysis to consistently guide the investigation of the presence, form, and substance of the concept of realism in the American political discourse and in its historical origins, the conceptualization of realism in politics in the context around the mid-nineteenth century Germany.

To that end, four sections are laid ahead. First, it recounts the return of both ideational factors and history to the core concerns of the study of world politics. It registers the process of a scientific revolt in the core of the field, the American national academic setting. It led to almost half a century of marginalization of ideas as explanatory factors and the dehistoricization of the theoretical efforts in the discipline. Despite the ideational turn, it claims that a thick constructivist understanding of ideas is still maturing, while instrumental-rationalist approaches still dominate the mainstream. The second segment presents the contributions from the history of ideas to this study on the breeding of IR's concept of "realism." The works of the Cambridge contextualist School of Quentin Skinner and John Pocock, and to a lesser degree, the German tradition on the history of concepts led by Reinhart Koselleck, became more familiar in IR through the last decades. Their dialogue has indicated promising venues for this kind of inquiry to be presented here. The third theme of the chapter deals with the dialogues engaged between intellectual historians of those affiliations and post-structuralists of Foucauldian influence. Its results open space to incorporate the concept of "myths" and "mythology as a methodological approach to language in action, as developed by Roland Barthes. These understandings, consistent with a thick constructivist take on social reality and social inquiry are linked to the proposed constitutive explanatory mode to be distinguished from the (not usually adequate) causal treatment of the more relevant presence of ideational factors in social reality. The chapter closes with concluding remarks on these theoretical-methodological debates encompassing the end of the rift between IR scholars and intellectual historians in the efforts to produce a proper history of international political thought.

Ideational factors and the study of world politics: from ideals to the scientific marginalization of ideas, and its (re)turn

In IR, the now clear consolidation of a subfield investigating the history of the discipline has consequentially made any trial at briefly recounting the history of the discipline a much tougher job. Disciplinary history has in fact become one of the most prodigious results of that movement now remembered as the “ideational turn” in the academic studies of world politics. Its efforts added relevant outputs revising early accounts of IR’s intellectual and institutional development and criticizing their hidden political functions in and outside the academic space. Thus, the presentation of the academic historical process that brought the commitment with a thicker conception of the role of ideas in social relations back to the discipline should definitely rise lots of reservations threatening any comfortable rhythm to this narrative.

The traditional tale is one of marginalization, rift and (re)turn. While the early post-World War II dominance of the realist theory kept the direct study of ideas aside from the serious investigation, the bet was doubled by the behaviorist revolt of the 1950s, leading to the empiricist-positivist delimitation of teaching and inquiry in the maturing discipline of IR (KAPLAN, 1966). Positivism – that epistemological/methodological standard resulting from varying mixings between naturalism, objectivism, the search for regularities, and empiricism (SMITH, 1996) – became more and more evident as a trait of the discipline by the 1980s, when cumulating demands for the acknowledgment of the intersubjective (if not subjective) nature of both the social world and the academic-scientific knowledge of it tried to break in that fortification. The “ideational turn” was the most noisy expression of that post-positivist debate that crawled into the discipline (LAPID, 1989; VASQUEZ, 1995; SMITH, 1996). By the end of the century and millennium, the constructivist approach – with its sociological take on international politics (WENDT, 1992; ADLER, 1997; RUGGIE, 1998a) – had made its way into the mainstream (WALT, 1998; KATZENSTEIN, KEOHANE, KRASNER, 1999; SNYDER, 2004). However, beyond constructivists’ merit, the message communicated by this new IR status could well be interpreted as a cooptation strategy in trying to preserve the academic identity and relevance of the professional field.

To be fair, the impact of ideational factors in international relations has persistently informed investigations in the discipline, even in its most materialist and quantitative frenzy days (DUNNE, 1995; YEE, 1996; BLYTH, 1997; BERMAN, 2001).³ Even during the early steps of the formalization of this distinct academic unit, the study of ideas attracted the attention of the most influential names, idealists or not, who were not merely engaging in ideological or moralist critique, utopian imagination, or shallow instrumental analysis of ideas as propaganda, coherently to what more recent intellectual history on canons of the discipline has emphasized.⁴ Maybe Carr and Morgenthau were not cautious enough with their disciplinary textbook contributions to avoid later disciples' and critics' interpretations of their realist contributions as materialist, amoral (or even immoral), mechanistic depictions of humans as power-drive calculators. But certainly, the methodological debate of the 1960s took care of that. Despite Hedley Bull's plead to all remain "resolutely deaf" to the appeals to follow the scientific approach (BULL, 1966: 377), it is undeniable that the behavioral revolution effectively pushed the discipline away from the perceived imprecision and unpredictability added to scientific studies from the reckoning of ideational factors beyond instrumentality, and agency beyond behavior. Positivism became the epistemological/methodological orthodoxy in the IR mainstream, almost explicitly emulating a science of economics to attain its respective social, policy-making prestige (WAEVER, 1998). It is never late here to remember that, as Bull himself could note, the orthodox status of scientism was already a peculiarity of the US in those days, and later contributions would only confirm that neat methodological preference (or belief), a claim many would confirm along the years (HOFFMANN, 1977; ALKER e BIERSTEKER, 1984; WAEVER, 1998).

Neorealism has been the most alarming consequential symptom following those three trends that have marginalized the study of ideational factors in the mainstream of IR: the dominance of realism, the exigencies of positivism, and the parochialism of its perspective.

³ "Ideational factors" is herein used as the broader conceptual definition that is to encapsulate its various, more peculiar manifestations such as meaning, ideologies, consciousness, mental representations, images, beliefs, thoughts, memories, opinions, perceptions, preferences, ethical and moral prescriptions and judgments, norms, culture, notions, conceptions, and knowledge itself, subjectively or intersubjectively held by humans acting on and being integrated by them in the reality we live in.

⁴ Examples of these are Michael Williams (2004) on Morgenthau, Tobjorn Knutsen (2009) on Norman Angell, Peter Wilson (2009) on Carr, and, much earlier pioneering on this kind of inquiry, Robert Cox's rescuing Antonio Gramsci as a Marxist approach privileging the co-constitution of ideational and material structures world orders (1983).

However, it was with this pretentious theoretical progression from classical realism to its structural rendition, providing a system-deduced behavioral hypothesis (WALTZ, 1979) and the most dedicated efforts (though not equally successful) to generate empirical support with rational choice, game-theory modeling inquiries of the interstate interactions under different structural power constraints (JERVIS, 1988), that the downgrading of ideas in the understanding of international politics reached its peak. Although Waltz kept emphasizing his isolation of the structural distribution of material capabilities – “guns and butter” (GILPIN, 1983, p. 19) – could not be taken as truth, for the theoretical exercise is not about accurately describing behavior, but usefully explaining it. Still, his proposed abstraction from “tradition,” “ideological commitments states may have,” as well as “the cultural (...) interactions of states” (WALTZ, 1979, p. 80-2) together with all other individual-level features – as defined by him –, inescapably diminished the role of ideas in international politics in analytical efforts of current issues – his or from other neorealists. The materialist state of the discipline, avoiding a thicker role of ideas in world politics, could not be helped by their mainstream rivals, neoliberal institutionalists, despite their best intentions. Robert Keohane, the main proponent of the alternative, would not disagree: “I do not investigate the effects of ideas and ideals on state behavior” as he put it (KEOHANE, 1984, p. 6). Not surprisingly, it came to be understood as “modified structuralism” (KRASNER, 1982). The issue to neoliberals is how institutions alter the structural incentives to rational actors by intervening in their behavior, leaving formation processes of identities, ideals, or conceptions of interests and preferences out of the model, that is, as previously given factors, exogenous to the explanatory scheme offered. Once the preferences and perceptions are formed, states behave like individual utility maximizers. Though Keohane also remembered this abstraction from the whole existence of ideas in social life is no more than the methodological protocol of rational-choice analysis, and therefore, analysts should beware of taking “premises for reality and seek to apply our conclusion in a simple-minded way to the world that we observe.” (KEOHANE, 1984, p. 70). Critics to this mainstream IR saw it as an insufficient excuse for an unavoidable consequence of positivist analysis.

The post-positivist moment in IR may be seen as (one more delayed) movement that took place in varying Social Sciences with the leadership of so many influential authors by the end of the 1960s, such as Foucault, Derrida, Bourdieu, pushing and being pushed by the

social activism of May 1968 in Europe and the Civil Rights campaign in the US. In IR, plenty of post-positivist criticism was available by the 1980s. But it was with the unexpected, unanticipated, surprising end of the Cold War to its mainstream theories (GADDIS, 1992; LEBOW, 1994) that definitely opened the space to that ideational turn (BLYTH, 2003). Constructivists first seized the day, by pointing to the exogenous treatment of identities, out of systemic interactions between states as a definitive impediment to a full understanding of the end of the Cold War as it actually unfolded as a bilateral strategical break of old enmity identities (WENDT, 1992), or of multilateralism as more than the neoliberal conception of institutions as information providers, but a truly constitutive process of new identities (RUGGIE, 1998c). Many scholars rapidly followed, turning their investigations to themes neglected by rationalists, with a pivotal interest in the role of ideational factors such as Gorbachev's "new thinking" in the closing of that era (LEBOW, 1994; WOHLFORTH, 1994; LEFFLER, 1999; TANNENWALD and WOHLFORTH, 2005).

In the first moment, while the mounting post-positivist controversy increasingly got attention, neorealists and neoliberals were too busy with their own debate. Then, as they refined the issues that really divided them they found themselves stuck in their "relative versus absolute gains" dispute, finding much more convergence as positivist, rationalist theories of international politics in which "states behave like egoistic values maximizers" and "moral considerations are hardly mentioned." (BALDWIN, 1993, p. 9) Those more aligned with the new critical moment in the discipline saw it as no surprise, for neo-realism effectively set the terms of the debate (SMITH, 1995), defining it as the neo-neo synthesis (WÆVER, 1996), both sharing the neo-utilitarian logic long reigning in the discipline of IR. (RUGGIE, 1998). And it was precisely from this logic that rationalists offered their answer to the ideational challenge that made post-positivists more evident. Keohane joined Judith Goldstein to develop an explanatory framework for the role of ideas in foreign policy, detailing rather vaguely their opening conceptual definition of ideas, followed by a more specific typology of three kinds of ideas, and the possible mechanisms through which they may affect political outcomes (GOLDSTEIN and KEOHANE, 1993). *Ideas and foreign policy*, their collective effort including colleagues' articles on specific issues dealing with particular aspects of the framework, has undoubtedly impacted the ideational debate. However, it never stood as more than a promise in expanding the weight of ideas in

explanation, locked in methodological individualism and objectivism, incapable of appreciating the intersubjective nature of the phenomenon (ADLER, 1997; LAFFEY and WELDES, 1997), vanishing the specific social context in which ideas effectively mean something or enable certain situations (YEE, 1996), or reducing the study of the impact of ideas in politics to the study of the effects of the institutions that embody those ideas (BLYTH, 1997).

The rationalist treatment of ideas in Goldstein and Keohane's framework could not complete the ideational turn (GOFAS and HAY, 2008, p. 15). It promoted the study of ideas into IR mainstream, but only when certain political outcomes appeared as anomalies to the prevailing instrumental material rationality model (BLYTH, 1997, p. 240). Notwithstanding, Andreas Gofas and Colin Hay made a very precise observation on the overall contribution of that model: "Whilst the current 'ideational turn' is invariably presented in terms of the challenge it poses (or is seen to pose) to a prevailing materialist orthodoxy, it is important to acknowledge that by far the most influential attempt to 'take ideas seriously' has come from within that orthodoxy." (GOFAS and HAY, 2008, p.7) And that included the ambitious work of the constructivism pioneer Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999). Wendt called his proposal an idealist-holist one. Idealist (ideas *-ist*, rather than ideal *-ist*, as he explains) for the consideration "that the deep structure of society is constituted by ideas rather than material forces." (WENDT, 1999, p. 25) However, he refused to take the notion of ideas all the way down and demanded a "rump materialism," for though international politics is not about a neo-realist "distribution of material capabilities," but much more, about a "distribution of knowledge" (WENDT, 1999, p. 20), he conceded that certain material realities could even have independent causal powers, like human nature, and geographical conditions. Wendt even famously registered there "I am a 'positivist'" (WENDT, 1999, p.39), which attracted lots of complaints in the post-positivist camp but also opened the way to his Social Theory into the IR mainstream. Later, he would have to confess the exaggeration of that point, leading him to restate it: "Social Theory is positivist only in the ... 'small-p' sense." (WENDT, 2006, p. 214).

Therefore, though by then "a more sweeping 'ideational turn'" in the study of IR had been declared (FINNEMORE and SIKKINK, 1998, p. 888) this permitted incursion of ideational factors seemed much more like the academic elite coopting a more "conventional

constructivism.” (HOPF, 1998) After all, as a critic noted, “it seems all the more extraordinary that a highly idealist version gained entry” the core of the discipline (JACOBSEN, 2003, p. 44). Wendt’s work has obviously great credit for expanding IR, challenging its mainstream in their own methodological ground while rescuing the radical exploration of ideas from postmodernists (CHECKEL, 1998, p. 325) Wendt, as a matter of fact, was criticized for not engaging with the most serious issues in the study of ideational factors as he apparently desired – “a closet postmodernist who fears the implications of his own questioning.” (DOTY, 2000, p. 139). By focusing on *ideas*, Wendt would take for granted a subjective understanding of ideational factors in politics that hide their effective intersubjective nature as *discourses*, not reducible to agents and their idiosyncratic intentions, interests, desires, language, etc, in their relative individual autonomy (DOTY, 2000, p. 137). The dichotomized subject-object treatment of the relation between ideas and matter feeds a convenient mainstream misunderstanding of postmodernism which effectively contains a more progressive, emancipatory knowledge of world politics. Hence, despite the constructivist co-optation and the anxiety for the end of the turn, much more was left to be done.

Contrary to the critiques pointed against the rationalist amending, those directed at the non-rationalist try-outs have not exposed them as dead-end routes (BLYTH, 2003, p. 695). In fact, many critiques have been pointed to constructivism when what was really meant to be attacked was Wendt’s position. The more hermeneutic, critical version of constructivism is still available. John Ruggie once promise that “social constructivists have sought to understand the full array of systematic roles that ideas play in world politics, rather than specifying a priori roles based on theoretical presuppositions and then testing for those specified roles, as neo-utilitarians do.” (RUGGIE, 1998a, p. 18) In order to realize this full ideational turn one must really break with a positivist epistemology if the ideational qualities of social reality are to be fully problematized. As Ruggie reminded, Max Weber taught him this, as the German sociologist (RUGGIE, 1998a, p. 32) explored actual processes whereby individual meanings become social forces, as a result of which he felt the need to depart from several positivist precepts, in particular the influence of its naturalistic monism on concept formation, the study of meaning, and the character of causal explanation.

Surely, that does not mean positivist approaches have not produced consistent contributions. Still, they seem to be limited to the study of behaviors and interactions under “structural stability” – extensions of time and space where the most basic ideational foundations of sociality are taken as given, not pressured by doubt, skepticism, revisionism, innovation, or other transforming processes. While the transfigurations in the conceptions of the world, society, self, and other are continuous, their pace is very slow most of the time, allowing the artificiality of the positivist analytical move of constructing explanatory models which take certain social properties as given. Under such conditions, this artificiality can be imposed as if it was a natural condition by the positivist discourse, acting against the impetus of emancipation toward fairer social order (COX, 1992, p. 132-6). Therefore, even the efforts of those sympathetic to the ontological precepts of constructivism but bended towards the positivist epistemology seem to stuck the discipline against a more responsible treatment of the ideational features of world politics. Critical constructivists – those less compromised with satisfying the mainstream’s positivist demands (BLYTH, 1997; LAFFEY and WELDES, 1997; JACOBSEN, 2003; GOFAS and HAY, 2008; MARSH, 2009) – have stressed very important issues for the investigation of ideas, generally advising against the usual subject-object-like dichotomizations that are set to unbalance the relation in the favor of the positivist dominance of the discipline as soon as they are externalized: ideas-matter (or ideas-interests), agency-structure, understanding-explaining, constitution-causation, and so on. Thus the very obsession for resisting some particular epistemological claim with the goal of reaching a more consistent intelligibility of the ideational constitution of social reality may have more conservative implications in its feedback to social dynamics than meets the eye. It is from this more critical constructivist stand that the research herein finds its historical-analytical perspective.

In a much more methodologically pluralist IR moment (KRATOCHWIL, 2003), critical constructivism holds the promise to complete the ideational turn, without losing rigor and relevance. For constructivists “of the ‘thick’ variety, [for which] there is no a priori reason to privilege material factors. If material variables are fundamentally constituted by ideational processes, then ideas are the place to begin.” (TANNENWALD, 2005, p. 23). Nina Tannenwald advanced a theoretical agenda to scrutinize the various relevant aspects of ideational factors in international politics, much beyond Goldstein and Keohane’s restricted

framework of ideas (1993) as world views (too vague, too ignored), principled beliefs or causal beliefs (too instrumental), restricting the role of ideational factors as ideologies, arguments, and even justifications. Tannenwald demanded much more: ideas shaping material factors by defining the desires of actors, and hence, the material ways to get them, ideas giving meaning to material realities, ideas constituting identities of self and others, and ideas as cause-effect indicators that must be taken in decision-making. They cause through mechanisms such as socialization, learning, and persuasion. Ideas can also serve instrumentally as legitimizing “hooks”, justifications for interests. But most constructivists have tried to escape the individualist ontology inscribed in the concept of “ideas,” which is not helped by an intercalating agent and structure in analysis, leading only to analytical dualism when consuming Anthony Giddens’s notion of duality of structure (JACOBSEN, 2003; Also check GIDDENS, 1984; WENDT, 1987; RUGGIE, 1998). As an effective assessment of agents and structures co-constitutive interrelations must focus on the concept of process, critical constructivists have also looked for similar solutions to the idea-matter/ideas-interests dichotomization. In this sense, John Kurt Jacobsen (2003) advised against to the risks of downgrading ideas as a psychological factor, of the individual mind, and of inscribing ideational factors in structures that are out of individual control. He insists on both qualities: ideas as shared (intersubjective) beliefs (a property of individual subjects).

However, as Mark Laffey and Jutta Weldes had already argued, the conception of ideas as beliefs (treated as if they were physical objects not only “held” by individuals, but also to be observed and measured), or even shared beliefs (which is not more than a collection of individual beliefs), is not enough for that deeper social conception. They relate this vitiated notion of beliefs as an example of the conceptualization of “ideas as commodity,” a Marxist metaphor (LAFFEY and WELDES, 1997, pp. 205-9). As commodities, ideas are exogenous to the interests of individuals, and become no more than the object of their fetishism and only contribute to their alienation. Thus, their role can only be thought of as an instrumental one, limiting the understanding of its constitutive quality. This metaphor is very convenient to a positivist research design, but to transcend it, they propose the more appropriated metaphor of ideas as “capital” or as “symbolic technologies” (LAFFEY and WELDES, 1997, p. 209-14). In their words, ideas must be thought as (LAFFEY and WELDES, 1997, p. 209):

intersubjective systems of representations and representation-producing practices...that have developed in specific spatiotemporal and cultural circumstances and that make possible the articulation and circulation of more or less coherent sets of meanings about a particular subject matter.

Hence, “ideas as capital” effectively emphasize the processes of interactions among people, constituted by those ideas, in contrast to individualism, where the agent is taken as a “chooser”, when, structurally, the individual is “depicter.” (Laffey and Weldes 1997, p. 216). What these alternative contributions have in common, characterizing the critical constructivist project, is that ideas cannot be defined as mental phenomena alone, but we can certainly talk about prominent individuals who make innovative interpretations and developments of ideas – not simply illustrations of the present ideational structures –, while also certainly, not as isolated mental processes, but as being individuals in social relations, constituted by and constituting these relations and structural possibilities of this temporal-spatial contingent sociality. Again, it ends up in the need to focus processes, the central aspect of a constructivist take of the world: under permanent confirmation and contestation by the resulting interactions of more or less consciously and intended agents affected and affecting intersubjective structures of meaning.

This brief trial at recounting the development of the study of ideas was less intended towards a precise neutral, empirical narrative, but a kind of presentist effort to present constructivism – especially its critical version – in the academic debates of IR engaging with proposing conceptions and logics for the proper study of ideas in world politics. The constructivist incursion into the IR mainstream, even if in its conventional version, has inspired scholars and opened them space to undertake more innovative and rigorous investigations on a particular set of ideas: those comprising the very academic study of world politics. Together, with this history of international ideas, a history of international political thought, fixing on those depictees/inventors of those ideas. The consolidation of the subfield that is more pertinent to the present research, the history of international political ideas, however may be much more an effect of the interdisciplinary contributions that were fortunately incorporated in this post-positivist, constructivist, ideational turn in International Relations.

Leaving the Ghetto: History of Ideas to the disciplinary history of IR

Methodologically, the approach of this research is mostly based on the “outer” contributions coming from the field of intellectual history to build the narrative of the

construction of IR conceptual bedrock. It claims that important elements of those are to be found in the debates of foreign policy that took place in the United States during the World War, the involvement of the US, and the process of ratification (and in the end, refusal) of the Treaty of Versailles. In a narrower definition, the effort is more appropriately called as a conceptual history, an appropriate choice due to the focus of the research on the definition, development, and use of the concepts of “realism” and “idealism” in that political environment. Though it focus not only on the discursive structure, but on the expression of their co-constitutive existence with agents, emphasizing the role of particular individuals in this process of creation, reception, and transformation of ideas. Therefore, it has aspects of an intellectual history, besides a history of concepts. In History, the title “History of Ideas” could catch all these different approaches to the main issue.

That kind of investigation on the history of ideas that have inhabited the academic network of IR has mostly been housed under the labels – usually interchangeably – of disciplinary history and intellectual international history, a subfield the pioneer effort lead by Brian Schmidt, Torbjørn Knutsen and others in the 1990s (SCHMIDT, 1994; 2002; KNUTSEN, 1997), and really consolidated by the end of the next decade, not without serious challenges to be faced (KEENE, 2017; BAIN, NARDIN, 2017). They have now accumulated an impressive volume of research on the ideas and thinkers that are referenced to most of the current academic work in the discipline – maybe not explicitly, probably not precisely – with its own collections and handbooks available. This process once started as an identity complex, as a need to recount the history of the discipline in a coherent way in order to gain wide recognition of its supposedly manifest autonomy among other social sciences. Still, at the turn of the millennium, it was perceived as doing more damage than helping the discipline. When Barry Buzan and Richard Little (2001), famously lamented the failing state of IR – very little relevant to the broader academic community of social sciences, and to the elite of decision-makers in their societies, justifying the pervasive insecurity about its academic autonomy –, they were witnessing the growth of the subfield of disciplinary history that they felt in need to do more to overcome the traditional historiography oriented towards the confirmation of myths about a consistent academic institutional coherence in time and space. Consistently, contrary to another scholar who claimed, already by the 1990s, that “international relations theory is no longer confined to its own, self-imposed, ghetto”

(BROWN, 1994, p. 213), Buzan and Little pointed that, a narcissist disciplinary history had only lead the discipline to more isolation, reinforcing “*the ghetto-like character of the discipline*” (BUZAN and LITTLE, 2001, p. 19). Still, more than criticizing the intrinsic goals of the subfield, they advised its form and results should be improved by the interdisciplinary theoretical-methodological dialogue to consolidate it. But that was already underway, through a diversity of approaches. Schmidt had registered concomitantly to the Brits’ critique, incursions through the historical sociological approach (GUZZINI, 2004), the sociology of science (WÆVER, 1998), and the Foucauldian genealogy (SMITH, 1995), beyond his preferred “critical internal discursive history”. In his words (SCHMIDT, 2002, p. 17):

There is room for all these approaches and more, but the important point is that disciplinary history can be a vehicle for fostering critical insights and opening additional space in which to think about the central dilemmas that continue to confront the study of international politics. These insights, however, depend on dispelling the misconceptions that have plagued past work on the history of IR.

Most of all other interdisciplinary exchange possibilities, though, one that was essential to the salvation of IR academic project was that with History, with which IR had been experiencing not their “potential for synergy”, but “turf wars” (BUZAN and LITTLE, 2001, p. 20), incorporating a diminishing notion of “history as a laboratory” since behaviorists once thrived in the discipline (KAPLAN, 1966). In fact, the subfield of the History of Ideas has become one of the most fecund sources for these dialogues all along the process of consolidation of the disciplinary history subfield of IR (HOLDEN, 2002).

The advancements promoted by that Historical specialty have themselves been constituted by interdisciplinary contributions descending from Saussurian Linguistics and Post-modern literal criticism. The first has fed Historians with cartesian guarantees to the relation between signifiers and signified, but made it from a presentist stance. The second opened the way to engage with a structural polyphony of meanings, always unstable and contradictory, however, it risked pushing the historical inquiry into an intertextual dead end of signifiers over signifiers. Among its variants, the conceivably most influential tradition engaging in the reconstruction of intellectual history after that post-modernist impact has been the group of scholars usually referred to as the Cambridge School.⁵ Led by the British Historians Quentin Skinner and John Pocock, this group proposed the caution of locating any particular historical text in its proper context – that is, beyond the material conditions of its

⁵ For the referencio Collingwood, this approach is also occasionally called Collingwoodian in homage to the earlier pioneer, R. G. Collingwood (JASMIN; FERES, 2006).

social setting, but the very ideational structures constraining and enabling certain meanings and intentions to certain situations and agents.

Skinner based his work on a critique of contributions to the history of ideas that used to arbitrarily or inadvertently attribute present meanings to events of the past. Contexts, for him, were formed by the social problems and linguistic particularities as meanings and usage contained in a determinate community of contemporaries. Besides, loaded with John Searle's speech act theory, Skinner implied that the meaning of any specific text could only be consistently comprehended when taking into consideration the intentions of the author – the speaker or the writer – in reaching certain goals under that context (JASMIN and FERES, 2006). For this goal, the reconstruction of the mental world in which the author lived in had to be pursued: the linguistic principles, symbolic conventions, and ideological assumptions (SKINNER, 1975). As Skinner held, "The point or force of the text (who and how the author was trying to convince), which is absolutely central to its meaning and to the way the arguments unfold, can be discerned only by placing the text in its convention-governed linguistic context." (SKINNER et al, 2002, p. 4) In more precise terms, for context Skinner is not referring to social and political events, processes, but the illocutionary possibilities within an environment of linguistic conventions. For that very confusion, the term contextualism sometimes is substituted for more precision, such as "intentionalism" (BEVIR, 2011) or "conventionalism" (HOLDEN, 2002).

The other great name of this approach, John G. Pocock, insisted on differentiating the duties of Political Philosophy and those of the Historian of Political Thought. The first deals with the speculation of logical continuities among authors in different contexts, looking for the essence of political ideas, while the second, with the identification or refutation of such continuities by concrete textual evidence. Both are legitimate endeavors. Still, they require distinct methods (JASMIN and FERES, 2006). Pocock's concern with the structural aspects of that ideational context, in the sense "that language gives authors their very intentions." (BEVIR, 2011, p. 16), led him to a wider timespan emphasis on "linguistic paradigms." Skinner's search for intentions was more coherent with targeting "linguistic conventions" that were available to authors. In Pocock's own words, the goal of the historian was to avoid "restating the thought of ancients and predecessors in the language of one's own day, in order to see what they have to say, when so stated, as to its concerns," which is legitimate to the

philosopher or the theorist (POCOCK, 1989, p. 8). The historian has no excuses but to reconstruct the past, including in its language, values and intentions. For him, “faulty division of labor – the chief cause of methodological debate – was clearly to blame for this sad confusion” (POCOCK, 1989, p. 8). Thence, despite their differences, then, he and Skinner maintained a modernist methodology to interpret historical texts in their proper contexts, while skeptical about the quest for global coherence of an author's thoughts, not only in individual texts but through his/her career. Furthermore, they refused the critics’ claim of a “hermeneutic circle” where the languages that allow for a limited set of meaning possibilities urge an interpretation effort before the interpretation of particular texts, trapping us in an eternal textual reference where there is no place to start. For both, however, the linguistic context is the point of departure (BEVIR, 2011).

From a more sympathetic take on post-modernism, David Harlan’s review of the contributions made from that Cambridge remembers the group’s critique on the intertextuality of the literary theory advised avoidance “as a matter of intellectual hygiene.” (HARLAN, 1989, p. 583) Though Harlan acknowledges Pocock tried to recalibrate the project towards discourses, trying to capture that structural understanding of the autonomy of ideas, his Gadamerian critique on the work of contextualists did not save Pocock’s rendition. The Cantabrigians hoped that the identification of the moving function, context, and application of particular time-located societies’ conceptual languages would consequently serve as the gate to the possible meanings available to an author at the moment his text was written, for he could not conceive and write something he did not have the means to do. However, Harlan took Skinner’s authorial hermeneutic aspiration as romantic, as it pursued objective access to rescue historical semantics that cannot be independent of the present significance and meanings of those texts. And Pocock’s work, for Harlan, transformed contextualism into something much closer to poststructuralism than Cambridge historians would like to accept. Pocock himself tried to mark a distinction between the history of political thought and the history of discourse, defending the history of thought as a liberal enterprise that was to preserve the subject’s creativeness in facing a polyvalent language system, and his ability to move inside this polyvalence in the name of his intentions in writing a text. But, in the end, this position cannot sustain the distinction between text and context, for the *context* is just another text to be interpreted. Harlan condemns the efforts of

Cantabrigians as a search for the ultimate meaning in layers of other superposed meanings cumulated over time that are to be progressively stripped off, but that, for Harlan, only amounted as “an endless chain of signifiers in which meaning is always deferred and finally absent.” (Harlan, 1989, p. 582). Skinner and Pocock did not help much with the means to deal with these problems nor the directions to follow.

Accordingly, Harlan proposed to intellectual historians some reorientations: first, to avoid any ultimate differentiation between fundamental texts and unimportant ones in the way Cantabrigians were looking for canons. It is not that selections are not made. But they must be done through more precise, less problematic differentiations, such as the level of elaboration of the language usage, the complexity of its purposes, the meaning dimensions included, and other paths already practiced by post-structuralists. Presentist selection of great thinkers and ideas, chronological organization of them in evolutionary teleologies, with their particular significance, their relation to other social symbols and purposes, are most usually backcast inventions are concrete difficulties of the contextualist approach. Thus, Accordingly, Harlan proposed to intellectual historians some reorientations: first, to avoid any ultimate differentiation between fundamental texts and unimportant ones in the way Cantabrigians were looking for canons. It is not that selections are not made. But they must be done through more precise, less problematic differentiations, such as the level of elaboration of the language usage, the complexity of its purposes, the meaning dimensions included, and other paths already practiced by post-structuralists. Presentist selection of great thinkers and ideas, chronological organization of them in evolutionary teleologies, with their particular significance, their relation to other social symbols and purposes, are most usually backcast inventions, but one that is constitutive of contemporary historians. Surely, there must be efforts to engage with their presence in the process of doing historical investigations. Still, what Harlan demanded was that contextualists quitted demeaning other historians for any presentism, and “acknowledged the value – if not the necessity – of letting the present interrogate the past” and then, as a result, “another sort of intellectual history could be written, a history concerned not with dead authors but with living books” (HARLAN, 1989, p. 608-9).

Contextualists have reacted back against Harlan’s post-structuralist-aligned critique based on the instability of language as a reference, reaffirming the historical commitment (as

they see) of re-creating discursive contexts and accusing the lack of empirical rigor and the relativism it lets in the historian's practice. Joyce Appleby remembers that Gadamer himself was not a one-sided, post-structuralist kind. The intertwining of the distinct historical traditions of both the historian and the historical agent is the goal of the historian, Appleby rejoins. But she also contends that it makes no logical sense to argue that we can only trace the tradition of interpretation grown around a text but not the tradition in which it was written. "If we can talk about traditions", Appleby asks, "why can't we talk about the norms and conventions that give stability to language?" (APPLEBY, 1989, p. 1329) Therefore, she understands Harlan's criticism as being "over-dichotomized (like) an all-or-nothing approach to issues of proof." (APPLEBY, 1989, p. 1330). Structure, then, is not all that must be addressed. Words do not stand above all human agency. The form human agents deal with the possibilities offered within a structural context in order to realize some of their interests is essential to understand the meanings of their historical utterances. Still, Harlan's argument may help to preserve the impetus of the research on the history of ideas set by Skinner and Pocock by redefining its goals in less positivist ways. The target of the history of ideas should not be the reconstruction of an objectively precise historical context, but the study of historical texts, especially those mostly explored, in new, not previously known contextual dimensions that may offer valuable answers to relevant questions in the present.

The Cantabrigian approach to the history of ideas has matured as a consequence of these intercourses with more critical linguistic approaches to the study of politics. Most disciples of the school have recognized the critiques directed against strict methodological confidence in univocal interpretations. As Mark Bevir notes, Skinner himself has admitted later that he "used to think far more in terms of correct interpretations and to suppose that there is usually a fact of the matter to be discovered," and that he changed his mind to the understanding that "the process of interpretation is a never-ending one" (quote in BEVIR, 2011, p. 19). Bevir has proposed a holistic approach to meaning in order to correct the original approach of Skinner and Pocock. In his view, studying the linguistic context is just as important as studying the social and economic context and the author's biography. But also, not engaged to a single, superior interpretation, there is no reason why not to deal with a text in terms, not of its "original" context, but in terms of our own present challenges "and even problems that have persisted more or less perennially throughout history" (BEVIR, 2011, p.

22), for they are also part of the meaning a text in the past carries with it. That is essential to make the effort to contextualize theoretical enterprises of the past works as a crucial way to understand the political and intellectual forces constraining and motivating them, while making current theorists more aware of their own constraints and motivations in composing their inputs today. In fact, Skinner has, with time, moved his conception away from the positivist and intentionalist conceptions of his early work, moving him closer not simply to Pocock more structural definitions of language, but to the hermeneutic tradition of Hans-Georg Gadamer, exactly from whom Harlan had criticized Skinner (HOLDEN, 2002, p. 264).

This development in his position, due to the influence of the Gadamerian hermeneutic concerns, in fact, exposed the unfolding dialogue between the Cambridge School and the *begriffsgeschichte*, the German tradition History of Social and Political Concepts led by Reinhart Koselleck, “its most brilliant theorist and practitioner.” (RICHTER, 1987, p. 251). Though as old as the Anglo-Saxon approaches, it was not so popular outside of German-speaking contexts until the last three decades. Melvin Richter, the American political scientist, is probably the most important scholar to break with this isolation, asserting that the German approach had “much to contribute to our current concerns with the implications of language and discourses for the writing of intellectual history and the history of ideas.” (Richter 1987, p. 248) (RICHTER, 1987). Convinced of the sophistication of *begriffsgeschichte* to improve the works in intellectual history in the British and American contexts, he helped to organize in 1992, a symposium in Washington, DC, in the occasion of the release of one of the most important works of that German tradition: the seventh and last volume of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, the herculean collective historical-lexical work on German social and political concepts (JASMIN; FERES, 2006).

Beyond being influenced by hermeneutics, *begriffsgeschichte* was developed out of older German traditions, such as philology, the history of philosophy, legal history, and historiography. The resulting distinctive approach moved towards a clearer link between social and conceptual history, the transformations in structural conditions, and the language of politics, especially focusing on periods of crisis, conflict, and revolution (RICHTER, 1987). The goal of the *GG* encyclopedia was the “verification” of the “hypothesis” – the heuristic assumption, as Koselleck preferred – that the basic concepts of social and political language went through a deep transformation in the period between around 1750 and 1850,

which he called the *Sattelzeit*, not merely as references to the new political, social and economic structures, but also constitutive of them. During this period, concepts became more often attached to different philosophies of history, incorporated into distinct ideologies (when before they tended to be specific and particularistic in their references). They were democratized, out of the elites' control in the content and manners of reading, delivering, and directing. And they were politicized, becoming concepts themselves arenas and weapons among competing movements, groups, and classes (RICHTER, 1987, pp. 252-3). A decade after the first meeting between the future editors of the dictionary, Otto Brunner, Werner Conze e Koselleck in Bielefeld, 1963, the publication of its first volume in 1972 would confirm that transmutation of the socio-political lexicon during the *Sattelzeit*. Concepts like “democracy”, “republic,” “revolution,” and “history” undergone definite changes, while others like “class” or “socialism” came to the front of public life, and others just lost their relevance, such as “aristocracy” and “state” (in the sense of a particular social grouping and their status, such as the “Third State” in Revolutionary France) (KOSELLECK, 2011). Comprehending and conceiving became simultaneous demands to experiencing political reality through concepts (KOSELLECK, 2011, p. 9). From then, concepts came to input in the present and experience of the past and an expectation of the future.

As a matter of fact, the focus on political and social language makes the investigation of ideologies central to this approach. “Almost a quarter of the concepts treated in the GG and Handbook are ‘isms’ of the sort Lovejoy declared out of bounds to the historian of ideas.” (RICHTER, 1987, p. 261) This is because Arthur Lovejoy – founder of the early American approach to the history of ideas, which the Cantabrigians also opposed – thought they did not form unit ideas, but ideas complexes, full of contradictions between different unit-ideas that had to be unveiled, fallacies to be discredited. Begriffsgeschichte, otherwise, welcomes this contradictions of concepts as a necessary condition for their political value. That is exactly what makes it possible for concepts to work as power tools in the political game that is to be understood through their investigation. In this vein, Richter has summarized the qualities to be looked for when studying concepts: they are basic (they do serve a community to refer to a particular class of events and process) and at the same time their meaning is always contested (that is what enable them as political weapons); they have a long history, with always unstable and moving boundaries in relation to other concepts; they

often have political consequences much beyond the intentions of those who introduced it at first; they are used not only by elite leaders, such as major scholars and politicians, but also by less evident agents dealing with politics in the arena of ideas, not only from within the government and other formal political institutions, such as pamphleteers, journalists, and other publicists and propagandists (RICHTER, 2005, p. 220).

In *begriffsgeschichte*, concepts are the unit of analysis, not individual words, nor individual thinkers, nor books, nor wider notions of intellectual units as ideas, traditions, or paradigms. As in a contextualist approach, the concern lies in the linguistic use of words and the actual practices registered by them. In this sense, both schools work against the treatment of ideas as constants throughout history. And though *begriffsgeschichte* has inherited from Gadamer this hermeneutic concern with the intersubjective understanding of language usage, it does not fall with the later most radical arguments against the validity of epistemological foundations. The understanding of present, past, and future embraced a Heideggerian notion of the hermeneutic circle (TRIBE, 2004) as the manifestation of that democratization of political debates. Koselleck was himself a pupil of Gadamer. While both of them were close to each other in understanding conceptual history as a converging zone of past, and future and present conceptions, they divert in relation to the possibilities of theories and methods to reveal the points of contact and separation between what Koselleck came to call the “spaces of experiences” and the “horizons of expectations” (JASMIN; FERES. 2006). The relation between words and things, spirit and life, conscience and existence, language and world are co-constituted. Koselleck treats these dualities as relating to another one: the relation between the history of concepts and social history (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 76):

Without common concepts there is no society (...). Conversely, our concepts are founded in sociopolitical systems (...). A ‘society’ and its ‘concepts’ exist in a relation of tension which is also characteristic of its academic historical disciplines.

Therefore, in all those dualities, the poles are never reducible to each other. The same challenge IR scholars described in the last section had deal with the need to avoid methodological individualism, even a dual one, when analyzing the relation of material reality and ideational factors, interests, and ideas, or agents and structure. Accordingly, the political relevance of concepts would not be the same if they were only forms of representing experienced realities. More than that, concepts have to be understood as the very conditions of the possibility of such experiences.

Concepts reveal the polemics of the competing views trying to steer the present, both by bringing different understandings of the past as well as projecting alternative plans for the future. For Koselleck it is specifically in this chronological multiplicity of the semantic aspects of concepts that lies the weight of historical experience and that justify the specialty of conceptual history: “The moments of duration, change, and futurity contained in a concrete political situation are registered through their linguistic traces.” (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 79) This notion problematizes in new ways the understanding of political action in the exact moment of its linguistic realization, not only to the future historian of that event. Political situations yet to be realized were first projected through language. Therefore, the meaning of concepts cannot be interpreted by mere reference to the social and political reality outside the linguistic reality. Concepts are intelligible within a system of concepts that is available to individual users of this linguistic community. The understanding of political order has necessarily to refer to this semantic structure. And change in this structure cannot be understood by merely linking it with outer sociopolitical changes (EDWARDS, 2007). For Koselleck, that is what makes legitimate the methodological autonomies of both conceptual history and social history. At the same time, if concepts are not only indicators but the constitutive factors of deep political and social transformations through re-readings of the spaces of experiences and the horizons of expectations, the fight for the adequacy of conceptualizations of the present becomes central for politics, conceptual history cannot be practiced apart from social history. Indeed, though Koselleck defended the autonomy of the methodological proceedings of *begriffsgeschichte*, he also made it clear that it could not be separated from the practice and advancements of Social History. And the same holds for the inverse relation. It is only through the contribution of *begriffsgeschichte* that concepts can serve the social historian as a condition for a “possible” history, and not merely as indicators of a “real” history (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 91).

Koselleck asserts that, if every concept is registered in words, not every word is a concept. Beyond having a meaning, for a word to be a concept it must be full of political relevance in a society, generalizing and polysemic. Besides, if in a Saussurean approach to linguistics, words have to be thought of as signs, composed of the relation between a signified (the meanings projected over a referent in the objective world), and the signifier (the sound image), to *begriffsgeschichte*, “signifier and signified coincide in the concept insofar as

the diversity of historical reality and historical experience enter a word such that they can receive their meaning only in this one word, or can be grasped only by this word.” (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 85). Therefore, the investigation must ask to which situations that unique term was originally used, to which situations it later also came to refer, and which other expressions were competing with that one to define those events and processes.

In this respect, Richter summarized the qualities to be looked for when studying concepts. First, they are basic (they do serve a community to refer to a particular class of events and process) and at the same time their meaning is always contested (that is what enables them as political weapons). Second, they have a long history, with always unstable and moving boundaries in relation to other concepts. Third, they often have political consequences much beyond the intentions of those who introduced it at first. And fourth, they are used not only by elite leaders, such as major scholars and politicians, but also by less evident agents dealing with politics in the arena of ideas, not only from within the government and other formal political institutions, such as pamphleteers, journalists, and other publicists and propagandists (RICHTER, 2005, p. 220).

For its concern with concepts' localization beyond time, but also space, *begriffsgeschichte* has the duty to study the reception of concepts, especially when they happen through a process of translation of lexical meanings in use not only in the past but in contemporary crossings in between cultures and languages. As Keith Tribe, the English translator of Koselleck's main works, has put it, “in its own way, *Begriffsgeschichte* is a form of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, charting the course of the reception of concepts, and examining the experience that they both contain and make possible.” (TRIBE, 2004, p. xviii) In terms of the temporal perspective, Koselleck urged the need to engage in two modes of analysis. In the synchronic one, the concept is studied in relation to its own linguistic and sociopolitical context, in relation to the different uses and renditions of the concept, and in relation to other related concepts. In the diachronic, the focus is on the permanence, transformation, or creation of lexical meanings over time. For that, in the first moment of the analysis, the extralinguistic factors are not considered. Concepts and their meanings must be understood before they are related to social structures or political conflicts, and then the co-constitutive interactions between concepts and social practices and structures (KOSELLECK, 2004). In

both modes, reception processes are happening, complicating the original intentions of an author, as László Kontler synthesizes (KONTLER, 2008, p. 42):

the idea that texts, on the one hand, cease to operate as stable entities but become subject to transformation by the readings, re-readings, commentaries etc. which constitute the process of reception, while on the other hand they emerge as elements in the modification of the experience of readers.

Hence, reception must be understood as an integral part of the historicity of texts and concepts. It is a process not only of reproduction but of creation, the original intentions of an author lose much of their social relevance, for every reader becomes a co-author of that text. Readers transform texts while they are also transformed by them. Nonetheless, a particular kind of reception, heavier in recreating the meaning of texts, is that of translation between different languages, in which case readers are also translators. Richter acutely noted that (RICHTER, 2005, p. 220):

What happens when the attempt is made to translate the basic political concepts of one society, phrased in its natural language, to another society with an altogether different history, set of institutions and religions, political culture, and language? The barriers to comprehension by both translator and audience are formidable.

For all that, translation amplifies readers' intervention in a text's original meanings. Hence, Kontler proposes that the history of conceptual translations must be even more rigorous with the contexts in which translators intended some result. Kontler offers a very precise presentation and integration between the Cambridge School and the *Begriffsgeschichte* (and *Rezeptionsgeschichte*) in the way this investigation has also proposed. Therefore, he does not dismiss the value of authorial intentions not only of original authors but mostly of translators, inputting meaning into texts written under different contexts and intentions, to make them worthwhile to tackle the challenges of their own horizon of expectations. *Begriffsgeschichte* reserves special attention to the translation conceived not only as the mere work of a bilingual dictionary bridging the distinct languages but the translanguing intervention of cultural materials' trans codification. Also, the translation of concepts must be carried much beyond the label-word, and assimilate the translation of the broader conceptual system of synonyms and antonyms, the complementary terms, and the correspondent ones (KONTLER, 2008). As noted by Richter, "discussions of conceptual transfers by historians involve the differences among natural languages, forms of writing and argument, rhetorics, and structures of authority, as well as the media through which concepts are transmitted." (RICHTER, 2005, p. 224) Moreover, as with the problems of communicating concepts in time, it is necessary to recognize the problem of translating

meaning through distinct cultural/language spaces not only one of the historian's duties but, first of all, an issue of agency itself.

Though Koselleck did not go as far as Gadamer in relation to the latter disbelief in the methodological foundations of knowledge, he would not defend any strict recipe for the practice of conceptual history. Still, he and other conceptual historians have certainly made recommendations to ensure the quality of investigations. In terms of historical sources, the linkage between sociopolitical and conceptual transformations, the diachronic and synchronic analyses, and translation issues have to be supported by analysis of the broadest range of materials that it is possible. One must be concerned with locating sources of discrepant kinds stemming from different social formations such as texts in philosophy, political, social, and economic theory, jurisprudence, theology, and literature. The use of concepts by both elite and other social groups and classes is to be investigated in newspapers, journals, pamphlets, reports, and speeches in the legislatures, governmental and bureaucracies documents, personal letters, and diaries. And it is very important to survey systematically the dictionaries of now and then in comparative form, as it is with encyclopedias and handbooks. In summary, the research has to look for any source exposing the conceptual articulations of political controversies of the place and of the day. Most of all, special caution has to be taken with avoiding the study of sources limited to representatives of the elite culture, such as the selection of great thinkers and writers (RICHTER, 1987, p. 253-4). But the search for the linguistic contexts that help define the meanings of concepts has not to be endless. Indeed, there could be infinite forms of defining what is the context of a concept: the paragraph? The book? The political and social debate? And so on, and so forth. For Koselleck it was more important to treat the problem in pragmatic ways, rather than theoretically (JASMIN; FERES, 2006).

For most of the features offered by the approach of *begriffsgeschichte*, it is understandable that the interaction with the contextualist research program has been very fruitful. At first, it is said that Skinner and Pocock had reacted adversely to the competition for the academic interest raised by *begriffsgeschichte* in the Anglo-Saxon and other national settings (JASMIN, FERES, 2006). However, Skinner himself later denied this charge of aversion to Koselleck's contribution as "deplorable", and declared his own work as a form of conceptual history: "I have not only been innocent of any desire to question Koselleck's

methodological assumptions, but (...) I have even attempted to write some conceptual histories myself.” (SKINNER, 1998, pp. 62-3). In fact, Bevir agrees there is less difference and much more space for dialogues between *Begriffsgeschichte* and the Cambridge School. First, “there is little point in attempting to distinguish between ‘concept’ and ‘idea’ by stipulative definition. In both English and German philosophical discourse the two terms are often synonyms. The meanings of ‘concept’ and ‘idea’ can be determined only within the context of a theory; they cannot be satisfactorily determined in isolation.” (RICHTER, 1987, p. 259) Moreover, both approaches were originally motivated by opposition to the practice of trying to trace ideas as constants through history. In this sense, the Cantabrigians criticized the search for unchanging unit ideas as in the work of Lovejoy, while *Begriffsgeschichte* dismissed the rival German tradition of *ideengeschichte* for practicing philosophical, not historical semantics. Therefore, both have emphasized the need to identify the wider social contexts in which concepts/ideas were strategically used.

Of course in terms of orientations to the practice of research and analysis, they do differ. For example, Richter notes the sophistication with which the German conceptual history has treated the distinct characters of words and concepts, methodologically focusing both *semasiology* (“assembling all the meanings of a given term”) and *onomasiology* (“seeking all the terms or names given to the concept at a given time”), kinds of insights that are difficult to be attained with the broader definition of “ideas” (RICHTER, 1987, p. 261). And there is also the greater concern of the *Begriffsgeschichte* with the constitutive role of concepts in their very contexts, which makes this approach more sensitive to the historical dynamics of continuity and change than the Collingwoodians (RICHTER, 1987; JASMIN; FERES, 2006). David Armitage has also pointed to the resistance of the British peers to the focus on larger spans of time as inhospitable to an appropriate history of ideas contextualized in their original language games, as practiced by *Begriffsgeschichte*'s diachronic analysis. Conversely, the German approach has not itself closed to synchronic, short-term history (ARMITAGE, 2012a).

But these differences have hardly been taken as incompatibilities, and the interaction of these distinct approaches has shown the discovery of much affinity. And they have even looked for fruitful interactions with other approaches to the question of language in politics. Skinner's words reveal this engagement (SKINNER, 2002, p. 177):

Koselleck and I both assume that we need to treat our normative concepts less as statements about the world than as tools and weapons of ideological debate. Both of us have perhaps been influenced by Foucault's Nietzschean contention that 'the history which bears and determines us has the form of a war.'

That passage confirms the perceived potential from the engagement not only between Cantabrigians and *begriffsgeschichte* but also with those usually labeled "post-structuralists" like Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, Bevir reminded of the caution that is needed with these approximations. As he indicates (BEVIR, 2011, p. 20), contextualists, post-structuralists, and conceptual historians generally offer different and even incompatible philosophical analyses of their historical practice. If we ignore these differences, we are in danger of promoting a bland eclecticism that elides important philosophical issues instead of confronting them.

Surely, Bevir's advice is important. But the fact is that these conversations – even if artificial, not historical ones at times – seem to be if not inevitable, at least very provoking. And so it is explored in the next section.

The History of Ideas as Histories of discourses: Myths and constitutive explanations

Section one above developed a brief history of the ideational turn in the discipline that concludes towards a thicker version of constructivist theory. It should be not only more ontologically intersubjective but also epistemologically. Only such a perspective can be successful in incorporating the contributions of the history of political thought and (even more) the history of concepts and follow their goals and duties in providing new investigative advancements to the area. Nonetheless, it is first necessary to establish "mythology," commonly understood as a post-structuralist kind of approach to studying language in use, with the historical engagement this research proposes.

As *begriffsgeschichte* stands as the core of its analytical framework, concepts are the focus of the research. They will be localized in wider meaningful contexts, be it the discursive formations in which they are inscribed, be it the political processes and interactions to which they offer not only constraints but opportunities and resources to agents that may even act to induce change in and of those very discursive formations. Authorial intentions are relevant to investigate, but much more, the usually unintended consequences of

their texts when other agents play a reproductive and creative reception of the semantic structures that perform the ordering of political dynamics. Hermeneutics is the approach to texts and actions, a method intended not to reach a superior, definitive interpretation of the past in itself, but one that is able to communicate to its contemporary peers its coherence in terms of the evidence of the events and processes in the past under investigation while relevant to thinking about our own duty to deal with ideas in face of the challenges of the day. Armitage's view of an appropriate definition of a renewed enterprise of intellectual history would not be far from the theoretical issues raised here (ARMITAGE, 2012a, p. 7):

The outcome of an openly admitted and consistently pursued serial contextualism would be what I have called history in ideas. I take this to be a genre of intellectual history in which episodes of contestation over meaning form the stepping-stones in a transtemporal narrative constructed over a span of time extending over decades if not centuries.

It is interesting the use of the preposition "in" instead of "of". "History in ideas" to distinguish it from Lovejoy's "History of ideas". It may imply a lesser commitment with the revelation of an ultimate understanding of ideas in their distant contexts, a lesser notion of appropriation indicated by the preposition "of", and the refusal of ideas as timeless entities, out of history. So, accordingly, it would be more appropriate to call this investigation a "history in concepts," a "*Geschichte in Begriffen*" then. That opening enables a rich conversation with post-structuralism. Jason Edwards, for instance, has engaged with the reflection on the interaction of the works of Koselleck and Foucault with interesting results. Edwards confessed that the dialogue between those authors, who have never done so directly, and who represent such diverging currents of thought may sound strange. He justifies it with his trust that reading them in concert is helpful to address "how individuals in modernity are provided the conceptual and practical means by which to contest established knowledge, values, and practices, in other words how ideology provides the grounds on which individuals in modern societies are made into agents of social and political change." (EDWARDS, 2007, p. 50) Edwards finds both commonalities between Koselleck's and Foucault's intellectual projects thrusting the dialogue and differences that can be thought of not as incommensurable ones, but be put in a complementary or corrective fashion in order to extract a better understanding of language and social change.

Despite Koselleck's prowess in investigating the past in its terms, Edwards found in his work on the history of concepts, the same concern of Foucault with a history of the

present. To the Germans, concepts did constitute possible agents and relations in the Ancien Régime. But open contestation of/through language became a political possibility of modernity, on which the succeeding bourgeoisie order was erected. The control of discourse is also central to the French's power/knowledge thesis. Both repudiated the imputation of general laws for the evolution of discourse in favor of the ability of certain individuals to intervene in those semantic structures, as well as the reduction of discourses to the authorship of any single individual. The study of Enlightenment by Foucault and that of *Sattelzeit* for Koselleck coincide with the understanding of the (academics') task and the (agents') action of criticizing the present by constantly anticipating the future. In Edwards's wording (EDWARDS, 2007, p. 63):

What the work of both Koselleck and Foucault strongly suggests is that in modernity individuals are equipped with the linguistic and social resources to contest, that this diffusion and democratization of contestation is something peculiar to modernity, and that it is what makes possible the very practice of a *begriffsgeschichte* or an historical ontology of the social and political.

One of Foucault's major contributions is to the description of discourses, which are supposed to deliver objective understandings of politics, as the object of the very political will to power (FOUCAULT, 1971). Throughout his career, he developed two deep reflexive efforts on the power/knowledge complex: his early archeology and his later genealogy of knowledge. For Edwards, the first seems more easily in dialogue with *begriffsgeschichte*, while the second offers an important challenge to its practice. The archeological approach focuses on statements rather than concepts as elementary forms in a discourse. Concepts are relevant in the sense that they organize a field of statements that makes up discourses. The whole made of these concepts, statements, and the rules that make them valid or not, are called the discursive formations or *epistemes* – the system of possibilities of thought and expression of a specific field of practice and epoch. But the rules organizing discourse transcend logic or grammar (EDWARDS, 2007, pp. 58-9):

the order, succession, or relations of dependence between statements; the grounds on which certain statements are included in or excluded from a discourse; and the procedures of intervention, such as rewriting, transcription, translation, approximation, and so on, that involve a transformation of statements.

In this sense, this approach requires attention to concepts in their functions in the context of discourse. The statements making use of such concepts are effective practices constitutive of subjects. The history of political concepts must address political knowledge,

no matter how “objective”, “neutral”, or “universal” it claims to be, as the result of discursive practices – not only linguistic, but every significant practice of ordering. In other words, ideologies are taken not as sets of independent principles, but as the actual practices that enable or constrain individuals to understand what politics is about, which values are in opposition, the ones who can talk about politics, and when they may do it, the limits and possibilities of political activity, the workings of the order, the desired futures and the paths towards the transformations. Concepts are never to be explained by mere references to their linguistic properties and contexts, but always in their necessary co-constitutive relation with the broader ordering practices of discourse contained in them. Edwards notes that in both Foucault’s archeological approach and Koselleck’s *begriffsgeschichte*, there is an analytical autonomy of discourse in relation to the non-discursive aspects of socio-political life. “What both are concerned with are the rules that govern what can be thought and said at any given moment, and with the transformation of those rules that takes place in the emergence of a new semantic field or discourse.” (EDWARDS, 2007, pp. 53)

Edwards states that even Foucault’s genealogical turn (FOUCAULT, 1971) does not make his contribution incompatible with that of Koselleck. The genealogy of discourse emphasizes the sociopolitical constitution of discourses as contingent on the intervention of agency and historical trends, not any rational notion of inevitable progress. Therefore it presents a much more sensible approach to changes of (or in) the order than archeology could reach. For his part, Koselleck always advised on the need to keep the practice of conceptual history in permanent dialogue with social history. However, Edwards pointed to the *begriffsgeschichte*’s shortcomings in this issue, not much for Koselleck’s work as that of most of his followers, calling attention to the challenge offered by the Foucauldian perspective. For him, *begriffsgeschichte* had become little more than a formal analytical interpretation of texts in their linguistic contexts, re-introducing the futile strict distinction between the social and the conceptual, the material and the ideational, etc. Despite some critics of Koselleck, with whom Edwards disagrees, the German historian did envisage the role of agency in the structural transformations (EDWARDS, 2007, p. 64).

What a *begriffsgeschichte*, properly practised, should do is not simply delineate the various linguistic applications the term ‘democracy’ has had in particular times and places,

but how these various applications are tied into specific struggles over political practices and spaces.

Therefore, once one recognizes the interrelation of knowledge and power going on in specific social relations and institutions from the constitutive character of concepts and ideologies empowering individuals as combatants in the political and social arena, not only working as determinants over them, the possibility of separation between the linguistic and the sociopolitical in analytical grounds cannot be confused with a permissibility of conducting conceptual history for itself, without connecting its dynamics with the ones in the world of politics. In terms of remembering particular important differences between these traditions of thought, *Begriffsgeschichte* has been projected over a predilection for studying moments of alarming social and political conflict in which the antagonism of interests gets ultimately evident in the contentions and contestations over the proper language and usage rules to position a particular group or set of groups in a constitutive advantage in relation to the conflicts and disputes determining the political outputs (KONTLER, 2008, pp. 37-8). A Foucauldian analysis would not be as concentrated on the discursive constitution of social and political changes as it is on the daily workings of the discursive orders. As the subject of historical investigation marks a moment of political groups did clash inside the US for the proper position of the country with the War in Europe from August 1914, which clearly was accompanied by a peculiar, specialized discursive-conceptual transformational process, the theoretical inspiration fusing Koselleck and Foucault is less problematic, sufficiently coherent for the research ahead. And there is the issue of the relevance of agents in using language in their favor, even eventually leading to broader semantic structural changes, a subject to Koselleck's approach displayed more sympathy. Students of Foucault have made this suggestion that the dialogue with more hermeneutic strains of sociology (KELLER, 2005; 2011) or even Koselleck directly (EDWARDS, 2007) could lead to overcoming the overall ignorance of agency in post-structuralism, the limited possibilities of the notion of the author as a mere commentator (FOUCAULT, 1971).

On the part of the Cambridge School, Skinner was the main figure in the reaction against post-structuralism that first moved the project (HARLAN, 1989). Skinner did buy Richter's effort to bring *begriffsgeschichte* into a critical dialogue with the Collingwoodians, and he has really made substantial changes to his approach since, not rarely in explicit

reference to Koselleck. Those learnings could probably be the entry for the bigger disposition Skinner displayed to understanding the reservation made towards his early work from that radical standpoint regarding the relative independence and relevance Skinner ceded to intentionality. As disciples of his theoretical contributions have recounted (SKINNER et al, 2002, pp. 13-4),

Quentin Skinner said that his own practice had been profoundly changed by reading postmodern critiques: the stress on ambiguity; the idea that some arguments are just tissues of metaphor; the insight that language takes on a structuring role such that we end up placing a large question mark next to authorial authority. In Quentin Skinner's own writings, the author is not dead but in very bad health.

In this context, Skinner moved his approach closer to that of the German tradition, as shown above, much more prepared to incorporate the post-structuralist power/knowledge critiques on the history of ideas. The Englishman wanted to deny accusations that he had reacted bad to the competition with the Germans in his own Anglo-Saxon space. He would write that not only his work became closer to a pervasive interpretative essence of the intellectual historian job, against an earlier modernist methodological take (BEVIR, 2011), but also on the main target of his inquiry being also that of concepts: "I have not only been innocent of any desire to question Koselleck's methodological assumptions, but (...) I have even attempted to write some conceptual histories myself." (SKINNER, 1998, pp. 62-3) And, as shown above, Skinner also noted the common influence from Foucault that Koselleck and he shared. In fact, an opportune analytical entry to explore these possible conversations between Skinner, Koselleck, and Foucault in the construction of a more relevant and less problematic History in ideas is the concept of "mythology" introduced by Roland Barthes, first brought to the critical study of IR theories by Cynthia Weber (2001). That approach will be very relevant to the analysis to be offered in this dissertation for "myth" has been one of the most popular concepts in IR disciplinary historiography through the pioneer revisionist work by Peter Wilson on the "myth of the First Great Debate," where he indicates there was no relevant registry of a school of idealists debating with realists in the interwar years, nor even a self-defined idealist school of IR (WILSON, 1998; SCHMIDT, 2012a). As explored in the following chapters, the revisionist meaning of "myth" – a false statement of reality – is not free of consequences (despite authorial intentions). It may be itself a mythological narrative being constructed over an original factual experience already being narrated by the very participants and those interested in the next generations.

First of all, a myth is a language, a type of discourse. It is that story that is ideologically abused to the point it assumes the form of the “falsely obvious”, or “what-goes-without-saying”. Barthes’s inspiration for the work on what he termed “mythologies” was his impatience with the “naturalness” of how “common sense constantly dresses up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history.” (BARTHES, 1972, p. 11) This is the manifest confusion of Nature and History through insistence and repetition. In his famous analysis of wrestling in the Mexican-American culture, the ring is a mythological space where what counts to the fan is not the termination, the conclusion of a fight – the victory of whoever is the technically superior athlete –, but watching the passion of every moment of the moral narratives of justice, vengeance, cowardice, luck, treason, and so on, repeated again and again. “What the public wants is the image of passion, not passion itself. (...) This emptying out of interiority to the benefit of its exterior signs, this exhaustion of the content by the form, is the very principle of triumphant classical art.” (BARTHES, 1972, p. 18) And Barthes does not avoid noting how the example of the comedian-kind wrestler, who:

always delights the audience by the mathematical rigor of his transcriptions, carrying the form of his gestures to the furthest reaches of their meaning, and giving to his manner of fighting the kind of vehemence and precision” were also to be “found in great scholastic disputation, in which what is at stake is at once the triumph of pride and the formal concern with truth. (BARTHES, 1972, p. 19)

Accordingly, as a myth, wrestlers must be acute in their art. The fighter must play for real the suffering of a received fake blow, but he/she must not exaggerate to the point of obviousness, or he/she will be condemned by the public. The myth cannot be experienced as an artifice, but only as reality indeed. As Barthes goes (BARTHES, 1972, p. 24),

such a precise finality demands that wrestling should be exactly what the public expects of it. Wrestlers who are very experienced, know perfectly how to direct the spontaneous episodes of the fight so as to make them conform to the image which the public has of the great legendary themes of its mythology.

Myths offer full, rounded significations to social phenomena experienced by human agents. They raise individuals from the ambiguous relations between concepts and the facts they should be referring to, evading conflictual meanings, and allowing people to see a univocal reality from a panoramic, otherwise impossible view of it. Therefore, it is a welcoming, somehow comforting, accommodating kind of discourse of social relations. The function of a mythological system is not to make forms and meanings disappear, but to distort them. The “double system” of a mythological scheme – the myth as a second-order discourse

raised on a first-order, language-object discourse), lets the signification of the myth move from the various meaningful elements of it, always ambiguously made of reality and pure imagination, intention and nature, arbitrariness and neutrality, innocence and conspiracy, making it immune to empirical inconsistency. “Myth is a *value*, truth is no guarantee for it.” (BARTHES, 1972, p. 123). As myth is never hidden, the reader of it may easily denounce it effectively at once, letting all see it through its whole semantic scheme. Therefore, the challenge is not to present the myth and its various meaningful elements, but to unveil the functions they play in social relations, corresponding their enunciations with the groups and interests they favor. That is when one passes from semiology to ideology, connecting myths to social and political history (one less conceived in ideational terms). For Barthes, “it is the reader of myths himself who must reveal their essential function.” (BARTHES, 1972, pp. 128-9).

In this sense, it is important to remember the Marxist orientation of Barthes’ linguistic critique of literature and art. The mass culture incorporated a “bourgeois disappearance” by co-opting the proletarian, potentially revolutionary cultural expressions that would abide by the obligation of borrowing from the poor, bourgeoisie culture while defecting from the very reference to the “bourgeois.” The so-called avant-garde is harmless for it is small and in the end, not only its origins but its results, bourgeoisie itself. “What the avant-garde does not tolerate about the bourgeoisie is its language, not its status. This does not necessarily mean that it approves of this status; simply, it leaves it aside.” (BARTHES, 1972, p. 139). Therefore, as myth, proletarian art may pass from the first to the second (and even third...) order, emptied from its emancipatory history and politics just to be refilled with bourgeois discourses about history and politics again, as argued above. Still, it does so only as an immediate impression, for it allows the agent to see through its distortion at a second glance. However, to be a myth, this means this meta-narrative has imposed itself over other critical, rational first-order discourses, but now naturalizing the order it was meant to criticize. In other words, by working for the naturalization of what was historical, myth plays its function of depoliticizing speech. It allows the kind of argument that hides the political struggle that led the bourgeoisie to substitute the old aristocratic land-owners, all their effort in promoting scientific and technical control of the physical process with that end while delivering a bourgeois ideology yields in return an unchangeable nature.” (BARTHES, 1972, pp. 141-2)

The true revolutionary language, for Barthes, was that of the working humans, those producing from material conditions, then not including those working with speaking about production, such as journalists. A proper revolutionary language, then, could never be mythical. Myth tends to be a conservative tool (left or right), for it wants to be understood as nature as if it was always there. That is why most often, myth is more suitable on the right side of politics.

In conclusion, Barthes recommends a careful approach to mythology practice, for itself can be alienating in the intended way towards emancipation. Who is benefited from the mythologist unveiling? Does it unveil or veil again? For Barthes, the critical mythologist, then (BARTHES, 1972, p. 156), can live revolutionary action only vicariously: hence the self-conscious character of his function, this something a little stiff and painstaking, muddled and excessively simplified which brands any intellectual behavior with an openly political foundation ('uncommitted' types of literature are infinitely more 'elegant'; they are in their place in metalanguage).

Some have argued that there are two different Barthes in his career: one more linguistically structuralist, as the one in *Mythologies*, and the other more post-structuralist, as in his later works (SAPER, 1997, p. 5). They have tried to work out that "reconciliation between reality and men [*sic*], between description and explanation, between object and knowledge," that Barthes urged to be sought (BARTHES, 1972, pp. 158-9). Others already recognize that, in his first phase, his relation to structuralism in analyzing myth was just nothing more than a flirt to guide his critical approach – in fact, critiquing myth pro-elite functionings "rather than question their representation of 'reality'" (DANT, 2003, p. 33). Barthes thought it was unusable to debunk myths, so he preferred to use sarcasm, laughter as a critical approach. He asserted that the mythologist's "connection with the world is of the order of sarcasm." (BARTHES, 1972, p. 157). Thus, while having features of straightforward post-structuralism, his work in *Mythologies* still manifests the concern with the limits of this kind of critique by retaining to some notion of objective assessment of reality in social thought.

Those were the concerns of the broadly called social constructivists in International Relations. While engaging more deeply with the interpretive structures of political action, and

the consequent interpretive condition of political analysis, it has also tried to minimally break with IR mainstream, striving to be understood not as simply an understanding of social life (HOLLIS; SMITH, 1991), but one different kind of explanatory protocol, that of the constitutive explanation (WENDT, 1998). Wendt has worked on clarifying the argument by differentiating it from mere descriptions, as real explanations of the way social kinds are the way they are and not otherwise. The notion of constitutive explanation is fundamental to assessing the role of ideas in world politics. The description is important, but a different exercise. Ideas' most important role in the knowledge of world political life is not causal. Ideas do not cause in the sense that they can have their variation measured and related to the variation in the outcomes, nor necessarily their existence can be demonstrated as independent and prior to the phenomena, process, decision, or action under investigation. "Constitutive theories have a different objective, which is to account for the properties of things by reference to the structures in virtue of which they exist." (Wendt 1998: 105) In other words, constitutive explanation connects the intersubjective structures to the very possibility of meaning attribution to any social event. And in this way, ideas are always important – not excluding here the relevance of material incentives or constraints, but also, never to be contrasted with the causal power of the latter, as if it was an explanatory residue to be investigated occasionally. Wendt's contribution has provoked advancements from both sides of the constructivist movement - depending on the categorization, the conventional and critical (HOPF, 1998), or thin and thick constructivists (WENDT, 1999, p. 75).

Tannenwald has advanced that "ideas cannot always be linked directly to outcomes because that is not the only way they work in social life. Ideas also shape outcomes indirectly by providing a framework for the social world. They provide the 'possibility conditions' for action." (TANNENWALD, 2005, p. 19) Hence, as proposed by Wendt, the kind of questions to be asked to assess the constitutive effect of ideas is not "why" or simply "how", as in King, Keohane, and Verba's classic research design proposal (1994), indicating causal and descriptive inferences, respectively, but "how-possible." For example, it is not about "how the Cold War developed in the late 1940s?", nor "why did the US and URSS engaged against each other in the post-World War II?", but "how Cold War was possible?" And satisfactory answers to these kinds of questions relate to different criteria. (Wendt 1998). Therefore, in terms of the present investigation, and already benefiting from the intellectual history turn

and the post-structuralist critique in the discipline, how the present signification of realism in International Relations, both among its defenders and accusers, has been made possible? But also, what kind of possibilities have been made possible (and impossible) by the myth of realism in the global/American discipline of International Relations?

Criticism has pointed out that an effective answer to attest to the explanatory role of ideas must try out counterfactual analogies in order to avoid the “endogeneity problem,” that is, for an insufficiency of evidence demonstrating the independence between ideas and material interests, it would confuse causation with mere correlation (BLYTH, 1997, p. 236; TANNENWALD; WOHLFORTH, 2005. See also WOHLFORTH, 2005; BERNAN, 2001). Nevertheless, this is the kind of nomological confusion between correlation and constitution, demanding a causal epistemology to rule over the constitutive logic of ideas in social relations. Even if Wendt agrees that counterfactuals are necessary, he urges that (WENDT, 1998, pp. 105-6):

the kind of necessity required here is conceptual or logical, not causal or natural. The relationship between the factors constituting the social kind ‘Cold War’ and a Cold War is one of identity, in the sense that those factors define what a Cold War is, not one of causal determination.

The Constitutive explanatory process, so defended by Wendt, cannot fall under a “thin” constructivist approach to this issue – to take ideas as variables, and, worst, to counterfactually oppose their relevance to that of material variables. And it could then confirm the incommensurability between understanding and explaining protocols, as posed by Hollis and Smith (1991), against Wendt’s stand, for which he provoked the field with his declaration of adherence to (small p) positivism.

Critics pointed out that while the shortcomings in constitutive explanations are not solved they will still be taken just as descriptions. If they are not purely descriptions, but explanations, then causal logics are in place. Saying that ideas constitute a relationship does not free one from having to show the causal process through which that happens (DESSLER; OWEN, 2005; TANNENWALD, 2005). Nevertheless, most trials at separating clearly causal form constitutive roles of ideas have not displayed that thick constructivism so much needed, manifesting the vicissitudes of the dualities discussed in the last section: matter-ideas, agent-structure, subjectivity-objectivity, interests-ideas, and so on. In fact, the main issue to be resolved in order to the field of IR, and in fact, social sciences, to unleash a full ideational turn, seems to be the tendency to dichotomize the existence of agency and structures,

interests and ideas, ideational and material factors. Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil accused the way positivism – based on a correspondence theory of truth – has forced us to deal with binary categories, as “a poor philosopher’s stone for social science”. The complexity of the social world disappears in the face of “yes” or “no” questions, where either things are so or they are not. So, “what is more important, material or ideational factors?” One theory is tested against all others in the competition for the monopoly of normal science. Here, there is no space for the undecided, which is supposed to be so embarrassing to the scientific endeavor. However, contest, indecision, justification, and disagreement are all intrinsic of political phenomena (FRIEDRICHS, KRATOCHWIL, 2009, p. 705).

It is important to stress one last time that the relevance of the ideational focus of research, as a relevant part of the explanation of reality, does not ignore the relevance of material factors all along. Thus, there cannot be a conceptual opposition of ideas and interests. Instead of focusing on the interplay of those factors in social processes, we must deal with their interpenetration. The issue is how they are constitutive of each other. Gofas and Hay (2008: 35) could not be clearer: “[*the*] commitment to analytical dualism ..., we suggest, is ultimately unnecessary.”

For, whilst it is indeed important to avoid the conflation of the ideational and the material, the agential and the structural, and thus to retain the analytical separability of the terms comprising such pairings, we do not accept that this can only be achieved by imposing an artificial analytical dualism. Moreover, there are associated dangers with such a strategy – namely, by assuming that all emergent properties of social and cultural systems are internal to them, we fail adequately to consider the interplay between them. In this way, an analytical dualism all too frequently gives way to an ontological dualism.

As Hopf (1998), Jacobsen (2003), and Marsh (2009), all suggest, a critical theory version of constructivism should be brought in to deal with this limitation. Jacobsen (2003: 47), for example, remembers that the dual quality of objects of experience is already present in the Gramscian notion of “common sense”, the public political discourse that, embodied in social practices, must be considered a material force intertwined with more straightforward Marxist notions of material factors: capital, work, and natural resources. The argument of extreme ideationalists that ideas can have a life of their own was never persuasive to critical

theorists. “Ideas and material circumstances, according to critical theory and Gramscian cultural studies, axiomatically are found together, mutually influence one another, and are not reducible one to the other.” (JACOBSEN, 2003, p. 49).

In accordance with Friedrichs and Kratochwil’s plea to overcome that dualism, inspired by the Cartesian distinction of mind and body, subject and object, but duality (GOFAS, HAY, 2008), Milja Kurki urged social science must retreat to more common-sensical notions about causation. Words like “because”, “leads to”, “produces”, “makes”, “enables”, “constrains”, etc. Causation must incorporate that open definition, indicating everything that leads directly or indirectly to changes in the world. Ideas, meanings, and reasons are definitely brought in because they are also causes. Therefore, hermeneutics, historical and qualitative methods are fundamental scientific methods, in a science that rejects the value-neutral objectivism of positivists, while also avoiding the relativist stance that there is no real world out there to be investigated (KURKI, 2006, pp. 202-3). As Laffey and Weldes had earlier suggested, in a wider notion of causation, “world views” do “cause”. It is all about the “concept-dependent nature of social reality”. Therefore, the investigation of the ways that interpretive dispositions enable certain processes, actions, or orders while inhibiting others (and vice-versa) “is integral to causal analysis, rather than in competition with it.” (LAFFEY, WELDES, 1997, pp. 202; 204). This is the kind of argument that challenges those strictly separated elements of those dualities, that can only be accessed in a very precise contextual moment of sufficient stability of political orders, to which positivism really seems more fit (COX, 1992, p. 135).

The strong positivist distinction between the causal and the constitutive logics “continues to plague almost all of the literature that strives to accord an explanatory and/or constitutive role to ideas.” (GOFAS; HAY, 2008, p. 37) Kurki suggested that this “uncritical acceptance of a so-called Humean conception of causation”, far from being exclusive of positivist work, has led to the incomplete ideational turn of thin constructivists (BARKIN, 2003; SØRENSEN, 2008). Like positivists, they tend to treat ideas as “pushing and pulling” forces,” in their search for “determinism, laws, and objectivism” (KURKI, 2006, p. 190). She urged that a redefinition of causation on Aristotelian terms – material, formal, final, and efficient – will emphasize that the search for regularities is not necessary nor sufficient, that unobservable causal roles of observable events must be included, and that determinism has to

be undermined by the notion of multiple (kind of) causes interacting in unpredictable ways at each new opportunity. Causation has that open, common-sense definition, indicating everything that leads directly or indirectly to changes in the world. Ideas, meanings, and reasons are definitely brought in because they are also causes. Therefore, hermeneutics, historical and qualitative methods are fundamental scientific methods, in a science that rejects the value-neutral objectivism of positivists, while also avoiding the relativist stance that there is no real world out there to be investigated (KURKI, 2006, pp. 202-3).

In this vein, Hidemi Suganami has even suggested that “narrative explanations” are not limited to the explanation of material and formal constitutive logics of reality, but also a necessary step in exposing the mechanistic and purposive processes associated with final and efficient causal phenomena. In both cases, one needs to explain how we got from an initial state, where the event is not localized, to an end state, where the event is manifested. Both kinds of causations, answered by their particular kind of questions, “can be, and often are, combined in narrative accounts showing how, as a result of a number of different kinds of things happening or not happening, some event came to occur.” (SUGANAMI, 2008, p. 346). Suganami points out that even some of Hollis and Smith’s exemplary narratives in their book do deal with both stories, contradicting their claim that they are not possible to be combined. Trying to escape a much persistent theme in IR, he insists that both kinds of questions are legitimate endeavors as in the field of international History as in International Relations.

Suganami’s claim reinforces one of the original claims of social constructivism in Ruggie’s *Constructing the World Polity*: the narrative explanatory protocol as the mode of explanation better suited for integrating constitutive and causal effects in social dynamics. Against a nomological-deductive approach, searching for covering law or law-like generalizations, Ruggie defended a mode of investigation not entirely deductive, but more an abductive mode, in a narrative that makes use of concepts that are not closed in a theoretical model to be confirmed or rejected, but open to the need to capture the empathetic meanings of each situation and process, including the meanings associated to hard mechanistic causes taking place. As a methodological practice, this brought constructivism closer to Weber’s use of ideal types and Charles Peirce’s pragmatism (RUGGIE, 1998a, p. 34). The main advancement in the constructivist position, since Ruggie’s and even earlier Hollis and Smith’s books, seems to be the avoidance of the hard distinction between cause and constitution, or

explaining and understanding, not exactly to fuse one with the other, but more in the sense of tackling with the very concept of cause to widen it.

The relevance of hermeneutic contexts that the History of political thought and the History of concepts (*begriffsgeschichte*) can bring to the IR mainstream is the counterpart of this concept of “common sense” in thick constructivist constitutive explanations. Surely, context is not an inertial category. Struggles over common sense are central in critical theory for the definition of power structures. The *rendezvous* between thick constructivism, post-structuralist notions of the ideational constitution and contest of politics, and the rigorous empirical immersion of historians of ideas make a very fruitful theoretical-methodological dialogue to guide the investigation laid in the following chapters.

International Relations and the Practice of the History of international political thought

In 2004, the intellectual historian David Armitage – supervisor of this research in its fellowship year at Harvard – complained about the half-century-long rift between the study of the history of political thought and the study of world politics (ARMITAGE, 2004). There was much-renewed interest in the history of political thought with the contextualist revolution of the Cambridge School. But still, their investigation was limited to the theories of the state in its domestic realm, resulting in sad neglect of its external relations. Later he noted that still by the beginning of the 21st century, “the very term ‘international intellectual history’ had hardly ever been used in print, let alone deployed to define a field of academic study.” (ARMITAGE, 2013a, p. 1) Despite the intellectual turn in history, it did not share company with a parallel effort with an international one. However, it had not always been like this, as Armitage remembered the occasional but explicit interest in the question, particularly in the internationalist moment brought by the League of Nations in the 1920s. It makes it more curious that even the commonly referred (grand)father of IR, Thucydides, was a historian. Even more curious to note the inverse movement in IR itself (surely the global/American one), setting apart the roles of history and theory in the study of world politics and privileging the latter since the behavioral re-foundation of IR in the 1950s. In IR, those concerned with a historically informed knowledge of world politics felt more comfortable in history departments, or in IR ones outside the American core (ARMITAGE, 2004).

Armitage recounted how, like most social science fields, History was born in the context of methodological nationalism. Nation-states were the obvious reference for defining the limits of their objects of inquiry and the comparisons between them. Even if historians interested in the international – mainly diplomatic and imperial historians – expanded their subject to reflect international politics, by the 1990s, an accumulated bulk of critics pointed to what was nothing more than “evolutionary nationalist historicism” that could be ignored no more. Post-colonialists lead a wave of reaction in the discipline’s many fields to re-think their questions from the perspective of the “international,” the “transnational,” the “comparative,” and the “global,” surely not with any significant consensus. “The family resemblance between their projects is the desire to go above or beyond the history of nationally defined states and state-bounded nations, thereby to take an international turn,” which Armitage claims to be “perhaps the most transformative historiographical movement since the rise of social history in the 1960s and the linguistic turn of the 1970s.” (ARMITAGE, 2013a, p. 18) Even though, the impact of this turn had not been so expressive among intellectual historians, both for the materialism that has dominated the other fields’ turn and for the very cosmopolitan roots of intellectual history – a natural resistance to nationalism had made it difficult for the area to perceive the need for an international turn (ARMITAGE, 2013a, p. 20).

Since the late years of the first decade of the new century, Armitage attests, the History of international thought has become an identifiable field of research, with identifiable and expanding contributions in its definite questions and agendas. Their main focus has been the “intellectual history of conceptions of international relations and international law, mostly in the period before those two modes of interaction and negotiation had acquired their current names, disciplinary boundaries and contemporary canons of authorities and ancestors.” (ARMITAGE, 2013a, pp. 1-2) That makes up for the latter quarter of the eighteenth hundreds, in a process extending up to the next century's first half. The proposed case of the present investigation steps back a little further, while it also spatially exceeds the core of contemporary IR, focusing on mid-nineteenth century Germany. That indubitably remits to the notion of a disciplinary pre-historic period of IR (WITHERS; MAYHEW, 2002), in which the absence of academic – and American – institutional frontiers between specialized

professionals and common sense let great relevance to the ideas and knowledge produced by political leaders, news media commentators, and literature (ACHARYA; BUZAN, 2009).

Therefore, to study the history of international thought is to study how individuals in past generations and different locations engaged with and registered the reflection of the interaction of different political sovereignties and the wider political dynamics of these and other relevant political agents in this environment, in terms of its peculiarities, its forms of organization, and the desired changes in it. Today, many point to the limits of an interstate focus when studying international thought. As also plead by Wight (1960), it is necessary to look for the transnational, the global, the regional, the relation among different communities, and for concepts like barbarianism, religious faith, racial difference, imperial hierarchy, etc. Still, the label of “history of *international* political thought” became more of a convention than a good description of their work (KNUTSEN, 1997; KEENE, 2005; ARMITAGE, 2013a). It is no surprise, then, that the emergence of the field of international thought coincides with the convergence of interests in political theory, International Relations, International Law, and International History. Among their common interests, there were normative issues, the weight of history, language and meaning, rising new agents, and the dynamics of power relations – all of this opening the way to more fruitful intercourses, just at the moment globalization has become a dominant transdisciplinary theme too (ARMITAGE, 2013a).

For IR, specifically, this “intellectual-historical turn” gets contextualized as mostly a global/American discipline, marked by the dominance of behaviorist and later positivist approaches since the 1950s. It was only by the new century that a “historical turn” was finally announced (BELL, 2009). As part of the wider post-positivist debate from the 1980s on and the discipline’s consequent tides of interest in constructivism, linguistics, and disciplinary history (ARMITAGE, 2004) – it completed the earlier ideational turn of the end of the last century, explored at the first section above. Therefore, it could more properly be said that this is a historical *return* – as historians were not only most commonly referred founders of the discipline and theoreticians of world politics before the behavioral coup in the fifties –, and more than that, a phenomenon pertinent to the American IR, – for, as already pointed out, behaviorism was not so popular among European social sciences, take for example of “the realist” Carr and the English School of Butterfield, Wight, and Bull.

In fact, even this happy convergence between IR theory and an intellectual-historical orientation are not completely new. Keene remembers that, despite the many complaints of the absence of an intellectual-historical concern coming from IR scholars, the fact is that (KEENE, 2005, p. 2):

the frequency of references in leading twentieth-century theoretical treatises to past thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant certainly suggests that the history of international political thought is regarded at least as important reference point for current theorizing.

Keene astutely points out that, despite the interpretations of these classics are usually questionable, they do have the merit of taking the history of political thought as a necessary step for building their own explanations about world politics today. Classical thought, then, may have been abused (in the presentist sense), but hardly neglected. The early Waltz wrote the classic *Man, the State, and War* which proposed an investigation of the classic writings about the international in the modern era in search of their explanations to the causes of war in three distinct images – the individual, the state, and the systemic – to work on his own systemic proposal of a theory of international politics later on (WALTZ, 1959). Wight's original contribution of the three traditions of international thought – the three Rs of realism, rationalism, and revolutionism (WIGHT, 1991) – has really been caught up in IR, much beyond the English School – which has consolidated its analytical framework around it –, as one of the deep-seated self-images of the field (SMITH, 1995; as an example out of English School, see WENDT, 1999).

For all that, the critical deconstruction of this earlier tendency of inventing traditions of international thought overtly concentrated on the sovereignties, in which Armitage included his own contribution, was described by him as a “salutary ongoing enterprise” (ARMITAGE, 2013a, p. 13). In his earlier piece on the state-of-the-rift, he reviewed a number of works in international intellectual history, both by historians and by IR scholars, all enhancing the understanding that these traditions do not have a historical value, and are unfair to the writings of early modern writers usually called as the fathers of those divisions, such that it is very difficult today to maintain these connections to something more than occasional inspiration to contemporary analytical approaches. But, far from dismissing Wight, most of this critical work today recognizes his value in pioneering an approach to IR theory through the history of international thought.

When, in 1960, he famously declared there was no international theory, he had in mind not the notion that would be taken today as the most obvious one in the IR mainstream of theory. Back in his time, that would be only one alternative to approaching the issue, “as meaning either the methodology of the study of international relations or some conceptual system which offers a unified explanation of international phenomena”. What he was complaining about was the lack of investigation of the traditions of reflection about interstate relations, a research agenda very present in the field of politics. Political theory – for him, the exercise of speculating about the good life inside a State –, was unproblematically equated with the History of Political Ideas, “the tradition of speculation and the body of writings about the State from Plato to Laski.” (WIGHT, 1960, p. 35) In fact, Wight’s work was more provocative than skeptical, for he himself presented that tripartite version of the traditions of international political thought. Still, even if he was sincerely looking for the traces of a genuine history of international thought (see for example, his lecture that first sketched his notion of traditions in 1960, “An anatomy of international thought” [WIGHT, 1987]), critiques pointing to the inventive character of his description would not have to wait for the 21st century, as Armitage’s quote above. His very pupil, Bull, pointed out that “his work is not an exercise in the history of ideas, so much as the exposition of an imaginary philosophical conversation” (BULL, 1991: 18). For Wight, the analytical value of the three positions was clear still.

Anyways, it is surprising that the English Scholars, inspired by Wight’s call, had not been influenced by the unfolding contributions of their compatriot Cantabrigians (ARMITAGE, 2004), or by the richness of hermeneutics that would potentialize their critiques about the neglect of moral issues of the scientific approach (EPP, 1999). Therefore, Armitage is right when he points out that, despite intellectual history’s late international turn, IR has taken even longer to engage with the history of international thought as a subject in its own right and with a proper theoretical/methodological canon (ARMITAGE, 2013a). Notwithstanding, today it is clear to IR students, like Alan Finlayson pointed, that (FINLAYSON, 2007, p. 553):

British scholars of the history of political thought have made an immense contribution to interpretivism in the history of ideas through careful attention to the nuanced connections between context, language, and intention, conceptualizing political texts and statements as forms of action that can be explicated by being placed fully into the conventional linguistic context from which they derive and to which they also contribute.

Despite Holden also showed his hope that Skinner's contextualism could contribute to the research of international thought, he declared that "its potential has so far been underestimated within IR (partly because it has been misunderstood by some of IR's own disciplinary historians)" (HOLDEN, 2002, p. 255). But even more timidly has been the reception of the German tradition of *begriffsgeschichte* in the literature of IR. Iver Neumann, for example, in complaining about the deficit in the discipline to study the constitutive role of language advanced by constructivists like Wendt, pointed out that "one particularly promising remedy for this state of affairs is to employ the work of Bakhtin and, perhaps even more appropriately, German conceptual historians (for example, Koselleck)" (NEUMANN, 2003, p. 139). Stefano Guzzini has also done great contributions with the Koselleckian approach in his problematization of the concept of power in international politics and the historical construction of realist thought in IR (2002; 2005; 2012; 2020). Today, many more exemplary contributions are available.

In the opening issue of the *International Theory* journal in 2009, the editors Duncan Snidal and Wendt celebrated that four decades after Wight's complaint about the absence of an international theory, things had clearly changed. "As a result of these multi-faceted and continuing developments, compared to the barren theoretical landscape of Wight's day, IR is today, if anything, over-supplied with theories of every conceivable variety." (SNIDAL; WENDT, 2009, p. 4). As argued above, Wight's complaint was not exactly directed to theoretical studies of the international polity in his days, but mostly a call a theoretical development through a genuine historical investigation of international political ideas. Snidal and Wendt, even if they seem to be involving the other, more positivist (with Wendt's small "p" again) definition of international theory, they do acknowledge the relevance of the intellectual-historical approach to theorizing about the international. The editorial invited approaches not only from "Formal or qualitative theory, empirical theory, social theory, legal and normative theory, conceptual analysis, philosophical reflection on the epistemology, ontology, or methodology of IT, practical ethics," and last, but never least, "history of international political thought" (SNIDAL; WENDT, 2009, p. 9). Still, it is very important to take into consideration that the value of intellectual history to the theorization of world politics must be a corollary of its achievements, not an immediate goal. As Armitage

proclaimed the end of the rift, of the mutual ignorance of intellectual history and IR (ARMITAGE, 2013, p. 26):

International thought now means less a body of authoritative doctrine to be deployed for present purposes than the past tense of international thinking as the activity of theoretical reflection upon international affairs. In this, it has paralleled the contextualist history of political thought as practised in the past fifty years.

This is the case, even if present issues are the inspiration for practicing intellectual history of the international. Its result may be precious to theoretical efforts concerned with the most relevant challenges in contemporary world politics. This is not about putting the classics before the same challenges of today, but to illuminate the current situation by way of contrasting what was thought and how it was thought then as something constrained by the different linguistic, ideological, social, and political contexts, emphasizing their actual discontinuities, rather than invented continuities. This approach is unavoidably critical, for it averts the tendency to imply sameness in the linguistic component of social order and justify an unalterable situation to be conformed with (KEENE, 2005, pp. 17-18). This thick engagement with the history of international thought may help to present agents and intellectuals to understand how their own context acts as a constraint in their thought possibilities and sharpen, as a consequence, the ways to think about the political questions looming on the horizon (BAIN, NARDIN, 2017; KEENE, 2017).

This chapter presented developments made within distinct settings of academic incursions – sometimes taken as incommensurable – connected by the ideational turn in IR. Social constructivists became mainstream, though maybe only the thin representatives of it. Though French post-structuralism, like Foucault's or Barthes's, is more influential in the global/American IR than, surprisingly, in France (HOLDEN, 2002), it is still too much misunderstood. Imprecisely understood as disavowing any pretensions of a rigorous study of reality due to their understanding of the power/knowledge complexes that consequently lead to the current post-truth moment, post-structuralism did engage in resolute historical-sociological inquiries to find and attribute explanations and reflective critique of society as a history of the discourses constituting effective political orders (HANLON, 2018). This is coherent with a thick constructivist comprehension of the intersubjective social ontology and the intersubjective epistemology of social inquiry. For their part, the contextualist intellectual history of the Cambridge School has met some resistance in IR disciplinary history (SCHMIDT, 1994; 2002), and *begriffsgeschichte* has not been significantly noted by the

discipline yet. This investigation seems to be a useful opportunity to cross these various contributions into a coherent approach to a new historical investigation of the American development of the concept of “realism” in the debates about international politics. However, this dialogue is far from being original, in the sense that the risk of incommensurability has already been ventured by others. In that regard, the organizers of the 2013 Summer School Introduction course to Conceptual History, organized by *Concepta* – International Research School in Conceptual History and Political Thought –, described in the syllabus that “doing conceptual history, therefore, demands familiarity with a variety of linguistically oriented approaches to discourse and ideology, as well as to rhetoric”. Besides the obvious reference to Koselleck, it explicitly indicates not only Skinner and Pocock, but also Foucault.⁶

More recently, Or Rosenboim and Liane Hartnett reinforced the perception that those intellectual strains do have much to dialogue in the production of relevant investigations on the history of international political thought (ROSENBOIM; HARTNETT, 2021, p. 102):

Conceptual historical work at its core connotes a linguistic engagement with the past. This work tends to draw chiefly, albeit not exclusively, on methodologies championed by Reinhart Koselleck and Michel Foucault. If the former is typified by a turn to *Begriffsgeschichte*, the latter entails an engagement with genealogies. If the former is characterized by an exploration of the shifts in meaning over history, the latter analyses discourses or the ways in which power constructs knowledge over time. ... Both methods seek to denaturalize concepts and reveal their historic contingency. Although they vary in focal range, these approaches are not dissimilar to what is commonly (and problematically) referred to as the ‘Cambridge School’, which takes as its starting point our embeddedness in speech acts and language games.

That gets more consistent if the Skinner to be considered is that of the later departure from the centrality of authorial intentions towards the relevance attributed to long-span conceptual transformations. An intellectual-conceptual critical history points out that while no author is entirely intellectually independent, it also allows focus on specific individuals who had uneven relevance in the conception, translation, transfer, or advocacy of an idea over time (JACOBSEN, 2003, p. 42). As a matter of fact, if there is a central concern unifying these thinkers is that all of them – Foucault, Barthes, Skinner, and Koselleck – had the naturalization processes of socio-political phenomena were depleted from history and the use of concepts depoliticized.

The themes presented in this chapter guide the empirical and analytical historical quest ahead. Extending this debate could become meaningless, as John Gunnell suggests that “a meaningful epistemology of social science and relevant methods and forms of inquiry can

⁶ The syllabus may be found at http://www.concepta-net.org/introduction_conceptual_history_2013>. Accessed on: Mar 23, 2020.

only emerge as the entailment of a substantive theory of social phenomena.” (GUNNELL, 2011, p. 1469). Accordingly, in the following chapters, as the investigation definitely unwinds, more precise theoretical-methodological arguments will be further formulated as particular discussions urge so.

Chapter II - The Imaginary and the Typologies of American Foreign Policy

In a sense the whole story can be hung around the fate of the cultural Enlightenment which came to America with the First World War and its aftermath.

Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, 1955.

Foreign policy studies are sometimes understood not as a subfield of IR, but as a co-subfield with IR in the same discipline of political science in the United States. Be as it may, no matter from which side of the agent-structure problem one tackles the theorization challenge (WENDT, 1987), IR theories always have something to say not only about the conditions, constraints, and changes in world politics and the inter-state structures over the behavior of states and other political actors. Obviously, they always have some hypothesis for the behavior of its main agents, states – then, foreign policy. Like it or not, that makes IR approaches like realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, and others, practically the approaches for studying the foreign policy of different states. Nevertheless, each national foreign policy academic community may have something particular to add to this general theoretical debate, identifying not only the theoretical consistency with the case in hand but, especially, the shortcomings that call for idiosyncratic explanations that usually relate to the “anomaly” to individual-level explanations and arguments on the cultural, ideological, normative constitution of the reality under investigation. When it comes to the study of the foreign policy traditions developed in the country that coincidentally and notoriously hosts the core of the global discipline of IR, it seems that little innovation could be added from its national subfield.

However, a big elephant stands within that restricted room for surprises. That is the fact that, while realism is vastly claimed to be the dominant paradigm of the discipline of IR (not with some more recent contestations earlier indicated), in the field of Foreign Policy in the US it is usually prostrated, only to become relevant as an IR residual explanation, not as a genuine contribution for their foreign policy (at least, if it is not preceded by the qualification of its *Americanness*). Therefore, this chapter maps not the presence of the concept but reconstructs a part of the meaning of realism in/on American foreign policy by studying its absence. It identifies the histories of the foundational values of the country and the generous

variety of typologies made available to produce descriptive and causal inferences of the behavior of the US in the investigation and analysis of the country's foreign policy. Their authors have effectively (maybe not intentionally) made it possible to study the state's international conduct without necessarily making reference to the realist theory of IR – especially, not as an American foreign policy tradition. The goal is far from the exhaustion of the available literature, which is absurdly immense. It offers just a selected literature review aimed at mapping the conceptual space in which “realism” finds itself in reflection and practice.

The first two sections ahead deal with the most pervasive general components of the American political discourse about its identity in the rank of nations: exceptionalism and liberalism. Even with very consistent critique available in rising quantity and quality, they are continuously restated by politicians today, as if they have defined the polity left by the Founding Fathers as if they have consciously been passed through generations of Americans as constitutive of its domestic character and international behavior, giving them an impressive continuity, in which variations do exist but are less relevant. The third section explores contributions that looked more precisely at those variations in systematic ways, guaranteeing their analytical difference, even if they (mostly) do not evade the exceptionalist and liberal character of the American polity and its related national political thought. It dives into some of the most popular conceptual alternatives arising from the encounter of the practitioners' language and the specialized academic discourses for the classification of the patterns in foreign policy creeds and proceedings, ideal types conceived in terms of typologies.

Exceptionalism and the Study of continuity and Change of the United States foreign policy

Traditionally characterized by a behavioral approach, the study of foreign policy has gained much with IR's ideational turn in the post-Cold War moment. In a very competent bibliographical review of the subfield to be properly called “Foreign Policy Analysis,” Valerie Hudson (2005) has accurately argued that it had positive support to the confirmation process of IR theories, either because human behavior is the intersection of material and ideational factors claimed to explain the states' international affairs, or because it balances the overestimation of structure over agency in IR theories (2005). As the very self-introductory

text of the academic journal's site that dubs the concept in its proper name, it is an "actor-specific focus" specialization, in which the study of ideas may not receive an exactly inviting treatment:

The underlying, often implicit argument is that the source of international politics and change in international politics is human beings, acting individually or in groups. In the simplest terms, foreign policy analysis is the study of the process, effects, causes, or outputs of foreign policy decision-making in either a comparative or case-specific manner.

The present study would not be of direct interest to the journal's public, if not to the subfield. Successful foreign policy analysis contributions involving ideational factors are understood as those which effectively connect them to particular relevant behaviors in the cases under investigation. This thesis does not aim at such a contribution, it is not interested in any particular decision. It proposes a conceptual history of the reception and early development of "realism" in the studies of IR and US foreign policy, and a constitutive analysis linking the contemporary form, content, and purpose of the discipline of IR to that foundational moment. Its results may be of interest to foreign policy analysts in the sense that it may reveal the ideational/linguistic context that has first made possible the understanding of particular speeches, decisions, and actions in foreign policy and the more or less intentional performance of those actors in relation to such semantic structures.

As argued earlier, in chapter one, it takes a sociological, constructivist understanding of IR to incorporate a full understanding of how ideas are relevant to the explanation of human agency. From the still mostly instrumental contributions of neoliberal institutionalists, (such as GOLDSTEIN; KEOHANE, 1993), to those more reflexive efforts, reunited under the umbrella concept of social constructivism – the more specific Constructivist approach (ADLER, 1997) and the post-structuralist critique (ASHLEY, 1996) in IR. It is about the notion of a constitutive explanation, long defended by Alexander Wendt (1998), and applied to American foreign policy by David Campbell, whose understanding of how descriptive/explanatory typologies are relevant not only as referential but constitutive of them makes it more explicit: "Given that a poststructuralist attitude makes no distinction between theory and practice (regarding theory as practice), postwar US foreign policy should be constituted by the same formulation." (CAMPBELL, 1990, p. 269). Therefore, conceptions of national

roles do not simply describe understandings of reality – they are constitutive acts of reality itself.

Campbell has advanced important efforts to study the distinctive imaginaries that legitimates each state as an actor of world politics. The “imagined community” that founds a state, as developed by Benedict Anderson (1983), only exists as it is continually represented by actively speaking, writing, reading, and listening about it. What makes Campbell’s such a valuable contribution, is that this imagination is never a static event, for states – as any institution – “do not possess pre-discursive stable identities ... because the performative nature of identity can never be fully revealed.” And, as a consequence, “states are (and have to be) always in process of becoming.” (CAMPBELL, 1998, p. 12). This notion of an imaginary of states – rarely embodying a perfect prior form of community self-identification, always struggling with aligning multiple, diverse identity claims that are permanently potentially centrifugal of such political project – has developed into a more precise analytical concept, the “security/foreign policy imaginary.” Jutta Weldes defined it as “a structure of well-established meanings and social relations out of which representations of the world of international relations are created.” (WELDES, 1999, p. 10) Stefano Guzzini has further developed the concept, heeding “interpretive predispositions of the foreign policy expert system.” (GUZZINI, 2012, p. 52). Though the concept of “strategic culture” (as in Johnston, 1998) is very relevant to the general inquiry on foreign policy ideas, Guzzini argues that it has tended to produce analyses focused on the relationship between ideas and behaviors, while the “imaginary” is set to analyze the relation between ideas and identity (GUZZINI, 2012; 2017).

Therefore, the goal of this inquiry has been described as a constitutive inference on the place the concept of realism currently occupies in the American foreign policy imaginary and in the global/American academic IR as owing much to developments in that same country at the beginning of the twentieth century. In order to realize that, it is important to establish what discursive elements – those closer and those farther from consensus, from that alignment defining the nation-state ideal type – the dominant narratives in the literature point as effectively existing as continuing discursive representations of the imagination of the American foreign policy community. It is an important duty in the study of the imaginary of any country, but of utmost pertinence herein, for, as Campbell put it, in “no state is this

condition as central as it is for America. ... America is the imagined community par excellence.” (CAMPBELL, 1998, p. 91)

Exceptionalism is the usual starting point of such a query. It is the belief that a perennial normative commitment has defined the exceptional stand of the country among human civilizations. Far from being consensually commendatory of conceptual reality, there is disagreement if this is a bonus or a burden to the country’s political reality. Not to mention the empirical challenges to such a self-definition against the poor results of the American society, mostly outwards, but in terms of its own society. The general academic acquiescence here seems to be the effect of this exceptional discourse over the lesser significance of foreign policy variations over time, for they would be more of the same.

Somewhat closely, a handful of other countries also experience this kind of national identification discourse (NYMALM; PLAGEMANN, 2019), so the phenomenon may not be limited to the US. Still, the contents and the effective use of public justifications of the exceptional “nature” (or social “(C)onstitution”) of any country are only accessible through case-by-case historical-interpretative studies (followed by proper comparative historical ones, and broad systematization efforts). Then, going deeper than the simple claim about uniqueness or specialty, and despite the risky conceptual definition that may be enacting power into the referent of political dynamics, American exceptionalism may be defined at first as the belief that the United States was established with a clear purpose of overcoming the political miseries of the “civilized world” political experience then. It is an identity claim, differentiating the American project from the Old World, from their monarchical arbitrariness over citizens to the interstate rivalry that drags European states into grievous wars time and again. Not only the belief refers to the purpose, but also to the achievement of that ideal along (most of) its historical path experience. And lastly, American exceptionalism entails a cosmopolitan notion of world leadership, it assumes itself to be the lighthouse of human progress (RESTAD, 2016; NYMALM and PLAGEMANN, 2019).

Despite the first use of the adjective “exceptional” to describe the country took place in Tocqueville’s reflection during his visit to the US in 1835, it was not before the mid-twentieth century that the “ism” became a full member of the American political liturgy. Its history seems to follow a typical plot of an empowerment move towards an earlier dismissed

concept: initially a pejorative reference, the term gets positively appropriated by the ones initially being diminished, making it a powerful identification nexus of the group. The historian Walter McDougall (2012) noted that the first uses of it in the early twentieth century expressed contempt towards the American society for the fact that both the Catholic Church and the Socialist International were not able to extend their broad transnational influence specifically over it, therefore understood as an anomaly. Yet, amidst the nationalist anti-communist public fever in the aurora of the Cold War, “the Stalinist term of derision” evolved “into a patriotic badge of honor...stamped...over all of American history.” (McDOUGALL, 2012, p.3). In order to produce its authoritative claim over the meaning of being American before rest of the world, the reinvented concept would have to dug deep in the country’s past, linking not only George Washington and the founding fathers into the tradition, but even earlier colonial leaders as John Winthrop, the Massachusetts Bay colony’s first governor, and his famous 1630 sermon *A model of Christian Charity*, and its even more famous quotation on the “City upon a Hill” (apud McDOUGALL, 1997, p.17).

In a recent study particularly dedicated to the sermon’s place in the claim of American exceptionalism, Abran Van Engen claims that, among the many alternative stories to America’s foundation, it is the Pilgrims’ the preferred one when someone operates within the identity of America, the exceptional. He demonstrates that the use of the metaphor by Winthrop – a Puritan, not Pilgrim colonist, who crossed the Atlantic on the *Arabella*, not earlier on the *Mayflower*, with the second wave of settlers of the Plymouth colony – did not reverberate within the ruling Protestant discourse of his own time. It was only given relevant social credit was discovered in archives by New England scholars and spread by historical societies being formed across the country in the wake of a national history movement amidst the spirit of the celebrations around the bicentenary of the pilgrims’ arrival (with a small “p” that indicates only the attitude of fleeing from Britain to construct freedom in a promised land). “The Puritans were not the first Europeans to settle in North America, but they were the first to undertake the logistical work and ideological justifications required for long-term colonization.” (CAMPBELL, 1998, p. 107) Thus, the narrative conveniently fit a wider social demand for national cultural independence, in the context of the post-Anglo-American War of 1812. The fact that *Democracy in America* was first published within few months of difference from the sermon (therefore most surely it was not accessed by its author), also

indicated the American origins in Puritanism concluded from the many home-literature books and the accounts of the many residents he talked through his US trip across the country, and not only in New England, was evidence that the narrative already enjoyed a national quasi-official status (Van ENGEN, 2020).

Though the plot of *Pilgrims* is one of escaping the British King to find the promised land, the 1830s celebration of the sermon aimed at investing in the centrality of the nation's Anglo-Saxon inheritance. British descendants still made up a strong majority of the country, especially in that northeastern part of the territory, and that discourse revealed their anxiety for the "racial" future of the country. Preserving "virtue depended on maintaining that racial and cultural purity" in a time of a progressive influx of "Scotch and Germans" since the Revolution, which still made for less than a fifth of the English descendants, and therefore, a considered purer Anglo-Saxon "race" than that one on the other side of the ocean (Van ENGEN, 2020, Ch. 11). Terms like "civilization," and its linkage with the "English race" entered the political lexicon while that New England narrative became History of the national foundation. But the sermon itself, and its reference to a "City upon a hill," was soon forgotten again, practically disappearing for more than two centuries. It emerged from obscurity and finally reached its current popularity at the opening of the Cold War, when the US defined its Soviet enemy but had yet to define itself, in a national identity crisis according to Van Engen's work. The relevance of his investigation is not to diminish the practical relevance the Puritan origins achieved anyway in American politics but to enable critical awareness of meanings that may be brought with its choice as the main narrative of the American foundation at the cost of rival alternatives. It chooses a myth of a cohesive white British ascendancy, committed with civil and religious freedom over political control, while forgetting the massacre of native inhabitants or the slavery of African peoples.

The ideological nature of American exceptionalism means it is amenable to bearing these and other historical inconsistencies. The American experience in the world must be selectively forgotten to push an untruly peaceful and benevolent history (WALT, 2011), to sustain "the belief that whereas other countries pursued national interests, the United States was motivated by a higher sense of mission in conducting its foreign policy." (HASTEDT, 2004: 16). Little research is necessary to acquaint with the fact that much prior to the dawn of the so-called "American century," since its foundation indeed, the US has got involved with

international disputes, more or less directly, more or less violently, not only to guarantee its freedom from the British King, but to impose its territorial claims over the Britons, Native Americans, Spanish, French, Canadians, Mexicans, Hawaiians, Filipinos, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans, to secure control over the Panama isthmus and later channel, to curb oil exploration in Venezuela, and so on. All of these few examples arising along the country's first hundred and twenty-five years, therefore. Moreover, as ideology, exceptionalism it is also not affected by logical contradictions such as the notion of being a historical exception among humankind at the same time that it is about a universal project fit to all humankind. Glenn Hastedt's *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy* has then concluded that exceptionalism is "a penchant for unilateral action" (HASTEDT, 2004: viii) that helped save the US position in world politics much beyond material conditions.

As exceptionalism exceeds the material possibilities for an explanation of the US foreign policy, the explanatory distinctiveness of this identity claims over decision-makers goes much beyond mere instrumentality. It priorly constitutes their thoughts and language in the socialization process of the self as belonging to a larger cultural tradition (even if this community sharing these values is all about a limited, elite group, and not the mass public). The same suggestion is found in the text for the entry in the *Encyclopedia of the American Foreign Policy* (McCRISKEN, 2002, p. 79) when, in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the American reaction over Afghanistan and Iraq, foreign policy scholars and international scholars in US studies showed increasing interest on the concept:

Foreign observers in particular often regard with contempt or confusion the use of exceptionalist rhetoric by U.S. policymakers. But if we are to truly understand the ways in which U.S. foreign policy is conducted, it is essential that we take seriously the intellectual and cultural framework in which it is made.

Definitely, to these politicians and bureaucrats, it works as a mental framework guaranteeing the best intentions of their actions even again a dramatic failure, from the start. Its influence must be understood through a mixture of constitutive and causal-intervenient explanations, in order to perceive its presence as instrumentality, but first, as myth. As McDougall suggested (2012: 4):

In sum, the myth of American Exceptionalism ... entered our lexicon as historical gloss for the campaign to persuade a skeptical, war-weary people that global commitments such as the UN, Truman Doctrine,

and NATO were not really a break with tradition, but a fulfillment of the nation's hoariest, holiest calling. Exceptionalism was not an archetype of the Promised Land but an artifact of the Crusader State.

However, his use of a myth tends to implicate falsehood, while a mythological approach secures the ideological reality as a constitutive phenomenon of American foreign policy (at a certain point in time, with some variation in relevance and meaning with it). In spite of all the critical and multifaceted inquiries that have offered cumulated deconstructions from those inconsistent empirical records and frail logic abstractions – the Pilgrims were not feeling part of an exceptional mission; Winthrop himself was a Puritan, not a Pilgrim; he was talking about the Church, not the Nation; this story entailed the forgettance of Jamestown colonists; the later associated Manifest Destiny was a regular justification of bad conduct in wars, and of territorial expansion and annexation too; and the fact that it was not originally intended as an apologetical, self-laudatory resource – the exceptional character of the American political thought tradition is still definitely present at current foreign policy public opinion contends. The exposure of its artificiality, its social construction, is never enough to deconstruct its effective reality. Broad social processes at play, are able to construct, reconstruct and deconstruct the explanatory burden of ideas and institutions.

In this sense, it is interesting that this discourse that has already passed its apex of popularity, if we consider the latest public opinion large surveys touching on the theme. In 2020, for the first time, the *Public Religion Research Institute* verified the belief that “God has granted the U.S. a special place in human history” rating below 50%, a sharp fall from 2016 – 57% to 40% –, and even sharper if it is considered the interval between 2013 and 2021 results – 64% to 44% –, although there was at least some recovery from the previous survey result (PRRI, 2020; 2021). If the divine providence is taken out of the question, the numbers of this exceptionalist belief, especially in terms of its foreign service, remains high. Almost three-quarters of Americans (74%, and higher than 86% if only the white religiously affiliated population is considered) agree that “America has always been a force for good, ” and 58% answer that “there has never been a time they were not proud to be an American.” All along these numbers, the never surprising 15 to 20-point distance between Democrats and the more faithful Republicans (PRRI, 2021). Another, more recent survey from the *Eurasia Group Foundation* points out an 8-point fall in the belief that the US is an exceptional nation, be it for what it represents or for what it has done for the benefit of the world, and a corresponding rise in the numbers of those with a relativist view of the US, just a normal

nationalist nation, guided by its own interests, now in 39% of the respondents. The survey also registers the same trivial distance by party affiliation, a similar difference between youngsters and elders (with 55% of the first group of 18-29 years old not believing in American exceptional character), and more sympathy towards the belief by women and those who served the military (HANNA et al, 2022).

This public opinion apparent reorientation matches how the last two presidents dealt with the idea as if their electoral goals as politicians were directly involved. The high point of this polemic with Barack Obama was the reaction of the Tea Party to the declaration of the president at his first NATO summit in France in 2009. There, he dared to relativize that deepest identity of the American polity during a press conference: “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as the Brits believe in British exceptionalism, and the Greeks in Greek exceptionalism.” (Obama quoted in FALLOWS, 2009). That Obama’s first European trip certainly helped him get that year’s Nobel Peace Prize, but to the Tea Partier Sarah Palin, it was to be mocked as the “apology tour” (GLUECK, 2012). As another commentator rushed, “President Barack Obama has finished the second leg of his international confession tour. In less than 100 days, he has apologized on three continents for what he views as the sins of America and his predecessors.” (ROVE, 2009). All of that served the hunger of birther conspiracists against their “un-American” enemies like Obama. By 2011, when half of its electorate believed the president was not born on American soil, and legal challenges even attempted to dislodge him (SERWER, 2020).

Obviously, the president would have to respond negatively to the accusation of a lack of commitment to such an American credo all the way long, reaffirming his belief and proactiveness in the promotion of his country’s uniqueness in every opportunity (he was pushed into). Through the race of 2012, the duty laid on Republican primaries’ presidential candidates, in many ways, was to occupy the place of the American exceptionalism champion against their outspoken suspicion of Obama’s European values (JAFFE, 2015). The year before, Mitt Romney, defending his leadership in the Republican preferences for the next presidential elections, would brag: “This century must be an American century ... I believe we are an exceptional country, with a unique destiny and role in the world. ... I will never, ever apologize for America.” (BACEVICH, 2011). Though Obama has explicit references to the exceptionalist belief, and specifically from the pilgrims’ myth, since the time of his rise to

national politics, the electoral battle for this American identity in his second winning race led him towards a more explicit dedication to that belief. If Obama was able to defend himself in 2012, he could not do the same for Hillary Clinton in 2016 against the solid birtherer, Trump and his “America first” mode of exceptionalism. Even the 44th’s remarkable discourse on American uniqueness during the Democratic National Convention that year could not help. Nor could *The Atlantic*’s comments on it, affirming that “his idea of exceptionalism is far closer to Reagan’s ‘city on a hill’ than the dystopia Trump described at his nominating convention – an existence so grim that a savior is needed to make America great again” (FOURNIER, 2016). Still, Trump’s ultra-conservative reading of Americanness was the one to master the zeitgeist of that political moment.

Van Engen (2020) argues Trump’s America First is not any legitimate reading of American Exceptionalism. In fact, Trump himself disdained it, since before the Republican primaries. He understood that was the kind of message the majority of American voters were waiting for. In a Texan conservative convention in 2015, he could not be more straightforward: “I don’t like the term. I’ll be honest with you. People say, ‘Oh he’s not patriotic.’ Look, if I’m a Russian, or I’m a German, or I’m a person we do business with, why, you know, I don’t think it’s a very nice term. ‘We’re exceptional; you’re not.’” (Apud in SARGENT, 2016). It is a rival reading to the contemporary identity crisis America lives in the post-post-Cold War era. For the historian, the rise of Trump’s America meant the decline of a Reaganite city-upon-a-hill exceptionalism a polarization that marks not only the growing distance between Democrats and Republicans but a polarization from within the GOP’s electorate. Against the exceptionalism of traditional Republican, leaders, from Reagan to Romney, “his rhetoric has offered no moral vision of freedom, democracy, opportunity, immigration, asylum, or any other traditional term of American exceptionalism.” (Van ENGEN, 2020). As one news piece confirmed by then: “This puts Trump at odds with many Republicans who have spent years criticizing President Obama for his alleged failure to speak out on behalf of American exceptionalism.” (SARGENT, 2016). Yet, at the same time, both American exceptionalism and America First are religion-based discourses. Van Engen points that the force of the Puritan-pilgrim myth of American exceptionalism, by carrying the religious teleology into the American statehood, is to blame for the reactionary religious

fervor behind the America First movement. McDougall quite anticipated it in 2012, by arguing that (2012, 7):

Such faith has its uses, for instance, to motivate a free and disparate people to rally and sacrifice in times of crisis. But it verges on idolatry from the standpoint of Biblical religion and—if exploited for partisan purposes—verges on heresy from the standpoint of civil religion.

Surely, Trump is history for now. Another four years and a global pandemic in between set the doom for the denialist Trump. Joe Biden's election, a politician more devoted to those reigning values of American exceptionalism than even the former democrat president Obama, attests to the present longevity of the exceptionalist identity (LYNCH, 2020). Notwithstanding, this latest victory is far from pointing to a guaranteed future of relevance to it. Obama and Trump themselves, have spent a long time reaffirming their creed or retracting from any critique on the special singularity of their country in many opportunities since their particular clashing moments with the idea. Take Obama in his 2020 memoir suggestively called "A promised land":, where he remembers that "as a young man, I chafed against books that dismissed the notion of American exceptionalism; got into long, drawn-out arguments with friends who insisted the American hegemon was the root of oppression worldwide." He had to counterbalance the sourly recalled "apology tour" accusations during his mandate (Obama, 2020). In the same year, an electoral one, Trump's second-term candidacy agenda had the item "Teach American Exceptionalism" as one of two educational priorities, to which a report noted: "the full embrace of American exceptionalism marks a sharp turn from his statements five years ago, even if the doctrine was promoted in the 2016 GOP Platform." (GAUDIANO, 2020).

There is no turning back after Trump's wreck on American Exceptionalism. It has made explicit the new identity crisis of the US in the world. As Stephen Wertheim argues, if he exposed the imprudence and utopia of the world's social reengineering, his "America First" alternative is imminently conflictual, and does not conform with the challenges of world politics in this century, from the threat of Nuclear Armageddon to the tragedy of forced migration and the dangers of climate change. Therefore, "by repudiating exceptionalism, Trump has unintentionally invited the country to reimagine its place in the world—to find a

vision, perhaps, that is neither hierarchical nor conflictual.” (WERTHEIM, 2017). Until then, as Vobeke Tjalve and Michael Williams argue, “exceptionalism remains crucial – not only because of its continuing prominence in political debate, but also for its potential as a window onto the intellectual history of American foreign policy and important, but generally ignored or overlooked, trajectories within it.” (TJALVE; WILLIAMS, 2017, p. 96). The brief historical indications of the place this vision of uniqueness has had in the US foreign policy not only inform the offerings of typologies to its historical practices, but it reveals a history that ran parallel to that the concept of “realism,” forcing a contextual awareness of a *begriffsgeschichte* on both possible targets.

Liberalism, International: the other face of American Exceptionalism

The claims exceptionalism makes on the divine providence of the US – its identity and its behavior among other states – do not translate themselves into the content of principles that specific political projects of this exceptional country must follow and spread. This normative content is filled by a complementary idea, that one stating the United States was constituted as a liberal nation. Liberal values – economically and politically, individual property, and free elections – define the space of domestic politics in institutional, behavioral, and first, intellectual domains. While exceptionalism contains the fundamental claim about a communitarian space identified by uniqueness, by its relativity, liberalism inputs it a meaning of movement towards a cosmopolitan, universalist telos. Furthermore, is not only about space, but time: it is not only about the redefinition of future expectations, but the redefinition of the past, the inherited lessons from experimented political processes and generations of intellectual elites down to the Founding Fathers and the Declaration of Independence, if not to the Compact agreed by the fleeing Pilgrims on the Mayflower. For sure, that kind of argument on the continuity of American international identity and engagements can only be derived through a presentist, theoretical concern on understanding not the peculiar happenings in history, the facts of the past *per se*, but a holistic understanding of the American experience as a whole. Still, the resistance of the interest in such engagements with this kind of Whig history up to, at least, the powerful argument presented by Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), if not to the continuously raging critical denunciations of the *Liberal Dreams* still in control of American foreign policy

(MEARSHEIMER, 2018), are all part of the mythological explanation to the practical relevance of this creed.

As a matter of fact, the liberal element entered the (hi)story at that same fulcrum moment of conceptual invention during the early Cold War, when the concept of the exceptionalism of the American experiment and the narrative of the country's foundation as "the City upon a Hill" found their way together. America's liberal tradition thesis successfully fused the inner universalist-consequentialist logic of the exceptionalist discourse and the argument defining liberalism as the essence (if not the whole) of the national political tradition. Among other contemporaries, the work of Louis Hartz (1955) is usually cited as being responsible for its systematization, which became orthodoxy in American political theory at least for the next decade. As it happened with the idea of "exceptionalism" itself, initially this "liberal America" thesis was not intending to flatter with home political culture. Hartz did not write about a supposedly superior ethical stand of the country, a point which important citations to his work promptly recognized. One wrote that "Hartz and other 'American exceptionalists' have offered insights about what happens when the liberal tradition confronts an obdurate foreign reality." (PACKENHAM, 1973, p. xv). Another, a former student of his, was even more emphatic: "Although *The Liberal Tradition in America* might appear to reflect the supposed complacency of the 1950s, in fact, his whole book represented a challenge to American thinking. He was trying to expose a fixed, dogmatic liberalism in American life." (ROAZEN, 1988). The so-called "consensus school" that had been formed around Hartz's contribution led to many shallow interpretations of the thesis as a celebration of American political culture, while Hartz's own sympathies fell for a more diverse, plural intellectual political environment.

For Hartz, differently from European democracies where the resisting feudal aristocracy defined the social struggles of modernity, no "revolutionary tradition," nor any "tradition of reaction" has been formed in American political thought. His inspiration for Tocqueville's work on *Democracy in America* was clear (*The Liberal Tradition's* epigraph is a sentence of the book). In fact, many others, especially foreigners observing America – Hartz felt non-Americans were best positioned "tell Americans the truth about themselves" (1955, p. 369) –, held that kind of conclusion, while they focused observation from other concepts before Hartz's liberalism introduction, as a reviewer emphasized: "Tocqueville

remained convinced that American society was held together not by its political institutions but by its widely shared values and moeurs, what Hartz would call its ‘liberal ethos’” (DIGGINS, 1988, p. 363). Anyway, for this Tocqueville-Hartz’s thesis, this pervading presence, and those abysmal absences, are explained by an early national “absolute and irrational attachment” to a “Lockian” political philosophy defining individual property rights from work and entrepreneurship, while articulating individual freedom, with constitutional government, and religious tolerance. Absent from its contextual *raison d’être* – the confrontation with the two other modern political ideologies, conservatism, and socialism – even liberalism was drained out of its philosophical critical power. Every particular ideational and policy disagreement were engulfed in “a kind of self-completing mechanism, which ensures the universality of the liberal idea” (HARTZ, 1955, p. 5). This kind of account – later properly called Hartzian – represented a change in the way American ideologies were studied before. Politics were mostly understood as an agonist space of confronting ideas that led the country from its political design to the development of the polity. So the standard understanding of the Founding Fathers’ lessons was one of competing, even conflicting views of the problems to be faced and the strategies to be deployed by the nascent statehood. Not one of teleological consensus while disagreement persisted on minor issues, a consequence of the popularization of this thesis.

Still, his immediate goal was to consolidate an explanation for the difficulties not only of the socialist movements but of the conservatives as well, in gaining relevant political space in the US. The same was the fate of alien ideologies not coalescing with those consensual liberal principles: their introduction was prohibitive, if not wicked. If it was good news, for the extremist expressions of liberalism’s rivals – fascism and communism – could never poison the American political soul, that also meant the permanent risk of its own kind of absolutism. That was Hartz’s overall intent with the book: to advise against the dangerously illiberal consequences of a social-intellectual-political framework in which liberalism is absolute, not finding concurrence with nor balanced by its original rivals left behind in the Old World: conservatism and socialism. And this should be the main reason to understand the US exceptionalism from European political developments: America lacked the maturation of a feudal aristocracy against which liberalism (and socialism) rose. Any movement inspired by those rival ideologies would get treated as they were (according to the “liberal tradition”):

offshore conspiracies. Accordingly, the consequent frequent violations committed by the liberal state against democratic and human rights in its domestic and foreign politics are to be understood as collateral damages of its “red scares”: “hysteria at home” and “an irrational anticommunist frenzy” abroad (HARTZ, 1955, p. 5).

As with the idea of exceptionalism – in fact, for their symbiotic relation – the “liberal America” thesis hegemony profoundly marks the subfield of US foreign policy studies. Rival political strategies in this realm came to be understood as a matter of variations of the “exceptionalism” theme. Therefore, in this liberal framework, both the irrational periods of plain isolationism and its following rounds of – also irrational – Wilsonian crusading missions illustrate the uncontested liberal tradition of America in the foreign policy decision-making process. Hartz could hardly be more provocative about this (consensual) lack of self-critique and reflectiveness (HARTZ, 1955, p. 286):

The explanation is actually not hard to find. Embodying an absolute moral ethos, “Americanism,” once it is driven on to the world stage by events, is inspired willy-nilly to reconstruct the very alien things it tries to avoid. Its messianism is the polar counterpart of its isolationism, which is why Harding and Wilson are both “Americanist” thinkers, and why, as Mr. George Kennan has recently noted, Americans seem to oscillate between fleeing from the rest of the world and embracing it with too ardent a passion. An absolute national morality is inspired either to withdraw from “alien” things or to transform them: it cannot live in comfort constantly by their side.

In terms of domestic politics confrontations over the appropriate foreign policy imaginary (and, therefore, the best electoral gains to be taken from it), the issue becomes not one of different traditions – isolationists vs. interventionists, imperialists vs. anti-imperialists – but of who is able to get “a stronger grip on ‘Americanism’.” (HARTZ, 1955, p. 289). To American philosophy it meant that reflection and critique were not as demanding as “pragmatism” – the main indigenous conceptual contribution to the world philosophical community, but which, in that particular national context, meant practically its whole practice. In that sense, though the thesis is usually called for its overambitious causal arguments, it is also praised for its comprehensive understanding only such a reflective and critical work could offer. However, it was exactly this context of a “colossal liberal absolutism” that progressively undervalued that kind of contribution that, to Hartz, could lead the country towards “the death by atrophy of the philosophic impulse,” contradictorily against the rich tradition of political theory (in the very peculiar American use of the term, i.e. the study of normative strata of political dynamics) founding the United States in the late seventeenth hundreds (HARTZ, 1955, p. 285). Maybe, American philosophy was even dead

already, as he suggested in the opening pages: “law flourished on the corpse of philosophy in America, for the settlement of the ultimate moral question is the end of speculation upon it,” that is, the nature of the American polity (HARTZ, 1955, p. 10).

The most accurate readers of Hartz understood his thesis was a theoretical one, it was not meant to be in any way an historical claim. John Gunnell, a historian of American political thought with a consistent contribution over the years to a highly detailed internalist history of the discipline of political science in that country, offered a very relevant reading of the context behind Hartz’s *Liberal Tradition* and his intentions with that book. In terms of a contextualist approach to the history of political thought, the first important element to be understood is that it was not a work on the history of the idea of liberalism – Hartz was not locating how Founding Fathers cited or used any book from John Locke in their public careers, but only offering a metaphor – a Weberian “ideal type” as Gunnell suggested, equating *The Liberal Tradition* to *The Protestant Ethic* as essays making possible such generalizations about social and historical occurrences. Gunnell quotes Hartz’s understanding that “the actual ‘American community’ was, he admitted, only ‘in the broadest sense liberal’ and a ‘liberal community.’” (GUNNELL, 2005, p.199). “Locke” was itself an image, taken too seriously as if Hartz was engaging in any intellectual-historical claim (Gunnell even points there was no particular treatment to any of Locke’s writings in *The Liberal Tradition*). The book was intended to advise about the dangers to liberty caused by an isolated liberal ideology against the challenge presented by the Cold War. In fact, Hartz did feed a hope, Gunnell recognizes, that this context was an opportunity to break with the American “cultural isolationism,” opening up dialogue with the outside world, making it possible for Americans to see themselves from alien national perspectives or from other rival ideological traditions. That could work to make liberalism a more relative, less absolute, definition of a mature society, shaking that “philosophic peace of American history” (HARTZ, 1957: 477). But the metaphor was reified into a supposedly real historical tradition of generations working on the development of a common idea eventually called “liberalism.” That became Hartz’s most relevant (and probably mostly unintended) legacy.

The concept first emerged in ordinary politics, before the academic discourse. Hartz may have been responsible, without much self-consciously intention, to systematize an important conception of what it meant to be American in terms of political values that did not

had a clear housing under a proper label. “Liberal,” a more even “Liberalism,” was hardly found in the political lexicon before the 1930s. Gunnell attributes a handful of reasons for its rise, beyond Hartz book impact: its prompt popularity with Europeans in referring to American society and politics, the substitution of the degradation positive value of the term “Progressive” for “liberal” by leaders like Woodrow Wilson, the pluralist theory distaste for the unifying dogma behind “democracy” that was increasingly being used by authoritarian regimes’ self-description, and the bipolarization of the Cold War leading “liberalism qua pluralism” as the Western conceptual opposition to the Soviet “totalitarianism,” in which “the United States was viewed as the embodiment of the liberal spirit.” (GUNNELL, 2005, p. 202). However, beyond the emergence of the label and content of this concept of liberalism, the critical orientation of Hartz’s book was part of a more fundamental issue transforming the academic study of politics in the US. And that is the central thesis of Gunnell’s main contribution to the history of political science in that country.

The title of the book is suggestive. *The descent of political theory: The genealogy of an American vocation* (1993a). “The descent” here, firstly seems to suggest lineage, for most of what has been produced under the label of “political theory” is about the history of political ideas. Second, it implies decay. This is Gunnell’s general evaluation of the current chasm between political theory and political science in the US (but specially the first). Before the 1940s, these notions knew no clear distinction. Spoiler alert, seeping from Max Weber “science and politics in America were, in the end, disparate and irreconcilable vocations.” (GUNNELL, 1993a, p. 278) American political science had a principled commitment with the betterment of the American political system. Gunnell claims that, historically, the partition between political science and political theory was a consequence of the intellectual and professional processes fired by the local academic reaction to the intense influx of Germans and other Central Europeans scholars escaping the rise of the Nazi regime from the 1930s. This group, known as the *émigrés*, brought ideas and understandings fed by their memories and experiences of their European cradle. In transposing their comprehension of the crisis from the perspective of their former home nations, most thought to have found an opportunity to social accommodation in criticizing the excesses of the liberal project, to which they did not share the Yankee commitment. As Gunnell remarks (GUNNELL, 2005, p.202):

They implanted the idea that liberalism, along with the attending values of relativism, pluralism, scientism, and progress, were deeply implicated in the decline of the West and in a political and intellectual crisis manifest in mass society and the advent of totalitarianism. ... It was not, however, until after WWII that this vision began to seep significantly into American scholarship.

The generation of émigrés were like “vessels” cruising the Atlantic full of their intellectual and political loads. As intellectuals, they were constructed in the German educational system, read its own, were introduced to their own philosophical and political canons and their debates, inherited past learnings and associated expectations of the future. Though Gunnell understands *The Liberal Tradition* is already a full expression of this transformation in American political science and political theory, Hartz could not understand the full relevance of the arrival of the *émigrés* on his practice. In Gunnell’s words, “by the end of the 1950s, the issue at hand was actually less a matter of the anticipation of transformation than an understanding of it.” (GUNNELL, 1993a, p. 145). In fact, the main academic refugees included in Gunnell’s history of that trajectory are not references in Hartz’s work. Arnold Brecht, Leonard Strauss, Herbert Marcuse, Eric Voegelin, Hannah Arendt – not to mention IR’s main émigré, Hans Morgenthau – were among the so many German academic refugees, who saw the tragical end of the Weimar Republic as a consequence of the rise of liberalism, as it was the case with Athens and Rome. They considered that presenting an experienced understanding of this process as an advice to their new adopted country could prove an opportunity for their integration and recognition. Of course, that was not a rule without exceptions. There were those German intellectual escapees who were not that critical to American liberalism, and felt more readily into committing with its theoretical and practical improvement. Notwithstanding, that dominant incursion carrying a reading of their past alien experience projected over their new homeland dynamics stimulated a rebellion from American political scientists, who started to push to even more scientism, the search of correlates and (quasi)laws of political behaviors. This was made in the name of preserving their liberal consensus, of avoiding critique to this principle and focus on empirical research over practical problems of politics. Émigrés and those Americans influenced by their discussions, and even those engaging in the debate by disagreeing with the civilizational decline represented by liberalism, came to dominate political theory, priorly

a central subfield of political science. While it alienated itself from the scientism veneration, preferring traditional methods of philosophy and History, it also came to be produced in terms and styles not accessible to political scientists. As a result, Gunnell lamented (1993b, 195):

Today, political theory has largely retreated from an involvement with, let alone critique of, political science, and political science has, for the most part, afforded political theory the ultimate disdain of pure tolerance. ... Both political science and political theory have been diminished. The former has lost its most important critical and reflective dimension, and the latter has lost its congenial and maybe most authentic field of action.

Gunnell's argument is not that those migrating Germans introduced ideas that were completely strange to Americans. They would probably never make it there. For one, German ideas had already been long appreciated in the academic circles of social inquiry. The opening act in Gunnell's history is the Hegelian turn in American political thought, through the introduction of conceptions of the state – distancing from *The Federalists'* prior focus on the government format and activities purposed to educating Americans on being a “people”. This new tendency, made from Francis Lieber's theory of the state in the *Manual of Political Ethics* published in 1838, to William Archibald Dunning's *A History of Political Theories* in 1902, equated the concept of people with the study of the state. The succeeding development the Progressive movement of Charles Beard, Arthur Bentley, Charles Merriam, and Harold Lasswell and the pragmatism in politics they inspired was in part a reaction to the earlier Hegelian dominance of the state in political analysis and theorization. They inaugurated the need for the differentiation of science from history, one of the main targets the émigrés came to attack one generation later – just to be fiercely defended again by Lasswell and then by Robert Dahl and the behavioralist movement (GUNNELL, 1993a), now from a commitment to the preferred concept of “liberalism” (GUNNELL, 2004). As one of Gunnell's main goals with the book is to criticize that every generation boringly reinvents political science for not knowing the discipline's past, liberalism of the 1950s must be understood as the reconstitution of the 1920s pluralism. Again, the point here is that émigrés critique on liberalism was not an introduction to German political thought, as pragmatic approaches on political theory were there before to defend “pluralism” from the Hegelian critique.

For another, there was, by the 1930s, a feeling of a liberal crisis in motion, both in intellectual and policy-making circles. If it was not the case, Gunnell admits, “the arguments of the émigrés would likely not have carried the weight that they did.” (1993b, p.193). As a

matter of fact, important American names learned on German political philosophy – many had some phase of its academic formation in Germany indeed – smoothly absorbed this critique on American liberalism and legitimized the argument from within America. The most relevant name to Gunnell is John Hallowell, “whose work would become one of the principal conduits through which the ideas of the emigres entered political theory and whose voice would come to represent the new mood in the field.” (1993b: 184) Much influenced by the critique those immigrants brought with them, Hallowell presented a harsh denunciation on how values of scientism (i.e., the excess confidence in science, which he introduced through the barely known language of “positivism” in the US), group pluralism, and moral relativism were at the origins of the tragedy of totalitarianism in Europe in the second half of the 1940s. By the late fifties, this kind of argumentation, now consolidated, was mostly led by émigrés, such as Strauss and Voegelin (GUNNELL, 1993a; 1993b).

Of course, the phenomenon of the émigrés in the US was never monolithic, even between those who commonly engaged in the critique of American liberalism. Moreover, beyond this dominant critique, Gunnell recognized the thought of fellow fleeing countrymen, for example, Hans Kelsen and Felix Oppenheim, who stood in favor of US liberals’ attachment to a positive reading of moral relativism, empiricism and the scientific method, and pluralism to the health of American democracy. However, due to the overall appearance of invasion of American political science and its creed in liberal democracy, the behavioral rebellion was set in motion. In Gunnell’s thesis, the radicalization by behavioralists was a precipitated reaction to that dominance of émigrés in dealing with moral critique, political values, ethics, and so on, always with that heavy critical weight that threatened the confidence on the liberal consensual foundations of American democracy. Overemphasizing an empirical science of American liberal democracy was a strategy of alienating that threat to the ideological unity premise behind interest-group, pluralist theories of democracy, reviving them into a whole new fashion (GUNNELL, 2004). However, while the critical appeal that was drained from political science, it also came to be subdued in political theory, for it lost contact from political practice and weakened its capacity to offer normative reflection to real problems and became busy with philosophical issues and with the history of political ideas (GUNNELL, 1993a; 1993b).

In the end, Gunnell's argument assumes all political science is trapped within pluralism (2004) from the real and only one Kuhnian revolutionary episode in 150 years of political science: the pluralist revolution of the 1920s, which would only become paradigmatic with the behavioralists "rear guard action" (GUNNELL, 2004, p. 49) thirty years later, reacting to the émigré critique of the 1930s to the early 1950s. The constant reinvention of pluralism without awareness of the history of the discipline, Gunnell argues, leads to this entrapment where "in the end, we have not been able to think effectively about political reality and democracy outside the theoretical terms of that revolution." (GUNNELL, 2004, p. 50). The first impression of Gunnell's work having critically placed the Hartz's critique on the liberal consensus in a historical trajectory seems in the end to reinforce it. Many reviewers have accused his internalist history of the discipline (HOLDEN, 2002; GUILHOT, 2011; KEENE, 2017; BAIN, NARDIN, 2017) of not delivering the proper political discussions of the day, disconnecting his own study from the object it studies, from the practice of politics, and from social-political history – just in the same way he accuses the field of political theory as it developed in the US (MANSFIELD, 1993; NELSON; 1995; SCHLOSBERG, 2004). Not that Gunnell would have a problem recognizing his own entrapment in this web of history. As he argues (GUNNELL, 2006: 21),

it is difficult to attack orthodox political science when the orthodoxy, even if it exists in some subterranean form, is as elusive as Louis Hartz's image of liberal absolutism. Like Hartz's depiction of American liberalism, political science seems to have the capacity to defuse and absorb all challenges.

One parallel reading offered by Duncan Bell (2014) has explored a broader, Anglo-Saxon invention of liberalism as a Lockean tradition from an earlier debate in the British isles already in the 1930s. Therefore, while Gunnell indicated "there was, at the time that Hartz wrote, no "classic" reigning academic account of Locke as the founder of a liberal tradition" (GUNNELL, 2005, p. 199), Bell explicitly diverge from what he saw as an otherwise "compelling account on American political thought," for "adding a British dimension to the story complicates this picture." (BELL, 2014, p. 693) While eighteenth-century politically successful liberals would hardly mention Locke at all, the attachment of Whig constitutionalists on a new comprehension of the ideology as an all-encompassing modern identity incorporating conservative aristocracies or projects of socialist state-economy demands. The British version focused on individual freedom and constitutional government (more than the American version of specific private property capitalist guarantees). As he

argues, “the scope of the tradition has expanded to encompass the vast majority of political positions regarded as legitimate” (BELL, 2014x, p. 689). With this, most contemporaries who identified themselves with rival political ideologies voluntarily (but maybe uncomfortably) came to publicly share the liberal identity for their support to liberal democracy.

Liberal thought and political stands were already in place during the British Victorian Era. In the end of that century, liberalism suffered tough sustained critiques for not being able to offer a stable basis for national and international economic and political order anymore. Especially in the face of the great depression of the 1930s and the surge of totalitarian alternatives in Europe, threatened liberals started to construct a narrative of their opposing tradition of “liberal democracy,” pushing its origins to the early modernity and throughout the Western world – much beyond its Anglo-American core. According to Bell, “liberalism was thus transfigured from a term identifying a limited and contested position within political discourse to either the most authentic expression of the Western tradition or a constitutive feature of the West itself. ... for liberalism has become.” (BELL, 2014, p. 704)

It was so instrumentalized against the threat of totalitarianism that the newly founded American discipline of the History of ideas, which academic runaways from Europe were greatly responsible. As with the case of political science and political theory, the promotion of liberalism (in the first case empirical, in the second critical) as the defining identity the US, was also replicated here. The history of ideas recovering the development of “liberal democracy” quickly gained terrain in American culture and education to the point that the CIA had a secret funding to the *Journal of the History of Ideas* to promote the proper conceptual elaboration of Western civilization as the progress of the culture of liberty. Bell tells that, by the mid-twentieth century, liberalism was much more than an American discourse. It was transfigured from a specific, questioned political position to “the metacategory of Western political discourse.” (BELL, 2014: 704; 683)

A decade later *The Liberal Tradition* was published, the quasi-consensual status of Hartz’s thesis came to an end. Many were the critiques cumulated over it: an exaggeration towards the presence of liberal thought, the silence on divergences coming from minorities such as the women’s and Native American and African American political movements, the silence on the influence of religious traditions in American politics, a pessimism towards

liberal political values, the ignorance of the large civic republican tradition focusing on the common good more than on the individual, pretentious long-shot causal relationships with no precise and consistent, falsifiable empirical references, and so on (ABBOTT, 2005). Apart from these more relevant critiques, there was also heavy misinterpretation of the thesis, fusing Hartz's with more laudatory perspectives on the exceptionalism of America's liberal culture and elevating him as the founder of a "consensus school." Writing more than thirty years ahead the book's publication, a reviewer wrote on this progressive distortion of his postulate (DIGGINS, 1988, p. 370; 372):

I don't think he expected to be classified as a defender and promoter of the "consensus" school of thought and, by implication, an anthropologist for liberal capitalism who feared acknowledging class conflict in America because of McCarthyism and the Cold War. Such was the charge of young SDS historians who linked Hartz's book to Daniel J. Boorstin's *The Genius of American Politics* (1953). ... Hartz's ultimate aim or hope was not to establish the depths of the liberal tradition but somehow to find a way out of it.

More recent critical revisitations of *The Liberal Tradition in America* in its 50 year anniversary confirm this path with Hartz's idea two decades later. While his genuine thesis kept attracting interest after the sixties, by the nineties critics argued it had completely lost its relevance. A curious contradiction for if Hartz's thesis became irrelevant in its genuine theoretical intentions, his misinterpreted thesis must have reached taken it to a popularity peak precisely in the 1990's "at the moment when theorists would soon write about the 'end of history' and the globalization of Lockeanism." (ABBOTT, 2005, p.104) The very logical coherence of his critique on American liberal absolutism should anticipate its fate: it could not be relevant for too long in the American context of liberal absolutism. Only a Whiggish take could. One would not need to access this wave of academic literature lead by Fukuyama's *End of History* (1992) to perceive that, in the political debates of DC, and elsewhere in the country as well, the idea was still well alive. As one piece remembered that *zeitgeist* (WERTHEIM, 2017), through the 1990s, it proved easy enough to imagine world leadership as America's new Manifest Destiny, the spoils of its Cold War victory and the fruit of its moral superiority. Especially during the economic boom, few could doubt that America embodied the end of history.

Therefore, what really waned was the critical intent of Hartz's thesis. It did survive, for example, in the more acid reactions against Fukuyama's frisson. But the more laudatory reading of the thesis as the coherent starting point from where to study American foreign policy prevailed as common-sense in the unbound liberal decade following the end of the

Cold War. The notion of exceptionalism represented by the primacy of liberalism in American political identity became the justification discourse of different successful and failed moments alike.

In 2001, a retrospect review of the work and legacies from *The Liberal Tradition in America* complained about “the stubborn persistence among political scientists of the idea of an American liberal consensus almost fifty years after Hartz wrote.” (KLOPPENBERG, 2001) However, Hartz would probably feel vindicated by it as the practically unquestionable constitutive presence of liberalism in American politics, specially foreign policy. Fastforward another eighteen years, and there are still new offsprings dealing with the thesis – in more or less apologetical readings –, not least by central names of the discipline of IR. As examples, John Mearsheimer alerted against the hegemony of the liberal ideas in foreign policy (MEARSHEIMER, 2018), and Stephen Walt specified it to the management by a “blob” in the decision-making elite (WALT, 2018), here a phenomenon understood as a fact made possible by the end of the constraints of bipolarity with the Soviet Union, which made crusading adventures potentially much more risky and costly to the national security of the United States. And there are also those who, in attesting its present hegemony in the US foreign policy, locate its origins not from the Soviet Union’s dissolution, but since the end of World War II (PORTER, 2018).

Hence, within all this normative consensus over American foreign policy making, which may be or may not be problematic in the perspective of its students, which kind of (denominations for) variations are available? The next, last section of the chapter explores which typologies have been offered to push for the potentially contradictory idea of an enlightened continuity in the international behavior of the US despite variations in it through successive administrations resulting from the pluralist character of American liberal democracy.

Change over continuity? Typologies in the study and practice of the United States foreign policy

A primal subject among the communities of specialists studying foreign policy in different national academic contexts is the assessment of continuity and change in the

international behavior of a state – the output of its foreign policy decision-making processes – through its history (SARAIVA, 2003; COX and STOKES, 2018; HILL, HURST, 2020). In a bibliographical review of the studies on the American case, an inclusive definition suggests “foreign policy is a guide for action declared by an authoritative source that makes certain behaviors more probable and other behaviors less probable, narrowing the range of actions that are likely to be viewed as appropriate in response to a particular situation.” (HERMANN, 2013, p. 4) Therefore, as a public policy, “foreign policy” is the very discursive manifestation of the goals (to be) reached and the strategies (to be) pursued. Therefore it is both a referential language of the state, but also a constitutive one. That is what makes studying the array of available typologies so relevant: they may anticipate the behavior of a state after political change, or even serve as rhetorical device to convince others of the meaning of decisions and actions already performed. Therefore, typologies effectively comprise the foreign policy decision-making processes and their implementation for it gives it purpose by enunciated postulates of coherence for the many particular decisions (to be) taken in this area of the government.

The practical and analytical use of typologies on the issue of continuity and change in foreign policy gives analytical relevance to the efforts of intellectual leadership of a country. It must catch both the most appropriate moments to implement bigger changes in content and form of the interaction of the country with the world political dynamics, and the time to keep itself attached to old values and successful practices earlier engaged. Beyond cultural and institutional, national and international contexts, foreign policy may vary over time due to the change of the groups in power with their particular ideological standpoints and interests, and their relation with ideas and interests of the disparate competing political forces of the day. However, the (mostly American) literature points out that in the case of the US, this kind of problematic challenges the deeply embedded self-image of its liberal exceptionalist tradition. As understood from the last section, this is not simply any typology devised to capture those variations in the country’s foreign policy, but the essence of its identity (RESTAD, 2016). Despite its status of national ideology, “exceptionalism does not prescribe a single course of action.” (WERTHEIM, 2017). It really makes little sense to talk about the concept without some further qualification: exemplarist, missionary, civilizational, imperialist, unilateralist, conservative, internationalist, globalist, or even liberal (“liberal” not

anymore in the Hartzian sense, but a more restrictive, party politics one). Therefore, this conceptual focus on exceptionalism could barely be the starting point of a serious investigation into the American national styles in foreign policy.

The coupling of the concept of exceptionalism to some qualifier can be seen as a conciliatory move to save its academic usefulness. In this sense, McDougall's article quoted above (2012) was reacting to such a move unfolding on the pages of the inaugural issue of *American Political Thought* in 2012. It presented a reflexive debate on the concept of "American Exceptionalism" indicating the consolidation of a critical turn in that academic community. Agreeing on the difficulty of referring to an uncontested national exceptionalism, the authors proposed approaches such as that of "dueling Exceptionalisms" (ONUF, 2012), the "two cities on a hill" (DENEEN, 2012), or a "foreign policy dichotomy" drifting "exemplarists" and "missionaries" apart (RESTAD, 2012).

Of course, they do disagree on the definition and relevance of the concept. Restad, the one most confident in the analytical usefulness of the concept, argues for a single definition of it: exceptionalism is the identity of the US, not its foreign policy. This, in turn, would be translated in a more continuous expression of a unilateral internationalism, from where that exemplarist-missionary dichotomy can make any sense (RESTAD, 2012). Others, agreeing with an initial space of possibilities defined by that broader idea of exceptionalism, do see more significant oscillations within. Peter Onuf delivers an exploration of the variation found between two readings of American exceptionalism that set the main divide in domestic politics overall: the conservatives and the liberals. If exceptionalism marks the US identity to the world, its practice reveals tensions between conservative and liberals about the appropriate interpretation of that founding idea. Hence, "conservative 'exceptionalists'" hold they are the most faithful to the purity of the ideal. For Onuf (2012, p.78),

who see domestic critics as subversives and fellow travelers of foreign foes thus use the term as a bludgeon, challenging the patriotic credentials of their liberal counterparts and bemoaning the dangerously declining if not degenerate state of the nation. Thrown on the defensive, liberals insist that they really do love their country and that it is indeed exceptional.

Still, "liberal 'exceptionalists'", for being more self-critical than their counterparts, are usually more vulnerable before the electorate. Because of that, "liberals have tended to disparage exceptionalism, openly when they dare, more discreetly when they fear a

backlash.” (CAESER, 2012: 2).⁷ Furthermore, Patrick Deneen’s typology works with the variation made by “exemplarists” and “expansionists” over the same transformational will of world politics, which, he argues, is the essence of the country’s exceptionalism. Nonetheless, he defends that this divergence could be turned less ideological, more rational, by exposing the inconsistency in the use of the Augustinian idea behind the notion of the “city on the hill” (it meant reference to the City of God, the one that could never be made real by any ordinary City of Man, but always a final reference), but more than that, by taking a post-Augustinian understanding of moving the debate out of theology and towards its political end. For the author, the transformational power of politics contained in the concept of “exceptionalism” could be rendered more rational, consequentially closing it to cosmopolitan critics, for there would be no room for understanding uniqueness as a divine monopoly of one single nation anymore (DENEEN, 2012).

Although Restad (2016) understands there is a correlation between the self-criticism on American exceptionalism and the debate on the decline of its international status, it seems that the volume of the critique today is not matched by the previous declinist waves. The Capitol riots of January 6th only reinforce this claim, already preceded, as noted above, by the election of presidents that have explicitly questioned that supposedly quintessential feature of American national identity – Barack Obama did it in his 2009 “apology tour” (FALLOWS, 2009; ROVE, 2009), and Donald Trump was a frequent critic before his populist “Make America Great Again” populist turn in his run to the White House (RESTAD, 2016; GAUDIANO, 2020). In academic debates, the contribution of Nicola Nymalm and Johannes Plagemann (2019) seems to have brought field evidence to support what appears to be a new two-folded consensus: 1) that though “exceptionalism” discourse is not common to every nation, it is a much less exclusive feature of the national identity than American exceptionalists would like to think, and 2) that the “exceptionalism” discourse beyond the US experience is not necessarily confrontational, unilateralist, or exemptionalist, gathering evidence for with case studies on China, India, and Turkey, while referencing previous works done on the cases of Israel, Poland, Serbia, and the British. In conclusion, they found that

⁷ Interestingly, this seems to be Hartz’s influence over the wearing of the “liberal” label, so that the American left, by all the contemporary public opinion surveys on the commitment with the identity of exceptionalism, always rank much lower than their Republican counterparts. Gunnel (1993; 2004) also registers that this made the label of “pluralism” – like with Robert Dahls pluralist theory of democracy – once again the preferred choice in American political science.

“exceptionalism in foreign policy is and always has been more common than a reading of the most prominent case, US exceptionalism, suggests.” (NYMALM; PLAGEMANN, 2019: 29). More than expressed by the American way of foreign policy, as also pointed by Restad (2012; 2016), just variations in the level of unilateralism of the country’s decisions and actions abroad, it incorporates non-exemptionalist instances, also varying between exemplary or missionary kinds, as the cases of AKP Turkey before 2016 and early Nehru’s India respectively represent. From the combinations between exemplary or missionary characters and exemptionalist and non-exemptionalist stands, Nymalm and Plagemann indicate four ideal types of exceptionalism available: civilizational (exemptionalist and exemplary), imperialist (exemptionalist and missionary), internationalist (non-exemptionalist and exemplary), and globalist (non-exemptionalist and missionary). In their matrix comparative analysis of individual national cases and assorted executive officeholders (NYMALM; PLAGEMANN, 2019: 30), Bush (GW) is rated an imperialist, while Obama, very close to the center on both axes, is an internationalist.

The attachment of adjectives to characterize American exceptionalism yields more useful typologies in capturing such considerable variations in foreign policy. It could never be a surprise that, beyond its analytical use (sometimes before it, sometimes after it) typologies also have a practical weight in politics. Agents frequently use them with rhetorical and strategical ends, claiming authoritative expectations, for good or for bad, over political leaders and groupings. In associating oneself with some kind of foreign policy, constitutive processes are also at work. More than being part of an a rational choice to pursue political interests, it defines the very identity and political interests associated with it. In this sense, another, very popular typology, distinct but easily confused with that contend between exemplarists and expansionists/missionaries (or for that matter, the one dividing conservatives and liberals) for their explicit overlappings, is that of isolationists and internationalists. Isolationists are based on the ideas registered in Washington’s Farewell Address and in President James Monroe’s doctrine. It can be understood as a pragmatical ideological orientation founded as a response to a physical separation from European continent, to its weakness combining a very small army and a large territory to be defended, to the need advance the settlement of that territory and modernization of its society, and to the need of an ideological reason for the unity of the nation (McCORMICK, 2010, p. 12). The

historical opposite concept to isolationism is in general terms defined as internationalism. James McCormick (2010) has indicated that this internationalism opposed to isolationism is in fact a principled, moral approach to foreign policy (which excludes realism as an American foreign policy tradition). Hence, American public opinion displays little tolerance towards small adjustment wars such as Vietnam or Bosnia, but display consistent support if the war has clear moral justifications to be delivered, like peacebuilding operations or humanitarian interventions, and even more in the case of vengeance after being attacked. “In all, then, even though Americans support all-out efforts on war and peace; they become more skeptical of in-between measures and expect quick and decisive results.” (McCORMICK, 2010, p. 23).

One very popular typology among Americans, especially in media outlets, is the opposition between Hawks and Doves. This typology, different from the previous ones, does not include all the foreign policy community (or the mass public opinion), for it further qualifies only those identified with internationalism. Thence, this internal dichotomy separates the ones who privilege the peaceful tools of diplomacy and multilateral institutions, limiting the use of war only in extreme situations and when in accordance to the decisions legitimately reached in international organizations, from those who are prone to invest in the military instruments of the state and give priority to these tools – the threat or actual use of force – as a more effective guarantee of American interests abroad. A common-sense error here has been to expect this divide to be coherently associated with the that marked by the two sides of aisle in the Congress. In this sense, Colton Heffington (2016) investigated how Democrats and Republicans themselves have changed their foreign policy stances through the decades, particularly in relation to military engagement. It has happened mostly as an electoral strategy, and investigations have confirmed that US voters condition their candidate choice on the evaluation of his/her foreign policy proposal. The Democrat Jimmy Carter was perceived as having a weak foreign policy by the time of the reelection campaign, and Ronald Reagan and he Republicans saw it as an opportunity for electoral victory by defending a more aggressive orientation in foreign affairs. Carter lost reelection, and Reagan did live up to his promises and implemented a much more militaristic policy, later even guaranteeing his reelection. The famous case makes it for the idea that Republicans are the militaristic ones, while the Democrats are the pacifists. However, another earlier Republican president, Dwight Eisenhower, for example, made a very low foreign usage of force in his

administration. Ordinary divisive political categories, such as party affiliation, are not substitute to specialized foreign policy typologies so relevant, and never only to the American case. “If we want to know what sorts of leaders are likely to engage in international conflict, we should focus specifically on their emphasis of foreign policy concepts instead of highlighting only binary measures of partisanship” (HEFFINGTON, 2016, p.19).

Despite Heffington explores the opposition between “hawks” and “doves” with more generalizing, theoretical aims, pushing his quantitative modeling over a sample of 25 countries being a democracy in the second half of the twentieth century, this is a historically genuine American foreign policy discourse. The historian Donald Hickley found that the idea of a political group of “war hawks”, a terminology majorly used in the US and thought to be born there amidst the War of 1812, was in fact found in American newspapers more than 350 times between 1792 and the outbreak of that war. And again, that original depreciative conceptual mood – it was first used as a mockery by the political opposition against any eventual irresponsible decision that could escalate to full military conflict. Since then, as it was not specific tailored for any party, the pejorative adjective was conveniently available to any player standing against whatever political gains that could be made by the powers that be with the engagement in wars abroad (HICKLEY, 2014).

On the opposite pole of this typology, “doves” was also designed as a scorn. The more frequently remembered older use of the term, in that same context of the very unpopular decision of the US government to go to war against the English (and the Canadians) in 1812-1815, ridiculed the “laughing doves”, affluent diletantes often observed “under the suspicion that they are hirelings delivering treasonous ‘aid and comfort’ to the enemy.” (WINTER, 2009, p. 1563). Though the association of doves and peace is much older, reminiscent of biblical myths, the typology opposing it to the hawks only achieved the contemporary relevance in the debates on American Cold War foreign policy (HASTEDT, 2004, p. 208), clearly registered by the Gallup Institute polls from 1966 on, in which respondents were asked about their agreement with the “hawks”, described by the interviewers as those in favor of military engagement in Vietnam, or with the “doves”, the ones who would rather choose non-violent strategies (SAAD, 2016). The catchy duality, once

thought to have been dead with the end of the Cold War,⁸ is definitely in full use today, mostly popular among politicians, polling institutes, and media pundits.⁹

This typology captures the variation between a more militarized, aggressive stand in world politics and its multilateral, cooperative, humanitarian opposites. In Heffington's study, hawkish and dovish ideologies of candidates are related to the propensity of those elected with such a kind of discourses to initiate military conflict abroad. His investigation seems to confirm the hypothesis set forth that deeds of presidents and prime ministers largely follow their once-candidates' words, a finding that is relevant not only to foreign policy analysis development as an academic specialization, but of utmost importance to careful citizens deciding on their votes (HEFFINGTON, 2016). It confirms the relevance of the efforts by political leaders to present foreign policy typologies systematizing their ideologies and strategies in world politics.

What the different typologies offered above have in common is their theoretical interest in composing generalizing analytical devices – eventually incorporating distinct national cases –, more than historical claims over singular countries' ventures, as that of American foreign policy. Therefore, the tendency for dichotomic typologies may be explained by the potential parsimony they may offer, while they may also force oversimplifications of real processes. Even Nymalm and Plagemann's (2019) proposal of a 2x2 matrix, recognizing the global complexity of the phenomenon, do not necessarily catch the particularities of specific national cases separated by space and time. Not that US presidents along history have not assumed those labels – sometimes they did. The point is that the intent of those typologies is analytical, they do not intend to have historical precision. For that matter, more historical accounts are widely available, presenting not exactly typologies, but traditions of American foreign policy. Two representative examples of this overreaching historical categorizations are offered by Walter McDougall and Walter Russell Mead.

⁸ In Glenn Hastedt's "Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy", it is argued that, once the hawks-doves contend came to the fore with bipolar conflict against the USSR, "for all practical purposes, the debate was brought to an end by the fall of communism and the end of the cold war." (HASTEDT, 2004: 208).

⁹ Examples are all around in the media. Trump was debated under this counterposition (check FRANK, 2019; SERWER, 2020). The same with Joe Biden now (DePETRIS, 2020; TRAUB, 2020; SEVASTOPOULO, 2021). One must remember that the term has also had a less popular, fiscal connotation: the "deficit hawks", conservatives in terms of government budget control.

From McDougall's concern with the backwardly created identity of exceptionalism and the expectations it bred (and was bred from), he locates eight historical traditions all cumulating to the explanation of the country's foreign policy conduct today, with its differing contextual weights each, all opening up the complexities hidden behind that popular concept. Using the biblical narrative, coherent with that founding claim of the city on the hill, McDougall divides them into an Old and a New Testament of the American foreign policy creed. ("Liberty, or") Exceptionalism, accordingly, characterized only the first period, between 1776 and the last decade of the next century. Still in the era of the Old Testament, exceptionalism was succeeded by the learning of "Unilateralism, or isolationism", the formation of "The American System, or Monroe Doctrine (so called)" and, last, the realization of "Expansionism, or Manifest Destiny". These constitutive traditions "were all about being, and becoming" (McDOUGALL, 1997, p. 4), the philosophical guidance left by the Founding Fathers to guarantee liberty at home and sovereignty among other (European) states. The national consolidation is priority to these four early traditions. In fact, fear of external involvement that could lead to a degradation of the American republic was to be strictly avoided.

In the twentieth century, new conditions dragged the US into engaging in world questions, beyond the hemispheric age of the Monroe Doctrine and exposed the limits of the established traditions. The foreign policy community would successively develop other four traditions that, in common, urged a crusader state to promote its values worldwide under the new systemic status the country was acquiring. "Progressive Imperialism", "Wilsonianism, or Liberal Internationalism (so called)", "Containment", and "Global Meliorism" were the scriptures composing the New Testament of American foreign policy. Together they have reinterpreted the golden rule of avoiding entanglements with external powers, exceeding the definitions of "being", constructed through the four first traditions, and maturing the American ways of actively engaging with world problems to shape them in its favor – "they are all about Doing and Relating." (McDOUGALL, 1997, p. 5). Civil War marks the watershed between these two foreign policy eras and their mutually inconsistent assumptions (despite the metaphor with the two biblical books), even with the victory of the Union, upholder of those four seminal traditions, for its aftermath assembled the proper broader intellectual context to that transition: the Progressive movement, a scientist (not necessarily

scientific) spirit, certainly linked to the popularity of social Darwinism, the appetite of the industrial development, and the emergence of a liberal Christianity. Philosophy lost its relevance to ideology in justifying decisions and actions while exceptionalism became a worldwide mission of reordering, improvement, and salvation in the name of universal principles the US was the champion.

There is no continuity, as that presupposed by the analytical presentist construct of exceptionalism. Though the American Constitution remained intact, there was a profound change in the self-image of the uniqueness of the US and the best foreign policy to preserve this polity. Although traditions in both the incompatible Old and New American-foreign-policy Testaments are said to spring from the same line of intellectual descendant from the Founding Fathers, “the result (...) was that a newly prideful United States began to measure its holiness by what it did, not just by what it was” (McDOUGALL, 1997, p.121). However, in McDougall’s evaluation, there is a clear decay all along: “while America the Promised Land had held that to try to change the world was stupid (and immoral), America the Crusader State held that to refrain from trying to change the world was immoral (and stupid).” (McDOUGALL, 1997, p. 205).

In *Special Providence*, Mead has also approached the historical problem in the formation of foreign policy in the American imaginary. However, each of the four traditions he identifies gets labeled with the name of a great national leader who embodies the main lessons – competing, but also complementary – to the country’s political interaction with the world. Mead argues against what he saw as a consensus that foreign policy domestic debate became relevant only after the Second World War, going back till the Founding Fathers, showing how relatively stable traditions were formed along US history. Two of the four traditions are based on these founders of the American Republic: Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the US Treasury, and Thomas Jefferson, drafter of the Declaration of Independence and the country’s third president. Hamiltonians represent the thrust of the American economic elites’ interest within the government activities to promote and protect their businesses in the necessary integration with the global economy, the best strategy to benefit the whole nation. Jeffersonians are more concerned with the danger that crony capitalism can impose to American democracy. Foreign policy may allow many opportunities for the corruption of the state. Priority is to only get involved in international issues that may

foster democracy at home. The other two traditions were consolidated with later American presidents: Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson. Wilsonians first commitment with US democracy is shared with Jeffersonians, but they believe democracy at home can only be safeguarded by spreading it worldwide, guaranteeing international institutions and using force when necessary to promote it to other countries. Last, there are the Jacksonians, those with a populist discourse and action oriented towards homeland physical security and the Americans economic well-being. Violence is the last resort, used only to ferociously avenge aggression (MEAD, 2001).

Two important considerations to Mead's framework. First, he makes it clear these human beings are not to be confused with the ideal type named after them. Thomas Jefferson himself would have moved from one position to another in his life. Accordingly, all of these or any other great American leader to be evaluated by this typology should be more complex than any single one of those 4 categories could encompass by itself. Second, Mead treats them not as alternating, excluding forces in the conduct of US foreign policy. Each represents permanent worldviews and interests composing the American society.¹⁰ However, Wilsonianism almost became synonymous with American foreign policy for its dominance over the others' influence along the last century. Even with Wilson's immediate failure with the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles at home, Mead remembers that "his vision and his diplomacy, for better or worse, set the tone for the twentieth century. France, Germany, Italy, and Britain may have sneered at Wilson, but every one of these powers today conducts its European policy along Wilsonian lines." (MEAD, 2001, p. 9) The presence of this approach has in fact been so heavy that, to the common sense, in and out of the US (and Mead seems to be pointing to the specialists too), Wilsonianism comes close to be confused with American foreign policy itself, or at least the most prominent and perennial of the four dimensions. Yet, this hegemony has never excluded the three other traditions, but instead brought them into a coalition that made its legitimacy possible.

For Mead and many analysts who took advantage of his typology went on to employ it over the twentieth first century presidents, a erosion of this hegemony became evident. Jacksonians, a movement gaining momentum since the attacks of 9/11, bringing Bush to his

¹⁰ Not surprisingly, all of them are men and white. This should be an alert to the silence on marginal worldviews and interests imposed by this [or any available?] typology, such as that of native Americans, black and feminist movements.

administration's highest ratings in their searching of vengeance against Islamic terrorists. They stepped up into the center of political arena in the context of the rise of Obama's multiethnic, multiracial America, and under the flag of Palin's Tea Party, made the crushing victory of Republicans in the mid-term elections of 2010 more dramatic: "But with all its ambiguities and its uneven political record, the Tea Party movement has clearly struck a nerve in American politics, and students of American foreign policy need to think through the consequences of this populist and nationalist political insurgency." (Mead, 2011, p. 32). Mead's advice here was priceless amidst the tragic events of January 6th, 2021 in the Capitol riots. By the time when *Special Providence* was written, the Jacksonian category seemed the least relevant and, specially for a foreigner eyes, the least comprehensible. But Trump definitely made this tradition clear (again) with his campaign to victory in 2016 (MEAD, 2017) to the point where he was confident enough to point that to the end of the Wilsonian hegemony in American foreign policy: "this noble effort has failed. The next stage in world history will not unfold along Wilsonian lines. (MEAD, 2021a). Even with Biden's victory, a much more Wilsonian figure (with a Jeffersonian duty at home) whose "doctrine holds that geopolitical competition must not be allowed to drive world history", will not be able to sustain more than a "liberalish" world order, which surely does not lead to any indication of widespreading civilizational conflicts (MEAD, 2021b). In terms of domestic foreign policy decision making, the most pressing analytical issue in terms of this typology is presented by Mead (2020):

People on the left and right, of all the different schools of foreign policy thought, have a growing awareness of the importance of the China threat. The most interesting question in American foreign policy today is whether a new policy consensus is forming around China concerns, and how the balance of power among the four schools will develop as that consensus forms.

The cognitive power of this typology has made it very popular among the US foreign policy academics, pundits, and politicians. Set forth before the events of 9/11 and the country's dramatic foreign policy change, it has proven very useful as a lexicon to host more empathetic understandings of the peculiarities of American public opinion and its relation to foreign policy leadership of succeeding presidents.

One last common kind of typology found in the debates of US foreign policy (and in fact elsewhere) is the one, generally recognized instantaneously, is the idea of presidential "doctrines." Still, doctrines can be thought of as forming ideal types that may not be

analytically limited to the very term of that figure in power, as it is the case of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 and its many interpretations over the years (GILDERHUS, 2006) or the similarities one finds between Obama's national security strategies and the infamous early twentieth-first century Bush Doctrine (ROGIN, 2010; FEAVER, 2010). It is a very popular terminology in the public and academic foreign policy debates, generating anxiety for the mark to be left by each new elected administration (BRANDS, 2021; THE ECONOMIST, 2021). The historian Hal Brands remembers that, by the opening of the twentieth century, the Monroe Doctrine was in fact the only presidential doctrine known to Americans – i.e., not in the sense of a systematized approach to foreign policy, but the use of the term itself: “Had anyone thought to apply the label to George Washington's farewell advice to the American people about avoiding permanent alliances, the ‘Washington Doctrine’ would have been the oldest of American presidential doctrines.” (BRANDS, 2006, p. 1). Meanwhile, other doctrines may not have been called as such in its own time, even with the term available to contemporaries, as it was the case with Theodore Roosevelt. The term itself has multiplied since then, as indicated by the special volume on the theme organized by Brands, timely published in the context of a consolidating “global war on terror” as the doctrine of the day. The collective effort to locate and rethink presidential doctrines presented many case studies, from the obvious Monroe, to Teddy Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, and Reagan, all of them having in common the more or less explicit threat of a unilateral use of force. In general, they are not precisely or even consciously defined by the president himself, most of the times taking time to be recognized as such.

And this is one last issue to be considered here. Most of the effort on the typologies of American foreign policy explored above fulfill the need for the academic and decision-making community to develop a common, specialized language that enjoys great descriptive and explanatory power. Even the particular examples of contributions to the issue that seem to have a more historical concern, like McDougall's and Mead's, the typologies seem to contribute to this same end. While they do it with lessons taken from the historical experience, to which they certainly claim factual precision, they do not properly fit the demands of the History of Ideas – or the History of International Political Thought, or the History of Concepts – which means they do not allege precision in relation to the distinct languages, concepts, words, meanings, etc, that prevailed at the time being explored.

Though this dissertation advances precisely a conceptual history of American foreign policy, the work on these typologies presented as contemporary theoretical-analytical instruments of the specialized community help it construct the proper linguistic context from where (when) it tries to assess meanings from the past. Therefore, while it tries to avoid presentism, it is aware of the relevance it has in explicating the current state of concepts investigated in the past. However, as a history of the concept of realism in the discipline of International Relations and in American foreign policy practice and studies, the main contribution of this section was exactly to understand how this specialized community may conceptually engage with its subject without centrally referring to “realism,” unquestionably one of the most important concepts of IR.

The elephant out of the room

The literature explored in this chapter helps to construct a basic comprehension of the American foreign policy imaginary – the elements that make for the country’s reflexive framework from which nationals (and foreign stakeholders too) signify the most relevant situations faced, the alternative paths of action to be evaluated, its choices and so on. The set of ideas composing it are not to be evaluated as being free of contradictions or if it is truthful to reality or not. From the insistence of national leaders’ public expressions referring to certain values, understandings, identities, descriptive and causal claims as signifying or justifying events before domestic and international, mass and elite public opinion. Moreover, that is a moving concept, as this imaginary may incorporate new ideas, rescue or reinvent old ones, or leave others behind as experiences accumulate.

The American case is made of a number of these ideas, of which its self-image of a liberal, exceptional nation are highly esteemed. The confidence (or apparent confidence) in the effective reality of these ideas by their carriers involves a presentist construction of a notion of tradition that links the presence of these concepts to the farthest times of the political community’s founding historical figures. Hence, the US is supposedly exceptional since before the first Puritan colonists arrived in the New World, for the sermon on the promised land is thought to have happened in the fleeing boats, over the Atlantic. Earlier fleets also over the ocean on the way to the Pilgrims’ new home, may also have agreed upon a compact that was Lockean before Locke. Nonetheless, the contributions to the history of

political thought and ideas explored above seem to agree that these concepts only effectively entered the political discourse of US foreign policy at the beginning of the Cold War. That was a maturation moment of the transcontinental involvement of the country in world politics, which may have, as a starting point, the declaration of war against Germany in 1917. A new vocabulary was demanded to signify and justify this new mode of international engagement in a dialogue with the American people and foreign counterparts. And that language of exceptionalism, despite all the substance considered here, may also be understood from the notion of absence of the obvious nemesis of liberalism in IR theories: realism.

The presence of the concept in/on American foreign policy is obviously the theme of the next chapter. Here, the lesson taken should have made clear the possibility of arguing on an American tradition of foreign policy thinking and making without resorting to a culturally developed capacity to understand the mandates of world (power) politics – i.e. realism as a social imaginary. The many typologies overviewed in the last pages represent an effort to qualify variations within those identity elements of exceptionalism and liberalism, to the point that nothing more than residual elements of realist behavior and thought rest in this broader American self-image. It is such a powerful identity that even authors who claim there is a consistent realist behavior throughout US history must do it by reference to an un-American explanatory factor. As it shall be argued, this refusal may be explained as a constitutive component of the very identity of the country. Until then, the elephant will not be visible in the room.

Chapter III - Tradition, Theory, and Myth: the Concepts of “Realism” and “Idealism” in the American Foreign Policy Imaginary

America's policy of principled realism means we will not be held hostage to old dogmas, discredited ideologies, and so-called experts who have been proven wrong over the years, time and time again. This is true not only in matters of peace, but in matters of prosperity.

Donald J. Trump, *UNGA speech*, 2018.

Although his predecessor, Donald Trump, gave voice to similar impulses, it is Biden who offers a more coherent version of pragmatic realism.

Joshua Shiffrin and Stephen Wertheim, *Biden the Realist*, 2021.

The first epigraph above comes from President Donald Trump's speech in his second United Nations General Assembly participation. The other is an assessment written by mainstream academics of the first months of President Joe Biden's administration's international performance, published in one of the most important specialized magazines of the American foreign policy community. Despite the harsh distinctions one may draft from these presidents' foreign policy leadership in such a polarized era, the passages expose how pervasive these concepts are in the American political discourse. Realism and idealism are not simply core conceptual references in the language used by academics, specialists, officials, and politicians of the US foreign policy establishment. They are constitutive concepts of American identity, centerpieces in the country's American foreign policy imaginary. Moreover, also have these referential and constitutive roles in the development (and maintenance) of the global/American discipline of IR.

In this chapter, the investigation addresses the presence of the concept of realism – and its counter-conceptual pair – in the discourse in/on American foreign policy and its specialized academic community. Beyond connecting it to the same dominant self-image of the broader discipline of IR, it explores a fundamental part of the country's imaginary that the simple counterposition of this typology is not sufficient to catch: anti-realism. That is an attitude, or even more, a normative standard imposing itself from the very constitution of the New Republic's national identity. In terms of the thesis, it opens meanings and significance of the current form and substance of that realist counter-conceptual semantics. This knowledge of American foreign policy thought sets chronological parameters that are to be

checked against the historical inquiry on the appearance and degradation of the concept of realism in its German origins.

Three sections follow. The first analyzes the contemporary usage of the typology in political debates concerning American foreign policy. It involves political leaders, media pundits, and journalists. This section captures the uses of the concept, the contestations, and the evaluations of this century's American presidents made from this counter-conceptual device from the segment of the foreign policy elite community in the US that is mostly in contact with the mass public, as their potential voters or audience. The other most relevant part of this elite, the academic community, is evaluated in the second section. It assesses the specialized use of the concept of realism and its counterposition in contemporary US foreign policy studies searching for its peculiar – supposedly more precise, objective, and less contested – presence and relevance. Finally, the central and most extensive part of the chapter is dedicated to the identification, conceptualization, and explanatory prospecting of the phenomenon of anti-realism in American foreign policy. It evaluates, with the support of the most relevant current literature, the argument that realism is not a popular idea among Americans, but treats it not merely as an assumption, but more relevantly, as mythological element of the country's imaginary. It captures a peculiar existing semantic content of the concept of realism as it developed in the United States and was to spread throughout other national IR communities and foreign policy elites: an antipathy for that intellectual stance representing a threat to liberal dreams of overcoming conflict in politics, the founding idea constituting the American polity developed along its history. A conclusive argument synthesizes the content of the anti-realist mythology and its constitutive functions and its parametric relevance to the more specific investigation pursued in this thesis.

The realism-idealism typology in contemporary political debates, leaders, and media pundits on the US foreign policy

Realism and its counter-conceptual relation with idealism has occupied a central, when not dominant, status in the academic theorization about world politics. And that was a historical fact developed in no other place but the United States. Contradictorily, as understood from the last chapter, the debates over the ideological orientation of American foreign policy generally start with some laudatory or critical reference to the pair

exceptionalism/liberalism, referring to the genuine belief in the liberal uniqueness of the new republic that claims not to do its foreign businesses alike the Old World powers, i.e. through the longstanding predicaments of the so-called realist tradition of international political thought. In American foreign policy studies, “realists were constant critics of exceptionalist excesses. ... At the center of this endeavor was liberal pluralism. Realism is almost as regularly defined by its opposition to liberal pluralism as by its hostility to exceptionalism.” (TJALVE, WILLIAMS, 2017, p.102). Therefore, one may suppose realism faces hard times in the US. From this viewpoint, exceptionalism is no more than a particular expression of idealist thought, which realist critique is meant to criticize. But to those Americans for whom exceptionalism represents their more fundamental political identity, the idea of idealism associated to its liberal project does not carry an unwelcome meaning: this idealism is more than simply okay – it is a necessary condition of *Americanness*, consciously designed to sharply discern the country’s foreign policy from that vicious (continental) European *Realpolitik*.

Nonetheless, after all the typologies previously explored and the apparent consensus over the initial condition given by exceptionalism/liberalism, realism (or the lack of it) is a pervasively evident issue in the political language of American foreign policy up to this day, sometimes apparently dominant among the many other typologies mapped before. Twenty-first-century presidential declarations, specialized media pundits’ analyses, and scholarly contributions, from introductory material to the leading research confirm the consistent presence of the realism-idealism altercation. Political leaders have incorporated the vocabulary in some peculiar form, generally making it part of a slogan about their administration’s perspective or records in its foreign affairs. George W. Bush’s second *National Security Strategy* in 2006 reflecting upon America’s was on terror since his first year as chief of government in 2001 and his own “Bush Doctrine”, laid down in the previous version of that document in 2002 (BUSH, 2006, pp. II; 5):

The path we have chosen is consistent with the great tradition of American Foreign Policy. Like the policies of Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan, our approach is idealistic about our national goals and realistic about the means to achieve them. ... How we will advance freedom: principled in goals and pragmatic in means.

Accordingly, Condoleezza Rice, his National Security Advisor for the first term and Secretary of State for the second one, claimed her approach was that of “American realism (*which*) deals with the world as it is but strives to make the world better than it is”, (quoted in KESSLER, 2007). In fact, she thought of herself as the counterweight to Bush’s idealism (FEFFER, 2007). She even pointed to President Theodore Roosevelt, who led the opposition against President Woodrow Wilson in the conduct of the postwar international order engineering, as “the spiritual father of American realism”. Interestingly some of her top aides in the State Department would prefer to define the country’s policy as “practical idealism” (KESSLER, 2007). Different from her previous academic career, most of the time in politics Rice felt she needed to escape a pure “realist” label, qualifying it on some consensual liberal principles of the country that may concede it the adjective *American*.

The same goes for the next president, Barack Obama. In his Nobel Prize acceptance lecture, for example, he argued that “within America, there has long been a tension between those who describe themselves as realists or idealists—a tension that suggests a stark choice between the narrow pursuit of interests or an endless campaign to impose our values around the world. I reject these choices.” (OBAMA, 2009). That was at the end of the first year of his first term. Later, in an interview during his second term, in 2015, he was demanded to reflect on his foreign policy style, now with a long record to be evaluated, again refusing a suggested sole classification as a realist made by the interviewer (YGLESIAS; OBAMA, 2015):

You know, traditionally, a lot of American foreign policy has been divided into the realist camp and the idealist camp. ...the goal of any good foreign policy is having a vision and aspirations and ideals, but also recognizing the world as it is, where it is, and figuring out how do you tack to the point where things are better than they were before. That doesn’t mean perfect. It just means it's better.

His early ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, once described his president through those counter-concepts: “Obama has multiple interests he is thinking about ... He has idealist impulses that are real, and then impulses about concerns about unintended consequences of idealism.” (Quoted in REMNICK, 2014) You can also find his early Secretary of State Hillary Clinton when still a Senator envisaging the presidency in 2006, argued in an interview with the think tank Council on Foreign Relations (PETERSON, CLINTON, 2006):

This administration’s choices were false ones. Internationalism versus unilateralism; realism versus idealism—is there really any argument that America must remain a preeminent leader for peace and freedom,

and yet we must be more willing to work in concert with other nations and international institutions to reach common goals? The American character is both idealistic and realistic. Why can't our government reflect that?

Donald Trump, for his turn, delivered a message to leaders of the Arab and Muslim world in Riyadh, in mid-2017, where he was laying down the first meaningful signs of a Doctrine of foreign policy in his presidency. He made it through explicit reference to the conceptual tension, announcing that (Quoted in DUNNE, 2019):

we are adopting a Principled Realism, rooted in common values and shared interests ... Our partnerships will advance security through stability, not through radical disruption. We will make decisions based on real-world outcomes—not inflexible ideology. We will be guided by the lessons of experience, not the confines of rigid thinking. And, wherever possible, we will seek gradual reforms—not sudden intervention.

Later in that year, the conceptual counterposition did come to define his “America First” national security strategy of “principled realism” (TRUMP, 2017, p.1):

based on American principles, a clear-eyed assessment of U.S. interests, and a determination to tackle the challenges that we face. It is a strategy ... guided by outcomes, not ideology. It is based upon the view that peace, security, and prosperity depend on strong, sovereign nations that respect their citizens at home and cooperate to advance peace abroad. And it is grounded in the realization that American principles are a lasting force for good in the world.

Trump's Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also explored this duality in introducing the administration's policies towards Latin America with the explicit use of that counterconceptual semantics opposing realism and restraint (which is also part of the realist discourse) to (American) principles (POMPEO, 2019):

First was this idea of realism. You have to stare at the problem set as it is, not as you wish it were to be. The second idea is restraint: understanding that we live in this unbelievably exceptional nation. We have an enormous privilege as American citizens, and we have a special role to play in that world; but our power is not limitless, and sometimes we must make difficult choices. And I'll talk about that a little bit more this morning. And the third idea is respect: respect for our American principles and how other nations choose to run their affairs inside of their own countries.

The theme of this American original recipe in mixing realism and idealism is still less explicit in the recently empowered administration of Joe Biden. Despite, that tension is clear in his actions of power politics towards Russia or China for one thing, and in his ideal of defending democracy and human rights globally for another, for now, we only have available general catchphrases that are too vague yet, such as his Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, still nominee in October 2020, when he delineated the future international strategy of the then elected administration: “A Biden administration (*will*) engage the world not as it was in 2009 or even 2017 when we left office, but as it is.” (Quote in McMANUS, 2020). Biden has also been vague, dealing with the conceptual duality in implicit forms, such as when he commented on his take on America's role in international politics: “With your help, the United States will again lead not just by the example of our power but the power of our

example.” (BIDEN, 2021). Climbing down the hierarchy of the American government, an anonymous declaration of a senior official on the escalating tensions with Russia over Ukraine, described how Biden’s foreign policy team was approaching the expected meeting between the American president and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in January 2022: “We will know a lot more in a week or so which path we are on,” the official said, adding that the U.S. will join the meetings with a “sense of realism, not a sense of optimism.” (Quoted in MACIAS, 2022).

If it is still rare to find foreign policy strategy declarations directly from Biden or his secretariat explicitly using the language of realism-idealism, media pundits are already offering analytical takes leaning heavily on those conceptual opposites. Then, there are titles endorsing his realism, praising *Biden the realist* and *America’s Return to Realism*, whilst others point that *Biden tries a new tool for handling China: realism*, and demand the same for *US Policy in Latin America: Time for a New American Realism*. Others question the approach, for reasons such as *Biden’s realism will drive competition among US allies* or recalling old lessons, such as *Beware entanglements? ‘Realists’ fret over Biden foreign policy*. Other critiques throw directly against the opposing pole of realism, claiming that *Biden is a romantic idealist in the age of cynicism and snark*, or, more tragically, that *Biden’s foreign policy team is full of idealists who keep getting people killed*, while *Hypocrisy Returns to US Foreign Policy*. Finally, also on the opposing pole, but on the political opposition to realism, there are those who lament the lack of the historical idealism characterizing American exceptionalism, but still, believe this is *Biden’s chance to revive US tradition of inserting ethics in foreign policy*.

As one goes back to the prior incumbents, this kind of explicit measurement of American foreign policy from a realist-idealist continuum or mix becomes even more available. Then there are inquiries on the Donald giving him the benefit of the doubt: *Is Donald Trump a Realist?*, for they saw “Trump’s early missteps are slowly being replaced with a realistic assessment of America’s national-security toolkit.” (ZAKHEIM, 2017) Others are more assertive engaging in opposing sides of the answer. One can find statements like denying him the positive identification with the concept. One says *No, @realDonaldTrump Is Not a Realist* another denounces that *When it comes to geopolitics, the Donald’s worldview is fantasy and folly – not realism*. Be as it may, they agree that *On foreign policy, Donald Trump*

is no realist. In this vein, there are accusations of *Trump's Latest Betrayal of Foreign Policy Realism*. On the exact opposite, there are those who understand that Trump fills the requirements for an identification with a yet unfavorable definition of the category of realism, as being un-American: with the title *Yes, Trump is a realist and no, this is not subjective*, a piece argues that the former president “goes much further than any of his predecessors or even most Americans – he expressly rejects the concept of American exceptionalism” (ROVERE, 2016). With the same pejorative understanding of the approach, another piece calls *Realism is back*, even if “Trump has no grand philosophy at all—he’s just making it up as he goes along.” (HEILBRUNN, 2017). Still, there is space for favorable evaluations of the president with favorable takes on the concept. To this argument, the president’s lead would be less aleatory, performing a clear strategy of international affairs: *The Conservative Realism of the Trump Administration’s Foreign Policy*. Contestation over the appropriate normative use of those counter-concepts is clear: whereas some assert that Trump’s realism represents the decline of the American foreign policy record (*President Trump has discarded Obama’s idealism for a realistic approach*), others are harsh on the accusation that the decline has to do with the lack of observation of realism (*Trump Has Destroyed America’s Power and Influence*).

Obama was no less scrutinized with that terminology, and evidence for that is plenty available. Here you have those who firmly assert his association with realism (welcoming or complaining about it (*The realist; Obama at one year: new realism in foreign policy; Barack Obama’s welcome Kissinger realism; Obama the Realist; The consequentialist; Yes, Obama is a realist. And he’s good at it too; In realist foreign policy, Obama found limits; Obama’s flawed realism*) or his lack of association with it, again, praising it or not (*Obama Is Not a Realist; Obama Was Not a Realist President; Barack Obama Is Not a Realist*) or the less assured analysts, generally arguing towards the comforting conclusion of the necessary mix, his style (*Obama on US foreign policy: principled realist or failed isolationist?; The Obama speech: idealist or realist?; Realism with a heart?; Is Obama real(ist) confused?; The Obama Doctrine: Multilateralism With Teeth; The Tattered Idealism of Barack Obama; Obama the realist idealist; Liberal or Realist? Obama’s Foreign Policy Ideology and the US Rebalance to Asia*). Exemplarily, the promo of a lecture given under this last title claims that:

Ideology has played a key role in leadership, including the present administration. Public policy scholar Brendon O'Connor argues that under Barack Obama, the White House has returned U.S. foreign policy to an ideological consensus that dates back to the 1930s, combining liberalism and realism.

As a matter of fact, commentators seem to agree with Obama's conclusion about his trajectory in foreign policy: "no American figure has wrestled with the contest between idealism and realism as publicly as Barack Obama. His new memoir, *A Promised Land*, can be read as a long dialogue between these opposing visions of what human beings essentially are." (BROOKS, 2020). The list of quotations from the pundit's analysis could be practically endless. So it is the case with the presidency of George Walker Bush.

The 41st and his Doctrine is a paradigmatic opportunity for the comprehension of presence and contestation over the realism or liberalism manifestation in American foreign policy. Bush's father, for his turn, is widely acknowledged as "the quintessential realist" (SWITZER, 2018), especially for the way he handled the end of the Cold War "without firing a shot." In the case of W., his unilateralist, preemptive, military doctrine and regime change engagements abroad, led to much more variant evaluations of his foreign policy in terms of the terminology of realism and idealism, and, as with the other presidents, with the expected differing attitudes towards the desirability of these countering positions (*Bush idealism at odds with realities of democracy, Echoes of Reagan Idealism, The Realist-Idealist Dilemma, Realism, and idealism, Security Policy Tempers the Idealism, Was Bush a (successful) realist?, An American Foreign Policy That Both Realists and Idealists Should Fall in Love With*).

In Bush's 2004 reelection campaign, a piece compared his contender with him in precisely those terms: *Kerry Casts Himself as Solid Realist and Bush as Dreamy Idealist*. In commenting specifically on the curious movement of the Democrat candidate assuming the realist side at that time, breaking the ulterior pattern identifying the party with Wilsonian internationalism (though in the end, the text concludes that both were more attached to different readings of American idealism), the text revealed the consistent use of that intellectual dichotomy to characterize the variations in American foreign policy for more than 30 years then (more than 50 now). As it argues (BROWNSTEIN, 2004):

Democrats see the world as they would like it to be, not how it is. They dissipate America's strength on idealistic causes unrelated to core national interests. They confuse foreign policy with social work. To one degree or another, every Republican presidential candidate since the 1970s has employed those arguments. They were a central element of the case George W. Bush made against Al Gore and the Clinton administration. And now these same arguments are moving to the forefront of John F. Kerry's case against President Bush.

From all those examples, it becomes evident that the precise usage of those counter-concepts in American foreign policy practice and analysis remains open to hot contestation. Still, from a straight theoretical perspective, that does not undervalue the academic goal and efforts in offering precise, empirical evaluative inquiries from the analytical use of them, in order to take a more “objective” stand in the intersubjective social scientific process. In fact, contestation seems to be kept out of the understanding of the general assumptions and explanatory logic of the realist approach to international politics and its opposite idealist bearing. The contestation in the proper use of those concepts thrives in the evaluations made of each president by the specialized community – and by themselves and their aides.

These actors infer no single, consistent set of prescriptions from that common overall approach. In fact, they may defend conflicting conclusions from the analytical use of the same realist ideas. Given the polemics between different strands of realist theory in IR and the intimacy between this field and that of Foreign Policy Analysis in the United States, that contestation comes as no surprise (WOHLFORTH, 2016, pp. 38-41). And, in the political sense, as *Begriffsgeschichte* holds, it is in this very trait of contestation that the political capability of concepts lives. Correspondingly, in the heavily polarized context of American politics as a whole these days, the rhetorical, public opinion appeal that realism and idealism have long had in the country’s political debates has been overloaded in their condition of essentially contested concepts (GALLIE, 1956; COLLIER et al, 2006). Therefore, when it comes to American foreign policy, an important conclusion differentiating the uses of realism-idealism in the IR disciplinary discourse, is that being an idealist – in the US it means believing in its exceptionalist example and/or mission of spreading US liberal values and institutions throughout the world – is not a clearly an asymmetrically undervalued concept to dodge from, nor is plain realism an obvious, even acceptable strategy for any American presidency.

The counter-concepts in the current language and analysis of contemporary US foreign policy studies

Understanding the state of academic discourse on the place of realism on (and in) American foreign policy adds to the political comprehension of a conceptual history endeavor herein. For that, as it was done in relation to the study of realism and idealism in the

wider IR, textbooks, and handbooks offer another layer of meaning to the concepts under scrutiny, where new students are introduced to the wider consensus and the disputes over basic themes of a specialization field. And, in most cases, they are written by the same analysts of the politics of the day. Here, excerpts from six recent references on the themes of realism (and idealism) in the foreign policy of America widen the access to the contemporary meanings carried by the concept in the public discourse today (LASCURETTES, 2016; WOHLFORTH, 2016; WIVEL, 2017; SCHMIDT, 2018; NAU, 2012; 2018). Methodologically, that is also relevant in setting parameters for the proximity or distance of the conceptual meaning between our contemporary linguistic community and that of the living political agents in the early-twentieth-century America, which is the goal of this dissertation.

Contestation over the meanings of “realism” in these academic circles seems to get more restricted to the edge of political analysis on recent actual cases, where it is back again expressed as political praxis through discursive actions. Among the seemingly consensus, there is realism’s ascendancy in the field, which should not be, again, a surprise due to the field’s close juxtaposition with the discipline of IR in the US. To the authors, realism is a “hard test” to exceptionalist explanations to the international behavior of the country (DEUDNEY, MEISER, 2018, p. 24), “the fulcrum of these academic debates” on its foreign policy (LASCURETTES, 2016, p. 878; NAU, 2012, p. 61; SCHMIDT, 2018, p.13; Quote on WOHLFORTH, 2016, p. 51). Even though, this primacy comes from being dominant as a systemic level explanation, which seems an untouchable, unproblematic aspect of the theoretical concept. Classical realism did have a philosophical dependency on a human nature assumption – egoistic, conflictual, vain –, which placed the explanation at the unit level, despite not being a cultural explanation still, and presenting impeding falsifiability issues. With Kenneth Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*, the structural explanation became the norm in the realist tradition (LASCURETTES, 2016, p. 878; WOHLFORTH, 2016, pp. 35, 37; WIVEL, 2017, p. 7, 16; SCHMIDT, 2018, p. 11; NAU, 2012, p. 60). Even for neoclassical realists, the explanatory power of the realism argument to the study of US foreign policy happens as structural constraints to be or not to be well digested by more or less informed, more or less rational domestic foreign policy processes (RATHBUN, 2008; KITCHEN, 2010). Liberalism, the other dominant approach to American foreign policy,

works at the domestic level, where it theoretically contends with Marxist approaches over the proper explanation of the foreign policy decision-making processes (SCHMIDT, 2018, pp. 13-4).

From a general conceptual interest, there is a very fair consensus over the definition of what counts as “realism” in these contemplated references. A fairly consensual general definition for realism that inhabits the discipline of IR. Though the texts analyzed here differ in the number of assumptions to be counted in, they agree at least in the central tenets of the tradition: state-centrism, the anarchy of the system, national security as ultimate interest and relative power as the proper means, the rationality of state action, a moral skepticism, and the logics of power distribution as the most determinant constraint to foreign policy success. Moreover, all share an overall commitment with a generalizing explanation of international politics to be evidenced by their manifestation in actual events of international politics. The limits of realism they agree on lie in the potential (though usually doubted) intervenient explanatory power of institutional or ideational factors over behavior in international politics, where neoliberal institutional and constructivist theoretical approaches thrive in (NAU, 2012, pp. 61-2). Yet, a very interesting way to delve into this apparent consensus and get sharper on this theoretical definition of realism is offered by William Wohlforth’s parsimonious tripartite presentation of the realist theory assumptions: groupism, egoism, and power-centrism. The other elements often brought as assumptions like those above mentioned would be in fact more properly understood as manifestations, implications, predictions, or derivations of one of the three assumptions, or scope conditions for the testing of the theory (WOHLFORTH, 2016, pp. 41-3). His argument supports an understanding of how similar takes on the general definitions of realism may lead to very different evaluations of and prescriptions of foreign policy, apart from ideological inclinations and unveiled commitments in the political game itself that makes for the essentially contested condition of the concept.

In this sense, academic analyses, even in top foreign policy academic publications, are no less full of that contestation over the meaning and the analytical/critical use that the last section revealed of media pundits’ analyses. Though the society is to assume the precision of their evaluations and prescriptions, intending definitive influence in the political game itself, these academic takes seem hardly detached from the convenience of supporting or attacking different competitors of the game, despite the confusion with realist assumptions above

mentioned may be part of the reason for such analytical disparities. Out of those above-listed analyses made available in different mass media outlets – where top IR scholars are routinely present –, it should be expected from peer-reviewed social scientific research journals that the concepts used for evaluative analytical goals in the published articles stand in more precision and in less contestation. Yet, those concepts are far from a consensual use in the empirical inquiries over those presidents.

Obama and Bush administrations, over which the main arguments of the debate have been well consolidated, offer good examples of this conceptual contestation. *The Continued Relevance of Realism in the Age of Obama: Plus Ça Change, Plus C'est La Même Chose* (THAYER, 2010), *Obama Abroad: Ambitious Realism* (LOY, 2011), *Obama and the Arab Spring: The Strategic Confusion of a Realist-Idealist* (CELSO, 2014), *Realism in Action: Obama's Foreign Policy in Afghanistan* (HOFFMAN, 2015), *Obama, the Idealistic Realist* (POWASKI, 2019), *The Obama administration, defensive realism, and American foreign policy in the Middle East* (JUNEAU, 2020); *Ideology and the Foreign Policy of Barack Obama: A Liberal-Realist Approach to International Affairs* (O'CONNOR; COOPER, 2021). The list is far from exhaustive, even less when taking into account articles on Obama dealing with the dichotomy outside of the title, but inside the argumentation. Anyhow, even if there is a tendency favoring a realist diagnostic (never without restrictions) of Obama's foreign policy – which is, as a general tendency, again, associated with a reversal from a clearer ideological commitment of his predecessor, George W. Bush –, the essential contestation over the meaning and use of the concepts is plain.

The infamous Bush Doctrine – the announced grand strategy moving and justifying the future use of violence in Iraq and the expansion and maintenance of a heavy military presence there and in Afghanistan (mostly in BUSH, 2002; reviewed in BUSH, 2006) – has stimulated a more heated public debate: the ideology of neoconservatism – Bush Doctrine being its sharpest manifestation in power (KRAUTHAMMER, 2005) –, is it mostly derived from a realist or a liberal grasp of international relations? The recent introductory literature to the field has properly acknowledged the case of Bush's grand strategy as of paradigmatic relevance in illustrating the contested use of that semantic structure in debates about American foreign policy:

For many, it seems self-evident that the doctrine was based on a muscular version of realism. ... Yet many realists are critical of the Bush doctrine, especially with respect to how it justified the Iraq War. ... A key rationale for the invasion of Iraq was that regime change was necessary. (SCHMIDT, 2018, pp.19)

On one hand, it exposed the most disputed aspects of the concepts as being related to the different prescriptions and evaluations supposedly deduced from the more consensual core assumptions of that theoretical discourse. On the other, it also burrowed the limits of realism as a theory for intentionally or not invading the ideological debate of US foreign policy. Subsequently, disagreements could be less a result of different theoretical clarity over realism's assumptions, but of political personal alignments indeed.

The contentions can be summarized in three general claims, and a positive versus a negative normative evaluation of each of them. Thence, there are those for whom Bush's grand strategy was not realist, but liberal, Wilsonian; those for whom it was realist indeed, not liberal, and those for whom it was neither realist nor liberal. And for each of these cases you can find those who approve that evaluation and those who decry it. Without a doubt, the first case hosts many of the most prominent IR realists, directly involved in this dispute over Bush's foreign policy. Many took it as a good opportunity to untwine – or at least, to deal with – the caricature that confuses realism with a hawkish position (SCHMIDT; WILLIAMS, 2008; WALT, 2010; EDELSTEIN, 2010). The more strident instrumental aspects of the doctrine – the possibility for preemptive, unilateral actions – used in the name of democracy promotion abroad (JERVIS, 2003), seemed to bring uncomfortable confusion over where the line distinguishing realist and liberal approaches was drawn.

As a means to stress the realist opposition, John Mearsheimer recalled Morgenthau's campaign against the US liberal-internationalist-inspired increasing involvement in Vietnam since the late 1950s as if the German-American professor would do the same in the case of the post-9/11 full military action against Iraq. As the author goes, the strategy “has an idealist strand and a power strand: Wilsonianism provides the idealism, an emphasis on military power provides the teeth.” (MEARSHEIMER, 2005). For him, the self-given label “neoconservatism” carries a mistaken understanding of conservatism, for it is a radical thought indeed. The power strand in neoconservatism cannot be realism at all. It carries a very limited understanding of how power constitutes politics and an unlimited hope for the victory of an ideal. Because of their expectation of a bandwagoning reaction from other old powers – be it for the pretense righteousness of democracy promotion, or for the expected

incomparable military superiority of the “revolution in military affairs”, Morgenthau would think neocons are “hoey”. Definitely, not something realists would commit themselves to (except for Kissinger, in both Vietnam and Iraq cases, Mearsheimer emphatically insists).

Robert Jervis early noted a global version of America’s manifest destiny inscribed into neocon thought, legitimating actions meant to secure the decisive victory of liberty over totalitarianism, forging a safer, improved, open world society – meaning, more than necessary intentions. In this sense, Bush aides were sharp in apprehending the permissive context of unipolarity, the unique opportunity (which realists read as a trap) presented by history. Therefore, neoconservatism compares to a hegemonic Wilsonianism, that old favorite realist target: “Just as Wilson sought to ‘teach [the countries of Latin America] ‘to elect good men,’ so Bush will bring free markets and free elections to countries without them. This agenda horrifies Realists (and perhaps realists).” (JERVIS, 2003, p. 366. In Jervis’s differentiation, capital “R” being the specialist use, and with the small case, the general sense of commitment to what is reality). And though Jervis concedes neocons have a Realist grasp of the nature of power relations among states, Bush Doctrine is basically a hawkish reading of the international liberalism of the United States. Nor even the preemptive action initiative would be approved by Bismarck, as he remembers. Even with unipolarity making primacy seem more “realistic” (Jervis purposely avoids “realists” here, as indicating different things), a prudent state, moved by realism, would avoid setting those civilizing (and unbalancing) tasks to itself.

For most of realist interpreters, then, neoconservatism is no more than a particular liberal interpretation of American exceptionalism (MONTEN, 2005, p. 116) that would be promptly recognizable by classic realists in the history of American foreign policy debate: Walter Lippman would call it the “persistent evangel in Americanism.” Reinhold Niebuhr contended that Americans were “inclined to pretend that our power is exercised by a peculiarly virtuous nation.” For them, realism stands for the constant alert against the dangers residing in a fervorous creed in an uncritical, reckless practice of exceptionalism. Expressing fear of this particular trait of American nationalism, the then-future Reagan’s ambassador to the United Nations, political scientist Jeane Kirkpatrick wrote: “The political temptation ... in believing that [our] intelligence and exemplary motives equip [us] to reorder the institutions, the lives, and even the characters of almost everyone-this is the totalitarian temptation.”

(Quotes on MONTEN, 2005, pp. 143; 146; 155). These represent the best critiques on the lack of prudence, and restraint in foreign relations as it was Morgenthau's real concern behind his most worthy contributions to the American society: to avoid the danger of depoliticization and the rise of totalitarianism, as he witnessed in the society he escaped from, by learning the art of politics – a theme to be explored later.

Bush's war in Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein was opposed by the most influent self-declared realists. Jack Snyder remembers that capital "R" or not, many intellectual and political leaders across the ideological spectrum signed the *Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy*, advising against the perils of overreach in advancing to seize Bagdad and dismantle the Ba'ath Iraqi statecraft (SNYDER, 2004, p. 56). All of that is easy to agree in retrospective, with the rise (and apparent fall) of the Islamic State in the region of Iraq and the Levant (BRZUSZKIEWICZ, 2018). Brent Scowcroft, a famous public representative of this approach, once national security adviser to President George H. W. Bush and responsible for making him the paramount realist, has written the same critique against his son: *Don't attack Saddam*. His open-ed in *Wall Street Journal* denounced the lack of national interest in and the long-term negative prospects of a regime change operation over Bagdad. Hawkish neoconservatives in the administration, like Dick Cheney, David Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, got upset with the message. It did, in reality, make crystal the difference between them and realists, according to a pundit:

Realists, in contrast to those who are called neoconservatives, prefer to deal with other nations on their own terms, whether they are democracies or not, and were skeptical that a war in Iraq would help make democracy blossom throughout the Middle East. (KESSLER, 2004).

Similarly, another analysis agreed that "the muscular approach to extending democracy shouldered aside the vocabulary of realism that had dominated US foreign policy for decades in the cold war." (SAFIRE, 2005). Hence, the Bush administration's post-9/11 commitment to democracy promotion and preemptive attacks through even unilateral means may be "hawkish", but still it is not realism. It came to power pretending to play a more selective balance-of-power foreign policy to challenge the liberal internationalism of the Clinton years but was pressured after the attacks in New York and Washington D.C. to play a more Wilsonian grand strategy of opportunistic primacism. Neocons, then, are more utopian in terms of expectations of moral progress and (relatedly) more aggressive with the use of force to defend and promote it. Accordingly, (DUECK, 2004, p. 516):

primacists are more idealistic than balance-of-power realists. They genuinely believe that America's democratic and free market values can be promoted successfully worldwide. And they believe that this is not only in the interests of the United States – although it certainly is that – but also in the interests of the international community as a whole.

Thence, readings of the Bush doctrine rebutting its qualification as a realist approach get close to a consensual point here. However, others – including realists – have tried to distinguish it not only from realism but from the liberal alternative of the coalesced counter-conceptual language of the country's foreign policy imaginary, making it a third venue of public disputes. Then, there is realism, finding forceful democracy exportation abject, and the discord among those who believe in the importance of exporting democratic values worldwide, or a “fierce tug-of-war between disparate strands of liberal thought” (SNYDER, 2004: 57), the adepts of multilateral institutions and democratic governments' alliances, and those who consent the unilateral decide on the use of military power in the name of exporting those values. Neoconservatism, in this line of argumentation, is all-around different from the scope of US tradition in foreign policy made of the realist-liberal axis (GEORGE, 2005, pp. 176; 183):

But as many conservative scholars (e.g. traditional and neorealists) and commentators have made clear there is something very different about this articulation of the ‘American way’. ... A difference centred on a disdain for modern IR orthodoxy (liberal and conservative) and, ultimately, a different way of thinking about modern global life. ...

My sense is that there are interlocking networks of people in and around the Bush administration which have put aside their reservations about each other for the sake of grabbing the historical moment, of wrenching US foreign policy away from liberals and orthodox Realists.

As another analysis adds, neoconservatism is a new approach to foreign policy transcending traditional realist and liberal variants as a more proper reaction to another novelty, the never-seen-before condition of unipolarity in international politics (DOLAN, 2004):

Realism—with its attendant balance-of-power politics, coalitions and alliances, deterrence, and containment—is no longer applicable in what Bush and most of his team view as a unipolar world characterized by major power imbalances between the America and the world. Likewise, Wilsonian strategies of enlightened self-interest designed to build economic and political alliances under U.S. global leadership have been deemed, for the most part, unnecessary and out of touch with today's global power structure. So, too, are liberal geopolitical strategies such as the democracy-centered policies and the humanitarian interventionism of Bush Sr. and Clinton that stressed a new world order of inclusion and rules-based processes.

Michael Williams and Brian Schmidt, a duo of disciplinary historians present in this “debate of the First Great Debate in IR”, pointed out that there was a clear dispute between representatives of realism and neoconservatism in the foreign policy community during Bush's years. From their revamped classical realist perspective, they understood that if “the core elements of the neoconservative Bush Doctrine stand in direct contrast to many of the

fundamental tenets of realism”, it was also plain that neoconservatism was not international liberalism, but a third main position in the national foreign policy debate, each being crucially distinct from one another: “The neoconservative critique of realism is not that it focuses on the national interest,” as liberal internationalists charge, “but that realism has failed to take the concept of the national interest seriously enough.” (SCHMIDT; WILLIAMS, 2008, pp. 195; 211). Therefore, they also agree that, as neoconservatism is profoundly nationalist, it could not be exactly international liberalism for its focus on transnational ties, international political authorities of governance and cosmopolitan values.

In effect, the emergence of neoconservatism in American foreign policy forced a reaction from academic realists in IR theory. Their influence was diminished to that ideology’s firm stand in nationalism understood in terms of shared values, moral commitments, and ethical standards, beyond a simple, insufficient realist notion limiting nationalism to the state interest in terms of material strategic gains (SCHMIDT; WILLIAMS, 2008, pp. 210-5; CAVERLEY, 2010; RYTHOVEN, 2016). The debate was stimulated not only by academic realists, but also from inside the government, by names like Collin Powell, the administration’s first Secretary of State, and his successor, Condoleezza Rice, a Scowcroft’s *protégé*. However, not even this alignment with the main realist names of the discipline – suggesting a strategy of offshore balancing (MEARSHEIMER, WALT, 2016) – could do much against the connection that neoconservatism had established with American symbology (SCHMIDT; WILLIAMS, 2008, p. 214). From the successful neocon public affairs viewpoint, this realist grand strategy proposal sounded un-American, coward isolationism to primacists, lacking the proper American purpose and identity (KAGAN, 2014). More than a decade ago, Schmidt and Williams argued that if realism was to “become a substantive guide and mobilizing symbol in foreign policy, and contribute to political reconstruction at home” it had to recapture traditional realists’ emphasis on the national interest (SCHMIDT; WILLIAMS, 2008, p. 214) The impact in IR realism is clear by now: after a three-decade dominance of structural approaches and their dismissal of nationalism as a unit level factor or as an unobservable ideational claim, realists have definitely worked to re-establish its connection (not its confusion, still) with nationalist power politics.

In a more consistent use of the semantic logics of the contemporary concept of realism – i.e., its asymmetrical counterposition to anything else that is not realist, included in

the category of idealism – Mearsheimer has even pushed the argument that Trump’s nationalist illiberal presidency was a reaction against cosmopolitan elites and their “unbound liberalism”, neoconservatism included (MEARSHEIMER, 2021, p. 6). Then, again, realists’ take on neoconservative primacism judges it as merely a hawkish form of international liberalism, and not something excluded from this American notion of exceptionalism. And while these realists – always making explicit their concern with the overall decadence of American liberalism in domestic politics – have even agreed with the offshore tendency in Trump’s foreign policy (for Walt [2018], a more accidental than strategical realist practical result), IR primacists – Robert Kagan is the leading figure – had flagrantly crossed the GOP limits to support Hillary Clinton in the 2016 elections, a hawkish liberal internationalist ace in US foreign policy (KHALEK, 2016). Consequentially, liberal internationalists and neoconservatives are no more than an expression of the disagreement between the offensive and defensive versions of liberalism in American foreign policy (MILLER, 2010). Bush’s initial years could even be read as a realist retreat from the Clinton liberal internationalist era, but after 9/11 it went back to a Wilsonianian approach to international politics, but not to a liberal internationalist reading of it, but a primacist one (DUECK, 2004).

Still, a minority do see neoconservatism not as a liberal, nor as an original third-way interpretation of a proper national grand strategy to the post-9/11 world, but as a realist interpretation itself. For these, the neoconservative takes on how world politics work around power, which “continues to be the fundamental currency of international relations in a dangerous world, and the spread of democracy is not simply its own reward, but improves American national security”. This is sufficiently consistent with realism precepts as a theoretical approach to foreign policy. Neoconservatism, in this line of thought, cannot be sided with liberalism for it only adheres to simply one liberal mechanism, that of democracy promotion, ignoring all others relating to multilateralism, international institutions, and law promotion, or economic interdependence. “To say the least, this complicates realism’s claim to be an alternative approach.” (CAVERLEY, 2010, p. 594) In addition, neoconservatism should be understood as having “roots in a strain of realist political thinking best labeled as hegemonist”, which “argues that American primacy in the world is the key to securing America’s interests—and that it is both possible and desirable to extend the unipolar moment of the 1990s into a unipolar era.”. A belief in a dangerous un-romanticized anarchy, where

states are key actors, military power their ultimate instrument, and skepticism about multilateralism and international institutions. Only its fifth precept, the exceptionalist credo, would be alien to realists. Bush Doctrine should be accordingly read as a realism-related deviation of American liberal internationalist foreign policy tradition (DAALDER and LINDSAY, 2003, p. 6).

One last issue to be reinforced here: this essentially contested condition of the contemporary academic use of realism-idealism on American foreign policy analysis does not limit itself to a labeling interpretation of American foreign policy, but the normative assessment of this eventual classification. References like those in the last paragraph evaluating Bush Doctrine take the influence of realism in American foreign policy as jeopardizing the country's contribution to humanity's political progress. While this particular position relating neoconservatism to realism is a minority one, the real relevant minority (in terms of access to political decision-making) in American foreign policy is realism itself. Consistently with John Gunnell's argument explored in the last chapter, there has been an isolation of the more critical arguments that threatened the liberal foundation normative commitment between the science of politics and the American polity it studies, making Political Theory a separate, autonomous, interdisciplinary field. Realism's dominance in IR may play the same script, it had to be somehow isolated from a behavioralist-defined subfield of American Foreign Policy Analysis (see chapter 2). Hence, the autonomy of IR from political science (and the pledges of isolation from FPA as well). The majority of the academic literature in the FPA field (and the news media analysts too) does not even make reference to that counter-conceptual duality, making it a more IR discipline interest on the issue. And hence, the majority of names in this section of American foreign policy studies are mainstream names in IR. A sensation of isolation from them may explain the issue to be treated next.

Anti-Realism in/on American Foreign Policy: assumption and Myth

The abundant references registering the occurrence of the concept of realism in/on US foreign policy compose a landscape of hot contestation over its meaning and significance. This contestation is manifest in the diverse ways in which presidents have explicitly tempered their commitments to American exceptionalism with a claimed awareness of the realist

dynamics of power politics and of the needed prudence therefrom. Despite all that evidence, however, a powerful widespread trope among these overlapping discourses on foreign policy is that America rejects that obsolete, alien, materialist political approach related to realism as a matter of defining the foundational elements of its polity's exceptional identity.

Richard Snyder once argued that “In liberal democracies, realism is the theory that everyone loves to hate.” (SNYDER, 2004, p. 55). However, this attitude seems to acquire specific identity implications in the case of the United States. Though it is implicit in the very substance defining American exceptionalism in opposition to European *Realpolitik* – thence realism becomes a minority position, an asymmetry reverted from its manifestation in IR, as described above –, it is frequently made explicit as some variant of the motto “Americans despise realism in their foreign policy.” Examples of the presence of contention in contemporary academic literature are plenty. One investigation on the history of US grand strategy argues that “the defining feature of America’s liberal foreign policy worldview ... is resistance to ‘realpolitik.’” Accordingly, beyond self-security, Americans support military foreign action only if it involves the realization of its liberal exceptionalist mission. Notwithstanding, this moralistic crusading tendency of the US foreign policy has usually failed (DUECK, 2006, p. 26). Another study claims that “the indispensable baseline for asserting the effects of any domestic factors, such as American liberal republicanism and the exceptionalism ideology associated with it, is the simple realist model of security, power, and interests.” (DEUDNEY; MEISER, 2018, p. 24). In the same vein, Mead praises the absence of what he disparagingly dubs “continental realism” from the pantheon of national foreign policy dispositions, while assuming the existence of a genuinely distinct “American realism” (MEAD, 2001, p. 127; MEAD 2002, pp. 34–41). All of these represent the claim of American antipathy for “realism,” as understood through exceptionalist prisms themselves.

What makes this argument really interesting, though, is that generations of self-understood realists have publicly agreed with the same point. George Kennan, concerned with this supposed national policy-making aversion to power politics, wrote *American Diplomacy* in 1951 to alert his compatriots to the danger of having legalists and moralists controlling decision-making in foreign policy (KENNAN, 1951). Morgenthau attacked the reigning liberal ideological distortion in the conduct of foreign policy, which he first developed theoretically, then critically, with practical acid implications over the expanding

military involvement in Southeast Asia already in the 1950s, through which, he complained, there was never a proper audience in the policy-making elite (RAFSHOON, 2001). As early as 1944, Reinhold Niebuhr argued against “liberal idealism” (and also idealist Marxists) who played against a proper “sober” realist public understanding of the necessity of policies consistent with the balance of power, while also averting an “amoral,” children of darkness’s “political realism” (NIEBUHR, 1960, pp. 6-8, 177-8). Henry Kissinger (1994) thought Americans, despite their insistent idealism, thrived out of a lucky trajectory. And to avoid depending on fate, he thought he could teach Americans how to conduct foreign policy through the lessons of realism (MEAD, 2001). Robert Gilpin (1996) complained that “no one loves a political realist” in a liberal society, for liberalism seems to be against the intellectual pluralism of ideas (and that goes for Marxist societies as well). Mearsheimer (2005), consistently pointing from the end of the Cold War to the eventual return of security competition once the unipolar moment passed, complained he experienced the same estrangement Carr did for exposing the realist critique at the dawn of the Nazi invasion of Poland. As the slogan he had already promoted, “realism is a hard sell” in the US (MEARSHEIMER, 2001, p. 23). More recently, complaining about the ongoing failure of international liberalism engagement strategy towards China, he wrote that “the US foreign policy establishment was enamored with engagement and had no time for realist arguments.” (MEARSHEIMER, 2022, p. 185). The list is endless. It is enough to point out such a consistent frequency in the repetition of the assessment by the main names of the discipline over the years. In fact, it has been a very long love-and-hate affair.

Daniel Drezner dubbed this phenomenon the “anti-realist assumption”. However, his study on the theme concludes it is a sustained misconception that does not live up to the facts. Still, despite not being confirmed by much available evidence in public opinion surveys he gathered, he concedes that it remains a persistent belief holding onto the development of the American liberal identity: “Scholars argue that the exceptionalist history of the United States allowed a liberal worldview of international relations to develop unfettered by *realpolitik* concerns.” (DREZNER, 2008, p. 53). Drezner’s point in his contribution was to ravel this myth by offering a review of data regarding the country’s foreign affairs leading to the conclusion that the anti-realist assumption is not empirically valid for it cannot find support among the mass public opinion. “The results suggest that Americans are far more receptive to

realpolitik than is commonly assumed. ... realist tenets resonate just as strongly with Americans as liberal internationalism.” (DREZNER, 2008, p. 52). Answers of the American public consistently point to “a Hobbesian prism”, ranking priorities of the country’s foreign policy in clear accordance with realist principles. And even when responses for certain issues apparently give way to an international liberal stance, contradictory answers to related questions reveal the realist penchant behind public attitude: if support for multilateral institutions is the only substantive majority issue that would confirm the anti-realist thesis with more than 70% of the sample, there are only about one in every six compatriots favoring a sole leadership of the US against international problems, implying the lack of will to unilaterally pay for the costs of an international order. Even more interestingly, these numbers were collected barely one year ahead from the fall of the twin towers in New York City, the apex of the post-Cold War unipolar context. The American power stood unmatched, and security was rarely found at the top of presidential concerns in foreign policy calculations, generally crowded with low politics issues. According to both the realist explanatory approach and the anti-realist attitude, those should be the proper structural conditions for the relief of security competition concerns and the strengthening of the liberal ideological commitments of the American people. Yet, that did not reflect on the numbers at all (DREZNER, 2008, pp. 55-8).

In order to update these results, it is a must to check the newest surveys from the institutes Drezner also recurred to in 2008. An analysis of the 2021 biannual edition surveying American attitudes towards US foreign policy of the *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, one of the references Drezner had considered in his 2008 review, confirms the empirical inconsistency of the “anti-realist assumption” more than ten years later. Focused on the middle-class foreign policy orientation Biden indicated in his inaugural address – first, the pooling confirmed its sample was vastly self-identified as belonging to (some class of) the middle class – sometimes it caught an agreement with the president’s approach. There is the perception of disproportional economic foreign-policy-related gains for elites, a position heavily explored by contemporary illiberal populist leaders, such as Trump, forcing Democrats to have their own answer to it. In terms of a realist public worldview or not, there is broad support for two major issues: China’s relative growth threats US military and economic lead in the world and the need to invest in the real foundations of the country’s

global influence stem from domestic improvements, especially in education, democracy, and its economy. Moreover, the most salient disagreements are revealed right within the liberal internationalist tendencies of the new administration: the public show little interest in exporting democracy and human rights, and are skeptical about trade and US leadership in global agendas and their overall participation in international organizations (SMELTZ et al., 2021). The other important reference in American public opinion, also in Drezner's review, the *Pew Research Center's* most recent surveys also keep corroborating his analytical interpretation. Even considering the marked divides between leaning or consolidated Democrat and Republican voters (PEW, 2021a) and the consistency of these views with media "bubbles" (PEW, 2021b), the mean ranking of foreign policy priorities is quite as consistent with a realist theoretical analysis, as it is the desire of almost half of Americans preferring their country to be as active as any other leading nation in world affairs – reinforced by the 78% who prefer a shared leadership against only 11% picking the single leadership (PEW, 2021a).

Drezner's survey and experimental data assembled in 2008 and the latest Chicago Council and Pew Research Center surveys should bury any validity for the anti-realist presumption. If Americans eventually show some sympathy for international liberal utopias and the moral conduct of their international affairs, what they do prioritize are images, preferences, and strategies strongly consistent with a realist approach of IR: awareness of a conflictual state of nature, concern with national security and its improvement, the preeminence of military and economic autonomy goals. Liberal alternatives such as promoting multilateral organizations and initiatives, democracy, and human rights lie at the bottom of the ranks. As he conclusively asserted in his 2008 paper, "Americans think like intuitive neorealists", in terms of the use of force in foreign policy, and of its foreign economic policy (DREZNER, 2008, p. 63). They calculate preferences by considering relative gains, which is made clearer when the opponent is a rising rival power.

Take China as an example here. Recent assertions from the president of the Communist Party Xi Jin Ping make it clear they feed a superpower image of themselves (ECONOMY, 2022). The many impressive material deeds like the 5G telecommunication technologies, its GPS equivalent, the artificial islands naval bases in the South China Sea, the hypersonic missiles, etc could not pass unnoticed through this relative calculation of public

opinion. *Pew* has identified a sharp rise in the negative (“cold”) view Americans in both parties have of China, from 46% in 2018 to 67% in 2021, and in the priority of limiting the Asian nation’s power and influence (from 32% to 48%) (SILVER; DEVLIN; HUANG, 2021). If the assumption of the un-Americanness of realism and the related preferences for liberal internationalism in that country was considerably weak in the decade it was thought to be the end-of-history victory of liberal democracies in the post-Cold War era, it would not be now, within the consolidation of a bipolar (or even multipolar) world, that someone should expect it to gain any more weight among Americans.

In fact, a last sigh to the thesis, Drezner concedes, lies in the particularities in the data explored. They leave the possibility that the real resistance against realism comes essentially from the incomparably smaller (but powerful) segment of the population made of the national elites and their particular attachment to the values of liberal internationalism. That is, in a wide range of issues – besides economic ones, where, a mercantilist bias is thoroughly evident – the foreign-policy elite in media, business and think tanks, organizations, universities, and policy-making sensibly diverge from the masses. “With the partial exception of think tanks, surveys of all of these subgroups indicate a strong predilection towards cosmopolitanism or liberal internationalism.” (DREZNER, 2008, pp. 61-64. Quote on p. 64). Furthermore, the ultimate front of anti-realism would, in fact, be limited to the elite subgroup that realists are most in touch with: IR scholars, concludes Drezner, forging an interesting reason for the endurance of the belief. This refined assumption is more consistent with recent findings from analysts at *Pew* crossing their data with the latter *Teaching, Research and International Politics*, now a traditional IR worldwide community survey (POUSHTER, 2018). Consistently, a later *Pew* polling with US foreign policy experts in 2020 pointed out that the most salient disparities between scholars and the general public lie in the perception of the terrorist threat (scholars marking minus 55 points), nuclear weapons spread (minus 30), Russia and China (minus 23 and 16), while realist-defined low-politics themes like climate change invert their position (scholars lead by 26 points) (POUSHTER; FAGAN, 2020).

With the refutation, or at least, imprecise state of that anti-realist assumption before the empirical data is available, it becomes necessary to evaluate the underexplored mythical existence of the assumption between both American liberals and realists. As earlier defined in the theoretical approach to this thesis (chapter 1), mythology is taken as a methodological

approach (BARTHES, 1972; WEBER, 2001). In light of this, the myth does not get less real because of the lack of corresponding empirical evidence to confirm it. Conversely, “despite subsequent evidence to the contrary, the anti-realist assumption remains one of the most pervasive components of American foreign policy discourse” (KERTZER; MCGRAW, 2012, p. 2). Being empirically consistent or not, the narrative composing the assumption is still constitutive of the American political identity. The New Republic’s self-image of an innovative political experiment, antagonist to the obsolescence of the Old World, had in the foreign policy realm a major focus. “Americanness” was constituted by the whole package of liberal democracy, which should include a clear commitment to liberal internationalist values, not only participation in multilateral organizations but also the exportation of democracy and human rights. Any foreign affairs action or position available to be plainly described as “realist” should be dismissed right away as alien to the national identity.

And yet, with all the constraints to realist thought, realist scholars find some comfort within the anti-realist American context. A last passage of Drezner’s works this suspicion very finely in the passage below (2008, p. 63):

Realists have repeatedly asserted that US foreign policy leaders act in a realist manner but disguise these actions through liberal rhetoric. The anti-realist assumption allows these scholars to assert that the only source of *realpolitik* behavior comes from the systemic level. If the American public holds realist views on certain foreign policy dimensions, then a unit-level causal mechanism exists that would also explain these policy outcomes.”

That opens meaningful space to an interpretation of anti-realism in American political mythology as some kind of a collective project – or at least an immanent desire – of avoiding the incorporation of realism as a genuine trait of American political thought. In accordance, that literature agrees that survey questions set to identify realist (in opposition to idealist) foreign policy predispositions in the American public are strangely absent (DREZNER, 2008, p. 62), as if there was nothing to capture with them. Despite the omnipresence of realism in American IR theory, one cannot find it “squarely in the company of other belief systems regularly studied in public opinion and political psychology,” like those of isolationism, interventionism, and militarism (KERTZER; MCGRAW, 2012, p. 1). Joshua Kertzer and Kathleen McGraw suggest that it is probably the very fact that realism is taken as a theory that unveils ideology behind any political action that make it difficult to find it treat as

ideology itself (in the sense of a “generalized belief system”).¹¹ In order to deal with this absence, they propose conducting simple surveys and experiments intended to explore “whether realism is understood as a function of political knowledge, foreign policy orientations, or personality traits” (KERTZER; MCGRAW, 2012, p. 4), which is what they offer.

From their findings, they conclude that Drezner’s hypothesis on the presence of realism as a unit-level mechanism does hold. They also find that fear – an explanatory variable for realism in interstate politics – can trigger realist calculations and responses on individuals, yet only inasmuch as it may trigger its opposite alternative: “fear has polarizing effects: ‘freedom from fear’ might steer individuals toward the center of the realist–idealist continuum, but it won’t necessarily push them to one particular side.” (KERTZER; MCGRAW, 2012, p. 11) Therefore, realism and idealism are also conditional to individual predispositions. Though fear and lack of information are treated by the rationalist approach of neo-realists as concept and operationalization, respectively, they in fact conform to very distinct manifestations of political reality. Their conclusion on the urgency to relate these phenomena with emotions and their psychological framework points to an interesting and already productive research agenda, but the argument of this thesis distinctly focuses on the unavoidable social linguistic structures that have made possible the current American foreign policy imaginary. While Kertzer and McGrew correctly look for explanations for realist attitudes in the psychological traits of individuals, this thesis follows another line of inquiry, an effort to reconstruct the constitutive process that the very social understanding of realism in politics in which individuals may find a cultural reference to incorporate or even to reject.

As an example of this difference in approach, Kertzer and McGraw indicate that the gathered evidence play against the argument Kagan offered in *Of Paradise and Power* (2004). In this much-debated book, Kagan presented the thesis that, since the end of World War II, the military weakness of Europe, comfortably standing as security consumers of the US against the Soviet threat, led them to develop much more multilateral, law-based, low politics foreign policy view, while the US progressively came to unilaterally assume costs of

¹¹ The authors correctly claim the difference in the realist critique of the American public opinion in foreign policy, offered by Morgenthau, Lippmann, Kennan, and Almond, who saw this aversion as a typical trait of the non-specialized, ill-informed mass public (an elitist argument) and the second, arguing that American do have robust belief systems, but not enough of the realist kind (here, no references are given).

international security of the Western alliance, developing a much more realist strategic stance in foreign policy in accordance (KAGAN, 2004, p. 72) Europeans were liberated from fear, and then from the Martian view of politics. The United States, due to its new power status, inherited the fear stemming from the anarchical system and responded accordingly with the incorporation of a realist strategic culture. If, as Kertzer and McGraw find, fear does not necessarily lead to the realist attitude, the realist conditional predisposition of a relevant share of individuals has to predate fear. Therefore, Kagan's explanation about fear and the realist element cultivated in the American foreign policy imaginary is of little relevance.

A mythological interpretation of Kagan's work, otherwise, reveals the elite anti-realist myth lurking there. The very title indicates that, in practically exchanging ideological positions with Europe during the twentieth century, America has left paradise to assume a civilizing struggle – ultimately violent indeed – in international affairs. And, from the realist systemic level theoretical logic behind Kagan's argument, this transformation in American (and European) foreign policy perspectives was basically induced by the redistribution of power among states since the half of the last century, tectonically in favor of the US. For this mythological narrative, once before, realism would not be relevant to Americans as a mental framework for thinking about its interactions with the world. Nevertheless, when power politics dynamics constrained the country towards a realist response, it answered in a manner that could not simply despise its exceptional constitution. Thence, realism is not idiosyncratic, or cultural, it is a systemic mechanic. This is one of the fundamental forms of American anti-realism's expression.

Another work regime of this myth emerges in Kagan's evaluation of the development of George W. Bush's foreign policy in his first term. For him, the new foreign policy team "came to office guided by the narrow realism that dominated in Republican foreign policy circles during the Clinton years." (KAGAN, 2004, p. 152). To be honest, Bush's first National Security Adviser and then later Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was much influenced by her former academic advisor – Brent Scowcroft, the former counterpart to Ford and Bush Sr., who helped define the quintessential realist strategy for the smooth end of the Cold War. Still, was not the genuine realist prudence that worried liberals, but a caricatural realist unilateralism and isolationism that was to lead to an eventual revision of substantial treaties and bilateral, multilateral engagements. Nonetheless, when 9/11 pressured a

Jacksonian vengeance, a minority position in the still hegemonic Wilsonian foreign policy elite was able to break in. As an analyst for *The New York Times* put it, “led by hawkish neoconservatives determined to overthrow the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, the muscular approach to extending democracy shouldered aside the vocabulary of realism that had dominated US foreign policy for decades in the cold war.” (SAFIRE, 2005). Civil society opposition to the war gathered around that concept as a *Coalition For a Realistic Foreign Policy* (the *realistic* label exactly meant that critique was not about power politics dynamics simply) and President Bush himself gave the final “rhetorical shot” on the hopes of this group in the Summer of 2005:

Some who call themselves realists question whether the spread of democracy in the Middle East should be any concern of ours. But the realists in this case have lost contact with a fundamental reality. ... America is always more secure when freedom is on the march.” (quote in SAFIRE, 2005).

Kagan, one of the most influential self-declared neocons, coherently argued that “the enunciation of this ‘realist’ approach by America, the liberal sole superpower in a unipolar era was a serious foreign policy error” not even that favorable distribution of power could justify (KAGAN, 2004, pp. 153-4).

Kagan himself had to abandon the neoconservative label as it got worn by the difficulties of regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq to declare himself a Realist Liberal.¹² Once, more, the necessary synthesis of liberalism and realism in American foreign policy surfaced. To Safire, that debate between Neocons and Neoreals (as he parodies in order to equate it with the first abbreviation) was just a new moment when “realpolitik and idealpolitik” reinforced each other (SAFIRE, 2005). It is difficult to avoid the weight of this counter-conceptual semantic founding the debates on – and in – American foreign policy. The myth in this example works to reassure a legitimating foreign policy general discourse that no realist conception that does not qualify to some liberal adjective may be considered truthful to the American mass public taste.

Finally, the birther movement questioning Barack Obama’s identity and/or even his nationality, all the way to and from the presidency, offers an even more pictorial example of its manifestation. Friendly fire from Hillary Clinton's campaign during the primaries of 2008 may have spread birtherism. A leaked memo by her chief strategist suggested portraying her

¹² Declaration in an interview with Robert Wright. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQIH57-CJI8&t=2966s>>. Accessed on: September 19, 2022.

adversary as a foreigner, disconnected from American values and cultural learnings (ALLEN, 2008). Multiplying chain e-mails¹³ from Hilary's supporters added to the rumor, culminating in a "message that suggested the senator is a kind of Muslim Manchurian candidate for the White House." (MANJOO, 2008). Conservative newsmedia and far-right Republicans could not help but fully embrace it as the denunciation of a political fraud concerning Obama's very citizenship. If Obama was not born in American soil, he should be legally impeded as a presidential candidate, but if he proved the contrary, it could at least result in his electoral saturation, which never really succeed (SERWER, 2020). Still, against all kinds of investigations and presented documentation – including his long birth certificate in April 2011, as an answer to when the strident real state mogul, TV star, and bully Donald Trump jumped in the bandwagon in 2011 – the hoax lived on.

Like every conspiracy, birtherism – either in its hard, birth-related or in its soft, identity-related versions – leaned on factual truths to extrapolate it through a superficially consistent alternative narrative. First, Obama was really born in Hawaii, to an American mother and a Kenyan father. Though he did not have much contact with his father, he did spend much of his infancy in Indonesia, following his anthropologist mother's occupation (KUPER, 2016; OBAMA, 2010). Second, studies have empirically found the correlation between whites, Republicans, and the belief in birtherism, in ways that are not reproduced with other non-racialized rumors like Obamacare's death panel (JARDINA; TRAUOGOTT, 2019, p. 72). Painfully confirming that racism, his 2012 presidential race rival, Mitt Romney joked: "No one's ever asked to see my birth certificate; they know that this is the place that we were born and raised." It was as "if Obama did not want his birthplace questioned, he should have been white," a columnist wrote in disgust (SERWER, 2020. Romney's also quoted there). It was explicit racism. Another journalist rightly put it, "the conspiracy caught fire because people were uncomfortable with the idea of a Black president" (Quote in FRONTLINE, 2020). The birther conspiracy made more damage as a broader identity suspicion than by doubting his birthplace. In fact, his life experience with the marginalized – globally, with his childhood in Indonesia, and nationally, as a black man in a racialized

¹³ A chain e-mail was an equivalent of today's bulk messaging in social media apps such as Telegram or WhatsApp, the favorite media of conspiracy theorists.

America – made him less prone to defend an idealized view of the country, perceived still incomplete until it deals with its own minorities’ marginalization (STEELE, 2011).

A realist push for the US foreign policy was only consistent with that perspective on the shortcomings of American democracy that were yet to be delivered to his country fellows. In fact, the third central piece of partial truth of the conspiracy is that Obama dared defying American exceptionalism occasionally, but persistently. And he did so with frequent references to his realist refined learnings – his favorite political philosopher was the German-American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, he told an interviewer as soon as in 2007 (BROOKS, 2007). Much before he was president, he was a critic of the Iraq War as unnecessary since the Senate vote legitimated it back in 2003 (WHITESIDES, 2007). Once he became president, in his NATO summit debut in France in 2009, he relativized that deepest national identity during a press conference: “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as the Brits believe in British exceptionalism, and the Greeks in Greek exceptionalism.” (Quoted in FALLOWS, 2009). Next, in Cairo, he offered an acknowledgment of the US cumulating mistakes (or its idealism, in that counter-conceptual language) with the region, loaded with critical vocabulary, such as that linking Western colonial modernity with Muslim extremism, the promise to overcome the moralist narrative of a “clash of civilizations,” even recognizing the mistake in orchestrating the overthrow of Mosaddegh in Iran, 1953 (BLAKE, 2010).

For exposing American international misbehavior to a broad international audience, Tea Partiers like Sarah Palin would trash him nicknaming his excursion as the “the apology tour,” or as another conservative commentator rushed, his “international confession tour,” in which “he has apologized on three continents for what he views as the sins of America and his predecessors.” (ROVE, 2009). In the 2012 Republican primaries, candidates fought for the role of American exceptionalism champion against their outspoken suspicion of Obama’s anti-colonial values (SERWER, 2020). As Romney, the GOP nominee in 2012, declared: “I believe we are an exceptional country... I will never, ever apologize for America.” (Quote in BACEVICH, 2011). Another four years, the Republican nominee Trump would also insist on that accusation: “Instead of an apology tour, I will proudly promote our system of government and our way of life as the best in the world – just like we did in our campaign against communism during the Cold War.” (TRUMP, 2016).

This final constitutive piece of birtherism is exactly a manifestation of anti-realism in American foreign policy. Differently from his predecessors, Obama's references to realism in foreign policy were much more incident and meaningful – and so was his reaction. In accordance with a genuine definition of the concept, long understood by the IR classical realists, he understood the successful implementation of policies depended not only on available material resources, but it must also be always engaged with the promotion of appropriate ideals in a particular social context. This was a refined lesson he took from his readings of Niebuhr: avoiding both of the pitfalls of “naive idealism” and “bitter realism” (quote in BROOKS, 2007). Consistently with the best realist tradition on understanding politics as the art of the possible, Obama learned from Niebuhr's words: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.” (quoted in BLAKE, 2010) In accepting things that are not amenable to change, his realist understanding of political dynamics led him to gradually conclude that his project could not be implemented without paying tribute to America's most worshipped ideas. Obama tried to be a child of light with the wit of a child of darkness. And that included a kind of pluralist thought on the balance of power as being the necessary condition for social justice (NIEBUHR, 1962, p. 115; 118). Surely, there are those disputing his prowess in those Niebuhrian criteria (OWENS, 2012). But the fact is that Obama discursively moved on through that combination earlier defined as the “American way of strategy” (LIND, 2008). He did it in the Nobel acceptance speech in the end of that year of that 2009 confession tour (quotation in section one above).

These references persisted till the end of his mandates and beyond. In the famous interviews to Jeffrey Goldberg, the editor-in-chief of the liberal internationalist magazine *The Atlantic*, Obama advanced his own typology of American foreign-policy thought in a four-boxed grid. “Isolationism,” he dismissed right away. “I suppose you could call me a realist in believing we can't, at any given moment, relieve all the world's misery,” again, a crucial lesson in Niebuhr's Christian realism. “We have to choose where we can make a real impact.” Goldberg then registers: “He also noted that he was quite obviously an internationalist, devoted as he is to strengthening multilateral organizations and international norms.” That is not to say explicitly, a Wilsonian, liberal internationalist. In fact, the interview does not make any more reference to the fourth box than its proper name – “liberal interventionism”

(toothed internationalism?) – making him unquestionably out of this one too (Quotes in GOLDBERG, 2016). In intellectual terms, Obama’s realism is a genuine historical form of the concept, as it will be argued in the following chapters. It was, first of all, about the art of possible in politics. It was about creating possible spaces through efficient communication of political challenges and strategies. It was about restraint and prudence in advancing over others’ political interests and in the use of superior material and technological resources as a form of power. It was about the balance of power, not only internationally, as a foundation of political justice. Yet, as it will be part of that argumentation ahead, the conceptual opposition he finds – or better, repeats – between realism and liberal idealism is already a distortion of that genuine approach (even in the words of Niebuhr).

But that is not the theme for now. What is relevant here is that, despite Obama’s realism being a very admirable one overall (again, the concept in his mind, not necessarily the performance of his administration), and that realism is never really new or foreign in Obama’s America, anti-realism resolutely hit him. Historical presidents were praised for their realism, the contemporary paramount example being Obama’s own usual inspirational reference, the former president George H.W. Bush, known for being “an amoral realpolitiker who has put American interests, as he defines them, above the promotion of American values,” (BOOT, 2016). Barack classified Bush's son’s legacy In Iraq as “disastrous,” just like IR realists. He was targeted for what he saw as a prudent behavior – his refusal to military escalate Ukraine, Syria, and other crises elsewhere –, by Wilsonians, toothless or not (EILPERIN, 2014). However, the marriage of Obama’s declared realism – mostly verbally expressed in his relativization of exceptionalism – with the rumor that an internationally-experienced black man’s foreign birth meant something completely different for Obama. For the special interest of this investigation, Obama, an active articulator of that specific language of foreign policy, was oddly demanded to publicly commit his reasonable contextualized realist take of world politics to the core national principles on a singular level. As an analyst clearly asserted (SERWER, 2020), birtherism (*went*) from mere false speculation about Obama’s birth to a statement of values about who belongs in America, and who does not. ... Birtherism could not really explain Obama’s political views, but it could place him, the Democratic Party, and Democratic voters outside the boundaries of American citizenship. The left’s claim to power, in this telling, was as fraudulent as the president’s birth certificate.

Accordingly, anti-realism could take the form of an accusation of anyone's un-Americanness, in order to defend exceptionalism from typical realist relativization. With Obama, the intersection of foreign life experience and bonds, and a racism-condemned skin color together with a realist worldview (here, more than a leftist view), made Obama an obvious target for the xenophobic hoax. Had these three elements not been met, the much-needed realism in foreign policy may have made its way into DC before.

Realists' main self-appointed enemies were liberal internationalists. Their reaction, as mentioned, was stiff. Though Hilary lost the primaries and Obama won the elections, that elite was able to make its way into his administration and besiege the president's explicit references on the influence he found in "classic realists" like Bush Sr. and Scowcroft's, and get important "interventionist" names like Michael McFaul, Susan Rice, and Samantha Power. On that step back, an aide reflected: "I think Obama is basically a realist—but he feels bad about it." (Quotes in REMNICK, 2014). The passage indicates that Obama was in fact socialized into compromising his realism. Hilary herself was nominated his first Secretary of State. The Clintonian hawk, who was "very much a member of the traditional American foreign-policy establishment," as one foreign-policy strategist who worked with her confirmed (quote in CASSIDY, 2016), must be remembered by her presence during the operations that found and killed Osama Bin Laden in May 2011, but also by leading a roll of foreign policy decision-making considered disastrous by realist analysts, such as the military surge in Afghanistan, 2009, the 2011 intervention in Lybia, and the Benghazi attacks against US diplomatic facilities in 2012. That liberal internationalist overtakes must be counted in Walt's assessment of Obama's administrations. Despite his earlier favoring prospective on the president's realism (*Is Barack Obama More of a Realist Than I Am?*, 2014), by the end of his second term he concluded that *Obama Was Not a Realist President* (2016): "I understand why many people regard Obama as some sort of realist, but from where I sit, the nonrealist dimensions of his presidency are as prominent and important as any realist elements."

Be as it may, anti-realist socialization was rolling on. Obama learned to show remorse in relation to his realism in foreign policy on multiple public occasions, the probably most curious of them caught by a reporter in a news conference during an Asian tour of the president. She asked him to explain his "Obama doctrine" during crises in Syria and Ukraine

to which he tended to promote appeasement solutions. The president then answered – “scoffed”, as the journalist who registered it portrayed (quote in EILPERIN, 2014):

That may not always be sexy. That may not always attract a lot of attention, and it doesn't make for good argument on Sunday morning shows, but it avoids errors. You hit singles, you hit doubles; every once in a while we may be able to hit a home run. But we steadily advance the interests of the American people and our partnership with folks around the world.

“You know it's hard out there for a foreign policy realist,” Drezner once mocked (DREZNER, 2016b). Anti-realism constitutes the possibility of meaning and significance for that kind of public remorse. It works as if defenses of realism in the country were obliged to refer to that aversive condition. That socialization was also present when Obama had to explicitly, undoubtedly commit himself to national uniqueness: “I believe in American exceptionalism with every fiber of my being,” pledged Obama, on the 50th anniversary of the Selma racial events, in 2015. Still, his socialization was not passive, and he presented there his improved interpretation of that special identity, one less concerned with civilizing missions around the world, more focused on America's domestic weaknesses revolving around the disproportion of wealth, education, life opportunities, and racial animosities fracturing the country from the inside (quote in JAFFE, 2015). Interestingly, Walt does praise Obama for so many other domestic achievements, for “when one remembers how scary things looked when he took office in 2009, this is no small set of achievements.” (WALT, 2016) However, in Walt's definition that has nothing to do with realism. Besides the Afghan mismanagement, Walt remembers that Israelis kept advancing over Gaza, Hamas got more powerful, Muslim Brotherhood succeeded the Arab Spring in Egypt, post-Qaddafi Libya was dominated by the Islamic State, a still Assad-governed Syria became a major refugee crisis to the Middle East and Europe, Iran's nuclear crisis was not properly resolved, and the crisis that went from the coup against Yanukovich to Russia's invasion of Crimea. That was too much to have Obama as a realist for Walt. As Drezner needled, “man, this club is exclusive!” (DREZNER, 2016b).

Nevertheless, the issue here is not about performance, but about the effective use of and contestation of the concept of realism in American foreign policy. Anti-realism, as part of the American foreign policy imaginary, has socializing institutions enabling or inhibiting various kinds of thinking and behaviors, while historically meeting individuals that are prone to resist and (maybe) transform them. In terms of a myth composing that imaginary, it is not

so much about logical consistency with empirical realities, but as a kind of mantra repeated over and over again. The constitution of reality – thoughts and behaviors – get trapped into those (provisory) heaviest myths. As a security studies senior suggested, inadvertently in relation to its mythological condition, “the realist perspective Mr. Obama holds is contrary to a conventional wisdom that is more widely and deeply held, across both parties, in the Washington foreign-policy establishment.” And thence, “going beyond the establishment and to the general American public, most of that public simply does not subscribe to the realist perspective.” (PILAR, 2016) While the first claim may be questionable in that performative sense – i.e, his perspective was effectively put into practice –, due to his performance, the second claim is more resistant to all the older and current survey results explored above – i.e. it lives on as a myth. It was not realism, but anti-realism that was restricted to the US elite.

As understood from those pooling results, the mass public exposes not a liberal worldview, but mostly a “folk realism” in ranking international threats, friends and foes, the uses of unilateralism and multilateralism, the use of military force, etc. Quite contradictorily, the public even sustains a (falling, but still close to a majority) belief in the importance of American exceptionalism in solving global challenges, but that seems to stand only as a general identity reference, for when it comes to alternatives, they become less exceptionalist. From within that elite scene, what that pundit got right (but not explicitly as a “myth”) was that politicians were eager to exploit such ideational context for electoral gains against those who somehow exposed themselves as realists. And “that is a political reality” – even if a mythical one – “that even the most diligent and cool-headed realist must contend with.” (PILAR, 2016).

Just to include another set of explanatory set of recent incursions into the theme of anti-realism in American foreign policy, the realist duo Mearsheimer and Walt dedicated themselves to consolidating their grasp on that seemingly resistance against realism in American foreign policy. Walt’s latest book (2018) is an accusation of how impenetrable to realist counseling this liberal elite “blob” has stood. From the ironic title, *The hell of good intentions*, Walt argues that, through a liberal internationalist approach to foreign affairs, there has been created an industrial complex of diverse professional careers, in and out of the state. Apart from genuine believers’ primacy, pagans who still pursue a career in foreign policy must be alert about avoiding any critique against those dogmas’ appropriateness.

Those who dare, especially from a realist viewpoint – in this arena, they are considered more dangerous than concurrent ideologies (SCHMIDT; WILLIAMS, 2008) –, are often dismissed as isolationists when not unpatriotic and get their professional careers threatened. Walt collects many quotations from foreign policy specialists reporting this situation, such as Leslie Gelb, former president of the *Council on Foreign Relations* and columnist at the *New York Times*. Regretting his initial support for the war against Iraq, he justified it as an unfortunate yield to the pressures of this elite against the professional credits of those who did not follow that route, as servants who would never defy denouncing the naked Emperor in Walt's metaphor (WALT, 2018, Chapter 4).

For not considering alternative strategies that could promote vital American interests, Mearsheimer's *The great delusion* (2018) also delivers heavy critiques specific to American foreign-policy decision-making. However, he deals more specifically not with the bureaucratic-imposed aspect of political decision irrationality, but with the ideological one. By adopting an international liberalist approach not as an occasional feature of the post-Cold War, but as a consistent one, they have jeopardized the comfortable power position reached with the outcome of the Soviet disintegration. The US and its exceptionalist certainties could finally have their full expression in a context never seen before in history, with such a powerful country and such extensive and deepened globalization. Unipolarity unleashed liberal hegemony, leading the country's foreign policy into an unstoppable expansion of its interests in the world, actively intervening in any region or theme it decided to do so in the name of those principles. The DC elite felt free to promise worldwide active protection of human rights in a stable world, in peace, strengthening democracy at home and those fighting for it. With the implementation of these expanded promises, a further expansion of associated professional careers at home, raising, even more, the costs of abandoning it. In agreement with Walt, the lack of international checks has unleashed liberal internationalist elites from the need to be pondered by realism. However, as Mearsheimer points out, even with all the genuine goodwill and practice, this foreign policy strategy was logically meant to crash, for nationalism and realism are much stronger forces within the anarchic international system. For him, liberalism, "despite its numerous virtues as a political system, is a poor guide for foreign policy... a source of endless trouble" (MEARSHEIMER, 2018, p. 218), responsible for most of the failure of social engineering foreign military interventions, and harmed

democratic systems, for “liberal states with ambitious foreign policy agendas are prone to engage in deception campaigns because inspiring people to fight and die in a war is not easy” (MEARSHEIMER, 2018, p. 181). Both realists understand the danger of the “culture of dishonesty” it imposes, fatal to the health of a liberal body politic. Walt argues that, in taking part in the liberal internationalist elite community, the newsmedia has synchronic worked with the government to guarantee public support for DC’s interventionist policies. In order to do that, they have ostensibly self-censored the kind of information and analysis that would lower public backing of the administration’s foreign policy (WALT, 2018).

Interestingly, both authors comprehend the apparent fact priorly explored by Drezner and Kertzer/McGraw that the American general public opinion is much more receptive to realist positions of offshore balancing and restraint, the prescriptions laid out by their contributions just analyzed.¹⁴ Furthermore, they suggest these elites have consciously incorporated this into their strategies and avoided both foreign actions with national military casualties, and local civilian deaths – even though, for group-moral reasons in the first case, and by instrumental ones, in the second. Both are realist ones. “U.S. citizens also believe that the United States is bearing too large a share of global burdens, and they are far more skeptical about an ‘activist’ foreign policy than most members of the foreign policy community appear to be” (WALT, 2018, Chapter 3) as Walt comprehended. The authors call for the public’s acknowledgment that realist policies are also part, if not the main reason, for the success of their country in the international game all along its history. Post-Cold War euphoria opened the way to the effort of the liberal elites to consign the Americanness of dealing with the realist approach definitely into oblivion – the newer edition of the motto.

In the end, both incursions are not inconsistent with their neoutilitarian realist approaches.¹⁵ For Walt, the blob interferes in the rational optimization of state decisions in the decisions and non-decisions that identity dogmas that hold together that semi-feudal network of professional careers in and around foreign policy administration. For Mearsheimer, the problem is with an ideological freedom from realist thinking (which is not taken as ideology itself) caused by unipolarity – for not being part of the genuine American

¹⁴ Walt explicitly cites Drezner’s 2008 work on anti-realism. Mearsheimer, not even it.

¹⁵ The classic reference to this debate on neo-utilitarian/instrumental theories and its social constructivist alternative is RUGGIE, 1998.

foreign policy imaginary, it could not be supported without its structural logic. A third recent contribution makes a decisive move from these arguments opening space to the more culturally oriented approach of anti-realism on/in American foreign policy and of realism itself. Unlike those inquiries, Patrick Porter (2008) indicates the 1960s as when liberal internationalists turned hegemonic, much before unipolarity, much closer to the broader Hartzian movement, therefore. “The Blob” – this cluster of government officials and media commentators formed in the aftermath of World War II – has set the parameters of American foreign policy since the deepening military involvement in Vietnam. This grand strategy of international primacy, frequently disguised as simply leadership – liberal internationalism –, was translated into four practical needs: military supremacy, reassurance and containment of allies, integration of other states into US-designed institutions and markets, and inhibiting the spread of nuclear weapons. It is undoubtedly a project of power. It is realist in points two and (maybe) four, but it exceeds it in points one and three. They were successful in that “they have established primacy as the only viable, legitimate grand strategy, and as an ingrained set of ideas, while installing themselves as insiders, positioned to steer the state.” (PORTER, 2018, p.15)

The argument pushes a combination of habit – “collective ideas that come to seem obvious, axiomatic choices made from unexamined assumptions” (Porter, 2018, p. 11) – and the never satisfying materialist permissive explanation. If a habit, serving as the purposive element of agency, was free of power constraints, changes occur much more frequently than what is effectively the case. Worse still, when facing changing material relative capabilities (economic size and military apparatus), the habit may perpetuate obsolete ideas and strategies. Thus, “the Blob’s achievement was to erect primacy as the seemingly natural framework of US diplomacy” (PORTER, 2018, p. 11), away from an alternative strategy welcoming multipolarity, preventing the quicker decline of the US. Indeed, with the ongoing long confirmation of China as a great power player in 21st-century world politics, realism is finding a renewed space for its critical presence. Although, it is rarely done so without proper apologies. As this apologizing act was part of the socialization process of the international liberalist presumably declining position in the US foreign policy community, it may inversely open critical possibilities for realists.

Be as it may, the systemic pressure for a realist post-post-Cold War American foreign policy would have a second failed chance with Trump. Despite readings suggesting that “the chest-thumping American irredentism symbolized by Donald Trump is in part a reaction to Obama’s 21st-century realism” (COHEN, 2018), his election was mostly read as an exhaustion of the liberal internationalist hegemony in DC circles. As one analyst points, in fact, “when he was candidate, Trump was darling of the realists.” (ZAKHEIM, 2017) His MAGA foreign policy meant a more realist dealing with international issues, much closer to the “offshore balancing” model defended by American realists (MEARSHEIMER; WALT, 2016), despite lacking any refined thinking as the Scowcroft-realist mode. Notwithstanding, it was effective in communicating with the mass public’s “folk realism” (as explored above), a more intuitive, layperson, and even “gut realism.” The Donald himself made use of the label-word “realism” to describe his promises in the area of foreign policy explicitly during the campaign, in his *Peace Through Strength* speech: “in a Trump Administration, our actions in the Middle East will be tempered by realism.” (TRUMP, 2016). Conservative analysts of foreign policy, anti-liberals in domestic politics, and biased towards Trump, argued that “empirically speaking, Donald Trump is perhaps the most realist of all candidates ever to be elected President of the United States” (ROVERE, 2016). Drezner himself (in defiance of Walt, maybe?) claimed that, though Obama and Trump were “a reflection of this realist thinking,” he even defined the latter as “realism’s moment in the foreign policy sun, avowedly putting himself against the assessments offered by other more traditional club members, such as Walt and Robert Kagan (DREZNER, 2016a). However, such high expectations of Trump’s realism began to erode as soon as he completed his third month on duty (ZAKHEIM, 2017). From Trump’s first year in power, Walt still recognized that “there (*was*) reason to think Donald Trump (*was*) becoming a closet realist.” Still, he added a caveat to the future: “Trump has a ways to go before he can be considered a true offshore balancer. He seems to grasp part of the logic ... but he lacks the knowledge, skill, and subtlety to make a sophisticated strategy like this work.” (WALT, 2018). That could not end well. Walt himself gave him very low grades on his final report card, overwhelmingly failing in the most important international issues of his time (WALT, 2021). Heartbroken realists (the antirealist myth mode on) from summer crushes with Obama and Trump.

Both Obama's and Trump's experiences show both the increasing relevant electoral success of realist perspectives making their way into the elite of foreign-policy making, and the resistance to decline of a liberal internationalist longstanding institutionally, bureaucracy, and political leadership. The evident greater availability of a positive understanding of realism in foreign policy elite circles may orient a re-signification process of the concept of realism right at the moment this thesis is being written. The momentum flows from Obama's frequent remorse for his realist relativization of exceptionalism to Trump comfortably assuming it right from his nomination from the GOP, not fearing any public disapproval for being so explicit against a supposedly untouchable bedrock of American identity. In a Texan conservative convention in 2015, he could not be more straightforward: "I don't like the term. I'll be honest with you. People say, 'Oh he's not patriotic.' Look, if I'm a Russian, or I'm a German, or I'm a person we do business with, why, you know, I don't think it's a very nice term. 'We're exceptional; you're not.'" (Quote in SARGENT, 2016). Besides the inescapable element of race just skewed here, the resurgence of realism in the American foreign policy discourse is manifest in the sensibly less loathing Trump received for such acid comments on exceptionalism than the ones pointed at Obama.

When Drezner tackled anti-realism, the phenomenon probably had reached its contemporary historical peak, that is, the end of Bush's administration (DREZNER, 2008). In Eric Van Rythoven's article on the inefficacy of realists' rhetorical power to influence policy making, he cautiously speculated that his thesis could be timed to that moment of neocon's preponderance over Bush's decision on the Iraq military operation (VAN RYTHOVEN, 2015). His feeling was justified by that new discursive context of 2015, approaching the conclusion of Obama's second term, when realism was much more evident as a demand, and not simply the liberal internationalist elite's straw man. Still, anti-realism resists the defense of American liberal internationalism. As the debate over Trump's realism became louder than the earlier one on Obama, so did their reaction in reassuring commitment to most cherished national values. Trump's aides tried to help him clarify his point about exceptionalism was not about its relevance but about America's current performance on it. Hence, the MAGA slogan (SARGENT, 2016). Realism in the post-post-Cold War American foreign policy is still lagging. Engagement with power politics lessons urges in order to properly deal with the new rivalry with China's greater political status. The strength of that liberal internationalist,

anti-realist imaginary, be it consistent in intellectual terms and with the evolving political scenario or not, is evident by now. First, the explicit reaction of the elite to Obama's foreign policy team. Then, Trump's consequent shunning his commitment to that outspoken realism. Now there is Joe Biden's presidency. From Walt's expectations, back in 2020, Biden was probably going to be "accompanied by a familiar coterie of once-and-future liberal interventionists, he won't try to turn the clock back to the unipolar era, or even to that weird moment where an American president could win a Nobel Peace Prize simply because he simply wasn't George W. Bush" as he acidly poured, as he made his *Realist Case for the Non-Realist Biden* (WALT, 2020).

In fact, after a reversal of Trump's policies that lead to a successful control of the pandemic, and a messy-implemented decision on the Afghan exit – positive realist expectations in that article from Walt –, he moved towards a liberal internationalist solution – though an ambivalent one – towards a solution to the War in Ukraine. That was a perfect time for realists' anti-realist moan once more: while Walt came to remember again that the American "people hate realism so much" for remembering things like the responsibility of NATO post-Cold War eastern expansion in creating the conditions for Putin's war (WALT, 2022). In a much tougher instance of the era of digital cancellation, an interview Mearsheimer gave in March 2022, in the context of the great anti-Putin wave after the invasion in February 2022 he gave an interview on March 1st confirming his point on the issue since the Crimean War, i.e. that the liberal internationalist process of incorporation of Ukraine into the UE and, mostly, into NATO, was the main responsible for Putin's aggression (MEARSHEIMER, 2014), confident that current facts had confirmed his prognostics (CHOTINER, 2022). On the same day, Anne Applebaum, a columnist for the *Atlantic* retweeted the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the day before, posting a screen print of Mearsheimer's 2014 to make their point on the Western responsibility of the war. Applebaum maliciously suggested that "Russians didn't actually get their narrative from Mearshimer [*sic*] et al. Moscow needed to say West was responsible for Russian invasions (Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, Ukraine), and not their own greed and imperialism. American academics

provided the narrative.”¹⁶ The interviewer article still presents a very anti-realist definition of realism – a caricature militarist and reckless state-persons – to present Mearsheimer, “great-power politics—a school of realist international relations that assumes that, in a self-interested attempt to preserve national security, states will preemptively act in anticipation of adversaries.” (CHOTINER, 2022), revealing the perspective of the polemic interview. Van Rythoven’s cautious final remarks were priceless, 2015. Even agreeing with Drezner/Kertzer-McGraw’s assumption that anti-realism is a phenomenon restricted to the elite segment made of the foreign policy community and that the mass public was much more receptive to realist alternatives, the author advised that “asserting the ascendancy of realism in US security policy may be premature.” (VAN RYTHOVEN, 2015, p. 503)

The mythical condition of anti-realism entails that it is so exactly because its claims are exempt from logical or empirical validity to survive and be enforced. Therefore, anti-realism is not simply a side effect of the American unipolar condition in the system. It was there even in and before the Cold-War context when realism was a systemic demand on American foreign policy bureaucracy, but realists still felt the need to complain about their marginalization. Nor it is simply a component of liberal internationalism – it was there before the self-consciousness of the concept of a liberal America, in the 1950s, but maybe not before Wilson, in the 1910s. Well, again an argument – the most important in this thesis – to be developed in the chapters ahead. It will advance a mythology of how more than exceptionalist liberalism, it is the argument of abandonment of Old World realpolitik, i.e. anti-realism, that constitutes the American foreign policy discourse and the narratives about its practice.

Realism and Exceptionalism in the American foreign policy anti-realist mythology

All in all, realism has been the dominant position, against which other explanations are tested in order to receive acknowledgment in the disciplinary debates on American foreign policy in the global/American IR theory. However, in the DC decision-making community and among media pundits, that predominance has been clearly reversed. While

¹⁶ Tweet available at: <https://twitter.com/anneapplebaum/status/1498623804200865792?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1498623804200865792%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ftheintercept.com%2F2022%2F03%2F06%2Frussia-john-mearsheimer-propaganda%2F>.

realism is pervasively used to communicate and evaluate foreign policies, it is much too of a hotly contested concept to give way to a clear understanding of reality. Still, it catches the eye that both supporters and deniers of the value of the concept agree that realism is an idea that captures the aversion of Americans – or more precisely, its elite. The concept of realism (always, more than the label-word) is oddly absent from the major popular opinion surveys on American foreign policy, despite its significance and frequency in the elite-guided public debates, a situation unparalleled to any other major typology explored in the last chapter. Interested investigators, without access to such expensive productions, are left in triangulating results to understand how the populace deals with their government's foreign policy alternatives set from this realist conception of international politics.

In terms of an “order of discourse,” anti-realism is an exclusionary argument. Mostly not explicitly expressed, it works just like most discursive interdictions. Liberal internationalists, fervorous or not, have been working as gatekeepers of the US foreign policy traditions since at least the 1960s. The exclusion of realism as a cultural element in the American political language, as it has been explored through the chapter, mostly in the last section, may now be systematized: three main discursive manifestations express the displacement of realism from the indigenous intellectual creations at work in the national foreign policy elite-dominated debates, including political leaders, media pundits and journalists, scholars, and public intellectuals. And, just as a reminder, the interest here is not about the falsity or not of the anti-realist assumption, but of its mythical existence in the social imaginary. It is relevant for the possible meanings it establishes to issues, institutions, and behaviors, and the order it may bring from then.

In some situations, realism is understood as not being an American tradition because it is mostly a theoretical description of the international systemic dynamics. It does not belong to the second image of state peculiarities, but it may be mastered in practice for it is a systemic logic. This is a kind of argument academically construed as neorealism (or structural realism). In this version, the success of the US in the world owes to their leaders' ascendancy in mixing the definition, conceptualization, and communication of their founding values with the excellence in the practice of associated techniques of power politics, equally accessible to every other state. In an older, relatively less frequent variation of this first argument, realism describes a world as resulting from the inner conditions of human nature. It is part of the first

image of the individual-level explanations to state behavior, but more related to an almost non-reflexive, non-arbitrary, instinctive form of rationality – still not the state, the American state, as the explanatory source.

Secondly, what is occasionally enhanced about realism is its responsibility in curbing more resolute progress of human civilization. In this sense, realism is not systemic by itself, but a first-image explanation of behavior based on human nature. As humanity is to leave its natural condition, it should be able to evolve into more sophisticated political institutions: the city, the state, the multilateral organizations, and so on. The modern era formation of sovereign states and a system of relations among them was founded on the primacy of the concept of *raison d'État*. A long historical process of state consolidation resulted in bellicose states fighting each other for territory, resources, and honor. With the exhaustion of this system from the frequent unnecessary wars, liberal internationalism comes as the organizing principle of a newer (or even final), higher era in human civilization. Thus, realism would be only an outdated systemic solution of a specific era in human progress. In this narrative, Americans nailed the proper new arrangement for human civilization, making the Old World's international relations what it really is: obsolete.

Finally, there is a last typical anti-realist argument: to stamp realism as culturally foreign to America, a kind of imaginary Europeans have conceived from their practice of world politics in the age of the modern system of states, but which was not exactly intrinsic to the system nor to human nature, but a particular reading that grew from a set of values that the US did not recognize as theirs. The American state experiment – from the Pilgrim-Puritan foundation of the New Republic in the Mayflower Compact and the sermon's City on the Hill and the early designs left by the founding fathers – is said to have consistently implemented its ideal, hegemonic at home, associated with divine providence. Americans are the chosen people fleeing from political injustice, imbued with the mission of consolidating its superior form of a liberal state and then spreading its blessing to the rest of humankind while fighting itself not to fall into pagan realist temptations. In terms of this international chapter of American history, the president who approached the ideal formula, of course, was Wilson, whose project of the League of the Nations was made to progressively overcome the anarchic competitive system that had historically favored domestic absolutism and made liberal republics exceptions to the rule, risking America's own liberal identity in the end.

Accordingly, the reluctant but obvious presence of realism in American foreign policy is a contradiction that must be signified with particular explanatory conventions for each of those three main mythological manifestations. So, respectively, the continuous incidence of realism – with varying relevance – in debates and implemented actions through the years is usually read as either the technical learning of unavoidable systemic constraints of international politics or the impulsive, instinctive reactions of those supposedly over spontaneous decision-makers. Or it may be referred to as a residual trait of an uncivilized past that is meant to be eventually subdued by the liberal international order. Or, last but never least, realism intrusions in national debates will be associated with a cultural alien invasion of the American imaginary space. Anyway, it is definitely curious how the same history and social setting of the United States may afford both International Relations as an autonomous academic unit in which realism has played a long-standing centrality, once characterized as the cornerstone against which every new approach had to challenge, while in the field of American foreign policy analysis realism has been permanently cornered – at least in its intellectual engagements.

Even if they are not dominant, realists deliver impacting critiques *on* American foreign policy in academic publications and seem to be able to draw polemic around their public interventions. But their effective relevance *in* its decision-making is publicly avoided most of the time, by most officials (and certainly news media too), a movement that may have peaked in the unipolar moment of the post-Cold War. Realists get socialized in this liberal identity of this polity's foundation requires, at least, public demonstrations of discomfort with realist thought and its representatives, and eventually practices that smell like it. And there comes the myth of anti-realism in/on American foreign policy. Those who are targeted by anti-realism must learn how to cope with it, justifying their political decisions as cautiously calculated – or maybe even gut-imposed – strategies to deal with systemic constraints, or by the sometimes necessary choices against the historical permanence of a Westphalian heritage of the past, or by reference to other great national leaders that strived through realist foreign policy alternatives – sometimes consciously and explicitly – that did bring more prosperity to compatriots.

The rise of the concept of realism in American foreign policy is evident, despite the low performance of its lessons by the latest administrations, probably helped by the anti-

realist DC “blob,” accordingly to the main realist names in the community, secures that the anti-realist mantra endures for longer. “There are reasons to believe that realists suffer from a paucity of public trust.” (VAN RYTHOVEN, 2015, p. 495). That calls the eye to the fact that the frequent repetition of the anti-realist motto not only by liberalists but primarily by realists themselves urges the problematization of mythological dynamics constituting the global/American discipline of IR and the US foreign policy. Though Van Rythoven unfortunately does not go further into the reasons for the realists’ problems with self-esteem, they may be framed by the idea of its mythological functions. A hint may be extracted from Drezner’s “anthropological ... close field observation of modern academic realists.” His entire passage nails it (DREZNER, 2016b):

I’ve noticed that their favorite intellectual position in the world is to be ostracized and right. That is to say, realists like to believe themselves to be speaking deep powerful truths at the same time that no one actually listens to them. It’s the ideal intellectual posture to hold, because it means that a realist can make bold pronouncements that have no real world impact because, ostensibly, no one cares what they say. If, God forbid, real-live politicians started doing what they advocated, they’d have real power and responsibility on their hands, which is scary. Better to remain cloistered and right and to get one’s hair mussed.

It sounds like the myth is both enabling an internal dynamic of the academic profession and also opening horizons of possibilities for the government’s international actions. In one of Robert Jervis’s final lessons he left from studying those (neo)realists’ books on the intellectual hegemony of liberal internationalism and its foreign policy “blob” he finely catches that “Walt’s and Mearsheimer’s way of proceeding is quite common, especially among scholars who see the United States as exceptional in various ways” (JERVIS, 2020, p. 22). Thus, anti-realism might be more than just a burden to realists, for it allows their arguments in the space of American (global) discipline of IR, even guaranteeing some special spotlight for roaring realists in their professional field. It reinforces the narrative of exceptionalism not merely as a liberal internationalist one, but as part of the American realist tradition itself. Also, in terms of foreign policy decision-making, it creates space for justifications laid down by the American government for their violent actions abroad (particularly failing ones), both to the domestic public and to the international community, as a burden not foreseen by the founding fathers but imposed by the international power structure. On the other hand, it may serve realists with arguments and justifications for their accused shortcomings. For their lack of explanatory power over selected but significant international behaviors, they may call the interference of the anti-realpolitik inscribed in the American liberal identity a variable that the systemic theory arbitrarily ignores. And for the

commonly accused contradictions between their prescriptions for foreign policy strategies and their theory's assumptions and hypotheses, they may blame the presence of that anti-realist caricatural misunderstanding on the genuine realist assumptions and hypotheses.

The lack of empirical consistency of the anti-realist assumption against public surveys, limiting it to an elite phenomenon, cannot but push it to be more properly understood as a myth cultivated by a much broader specter of the population. As a myth, anti-realism is not limited to the elite, for surveys do point to the general public belief in the country's exceptionalism, though in terms of alternatives they tend to choose realist over liberal internationalist ones. This is precisely the mythological workings of anti-realism: it may be not American, but Americans are not to blame if they occasionally (or maybe persistently) give in to the constraints set by the system, the past, or the others. It is never an active part of the heterogeneous intersubjective formation of the nation's security/foreign policy imaginary. It is never part of the national polity, its time and space – never part of Americanness. “Then there is realism; always relevant but rarely fashionable.” (ETTINGER, 2019, p. 2). When properly understood, realism is part of the cultural constitution of the US. The concept of realism, precisely, and the anti-realism mythology owes to the American intellectual milieu more than it owes to any other national social setting.

The next chapter is to develop a narrative of the presence of these central terms in the historic dictionaries. That is meant to create a linking semantic route between the contemporary context, in which rival interpretations of realism in the face of the American foreign policy – sympathetic or not, but most of all “power politics” – and the moment of its conceptual invention in mid-nineteenth century Germany. Then, the final chapter is to reconstruct that particular history – besides its invention, its reception, appropriation, and distortion yet in that century. In this sense, it will serve as the present parameter in which those present meanings were inherited already from those first historical manifestations of the concept. Furthermore, it may find other meanings left behind, with eventual relevant use for present purposes. In other words, how the German internal debate on *Realpolitik* in the second half of the nineteenth century made possible the present anti-realist American foreign policy imaginary today?

Chapter IV - The lexical evolution of “realism” and related terms in the American English language references

In my investigations, I neglected all authorities, except the languages to be examined. From these, and from the affinities between them, are deduced the facts and principles which have assisted me in explaining English words, and the theory of language.

Noah Webster, Letter published in the *New England Puritan*, 1842.

Every entry is based at a minimum on consultation of the major dictionaries, encyclopedias, and lexica of a period being studied, even if they ultimately proved unhelpful.

Reinhart Koselleck, Introduction to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 1972.

The concept of realism (and its idealist counterpart) as a significant component of the language of the study and practice of United States foreign policy and its public debate is clear by now. Its persistence in contemporary political analysis in the US, serves both as an opening door to laymen in public evaluations of different politicians in office and as a rigorous analytical instrument of specialized academicians. As an essential contested concept, it both emanates notions like prudence and rationality on one hand and of obsolescence, and immorality on the other, certainly contributing to a lower relevance of the concept as an analytical and critical reference of the country’s foreign policy community, while rising its value to the same social network as rhetorically empowering political rivals as the examples of all the 21st-century presidents and their political and media contemporaries. However, the cautious investigator looks for the history of “realism” as a concept under the concern of maybe ending up looking at no more than presentist-invented traditions of thought. The oldest commonly referred uses of “realism” in the historiography of US foreign affairs are to be found in the debates between and around the realism and idealism of Ted Roosevelt and of Woodrow Wilson in their foreign policy clashes by the time of the World War, with contrasting conclusions in Robert Osgood’s (1953) and in John Milton Cooper’s (1983) books. Still, both authors were not intending to explore “realism” as a historical fact of the language used by those political figures, or their original contributions to political thought,

but to analyze the coherence of their thought and other actions under that presentist analytical category.

In fact, as one goes further and further back in time in American literature, the concept gets very rarified, only occasionally appearing in books on international politics or foreign policy. The Englishman E. H. Carr (1946 [1939]) gets credited in the discipline of IR for identifying realism and idealism as the dominant traditions of the interwar years (JEFFREY, 2005, p. 58). But the prevailing historical knowledge is that *émigrés* from Germany and East Europe, mostly fleeing from Nazi Germany, brought to the US those counter concepts, among other ideas and values. Then there is Hans Morgenthau (1954), the most famous German *émigré* in IR, presenting at the time the most impacting theoretical systematization of the concept of realism at the time. However, at a much earlier moment of that voluminous migration, another *émigré*, Arnold Wolfers, was already timidly including the concepts in his publications in English-specialized venues like the *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* (now *International Affairs*) on international politics before he even arrived in America in 1933 (WOLFERS, 1930). And before the famous Morgenthau, another ex-compatriot cruising the Atlantic in 1938, John Herz, had specifically developed those concepts (1951). Nevertheless, as early as 1932, the very popular American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr used them heavily in one of his first major books developing his understanding of morality in society in general, and in the intercourse of nations. Still, by then, Niebuhr was mostly using the label—the word “realism” in a generic sense, as the consistency with reality and prudent behavior. It was not clearly a political science discursive device under Niebuhr’s name nor his political precision in defining it. By 1950, he was almost canonic in the tradition of political realism. Wolfers’s use of “realism” had political sense and a more precise definition already in 1930, but the incidence of this argument was very timid. Over the two next decades, his use of them gets much more frequent, significant, and precise (WOLFERS, 1940; 1951). All along this period, efforts to connect or disconnect the evident semblance with the German notion of *Realpolitik* – frequently associated with the international aggressiveness of Wilhelmine and Nazi Germanies – , reinforced by the German birthplace or descendency of most of its representatives in the American public and academic controversies, added a significative layer of meaning into the concept of realism.

Available historical research has not gone much further back from this interwar moment. The reason may well be the powerful effects of the traditional disciplinary history, still urging revision and criticism to be overcome. The narrative of a sequential Kuhnian movement from the dominance of liberal idealists of the immediate post-World War to the debate with realists and finally realist's paradigmatic IR in the aftermath of World War II has shown enormous resilience in the discipline's imaginary. Both the debaters of the thesis of a myth of the First Great Debate in IR (carrying a different notion of the mythology worked here, meaning strictly a non-truthful statement, such as WILSON, 1998; ASHWORTH, 2002) – and those finding in it a “half-truth” (then closer to the mythological understanding of conceptual distortion, like in QUIRK, VIGNESWARAN, 2005; WÆVER, 2011) see the effective relevance of the myth in constructing the discipline's self-image (SMITH, 1995). There are still who find the proper evidence confirming its existence, those who see the pedagogical value of it for the discipline's newcomers, and those who simply ignore this revisionist literature (SCHMIDT, 2012a, pp. 1-2). However, none of them trailed the way back to the original debate on realism and foreign policy that took place in Germany a century before American IR to understand its inheritances and silences from that earlier historical time and those farther lands.

As realism is remembered as a reaction to idealist academic renderings of international politics, and while there was no formal, significantly autonomous discipline of IR, there was no disciplinary history to be followed. Meanwhile, a tradition announced by realists themselves, linking their work in the second half of the 20th century to some of the greatest names in modern Western political philosophy until at least Machiavelli, as if the concept of “realism” was always there, available to those authors and their contemporary readers. A conceptual history of the debate on *Realpolitik* in the mid-eighteen-hundreds Germany must deal with the issue of both the discursive structures concerning Foucault and Koselleck (*could contemporaries understand or use the concept of realism in their discursive expressions?*) but also must deal with the authorial intentions involved, as proposed by the contextualism of Skinner and Pocock (*did contemporaries use the concept of realism in their discursive expressions?*). There are unequivocal indications that the use of those concepts is decidedly anachronic, serving the present historical academic debates which seem

to take this discursive framework from later developments in IR¹⁷, i.e., the contributions to the development of realism as a theory of international politics and foreign policy made by founding figures like Carr, Morgenthau, Herz, Kennan, and so on. Therefore, in the Osgood-Cooper controversy, historians have not clearly been concerned with the actual use of the “realism-idealism” by the presidents Roosevelt, Wilson, and their contemporaries did, or at least could present their (and others) contents in terms of those concepts during, for example, their political clashes on foreign policy during the World War I and its following peace negotiations. These historians’ use of the counter-conceptual asymmetry is not historical, but analytical, an instrument later devised to scrutinize any important leader, or more simply, any particular political decision in American (or any other country’s) foreign policy history.

Therefore, when and how does the concept of realism historically get manifest in the US? As chapter one elaborated, *Begriffsgeschichte* assumes that concepts may be manifest even without the words that specifically label them. It could, then, be consistently manifest in Machiavelli when the Florentine accused the false moralism and the power relations defining the status of Princes, or in Wilson's clear understanding of expediency, both elements of the concept of realism as it came to be consolidated in the sequence of World War II. Nevertheless, in the case of the concept of realism, its label-word in itself carries meaning, and is not merely a Saussurean signifier, as in the Barthesian scheme explored in chapter one again. As a much more common concept in arts, “realism” indicates an alternative take on reality, a matter of taste and style condensed into an artistic product that some will deeply admire. But in politics, it came to refer to a commitment to the reality that should be untradeable for those who embrace any serious effort to build effective knowledge of it. Realism, in politics as in philosophy, more than in arts, has an excluding effect of its counterpositions. The attachment of certain political attitudes like prudence, expediency, and practices like appeasement or balancing to the concept of realism, thus, thrusts them by way of naturalization or normalization.

For all these particular reasons with the label-word of the concept of realism, the study of historic dictionaries makes a bountiful entrance into the elements of its existence through time. They may indicate when the word, in its ordinary or specialized use, came to

¹⁷ “Many writers later depicted their conflict as a clash of ‘idealism’ and ‘realism.’” (COOPER, 1983: 271). Cooper does indicate, though, that the use of the elements of the concept, like the issue of expediency, was explicit in Wilson’s political thinking.

have a relevant presence in a particular language, with which meanings, to which areas, its transformations, and so on. Dictionaries, historic as primary sources, and contemporary as referential standards of the present, are one of the proclaimed advantages of *Begriffsgeschichte*. Tracking the lexical history of the word “realism” and other related words is the goal of this chapter. As the next gathers and analyzes empirical and interpretive evidence of the manifestation of the conceptual duality of realism-idealism as a historical fact developed in the American discourse on foreign policy in those two decades opening the last century, much before the developments of the first IR realists as those just named, this chapter serves it establishing the place of the concept of realism in the intersubjective context of American foreign policy and international politics debates in the two first decades of the last century. It will consider a wider timespan, for the conceptual transformations in the core of a political language are certainly not a short-term phenomenon, stretching itself through the decades, if not centuries. Thence, how do English dictionaries (the focus is mainly on American contributions) in different subsequent new editions along that period, register the novelties in terms of presence and transformations of the concepts’ label-words with which this research is concerned?

This is the content of the first, opening section. The second one pays attention to specific lexical-historical work on the German loanword “*Realpolitik*” in the American English language, for it is the destiny of the final chapter. German and bilingual dictionaries make their presence here, as well as etymological findings in that language. Thirdly, the investigation will take advantage of an interesting tool for a big data digital history of ideas. It will evaluate the presence of the diverse words of this conceptual system analyzed in the dictionaries in the first two sections above in the N-gram Viewer, a Google internet application that allows viewing the incidence of different words in different grammatical functions and relations to other words along time in Google’s whole repository of scanned books (it pretends to exhaust all available books someday soon). The chapter ends with arranging the lessons of this lexical-historical investigation and analysis. Its empirical conclusions may be permissive and/or prohibitive to the interpretation of the meanings of “realism” will assume in the years surrounding World War I and American participation in it, in a reception process that has its source in a distinct national, political and historic moment,

the German debates on the challenges imposed in the era to be later called “modernity” over the political destiny of its peoples.

Historic dictionaries and the register of the political significance of the entry “realism” in the American English language

In the historical inquiry on social and political concepts, the study of words in dictionaries of the epoch is a crucial primary source. Reinhart Koselleck, in his introduction to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Koselleck’s group’s *Historical Dictionary on German Political and Social Concepts*), listed a variety of urgent materials to be assessed: from philosophy, political, economic, and social theory to literature, from jurisprudence to theology. Newspapers, specialized journals, political propaganda, bureaucratic reports and documents, Congress or other public speeches, biographies, personal correspondence, and diaries, all may give access to the use of concepts by different social groupings, from the elites to the masses. Richter suggests the great breakthrough of the German tradition was exactly the broad diversity of primary sources recurred, “discrepant in origin and appeal, and covering as many social formations as possible.” (RICHTER, 987, pp. 253-4). Dictionaries, for having to reach the meanings and grammar of words as they were relevant in general public discourse at a particular point in time, do reveal that more structural than agential aspect, more intersubjective than simply subjective existence of concepts. Thence, as Koselleck introduced the *GG*, he indicated that (KOSELLECK, 2011, p. 22):

every entry is based at a minimum on consultation of the major dictionaries, encyclopedias, and lexica of a period being studied, even if they ultimately proved unhelpful. It is at this level that the knowledge and self-understanding of particular generations is recorded, first for scholars, then for the educated, and finally for the reading public at large. To understand the formation of concepts and their impact, it is always informative to compare and contrast the differences among these three categories of materials.

Dictionaries, then, may reveal the approximate moment a word became socially relevant and with which meanings. It also marks the reception of new meanings in old words and even may indicate their first registered use in each of their multiple meanings. Melvin Richter also reinforced the value of lexicons in the history of concepts: “It is requisite to survey systematically dictionaries (German, bilingual, and multilingual) in each period treated comparatively, as well as opposite entries in encyclopedias handbooks and thesauri.”. (RICHTER, 987, p. 254). All along time, then, dictionaries serve as primary sources of a concept’s history.

Nonetheless, the demand for consulting lexicons seemed to more directly threaten the consistency of the assumption of the essence of the meaning of texts in authorial intentions, as proposed by Skinner and the contextualists. In the decades-long debate between proponents of the Cantabrigian history of political thought and the history of concepts developed in Bielefeld, James Schmidt offered a critique (or a defense) from the English viewpoint, arguing that the use of dictionaries as sources of conceptual history was precisely the opposite: an important weakness of the *Begriffsgeschichte*'s project. If Koselleck celebrated that "language is augmented and qualified by the additional sources employed systematically throughout our work, including a series of lexica from earlier periods as well as dictionaries of everyday language in the past" (KOSELLECK, 2011, p. 35), Schmidt pointed that a superior kind of historical work demanded a serious contextualization, including not only general structural rules of conceptual transformation, like Koselleck's argument on *Sattelzeit*¹⁸, but the inclusion of the intentions of the speech agents in the construction of meaning, as practiced by Pocock and Skinner in a Wittgensteinian language-in-action fashion. A dictionary, for Schmidt, could not capture this intentionality process¹⁹, for (SCHMIDT, 1999, p. 12):

it is concerned not so much with what individuals are doing to a concept but rather with what a concept is doing, behind the backs or above the heads of individual agents. The use of contemporary dictionaries and encyclopedias as evidence for this process (...) would have only a limited utility for Pocock and Skinner, since sources such as these can give us little in the way of insight into the uses to which these concepts have been put in actual arguments and the history of the uses of concepts in argument is, for Skinner, the only real history that concepts can have.

In fact, arguing from *Begriffsgeschichte*, Richter had earlier contended that dictionaries were found to be unreliable as sources of conceptual change in the course of Koselleck's led German dictionary of political concepts project.²⁰ The first appearance of concepts in political and social use, he pointed out, was usually mistaken by a century or more. Furthermore, the fact that they search for literary usages limits and/or misleads access to the semantic range of those entries as political concepts. That makes dictionaries a supplementary kind of primary source of evidence in the history of concepts, which has to

¹⁸ The period from the mid-eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century when great conceptual transformations in the political-social lexicon were in course. Check chapter 1.

¹⁹ And later Skinner himself gave credit to his critique. (SKINNER, 2002, p. 178)

²⁰ Schmidt recognizes that, but he is still not satisfied with Richter's answer.

concentrate on the typical kind of sources used by the historians of political thought: academic texts, diaries, letters, utterances, and so on.

With that in mind, the kind of care demanded from within conceptual history as an approach points to the need to still recognize that authorial intentions are a phenomenological part of reality that may not be accessed apart from one's own interpretive engagement – hence the label “intellectual-conceptual history” to make it explicit in the approach of this investigation. Still, if the present is the *locus* of the lived political experience, one cannot escape the fact that for the intellectual-political agency, “the political languages of the present are continuously engaged in reconstructing the past and projecting the future,” as João Feres Júnior, another voice closer to the German tradition, suggests. In order to capture such lives, Feres highlights “the fruitfulness of the diachronic study of the reception of concepts,” (FERES Jr, 2008, p. 78) registering not only the differences between the present and the past moment under scrutiny but its earlier and later appearances in dictionaries. After all, the history of concepts is still a legitimate endeavor in itself, for concepts also have a life of their own, recurrently disconnected from any particular original intentions of an author using them.

The world of dictionaries of the English language is both old and vast. In order to promote a coherent analysis, it is necessary to follow the chronology of the distinct incoming publications in the time period under investigation: from around the invention of the concept of *Realpolitik*, in the mid-eighteenth hundreds (BEW, 2014) until around the Second World War, time of the so-called realist-idealist debate in IR. And it is also necessary to limit the investigation to the most important lexicographical efforts in the US, limiting British representation to the inclusion of the entries of subsequent editions of the standard *Oxford English Dictionary*, which does make the effort of capturing national overseas variants of the language.

In fact, the efforts to keep control of the English language culture around the imperial reference needed to promote the idea that there was not necessary to Americans (or any other former colony or Commonwealth countries) to have their own national dictionaries. This notion was effective among the US public for a long time, confirmed by the evidence that the most cherished dictionary by the beginning of the nineteenth century was the 1755 *A*

Dictionary of the English Language, written by the English writer Samuel Johnson. Usually referred to as the “Colossus of Literature”, the great champion of Englishness, Johnson was responsible for coining the term “American dialect” years later to bluntly refer to “a corruption” of the language in that people (JOHNSON quoted in MARTIN, 2019, p. 4). His antipathy to Americans was evident – American English was frequently mocked in public among Brits – but still, he was devoured in American schools and homes, usually with great admiration.

Things would gradually change before the turn of the century. But not fast. As America won its independence, the first locally printed dictionaries appeared in the case of the seventeenth-century. Caleb Alexander’s *The Columbian Dictionary of the English Language*, considered the second of the American-authored lexica in 1800, was a compilation of Johnson’s adopted to include each related “many new words peculiar to the United States” (ALEXANDER quoted in MARTIN, 2019, p. 46). If there was mockery in the King’s island, many in the New World would also not sympathize with it. Still, nothing could stop a consolidating majority who felt the opposite, moved by patriotic fervor, and leading to different initiatives towards an American completely original work, be it for the praise of patriotism, for academic linguistic reasons, or even for cash. The political independence secured in a second war against the Kingdom in 1812-1815, was a definitive stimulus to the young nation to search for an equivalent cultural independence in that opening nineteenth century, and the commitment to a dictionary of American English, together with other local expressions in arts and literature, did have a major role in it. Nonetheless, in many ways, an American variation of the language did take form since the first English settlers founded Jamestown in 1607, so there was a legitimate object of academic interest there to be investigated. And last but not least, the new governmental structures created an ever-rising volume of procurements discriminatorily giving preference to national goods, promoting the local industry. Under this context, the most popular central names (if not brands) of the “War of the Dictionaries” (THE ATLANTIC, 1864) fought along that century: Webster, the patriot; Worcester, the academician; and the Merriam brothers, the capitalists (MARTIN, 2019).

The patriot Noah Webster had already published his “blue-backed speller” to simplify American writing in 1783 when he announced a home competition to Alexander in 1800. He promised a major American dictionary that, despite smaller fascicles (the first in 1806), was

only finally available in 1828. The Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, published by the brothers George and Charles Merriam from Massachusetts, set the standard for the upcoming home rivals. But it was still little qualified in the state-of-the-art elements of lexicography and philology, especially due to his lack of proficiency in German, which made him ignore not only the best academic contributions coming from that country but also the German origins of many vocabularies in the Anglo-Saxon language, particularly the American variant of it. Throughout his career, "Webster was under attack for not accepting the advances made by the German scholars," though in private letters answering his colleagues' suggestion of recently published Teutonic linguistics, he would promise to do so as soon as he could find the time (READ, 1966. p. 175). Joseph Emerson Worcester, a brilliant academic student of lexicography, then reputed as "the best possible editor" available for the abridgment of *Webster's* first (LANDAU, 2009, p. 191), tried to escape the shadow of Webster with his *A Universal and Critical Dictionary* in 1846, advancing a lot of American regional uses of English and including thousands of new entries, introducing German loanwords etymologies, but never succeeded so. In 1860, he completed his masterwork, the *Dictionary of the English Language*, after four decades of work. While Webster was infusing his supposedly descriptive work with lots of prescriptions for an Americanized, simpler spelling of English words, Worcester was clearly the one attracting academic respect, even to the point of competing with the British reference by the time, the *New English Dictionary*, the work once thought to suffice to both Brits and Americans. In spite of the quality of its accomplishments, Worcester's publishers would not find enough market space to engage in a second edition. (MARTIN, 2019)

Despite sharing with Webster the initial organizational reference to Johnson's old dictionary and the goal to departure from its critical technical issues in lexicography, Worcester did not entertain the entrepreneurial-nationalistic impetus that Webster and the Merriam brothers had against Johnson's. And to be fair, also against Worcester himself. As soon as 1834, Webster publicly accused Worcester's first lexicographical works of plagiarism of his dictionaries. Stimulated by the incendiary Merriams, he took the front in the "dictionaries war" in which new offerings fought for the generous market of primary schoolers. (LANDAU, 2009; MARTIN, 2019) Webster would do the combat till his death in 1843, when the Merriams bought his lexicography rights, renamed the company Merriam-

Webster, and, to compete with Worcester's rigorous work, begun to clean the Webster's from the prescriptive verge towards new American spellings the old pioneer had in mind, publishing a new, but lexicographically untouched edition in 1846. In that same year, Worcester sold the publishing rights of his new dictionary in Great Britain. Due to his role as editor of the first Webster's, the Londoners started editing new editions using the most famous American lexicographer's name in the title of their dictionaries as a promotion strategy. That happened even without a single passage of Worcester original dictionaries being taken from Webster's, and surely without Worcester's acknowledgement, concealed from him for two years. The Merriams, owners of Webster's rights, threatened to sue the London publishers and even Worcester himself, forcing him to publicly defend himself exposing the fraud overseas. As the Merriams felt threatened, they invested in the academic improvement of their new dictionary, hiring new editors and recruiting of a German etymologist to engage with Webster's main etymological vulnerability. The Merriam-Webster's new edition of 1864, effectively came to dominate the sales and definitely left Worcester as a kind of secondary work (MARTIN, 2019). Webster's name became a brand, "from then on nonpareil among American dictionary-makers, a position it retains, though not so securely as it once did, to this day." (LANDAU, 2009, p. 362). The next big thing The publishing of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1930, which included the national variations of language usage, would raise the bar of the academic quality of lexicography, forcing the American tradition to follow up. The contemporary market space has become digitalized, connected online, dictionaries became electronic and new offerings are constantly struggling for the top of the Google searches (even disputing with Google itself).

This brief historical introduction is relevant to understanding both the variety of lexicographical efforts, but mostly to the research interest here, it indicated the availability of dictionaries of the American use of English before *Realpolitik* even existed as a word, invented in Germany, in 1853. It allows analyzing the relation between the popularization of the concept by the introduction of the entry in American dictionaries and transformations in the meaning of "realism" in its incursion into the political language. As a matter of fact, there was no mention of "realism/realist" in the 1755 Johnson's, not a singular entry, nor even a derivation in the headword "real". Despite the first *Webster's* in 1828 also missed an entry for the word, there is, under "real" – an adjective meaning the general notion of the "actual, not

fictions, imaginary” –, a fifth, last meaning (indicating its lesser incidence) to the derivation “realist” as referring to the “Scholastic philosopher, things not words, op. to nominal/ist”. In the second *Webster’s*, published in 1841 – the last to count with the old philologist’s assistance, two years before his death –, “realism” gets a specific entry for the first time. Still, it refers only to the philosophical use of the term, again as the doctrine opposing nominalism. Worcester’s 1860, main lexical work also brings an exclusive entry for “realism”, indicating almost exactly the same meaning as that in *Webster’s*, but adding a new opposition to this philosophical doctrine. Beyond being opposed to “nominalism” (for asserting that the reality to which concepts refer exists independently of cognition, a position in epistemology), it includes the counterposition to “idealism” (for supporting the existence of an immediate, intuitive cognition of external objects, an ontological claim) following the older engraved opposition. The Webster’s and Worcester’s dictionaries presented the first registered uses of the word in the first half of the eighteenth-hundreds. Through the years, the etymological effort of subsequent dictionaries would reach older uses until the 1989 second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* locating its earliest recorded uses in 1826 (as the epistemological opposite to nominalism) and 1830 (as the ontological opposite to idealism). Therefore, here lies an important argument for the anachronism of using “realism” to classify the thought of thinkers and artists before those imprints.

In 1864, the new edition of *Merriam-Webster’s American Dictionary* did not bring any novelty to “realism” and “realist,” regardless of the out-loud careful revision of the lexicographical work (THE ATLANTIC, 1864) and the inclusion of a specialist in German etymology (MARTIN, 2019). But the entries have come to stay. They are there, simply pointing to the same philosophical meaning of the older editions, ignoring the specific opposition to “idealism” that its rival had already adopted. In both dictionaries, there is the inclusion of the French origin of the word (“*réalisme*”), outrightly ignoring its connection with the philosophical movement in Germany also using the label-word (“*realismus*”) (WOLFGANG et al., 1993). The fact was ignored, even by the Merriam-Webster hired German etymology specialist. It gets strident that publishing year coincided with the peak of the German immigrating wave of the 19th century – which would make Germans, until today, the major foreign ascendancy of Americans. Actually, right after *Webster’s* First publication, there came to the fore a truly cultural substitution movement of French for German as the

main foreign influence in American language and arts, along with intellectual and institutional academic exchanges, and so on, which had started by the beginning of that century. As the lexicographer Allen Walker Read noted (READ, 1966, p. 181),

The scientific linguistics that spread from the discoveries of scholars in Germanic languages early in the nineteenth century reached New England relatively soon. Noah Webster had made important advances through careful but uninspired research, and it was his misfortune to be superseded even as his masterpiece of 1828 was being seen through the press. He has been censured too severely for not adopting German learning, for at his advanced age he could not be expected to overturn his life's work.

Webster's International Dictionary in 1890 would still not correct that lack of acquaintance with the German origins of the word "realism". But it would first register the artistically, literary meaning in rank 2, with significant aspects – negative as well – of the style that will live on in the political use of it. Accordingly, despite it means "Fidelity to nature or to real life", "adherence to the actual fact," it also indicates a "representation without idealization, and making no appeal to the imagination." It is very possible that, in the end of the nineteenth century, realism had already that political use appealing to this non-philosophical sense, much more often than dictionaries of that period could point. Three years later, the *Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, one more rival debuting in the market, confirmed that innovation to the diachronic narrative was marked by the introduction of the literary sense. The *Standard* sought to differentiate itself in the lexica market by presenting the senses ranking in terms of user convenience, i.e. the importance of the word rather than the academically precise historical order that the Webster's privileged. Accordingly, this organization accused the newer meaning prior to the philosophical traditional usage. It would also originally introduce a third usage: "realism" in theology, "the doctrine that the human race, being seminally in Adam, sinned in him," which did not seem to have had much lexical relevance elsewhere. The main contribution of the *Standard* was really noting that, as an aesthetic program – etymology there pointing to mid-nineteenth-century France (Germany ignored once more) – opposing classicism and romanticism, "realism" quickly became the most known use of the word in the American scene.

"Gilded Age" is the consensual term defining a period in American history generally including the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, it was a time of rapid industrialization and enrichment in the northern and western portions of the US, together with ostensive greed, corruption, and social degradation.

It was definitely a pejorative brand, implying the failure of a utopian, “golden age”, thus not comparable with the contemporaneous reference to the *Belle Époque* in France, signaling the nostalgic feeling of a great intellectual-artistic era that once was. It had more a critical take of the obscene social, economic, and political excesses of a new industrial money-loaded elite, at the expense of social impoverishment. Coincidentally to the semantic innovation printed in the dictionaries above – that of including the artistic and literary meanings to the item “realism” –, it was one of the main names of that very cultural-intellectual movement to give that era’s name right at its birth. *The Gilded Age: A tale of Today*, the satirical work by Mark Twain (co-authored with Charles Dudley Warner) in 1873, gave the era its name, as historians increasingly adopted it to indicate their critical take on that moment’s achievements. Today, it is a necessary reference in the American realist literature.

The entry for “realism” in the *Encyclopedia of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* (PENNACCHIO, 2005) – a contemporary study on the main ideas and events closing the nineteenth century and opening the next one – refers immediately to that literary trend of realism. As a reaction against the “genteel tradition” of transcendentalism and romanticism, realists proposed the representation of social and personal life, and things “as they really are”, what in fact meant their common subject: the life experience of middle and upper-middle classes “between the inherited American ideals of faith in man and the individual and the pessimistic, deterministic creed of modern science.” Popular ordinary life in the context of the profound social transformations due including the growing application of the scientific method under the primacy of a rational philosophy, and the development of a positivist history, while integrating these to the constraining political, economical, and social frames of US territorial expansion, industrialization, urbanization, and immigration (PENNACCHIO, 2005, p. 819). The *Webster Collegiate Dictionary* of 1898 confirmed this meaning back then, referring to the artistic and literary style concerned with the “fidelity to nature or to real life,” also noting that “real life” here contextualized the ordinary struggles of everyday events.

The general sense of fidelity to reality conceived by the artistically and literary realist school of the American Gilded Age will certainly cumulate in the concept of “realism” as developed in the theory of international politics today. As a collective historical dictionary on the world history of the eighteenth hundreds, a brief entry on “realism” remarks how even more relevant, dominant in fact, it was in other Western countries’ literature: France, Russia,

Britain, and other European countries. That storytelling approach of individual lives in their connection with great historical processes animated the intellectual life of that century committed to the goal of making the distinct areas of social life more amenable to scientific methods of knowledge. According to the author (DENTITH, 1994, p. 517):

In this respect, realism in the novel can be seen as cognate with realism in other areas of nineteenth-century intellectual life, which similarly sought to bring the vast and multifarious data of social life into a comprehensible form. The abstractions of political economy, the collection and analysis of statistics, the new study of SOCIOLOGY, and the explosion of historical forms of understanding were all in their different ways realist enterprises, which sought to find appropriate non-theological ways of understanding the variety of society and history.

In terms of historical social and political processes, the little piece is a fine description of the terminology's usage in the period, while it commits gross conceptual history mistakes. It defines it as “a term with an especially complex history, (*which*) took on its distinctive modern emphases in the nineteenth century,” which is the “belief in the possibility of understanding the world which we inhabit.” This realist position in philosophy would persist in exploring the contrast between the underlying reality itself (psychological, social, and historical), and its “confusing surface appearances.” Therefore, “realism” in science, philosophy, or literature, in the course of the eighteenth century, meant the commitment to the secular, against the theological foundations for the explanation of material and social facts (DENTITH, 1994, p. 516).

All are very coherent until now. But, as the text literally goes, regarding “the world as it is” was not what medieval philosophy meant by “realism,” for “in medieval philosophy to be a realist meant almost the opposite,” that is, “a believer in the reality of the underlying forms of thought”, mostly in the Platonic sense. This issue is certainly a priority only in the philosophy of knowledge (DENTITH, 1994, p. 516). The point here is that, regardless of the substance of these ontological and epistemological cleavages, the reference to the word “realism” cannot be made in English before the early nineteenth century. Nor in its etymological origins in French, or in German. The *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, organized by Université de Lorraine, displays the first record of “*réalisme*” in 1801, already in opposition to “*idéalisme*”, it was understood “*Chez Kant.*”²¹ The *Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* pinches the first uses of “*realismus*” even earlier, in the late 18th century to make reference to the representative intellectual contributions not only of

²¹ “*Realisme*,” in *Trésor de la langue Française informatisé*. Available at: <<http://atilf.atilf.fr>> . Accessed on: February 22, 2023.

Kant, but Schiller and Goethe too (WOLFGANG, 1993). All of this urges some conclusions: first, the use of “realism” to define Kantian philosophical thought in the nineteenth century is completely inverse to how political realism would come to define the Kantian prospects for the “perpetual peace.” Second, this historical efforts on the the lexical references above make sure that it is not anachronistic to call Twain a representative of the “realist” literature in that same historical moment he had co-baptized. But, third, to call a medieval line of philosophical thought a realist one, is indeed anachronistic, as it externally adds authoritative meanings that were not available out of that label-word to appear only in the 19th century.

Therefore, “realism” came to indicate a general intellectual attitude in aesthetic expressions and in the newborn social sciences. Coherently, the first edition of *Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language*, in 1909, includes a new important usage of “realism” after its development in the previous century. After the well-established philosophical and the arts & literature senses, and a third indicating that general concern with fidelity to facts, there is the inclusion of a fourth one: “Law” (it really does not indicate any extra information than “Law”). The register of the term in the field of Law may indicate that it was probably already being in use in political issues, for Law deals with many of the same subjects of interest engaged by the academic study of politics, like the state, legislative processes and results and the government overall. This is relevant evidence to argue that, by then, the word had long spilled over from philosophy not only to arts and literature, but also to Law and, much probably, politics, at least in its general usage. In 1923, the new revised edition of the *Webster’s New International Dictionary* brings no innovations in the semantic field of “realism”, but there is a definitive relevant etymological step: the embracement of the German origins of the word, after the French already standard registering.

In Britain, the most important parallel effort in lexicography – indeed, it is the king as a general reference to the language – was the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It started as a project of The Philological Society of London to be called the *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. The Oxford University Press took control of it in 1879, and published the rolling work in 10 volumes from 1884 to 1928, which was then compiled in the 1933 *Supplement* under its definitive brand. The *OED* raised the bar in the broader Anglo-Saxon market competition by presenting a meticulous and continuous lexicographical, semantic, and etymological work (BREWER, 2009). And that has increasingly been the case with the entry

for “realism” not only in its three succeeding main editions (1933, 1989, 2000-), but in the cumulating offshoot outputs all along its trajectory – the *Shorter*, the *Concise*, and the *Pocket* Oxford dictionaries. In the preface of the 1933 *Supplement*, the legendary editor of the *OED*, James Murray, felt necessary to justify why the new edition would not simply be “a collection of closely-packed slips occupying some 75 linear feet of shelving.” It would also recognize it needed to even include some precisely selected new elements to the dictionary, which are determinant to this lexical history of realism pursued herein: “items of modern origin and present currency that had been either intentionally or accidentally omitted would be included,” which was a coherent take as these words could present a semantic instability that would lead to great inconsistency between the offshoots. Murray also promised to take into account “earlier evidence for American uses,” with a head specialist exclusively responsible for that. And, even more, significant to the notion of a realist theory of international politics being developed by then, the *Supplement* also guaranteed that “temporary or casual uses would be recognized only in so far as they marked stages in the recent history of scientific discovery, inventions or fashion, or illustrated the progress of thought, usage, or custom during the half-century under review.” (MURRAY, 1933, p. v).

It is then just logic to suppose that the *Supplement* editions are to incorporate all the most relevant advancements of these shortened steps onwards, and also those all academic relevant innovations of the time, with a particular concern in correcting any misses from the language use in the United States. However, the most important novelty to the conceptual history of realism did not come in the major edition, but a merely *Pocket* one, in 1924. The *Supplement* itself brought nothing new in relation to what American lexicographers had already discovered. “Realism” first historical sense, the philosophical one, opposed to “idealism” and “nominalism,” with its earliest ascertainable example in use coming from 1838. The second meaning revealed that generic “fidelity to reality” sense, thus even before the third showed up, “realism” in arts and literature. And that was it. Probably, the political conception of “realism” was only not clearly distinguishable, useless, or maybe not relevant at all, passing to most lexicographers as that generic sense. Dictionaries have indeed registered not only this general attitudinal meaning of “realism” but also the opposing label of “idealism” which would become more evident (in the realist perspective, at least) in later public contends. The examples brought by the *OED* illuminate this argument. The words of

the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1817 registered its earliest use: “It is only so far idealism, as it is at the same time, and on that very account, the truest and most binding realism.” Here, though the dictionary uses the sentence to register the secondary, generic sense of “realism”, Coleridge was also using it in the same text to refer to the philosophical debate with idealism more precisely, and the entry “ideal-realism” in the third *OED* uses another sentence there to record this word’s earlier use: “A long treatise on ideal Realism, which holds the same relation in abstruseness to Plotinus, as Plotinus does to Plato.” The other early example to the generic sense in the first *OED* came from the other side of the Atlantic, in a passage from the American writer and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1861, demanding from his contemporary intellectual community this realist attitude towards the brute facts of reality: “Let us replace sentimentalism by realism, and dare to uncover those simple and terrible laws which, be they seen or unseen, pervade and govern.” Broadly speaking, it feeds the generic semantic structure of the realist-idealist debate.. If, as it is the case with the last *Webster’s*, it does not refer to a specialized adoption of this sense in politics nor any particular area, it makes it evident once more that no less than this general meaning was available by the mid to late eighteenth century to the eventual reception of *Realpolitik* in the English language, especially as it also recognized the etymological origins of the word not only in the French but in the German cognate too.

This lexical investigation searched through all the main American dictionaries of the period, a great number of other secondary ones, and also many other British exemplars. Nevertheless, it made reference exclusively to the main innovations in the conceptual history of “realism” in the study of international politics, privileging the American dictionaries, the earlier appearances, and the mainstream works, in case of coincidence. In that respect, the older English lexical reference to the political sense of “realism,” though still marginal, is found in the first publications spawning from the work at Oxford to put out the first edition of the main dictionary. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary Of Current English*, in 1912, after the epistemological and ontological meanings, listed: “practice of regarding things in their true nature & dealing with them as they are, freedom of convention, practical views & policy.” The first edition of the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, in 1924, repeats that light indication of politics through that generic definition – now top rank, “practical views & policy, (opp. *idealism*),” not contaminated by “prejudice & convention.” Both are inserted in the generic definition of

the word, sided with the philosophical and artistic uses (but with no criteria for ordering, as indicated). It may seem little, but the idea of “practical politics,” as the next section develops, is a core translation of the German “*Realpolitik*,” more than an obvious “politics of reality,” “*real*” was to denote the idea of practicality, as in the old notion of “*realschool*”, relatively well-known in the US. “*Realpolitik*” had first debuted in the lexicon in the referential etymological dictionary of the British professor Ernest Weekley (WEEKLEY, 1921). It had simply offered a fair translation that German neologism as no more than “practical politics,” only explicitly adding the semantic linkage to the use of the German “*real*,” as that one in “*Realschule*.” Anyhow, it is most probable that these first lexical appearances of the entry for “*Realpolitik*” influenced the first appearances of that timid reference to the political use of “realism” as meaning the “practical views and policy.” As a matter of fact, the first American lexicon to capture the arrival of both the political explicit sense and the loanword “*Realpolitik*” would be the *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* in 1936.

The first minor Webster’s publication after the standard *Merriam-Webster’s New International Dictionary* in 1934, could then start to fill the lexical void. Compact yet encyclopedic, the *Collegiate* series was intended to catch the rapidly rising market of students in universities and colleges all over the country, from 0.3% of the population in 1898 to 5.4% in 1989, or 13.5 million youngsters (LANDAU, 2009). *Webster’s Collegiate* introduced the German loanword precisely with a valorous immediate definition of it as “practical politics.” But then, it could not miss the pejorative point on political realism thinking: “often cynically, reliance upon armed strength for gaining one’s ends in national or international affairs.” Coherently, the *Collegiate* was also the first dictionary in the American context to register a more explicit definition, closer to the political sense of “realism”, which coherently offered as its definition the “preoccupation with reality; scientific, as opposed to idealistic or speculative or sentimental, attitude, policy, etc.” As the definition moves on, it clearly indicates that contemporary extended use: “now esp., the disposition to think and act in the light of things as they are and to repudiate visionary schemes. This more significant yet still timid indication of the political usage of “realism” marked its presence under the generic sense definition, as it was expected from earlier lexical records just explored.

Thus, it seems that the heavy load of the pejorative sense of “realism” as an intellectual framework for the understanding of politics was preferably deposited on the

German import, as its foreignness made it more vulnerable to such tainting. In its introduction to the lexicon, in that 1936 *Webster's Collegiate*, some of the pejorative adjectives still relevant to define "Realpolitik" in the present are there: not simply its linkage to the material elements of power, but attaching it to the military aspect of it; not simply rationality, but often cynicism, and the capital sin of avarice in emphasizing an otherwise normal concern with self-interest. This is a definitively relevant record of the distortion of the meaning of "Realpolitik" in this lexical history reception in American English, usually meaningfully connected with political "realism," when in fact, it usually means to imply "*Machtpolitik*" – power politics, more precisely – another loanword still absent by that edition, only to appear in the second volume of *The Compact Edition* of the *OED* published in 1976.

Murray, the *OED*'s chief-editor, was also the Weekley's *Etymological Dictionary* publisher, as part of the work towards the future *Supplement*. In this vein, it would be relevant to know how the criteria defined by and his team to include or not new acquisitions of the offshoots, resulted in the rollback from the political definition of "realism" in its political usage. Nonetheless, as a lexical historian acknowledged, "criteria for identifying such 'stages' were not revealed." (BREWER, 2009, p. 262). It may not be possible to know for sure if the exclusion was a result of malpractice or omission. As she wrote, "the Supplement was a different matter altogether," including briefs on vocabulary relevant before the late nineteenth century, "but its pages teemed with more topical and everyday usages, often colorfully colloquial, that had escaped entry to the parent volumes." (BREWER, 2009, p. 261) Even though it was not the main *Supplement*, the first *Pocket*, was made available nine years before, which would formally (lexically) recognize the political take on "realism," not without that peculiar shyness still. And, despite the *Pocket* did not bring an outbreking entry for "Realpolitik," there were very close efforts much closer to Murray. Weekley's etymological contribution in 1921 was crystal clear in cataloging the simplicity and fullness of the basic meaning of the imported German concept of "*Realpolitik*," indicating its relevant presence in the Anglo-Saxon world. As a contributor to Murray, the main editor of the *OEDI*, how could it be left out? This absence gets even more curious by the fact that there was an increasing space for the development of its specialized use (even if not as systematically as

Carr would intend in 1939), for IR departments were spreading all around British and American academic settings for over a decade when the *OEDI* debuted.

Now this investigation arrived at the limit of its temporal focus. Most of the political meanings of “realism” lexicographical efforts reached by the publication of the *Webster’s Collegiate* in 1936, would get quite stable, with minor insignificant change in wordings, or no alteration at all, like etymological information of time and place of origin and first-use exemplary sentences. Differences would be more evident between the two main rival brands – the *Merriam-Webster* and the *OED* – than within them, along with their secondary issues. Both seem to avoid allowing a specific political category to the entry “realism,” for the word had a wide generic sense, applied as such in many other specializations, most probably because of its rhetorical value in inner disciplinary debates between competing theoretical approaches. But “realism” was indeed a progressively consolidating tradition, with its own internal distinctions, contends, public figures, and so on. Further, it was not any theory, but the dominant one alone the very development of the discipline of IR, especially in the American context, but certainly across the ocean, with the English scholars’ renderings of a realist international society – not forgetting the more restricted space it found in the study of government and domestic politics. And also, “Realpolitik” was already recognized by both dictionaries and here the political was inescapable. In that sense, it seems that the possible lexical host of the concept of “political realism” was really that general, basic meaning exemplified as early as that 1817 quotation from Coleridge, so long captured in the *OED*, and later also recognized by *Merriam-Webster*. It is, therefore, much probable that, along the 19th century, in Germany, France, Britain, and the US, the word “realism,” generically meaning an attitude of cold reasoning about the facts of international life, was increasingly effective rhetoric to engage with peers and the public. At the same time, those minor modifications in the writing of that basic meaning closed it to the political use of the term, such as in *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* in 1968: “inclination or attachment to what is real; tendency to regard things as they really are; any view or system contrasted with idealism.” This opposition to idealism, more than any other labeling alternative, marks the presence of the concept in political debates. But the asymmetry it brings in favor of realism has also been reversed – as Koselleck had proposed on the history of asymmetrical counter-concepts – as

the anti-realism of the liberal internationalist elite has displayed in current American foreign policy debates earlier analyzed.

Small innovations in the fine arts' meaning also seem relevant to understand those most pejorative charges held against political realism. Accordingly, in the 1958 Webster's Dictionary, there is a first definition – surpassing the historical priority of philosophical and fine arts ones – referring to the less cynical “interest in things as they are; practical outlook on life; representation in arts or letters of real life even if sordid and repellent.” 1968 *Shorter* would likewise integrate that meaning, relating that the realists' cold tract with the reality that fidelity urges “often (*came*) with the implication that the details are of an unpleasant or sordid character.” This meaning of arts and literature realism must have fed the current meaning of political realism, as the tragical nature of reality – sordid, repellent, and unpleasant – were the kind of mythical meanings systematically imposed on realist thought till those contemporary American foreign policy debates remembered above.

Of the three main meanings comprised in this lexical history, the one probably less influent to the formation of the political use of realism is the philosophic one. At first, it was the most evident meaning to nineteenth-century lexicographers, so that they incorporated it as the original historical meaning. With time, dictionaries would incorporate earlier uses of the generic sense, which suggests that all three meanings came into being around the turn of the nineteenth century. “Realism”, philosophical, displayed mostly two distinct original specialized usages, that may confuse the contemporary lay reader, and how each of these meanings, sometimes even apparently contradictory ones, fed the formation of a political conception in the usage label-word of “realism.” As the opposite of “idealism,” “realism” rejects the (mostly) ontological assertion that objects of cognition do not exist outside it. It asserts that matter exists independently of ideas about it. In opposing “nominalism” (and “conceptualism”), “realism” rejects that “universals” – generalizations and categorizations of observed phenomena – only exist in the cognizing mind, not being a property of the world in itself. Reality exists only in the form of “particulars,” of singular occurrences. For realism, those regularities are indeed part of the reality to be explained, so that knowledge assertions may be judged by its referential consistency with it.

This is an epistemological debate, descending from the theory of Platonic “forms,” which inscribes an older use of realism, but still a much more recent fact than Plato’s times for sure. And it was first as an early nineteenth-century pejorative tag, as earlier generations in scholasticism like Aquinas were perceived as overtly confident in the reality of the forms themselves. In contemporary terms, this is the most relevant philosophical meaning immediately cited in the most recently published dictionaries, sometimes being only available in compiled editions. And, while the belief in the imposing material character of reality is coherent with political realism, the idea that general ideas, principled abstractions, and other “universals” the cognition uses to effectively deal with the real world do exist independently of its observers, especially those who engage in reaching or and those who use them.

Political realism, as it got popularized, meant the focus on the material conditions define power politics and impede the best utopias with all their inner normative or logical quality to be realized. For the realist critique, the supposed coherence of those ideologies is merely expediency. Ideas cannot have the same existential status as material ones, what would contradict scholastic realists. The confusion goes aloof when one is remembered that Immanuel Kant, the arch-idealist of the perpetual peace to IR realists, is best known in philosophy for defending an epistemological foundation in realism. In fact, it was Kant himself who introduced the term “*realismus*” to the (German) philosophical debates in 1781 (it was translated to English only in 1838). As one scholar recently wrote on the renewed interest in Philosophy on the conceptions of realists and idealists and Kant’s central place in there (HEIDEMANN, 2021, p. S3231),

the *Critique of pure Reason* is the founding document of realism and that to the present-day Kant’s discussion of realism has shaped the theoretical landscape of the debates over realism. Kant not only invents the now common philosophical term ‘realism’. He also lays out the theoretical topography of the forms of realism that still frames our understanding of philosophical questions concerning external reality.

The confusion which these so sophisticated philosophical discussions suggest they were not crucial in constituting the current concept of realism in IR and American foreign policy but in more general notions. Different statements, are opportunely selected in both these two metaphysical traditions sharing the same naming, but which could most probably been inherited by those generic and artistic senses as well.

The fact is that an explicit, clear lexical reference to a specific political sense of “realism” would only appear in 1981, as a by-product of the *OED*. Before it, only the timid,

general meanings were formally available in the lexical access to the political concept of realism, but much only superficially and much less precise than it should. The *Webster's* series (regular and irregular) in the US never went beyond it, like the *Compact Edition* or the *OED2* explicitly, undoubtedly did. The political only cumulated there in the generic sense of the term. So, in 1936 *Collegiate*, there was in the generic sense of the item “realism” as the opposition to “idealistic ... policy.” In 1967, the *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* brought the notion of practicability to “realism”: “preoccupation with fact or reality and rejection of the impractical and visionary.” From here on, the generic sense of “realism” is not significantly altered in the American lexica, though is increasingly evident through the editions that the generic sense had gone more relevant in public speech. Regardless, the political was never used is never made a specific entry there, as if it was just one more general case of the meaning – a matter not of a specialized language, but a general attitude. Fairly, every specialization may probably find the rhetorical use of the term to discredit an opponent. However, in IR it has long been known as the central approach of the academic field. And that is the case, despite the entry “*Realpolitik*” – a neologism explicitly linking the adjective “real” to the object of politics – is not only more frequent, almost present in every subsequent edition from the 1960s on, but also its meaning has undergone a clean up, as next section explores. The inclusion of the political use of the concept will in fact never appear until this day as to the current electronic edition of the *Merriam-Webster* available online.

The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary was a heavy compilation of the full 20-volume text of the first *OED* and all the most important revisions and incorporations anticipating the so-expected second edition of the *OED* that would come in 1989. It was the greatest updating compilation since 1933, published in four volumes from 1971 to 1987. Accordingly, these additions to the entry “realism,” published in the third volume in 1981, will compose the exact text of the entry in the *Supplement* to the second edition of the *OED*, eight years later. As expected earlier in this text, the political definition is hosted under that same old general usage sense, indicating it was implicit there in earlier editions, or for that matter, to the current *Merriam-Webster*. Historically arranged after the philosophical meanings, and before the third sense associated with arts and literature –, the new political variant has an exclusive subitem, sided with another one to the meaning in Law.

Both are explicitly indicated as having an American origin. “Realism” as “legal theory” is “the doctrine that the law is to be discovered by studying actual legal decisions and procedures, rather than by recourse to enactments or statutes”. And “realism,” used “more loosely in political theory, (*is*) the view that actual political power is the subject-matter of politics, as opp. to the doctrine, law, rights, or justice”. In the example for this specific definition, one classic of the American IR realist contribution makes the earlier example: John Herz’s *Political Realism and political idealism*, from 1951 (the examples from “legal theory” sense start from 1930). For the first time in the history of the lexicography of the English language the term “realism” was directly associated with political analysis.

Fortunately, the new, third edition of the *OED* – currently under construction since the turn of the millennium, with new entries progressively being added to its website – advances more precise information on the earliest use of the original sense of the label. In the older examples found, French quotations were substituted by those of German philosophy and literature, stemming from 1781 (Kant, most certainly) and 1798, respectively. However, it still indicates the origin of the word in its “pragmatist”, general sense, as coming from the French in 1855 (though since the first edition of the dictionary, there is a much older quotation in the English language by Coleridge in 1817, referenced above). The older ascertainable evidence in English of the use of the philosophical sense now comes from 1797, and in the literature, from 1856. Lastly, the political sense update is limited to its wording: “(in political theory) the view that the subject matter of politics should be actual political power, in contrast to principles of doctrine, law, rights, or justice (also political realism).” And, in the examples, an earlier one is found in legal theory in a 1925 *Illinois Law* magazine, while Herz is still the oldest example presented for political theory.

The big picture is starting to take form. This mostly diachronic analysis of dictionaries exposed the lexical development of “realism” in English, particularly in the US, in the way of eventually assuming a specialized political significance. It certainly took too long for it to be recognized as a relevant sense worth of its own place in the lexicography. At the same time, it should be clear that presentism in referring to a realist tradition in (international) political thought or theory much before the twentieth century, or even more, a “school” as Morgenthau suggests in 1954 (MORGENTHAU, 1954, pp. 3-4), never without distorting those older contributions. For example, this historic lexical analysis showed that the asymmetrical

condition assumed by the conceptual counterposition in IR was not clear nor defined in the prior use of the term in both philosophy and literature. A “realist” commitment in these areas was not necessarily about excluding rival alternatives. Nor was it defining the position to be proud of, to the cost of the contrary one. The introduction of the label is a definitely meaningful innovation to a dispersive tradition made by distinct tropes of material power, expediency, prudence, moral relativity, reason, and the lesser evil, all more or less loosely connected notions of the political, reconnecting them to notions of practicality and objectivity, under a new concept – and not simply a generic attitude – that advanced an authoritative claim, analogous to that made by science, over rival explanations and even reality itself.

In conformity with that critique acknowledged by Richter that the lag between the first usage of a political language and its appearance as an entry in a dictionary could reach a hundred years or more, “realist” is a term that has been made into dictionaries in the original 1828 *Webster’s*, while the newer edition of the *OED* point to 1797 as the first identified record with this usage. Thus, 31 years between these points in time, but for the philosophical, specialized concept. As the first lexical inclusion of undoubtedly political usage of “realism” happens in the 1981’s *Compact* edition of the *OED*, and as most known early developers of the concept will not be located much further back from Carr’s *Twenty Years’ Crisis* in 1939 – the lag would be more significant: a little more than 40 years – which would still not be close to the secular delay that Richter proposed. But if the 1912 *Concise Oxford Dictionary* is indeed capturing a relevant political use implicitly, the window would widen to almost seven decades. What is fairly evident is that “realism” was already used in generic terms to describe, evaluate, and prescribe human practice in various fields in the English language since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and one cannot exactly discard that the political use was already there if not in the more usual primary sources of conceptual history: the effective use of concepts in books, newspapers, documents, speeches, and personal communication. And new findings here could adjust that lag to something closer to that century span.

In the path to politics, the term “realism” has cumulated elements present in the general sense, as well as the philosophical and aesthetic variations in the way of consolidating the current political concept usage. It has also brought with it its foreign,

German way of thinking about it, which took too much to be fairly recognized by the lexicography, even with all the human and intellectual, growing dominant presence of that German culture in the US. That will be relevant to understand how receptive the label-word once was and became to the Oceanic translation of the invented and imported concept of *Realpolitik*.

“*Realpolitik*” as a German loanword and its translation to “realism” in the American English lexical history

Now it becomes important to explore the historic registering of the imported word “*Realpolitik*” to look for indications of its semantic meddling with the meaning of “realism”, inside and outside the lexica. It is a seemingly obvious question, which nevertheless may impose defining questions to this history of the concept of “political realism.” Though “realism (political)” seems the undoubtedly literal translation of the German “*Realpolitik*,” this movement was never free of problematic issues in linguistic terms and mostly unnoticed throughout its historical use by English speakers, especially in the United States. And not only because it is the theme of this investigation. The German presence in the United States is a theme in itself.

Their immigration became relevant from the establishment of Germantown in Pennsylvania, 1683. They were not only incited to cross the ocean by the founder of the colony, the English Quaker William Penn, but were also fleeing from persecution in the post-Westphalian Treaty moment (which was thought to guarantee freedom of worship under regions of the Holy Roman Empire dominated by different religious sects. As German colonization cities grew mostly in states like Ohio and Indiana, besides Pennsylvania, record waves of immigration arrived in the 1830s and 1840s, spreading their colonization to new areas in those states and in most other midwestern ones. As instability marked the post-1848 failed liberal revolution in the German political situation – the very context in which Rochau is writing *Realpolitik* as a counsel to his liberal peers – the rhythm of immigration accelerated to the point that Germans became the major foreign-born population in the US by 1860 (it was second to the Irish in the first national census in 1850 and in the next decennial report), reaching its peak in 1890 (2.78 million immigrants, 4.42% of the US population by then) almost summing the number of the second and third ranks by 1910 (2.31 million German

immigrants against 1.35 Irish and 1.34 Italians), never inferior to the English immigrating numbers. Germans still count a relevant 540 thousand living in the US by the 2021 census's updating estimates, only the 19th place, even behind Brazilians now (569 thousand). In comparison terms, Mexicans today stand first with over 10.7 million residents in the US, followed by Indians (2.7 million), Chinese (2.13 million). However, reinforcing the more relevant presence Germans had in end of the nineteenth century, composing more than 4% of the whole of the country's inhabitants, that impressive number of Mexicans in the US today according to the most recent official data amounts to no more than 3.24% of the US population.²² Further more, even to this date, Germans are second to none in the contemporary US population regarding ancestry. Here, Germans are cited by more than 42 million people, almost 13% of the American people, leaving far behind the Irish (31.5 million) and even the English (31.8 million).²³

The influence of the German language in the English lexica is evident. However, once there has been complaint about the neglect of careful investigations of this historical phenomenon, especially incorporating a sociological-linguistic approach. The reference to the work of Jay Alan Pfeffer (1987) on the presence of German imports in the British and American vocabularies is almost consensually taken as a breakthrough here (LANDMANN, 2020; JAWORSKA, LEUSCHNER, 2018; SCHULTZ, 2017; STANFORTH, 2009). It deeply contributed to changing the popular view that – especially in the case of the US and its German gross immigrating waves – the Teutonic language was just a minor contributor, if not insignificant to the development of the English language. Pfeffer collected more than 3000 words that have crossed the cultures since the sixteenth century. In a revised and augmented edition in 1994, co-authored with Garland Cannon, they reached more than 6000 borrowings, retreating even further to the year 1346 (PFEFFER; CANNON, 1994).

As Pfeffer and Cannon concentrated their investigation to pre-twentieth-century borrowings, other works went on to incorporating that centuries' innovations period's rapid

²² US Census Bureau: World Region and Country or Area of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population, With Geographic Detail Shown in Decennial Census Publications of 1930 or Earlier: 1850 to 1930 and 1960 to 2000. Available at: <<https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2006/demo/POP-twps0081.html>>. Accessed on February 11, 2023.

²³ American Community Survey: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States. Year estimates data profiles, 2021. Available at: <<https://data.census.gov/table?q=DP02:+SELECTED+SOCIAL+CHARACTERISTICS+IN+THE+UNITED+STATES&tid=ACSDP1Y2021.DP02>>. Accessed on February 11, 2023.

spread of lexical works, some finding the decrease in German loans (STANFORTH, 2009), while others went on to precisely catalog what was available, like Julia Schultz (2017) who provided an exhausting collection of evidence in the *OED3*, reaching all its 1958 items which had in the twentieth-century its first filed use, while she agreed with that deceleration in loans, finding no new century's imports in the newest *OED* yet. German was assumed to be the source only very specific, technical terminologies that were ignored by most English native speakers (SCHULTZ, 2017), when not of stereotyped references to Germans imposing them the burden for the Nazi tragedy – *Führer*, *Blitzkrieg*, *Anschluss*. But both of these notions are inconsistent, – in themselves, a stereotype, for much more ordinary use loanwords are frequently forgotten of their origin, such as “aspirin”, “angst” “bum”, “*delicatessen*”, and even “dollar” and so many others (STUBBS, 1998). Those and other works have changed that perception of insignificance and have opened a currently thriving research agenda.

Pfeffer included “Realpolitik” in his first German loanwords dictionary (1987). Though it was made of a corpus mostly of the *OED*, close to the completion of its second 1989 edition, and the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, the 1966 standard edition being continuously updated in the Merriams' spin-offs, reproduced the *Duden Onlinewörterbuch* wording to the entry: “*Politik, die vom Möglichen ausgeht u. auf abstrakte Programme u. ideale Postulate verzichtet*” (“Politics that assumes the possible and dispenses with abstract programs and ideal postulates”). It also indicates 1914 as its first use, as the *Compact Edition of the OED* had reached in 1981, denoting “politics based on practical and material factors” (PFEFFER, 1987, p. 271). With the publication of the *OED2* and the *Webster's Third* 1993 expansion, Garland Canon not only expanded the lexicon of Germanisms in the English language, but also announced a scale for measuring the frequency of each item in the American and British corpuses, “the degree of naturalization”, which also considered orthographical, syntaxis, and pronunciation, listed at the end of the given meaning with a number from 1 (most rare, difficult to write, to use in a sentence and/or to speak) to 4 (full integration of a loanword in the host language). (PFEFFER, CANNON, 1994, p. XXIX). Then, there is the definition they use (PFEFFER, CANNON, 1994, p. 291):

realpolitik/real politik, *n.* (1914) *Politics* [G *Realpolitik* < *real* + *Politik* < LL *realis* essential, real, actual + Gk *politiké (téchne)* politics] Practical politics, as based on practical and material factors or on national interest and power, rather than on ideals. O, R, W [4]

Thus, it designates rank 4, implying the top frequency and popular acknowledgment of German borrowing, even if it has not been orthographically adapted to the English language in any way. And though it offered precision in making reference to the very etymological origins preceding *Realpolitik* as part of the own German language, (that combination of words descending from Latin and from Greek), it missed elements of its German signification, from the context where it was literally born, in the post-1848 Prussia. Then, “real” had less to do with a deterministic view of progress in politics, with a conform-with-reality lesson, and more with a notion of mapping the possible for an effective intervention in reality, with the practical politics in this sense. And that notion of “*real*” in German is as old in the US as 1833 through the idea of “Real school” (PFEFFER, 1987), which Pfeffer and Cannon (1994) attest as a lesser naturalized word in English (rank 3), a feature that gets clear by the times it is written in the German compounding style “Realschool”, with or without the capital R, and also appearing in its German original spelling “*Realschule*.” It was a type of secondary school in Germany’s educational system, characterized by more technical-oriented contents, differently from the regular classic curriculum of the gymnasium. Real schools were instituted in many German migrant destination areas in the US during the nineteenth century (the most famous German element to inhabit the American educational organization is the “*Kindergarten*”, a loanword – and an educational institution – in full current use, so popular it dismisses a definition here).

Ludwig von Rochau presented the concept of “*Realpolitik*” in his 1853 *Grundsätze der Realpolitik: angewendet auf die staatlichen Zustände Deutschlands* (“*Principles of Realpolitik applied to the national state of affairs of Germany*”). Rochau’s original idea von Rochau can thoroughly be defined in a less pejorative way, as skepticism, fortitude, and responsibility. It indicates how it still lives today with a mixed record in terms of original meanings and also distortions along the way: if it, on one side, has been properly received with the translation of “*real*” as the “practical”, on the other, it has been reduced to material issues which seem to exclude the genuine concern Rochau had with the appropriate moral values and communication with public opinion as a central criterion of a realist political engagement, as the next chapter explores. “*Realpolitik*” was really implicating a realist conception of politics, with “*real*” denoting the practical. By itself, is not translatable to the idea of the practicable, or the feasible, and there are other German words for the idea of

practical in itself, such as *praktisch*, *praktikabel*, or *durchführbar*. Notwithstanding, in compound form, as in “*Realschule*”, “real” assumes the meaning of the “practical.” In this sense, the *Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* indicates “real” as a common suffix in word compositions to mean “*auf die Wirklichkeit, auf die Praxis ausgerichtet, die Dinge betreffend*” (“oriented towards reality, towards practice, relating to things”), appearing as such in the middle of the 17th century, as it happens in other German words, such as “*Realwerk*”, (even before “real” in the practical sense, at the beginning of the 17th century), “*Realschule*”, “*Reallexikon*”, “*Realwissenschaften*” (all appearing in the 18th century), and finally “*Realpolitik*” (mid-19th century). (WOLFGANG, 1993) Today, “*realo*”, a late twentieth-century borrowing from German, originally designating a “pragmatic, moderated member of the Green Party,” was duly incorporated the English language in the current *OED3* as “a moderate or pragmatic environmentalist.” (SCHULTZ, 2017).

The very word “realism” is now broadly recognized as a loan translation from its philosophical use in German (“*realismus*”), rather than as resulting from the English language’s intimacy with its French contemporaneous cognate. As a matter of fact, the relation of that suffix in “*Realschule*” with the very idea of “*realismus*” was plainly articulated already in the end-of-the-nineteenth-century American debates regarding its national educational system. The professor of linguistics at the *John Hopkins University*, A. Marshall Elliott, made it clear in debating educational reform in the US, in 1884 (ELLIOTT, 1884, p. 229):

the end of the XVII Century, the special cultivation of Natural Science, already produced the germs of Realism and in the struggle between these two systems in the following century it soon became evident that the Gymnasium, the sole representative of Humanistic Culture, did not satisfy the new and varied demands of the times. Hence the rapid development of the Realschools and the final initiation between them and the Gymnasium of that jealous strife which has had divers periods of ebb and flow, but which, since 1878, is more bitter than at any other period perhaps of its history.

Therefore, the Real School is a development of realism as an affirmation of that scientific culture privileging the notion of an external, material reality everyone is to understand so as to be in a better standing to do the best with it. When it first appeared in lexicography, inserted by James Stormonth in the 1904 newest edition of his pioneering *Etymological and Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language* (STORMONTH, 1904, p. 722). It was first found in a *Webster’s* in the *New International Dictionary of the English Language* of 1923, and later inscribed in the *OED1* in 1933 as “a class of schools in Germany

which occupy themselves mainly with the sciences and modern languages, as subjects of practical utility.” All the way, as a word with little semantic contestation, it has the same meaning pointed from the earliest references. The *OED* 3rd edition recognizes it is now a rare usage, reinforcing its lower relevance. Still, it remembers the most appropriate translation to “*real*” is something closer to practical, which could avoid other semantic distortions that were already mounting over the loanword as Pfeffer received it in the late twentieth century: the greed materialism, the immoral relativism, the overstatement of the *raison d’État*. However, the rescue of the “practical” element that Pfeffer does recognize, has never been enough to avoid the mythical resignifications over the loanword, as a Barthesian mythological approach should capture.

In fact, the “practical” element has not been constant in the successive appearances of the loanword in regular dictionaries of the English language. Notwithstanding, those more pejorative senses did cumulate in the lexical item. “Realpolitik” will debut in the lexical products available in the market in Britain through Weekley’s *Etymological Dictionary* in 1921, only defined as “practical politics” and linked its suffix “*real*” to a notion of practicability. In the US, fifteen years later, the 1936 *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* first presented it with that typical pejorative touch charged on “realism.” Next to “practical politics”, it gets defined as an “often cynically, reliance upon armed strength for gaining one’s ends.” As in Pfeffer and Cannon’s 1994 definition, despite it opens with the “practical”, it ended up deepening the distortion towards “material factors ... rather than on ideals.” But, more than the opposition to ideals, that 1936 definition implicated it with the necessity of military power for an effective political agency. Furthermore, it explicitly added cynicism to this kind of concern with self-interests. That would become even worst in the next edition of *Webster’s New American Dictionary*, in 1947, when “realpolitik” really became simply “politics conducted by force or other pressure”. Meanwhile, an implicit political sense in the generic definition to the other entry of “realism” related it to “what can be done with things as they are,” suggesting there was a semantic distancing between both borrowings. Then, the “practical” even vanished in the 1952 *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, disappeared, being more specifically substituted for an outright search of “material greatness” by a nation, and attached to a more precise, literal translation of “real politics.” The *Webster’s New American Dictionary* of 1968 (another Merriam-unrelated publication) presented the most

straightforward example of this caricatural definition: “politics conducted by force or other pressure”. Yet, it has a good rival in Britain, in the 1968 *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, confirms the harsher anti-realism of the Brits in the definition of the German borrowing: “a ruthlessly realistic and opportunist approach to statesmanship, rather than a moralistic one, esp. as exemplified by Bismarck” and makes it clear once more the precise Anglophone translation: “politics of realism”.

As discussed above, a better translation for *Realpolitik* would reveal it is more about “practical” politics than “real” politics. It would call more for the practicability, the feasibility, and the possibility, than the actual, the factual, or the given. Notwithstanding, historic lexical definitions that preserved the practical aspect captured since the earlier appearances of “Realpolitik” in the dictionaries, could not avoid at least incorporating the counterposition to theoretical and ethical, moral, or ideological principles, semantically pushing them out of the range of possibility in the meaning implied by the German borrowing. This can be checked with practically no variance in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* from 1961, the 1967 *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* of 1974, in *The Compact edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (1981), in *The Oxford Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases* (SPEAKE, 1997, p. 356), in the 1987 *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate*, in the *College Edition of Webster's American dictionary*, 1997 and 2000. Not even the more precise composition of the recent 2014 *Webster's New World College Dictionary* can hide – as in any good myth, the function is not to hide, but distort – the pejorative senses of the concept: “foreign policy determined by expediency rather than ethics or world opinion; power politics.” Though there is an indication that Pfeffer asserted that *Realpolitik* was originally coined “as a counterpart to the *Idealpolitik* of 1848 and subsequently associated, like *Kulturkampf*, with the policies of Bismarck” (JAWORSKA; LEUSCHNER, 2018, p. 122), the historian John Bew made it clear that Rochau was not dispensing the elements of ethics of public opinion of his analytical framework. His proposal was to subsume them in a reflection of what could effectively bring political gains and those that could lead to tragedy, despite the best of intentions (BEW, 2014). When equating the practical with power calculations, or power with material factors, or when condemning ideals or ideology, in all its possible variations, as out of the notion of the practical, a distortion on Rochau is in place. Take the first appearances of the word registered in the state-of-the-art

etymology of the word found in the 1981 *Compact Edition of the OED* and in the updated version of the third, to-be-completed, version of the *OED*.

1872 *Illustrated Rev.* Dec. 346 Speaking of the mission of Christianity to promote ‘peace on earth’, the author [sc. Frantz] asks, ‘Whither shall we drift if, instead of the Gospel, a so-called matter-of-fact policy (*Realpolitik*) is to gain ground?’ (*OED3*, 2000)

1895 *Times* 3 Dec. 5 Dr. Förster..appears to be one of the rare survivors of a period when the old-fashioned idealism of the German character had not yet been superseded by what is now called ‘*realpolitik*’, or, as Professor Delbrück more bluntly puts it, by ‘policemanship’. (*OED3*, 2000)

1915 E. B. HOLT *Freudian Wish & its Place in Ethics* iv. 151 “This science is ‘*Realpolitik*’, the Politics of Reality.” (*CEOED*, 1981)

1920 *Times* 19 Jan. 13/2 An over-strong Russia ... might not altogether suit the *Realpolitik* of this country. (*CEOED*, 1981)

1928 C. H. DODD *Authority of the Bible* xii. 266 In the last days of the monarchies Israel became involved to its cost in the large ‘*Realpolitik*’ of the time. (*CEOED*, 1981)

1931 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 4 June 433/2 The conflict between these two ideals – *Realpolitik* and a policy founded upon principles of justice and morality. (*CEOED*, 1981)

Though all of the references but that of Holt’s are made to writings coming from the United Kingdom, it reveals that some level of distortion over the original meaning of Rochau’s *Realpolitik*, accompanied the word throughout all its registered exemplary usages in the *OED* etymological work. It has served public intellectuals with a pejorative disqualifying rhetorical resource in debates about politics, science, and Teutons, which is a fact that has indeed a special color in Britain (BEW, 2014). And even in the non-negative sense, the borrowing gets encapsulated in a mere notion of a policy of strength. The more complete passage in the American case, from the Edwin Holt, is much harder on that aspect of a cultural engagement with Germans (HOLT, 1915, pp. 151-1):

These egregious ethics of the air have produced their tangible and all-pervading consequences. Since ‘ethics’ is such a floating vapor, many sober-minded persons conclude, and not illogically, that it is quite apart from the practical conduct of life. And they lead their lives accordingly. Thus the Teutonic races, in their rigorous fashion, have codified this conclusion. Ethics, they explicitly say, have no part to play in politics and statecraft; these are a science and they deal solely with realities. This science is ‘*Realpolitik*,’ the Politics of Reality. The effect of such a doctrine when put in practice is now being written on the pages of the world’s history in letters so large that even he who runs must read. And similarly, the world over, it tends to be held by high and low that the ‘scientific’ attitude *supersedes* the ethical.

In the end, Holt evaluates Freud’s contributions as throwing “considerable light” into the problem of ethics through the concept of “wish”. But that one should be aware of the dangerous consequences to politics in the scientific pretensions of understanding morals. Therefore, consistently in most of the lexical original appearance examples above, “*Realpolitik*” usage implies sinful avarice, brute strength, lack of finesse or maturity in political analysis and decision-making, absence of moral commitments, a tragedy not of reality itself, but of the thought first of all. The reception of Rochau’s text, and not only in the

English language, but earlier, in the very Teutonic linguistic domains, already imputed the word those distortions as the rival sides of the domestic cleavages took it became a rhetorical weapon to their favor. In the process of becoming a highly contested concept, it incorporate a broad variety of meanings, even contradictory ones, which was exactly what gave it political relevance. Thus, as soon as Rochau's book was published with the purpose of advancing political liberalism in Germany, it was embraced by conservative nationalists with an aggressive international agenda. These meanings have really been established as the standard interpretations of that historic concept and applied to contemporary (presentist) analyses along its historical development. Nonetheless, due to the top global political influence of the Anglophone intellectuality in the nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries, one very interesting issue, indeed – but not one to be investigated herein – is the bouncing effect that the reception and usage of the loanword in English-speaking contexts has had on the meaning and use of it in German contexts.

Anyway, it is plain that to capture the meaning of its detected effective use, dictionaries did have to include the “euphemism” besmirching the German concept in its Anglo-Saxon contexts. Pejorative definitions like these historical Germanisms, as it has been called elsewhere, make a peculiar case in the study of linguistic borrowings precisely because of the stereotyping associated with it, both positive and negative. It is clear that science words retain the most positive meanings, while the political ones, usually exploit the negative associations with Nazi-fascism specifically and German militarism overall. In fact, the sequence of the two World Wars in the first half of the last century had “a disastrous impact on our attitude towards things German, and the terms ... still pack an emotional punch, and are still used, and not necessarily in a German context, with the word Nazi leading the field.” (STANFORTH, 2009, p. 45) “*Realpolitik*”, in particular, had made its way into America before its declaration of war against Imperial Germany in April 1917. And though it may have had its pejorative meaning emphasized with the wars, it is certainly the space that had always been there. Furthermore, it had that foreign, specifically Teutonic spelling and pronouncing that made it an easy prey to English and American envy and prejudices against Germans. As Anthony Stanforth remembered of loanwords, “If we do not recognize a word as borrowed, we cannot achieve any functional or stylistic effect on the basis of its foreignness.” (STANFORTH, 2009, p. 48). It remembers a passage quoted in Bew's history

of the concept of Realpolitik in Britain and the US of a harsh definition of Realpolitik, in which its aspects of historical obsolescence, systemic constraint, and foreign typicality contained in the modern conception of anti-realpolitik in American foreign policy elite community, as seen in the last chapter, are getting mature. Here, the excerpt is extended so to catch more precise elements in this pejorative descent of the concept of Realpolitik in the US (VIERECK, 1941):

Almost as hard to define as “*Kultur*” and “daemonic” is *Realpolitik*. The word has seeped through all layers of the German population. In foreign-policy discussions it is a favourite equally of professors and of humble beer-table strategists. The word is pronounced with a long, throaty, truculent “r.” Its pronunciation in *Realpolitik* connotes “r-r-ruthless” (*r-r-rücksichtslos*, Hitler’s favourite adjective) and “r-r-realistic” (*r-r-realistisch*). *Realpolitik* tends to mean ruthless power-politics. It means the most callous pragmatism (it “works”). It means force (notably militarism and war) plus bluff of force as the twin principles of foreign policy.

...

Literally, *Realpolitik* means “realist politics.” It is about as realistic as smashing the street-corner traffic lights or substituting Stone Age clubs for due process of law. Fortunately, reality is not at the beck and call of the self-styled realists. Hitler and Rosenberg are following an unrealistic and suicidal *Realpolitik* when they advocate that Germany rule the globe not by peaceful consent but “by the victorious sword of the master race,” for as a more truly realistic Frenchman said, “One can do everything with bayonets except sit on them.”

...

In the pre-Hitler past, Realpolitik was perhaps equally practiced (tacitly) by all nations. But with frank perversity and perverse frankness, nineteenth-century Germany, like the Italy of Machiavelli, went furthest in rationalizing this deplorable practice into a glorious ideal of theory.

It comes from the American professor of history at Harvard, the conservative intellectual Peter Viereck, writing in the middle of the deepening war being waged in Europe. “During the 1914 World War, Prussianism was accused of the same *Realpolitik* and ‘might make right’ as nazism today. ... In 1914 many of our leading journalists and professors tried to prove Treitschke and Nietzsche the godfathers of the World War and the chief founders of German *Realpolitik*.” It is important as the kind of reading which became dominant in the US in the period, and much more than ever in Britain, which took all the German culture to be captured *Realpolitik*, including its romantic idealist version in Hegel, in the same collusion that led to Hitler and Nazi Germany. Beyond that debate, it is most probably that the borrowing happens not from Rochau, the creator of the concept with the label-word, but from Henrich von Treitschke, a nationalist historian, the main responsible for the assimilation of that *Realpolitik* with Bismarck’s *blood and iron* politics over German unification and later within the international system dynamics. Still, Viereck’s book is a crucial evidence of how the concept – and German culture overall – was affected by the warring beginning of the nineteenth-hundreds that had the German Kultur as its main loser and responsible. It was definitely linked to all the preceding conceptions that were themselves previously linked to

lessons taken over the disastrous episodes resulting from reckless power ambitions. Then, “political realism” or “Realpolitik” was equated with power politics, not in a reasonable sense of it, as meaning the concern with power relations among groups, but in its sinister one, as relating to the fearful state of war reigning in the relations between states (WIGHT, 1991), *Machtpolitik*, and Machiavellianism, Absolutist state theory, Geopolitics, Nationalism. “Realpolitik” was able to capture the whole tragedy of German foreign policy from its Imperial to the Nazi period. The one meaning that the lexica widely registered to express this anti-German sentiment via “Realpolitik” was its meddling with power politics, a loan translation of another German concept, that of *Machtpolitik*.

Though earlier dictionaries’ editions brought the identification of the practical in politics to material factors and strength, the first lexicon to include an explicit connection of “Realpolitik” with “power politics” was the 1951 *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language* (a publication not related to the Merriams’, possibly infringing their naming rights) included an entry for “Realpolitik”, meaning “practical politics: usually a euphemism for power politics”. “Power politics” is not a synonym for “*Realpolitik*”, nor “*Realpolitik*” should be understood as “euphemism” for “power politics,” in conceptual historical terms. As defined by *Webster’s*, “Power politics” is the kind of international relations marked by the continuous attempt of interests impositions based on the threat or effective use of military power. The genuine Merriam’s *Webster’s New collegiate dictionary* also in 1951, and the non-Merriam’s *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language* in 1960, and the *New Webster’s dictionary of the English language* (and another one) in 1975 brought the same definition substantial definition, also not referring to the original German cognate.

It would only become evident in a dictionary, with its own entry, by 1976, in the second volume of *The Compact edition of the OED*. “*Machtpolitik*” is defined as the original foreign compound literally translated as “power politics”, denoting “strength as a potential factor to use in gaining a desired result.” It indicates (another British) early usage in 1916 to indicate that kind of strategic conduct deciding purely on a basis of “a balance-sheet of loss and gain.” Meanwhile, the entry for “power politics” indicates it as the translation to the German “*machtpolitik*.” In both, as noted above, the concept of “realpolitik” is defined in a very clean way, “practical politics; policy determined by practical rather than moral or

ideological considerations.” It even suggests “practical politics” as the precise linguistic transfer. And no connection is suggested to the pair “machtpolitik”-“power politics.” The *OED2*, published in 1989, will repeat those information. In the American *Webster’s* series (now bought by the Encyclopedia Britannica), it will take longer, 1993, in its *New Third International* edition. While it starts by equating it to the entry “power politics”, it suggests comparing it with the entry “realpolitik”, differently from the neat take from the *OED* which proceeded to dismantle the confusion. Its entry for “power politics”, also starting with the reference to the German original, ends with the same suggestion as the entry for “realpolitik”, which gives that more distorted definition starting with “practical politics”, but following that assimilation of it to “material factors“, the ”national interest and power” and its divergence with “theoretical, ethical, or moralistic objectives”, ending up with the already expected suggestion comparison with “machtpolitik” and “power politics”.

Though etymology recognized the loan translation in the English language in the form of “power politics” (STUBBS, 1998, p. 22), confusion between the two distinct German concepts – “*Realpolitik*” and “*Machtpolitik*” – became part of the conceptual functions “realism” may assume in the specialized debates. The semantic space of this contested concept of realism work as a mythological scheme where convenience dictates the appropriate meaning to surface – from realism as simply a scientific attitude, to a German-like calculous, egotistic, cold cynicism, or to a bellicose ideology, and even to a mere voluptuous greed. Confusion is not occasional, but neither it is simply authorial intentions. These are only possible from constitutive mythology around realism, *Realpolitik*, and anti-realism in the study and practice of American international relations which urges understanding this lexical registering as being less a responsibility of editors, and more as a conceptual history development.

N-gram analysis: mass-digitalized data on the evolution of the presence of “realism” in the history of publications in the English language

With the historical dictionaries explored, one last linguistic analysis may add more precision to the investigation of the actual usage of these concepts at the turn of the twentieth century. Technological advancements – especially in the area of digitalization of information and cloud computing –, which most relevant historians do not ignore, made it possible to deal

with massive repositories gathering ever-growing volumes of data, in accelerating velocity, and of an incredible variety of formats such as data expressed in numbers, words, audios, pixels, be it from texts, music, recorded speeches, movies, economic transactions, newspapers, and so on. Suggesting the immense potential of the application of digital humanities to the development of intellectual history in the *long-durée* – big data for big history – David Armitage claims that (ARMITAGE, 2012a, p. 15):²⁴

the increasing availability of vastly larger corpora of texts and the tools to analyse them allows historians to establish the conventions that framed intellectual innovation, and hence to show where individual agency took place within collective structures. And with ever greater flexibility for searching and recovering contextual information, we can discover more precisely and persuasively moments of rupture as well as stretches of continuity. ... The most familiar tools by now are the N-gram Viewer which graphically reveals patterns of word-frequency in the corpus of Google Books.

Together with other projects such as Project Gutenberg and the Internet Archives (both ultimately useful, in fact, necessary to the past lexical research), Google Books stands as the most impressive attempt to digitalize “all the books that have ever been published, which by a Google employee’s reckoning is approximately 129 million books” (WEISS, 2015). Starting in 2004, it has digitally stored by now “more than 40 million books in more than 500 languages” and counting (MARINI, 2023). It progressively scans every page of every book collected, converts the images into texts using optical character recognition (OCR) technology, and stores it with very restricted online access to readers, due to associated copyrights. The N-gram Viewer, fully accessible by anyone on the internet since 2010, is an application that let’s organize all this information and visualize them according to many possible filters. The analytical possibilities of the N-Gram Viewer are vast. From a selected corpus of texts, it can search for the incidence of words or phrases, words with uses in different areas of human activity, the incidence of adjectives and adverbs over a noun – or the opposite, it can search for wildcards being used with selected words, inflections of verbs and other categories, the most frequent dependencies of words, and so on. And it can search by limiting different corpuses (e.g. German, British English, Chinese, and others), and limit specific timespans. Critics questioned different points of the project, from its excessive Anglophone strategy to its corporate-centrism, the integrity of the digitalized storage, the poorly generated metadata and indexing, and the poor quality of scanning (WEISS, 2015). Hilarious memes have been covering notorious scanning/OCR mistakes, sometimes due to

²⁴ For more on N-gram use for the intellectual-conceptual history, examples, limits and suggestions for the enrichment of its use, see WEISS, 2015; ZIĘBA, 2018; and DE MIRANDA; CHABAL, 2019.

the bad conditions of some books or even plainly material errors in the publishing process. Thus, significant errors may surface in peculiar searches such as that on “Frankenstein”, one of the three compared names – together with “Sherlock Holmes” and “Albert Einstein” – in the presentation data opening the website. If the search is stretched to the year 1500, there will appear a spike in the 1570s – almost 250 years before Mary Shelley got her first volume of the story published. The error was due simply to the wrong Roman numbering of the year of the book in the opening pages, which read 1594 instead of 1894. Apart from the obvious mistake, the alert historian may make this device for the benefit of its work. “The N-gram Viewer is truly a wonderful tool for researchers interested in the history of ideas and how events shape them.” (WEISS, 2015). Here, the investigation took advantage of just a few of its utilities, and their intent, and determinants, are opportunely described for the results presented in each plotted graph below which are analyzed along the efforts drawn in the last sections of this chapter.

Data in *figure 1* confirms that it is by the early 1850s (Rochau in 1853, then) that the term literally appears to the public debate among German-speakers. It reached a cumulative yet not steady growth to its use, reaching a peak close to the turn of the twentieth-first century, and now it suddenly seems to be returning down to the usage incidence it had by the 1910s (what is definitely intriguing). The two World Wars and the Cold War seem to have fueled German interest in the word. Curiosity asks why Sino-American power competition has not kept up with the rising tendencies in the use of the word located there during the periods of the two World Wars and the Cold War.

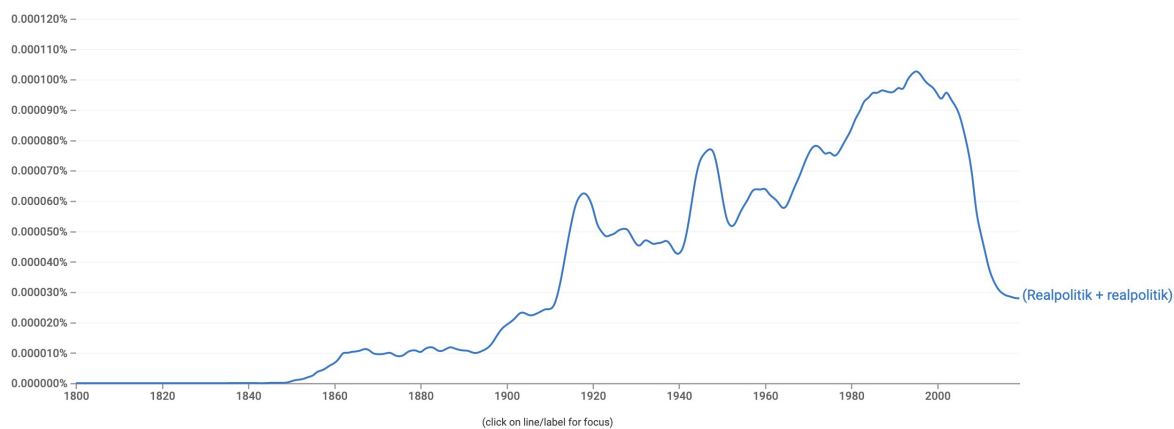


Figure 1. N-gram for different case-variants of “Realpolitik” in the German corpus, 1800-2019 (Smoothing:3).²⁵

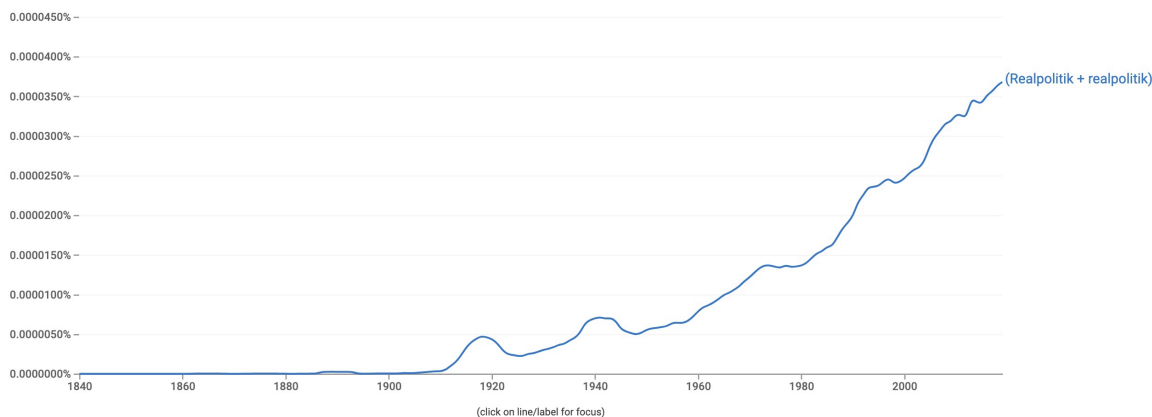


Figure 2. N-gram for different case-variants of “Realpolitik” in the American English corpus, 1840-2019 (Smoothing:3).²⁶

The same search for “Realpolitik” in the corpus of American English from 1840 to 2019 in *figure 2* reveals a steady growth of the use of the word still showing its same thrust in the present. It presents two major bumps on its way, the periods around the First and the Second World Wars, and some other minor bumps from the Cold War till the present. In comparing it with the manifestation of the term in German lands, it is interesting noting that the Teuton curve has risen to a peak almost three times higher than the present top point reached by the American rising curvature, which is close to where the German curve was at the beginning of the 1910s. Notwithstanding, despite the American curve starts to rise later, the German incidence shows a final flat-out declining trajectory that brought the incidence of the term in its whole corpus to a lower value today than the American case. Very relevant when the obvious is taken into consideration: the comparison is about the frequency of the loanword in its own language corpus and in the foreign language country to where the

²⁵ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Realpolitik%2Brealpolitik&year_start=1800&year_end=2019&corpus=31&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2C%28Realpolitik%20%2B%20realpolitik%29%3B%2Cc0>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

²⁶ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Realpolitik%2Brealpolitik&year_start=1840&year_end=2019&corpus=28&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2C%28Realpolitik%20%2B%20realpolitik%29%3B%2Cc0>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

concept traveled, where it has steadily become more relevant to national political discourse. Finally, it seems crucial to the history of the political, contested concept, that the first interest in the term among Americans timidly appeared at the end of the eighteenth century, but has shown a constant rise, almost out of nothing, from the beginning of the next century, sharply rising the World War I bump.

Figure 3 brings the comparison between the curves for “realpolitik” and “realism” used in the political sense. The incidence of “political realism” rises close to that of “realpolitik”, but with no bumps, until the early 1960s, when its incidence follows that impressive non-stop high, while “political realism” has a shier behavior, seeming to be slowly rising its presence reaching its all-time peak in the new millennium. Again, both trajectories wake in the early 1910s. And while the “realpolitik” use explodes, probably as a consequence of the anti-German sentiment of the two World Wars, the equivalent rise of “political realism” may both be explained by exploration of its use to translate “realpolitik” and all its pejorative charge, or it may indicate the distancing between the pejorative sense of the German borrowing explored by the anti-German sentiment and the higher interest in understanding politics through a new lens, inspired in the scientific attitude to reality. However, anti-German sentiment cannot explain the continuous high in the loanword, despite the calque remained practically stable since the 1960s, despite Germany was made a less relevant – a less threatening then – actor in the international scene. But it may be used today to describe, by analogy (or metaphor in other specialties) other cases of aggressive dangerous states in the international scene (usually opposed by the lead of liberal internationalists).

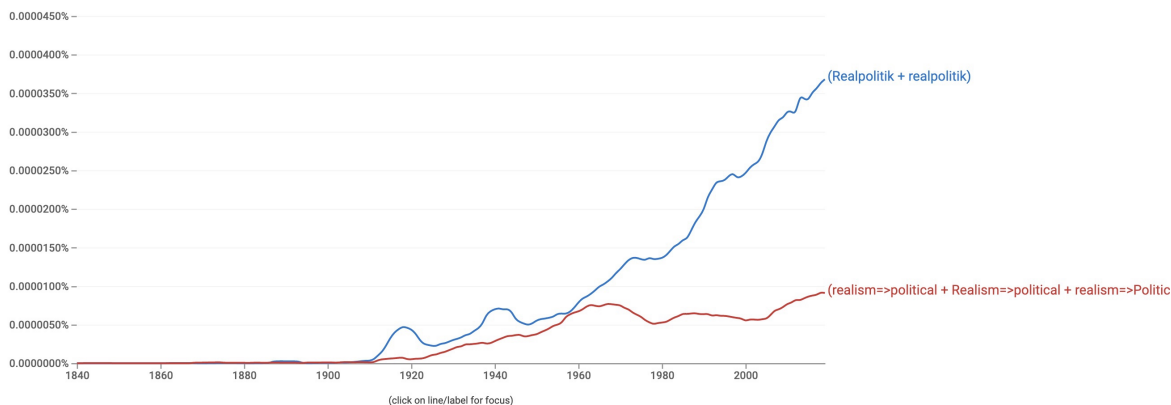
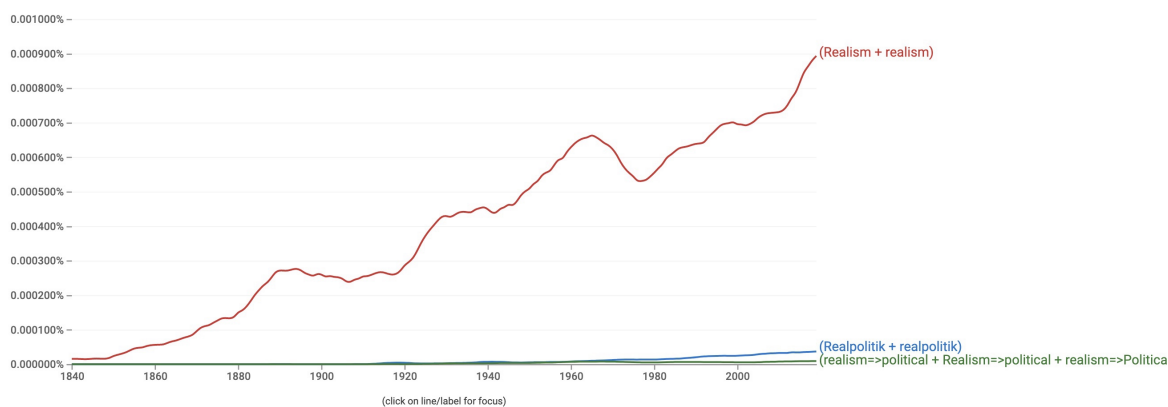


Figure 3. *N*-grams for different case-variants of “political realism”, and “Realpolitik” in the American English corpus, 1840-2019 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).²⁷

However, the *N*-gram Viewer tool cannot be so precise to show all the times the usage of “realism” happened in the area of politics (nor with the case of “Realpolitik”, by the way). If the search is limited to the word “realism”, and plotted in the same visualization with the curves just analyzed (figure 4), the argument becomes clear:



²⁷ N-Gram available at: <[https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Realpolitik%2Brealpolitik%2Crealism%3D%3Epolitical%2BRealism%3D%3Epolitical%2Brealism%3D%3Epolitical%2BREALISM%3D%3EPOLITICAL&year_start=1840&year_end=2019&corpus=28&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2C%28Realpolitik%20%2B%20realpolitik%29%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2C%28realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20Realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20REALISM%3D%3EPOLITICAL%29%3B%2Cc0#t1%3B%2C\(Realpolitik%20%2B%20realpolitik\)%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2C\(realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20Realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20REALISM%3D%3EPOLITICAL\)%3B%2Cc0](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Realpolitik%2Brealpolitik%2Crealism%3D%3Epolitical%2BRealism%3D%3Epolitical%2Brealism%3D%3Epolitical%2BREALISM%3D%3EPOLITICAL&year_start=1840&year_end=2019&corpus=28&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2C%28Realpolitik%20%2B%20realpolitik%29%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2C%28realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20Realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20REALISM%3D%3EPOLITICAL%29%3B%2Cc0#t1%3B%2C(Realpolitik%20%2B%20realpolitik)%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2C(realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20Realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20REALISM%3D%3EPOLITICAL)%3B%2Cc0)>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

Figure 4. N-grams for different case-variants of “realism”, “political realism”, and “Realpolitik” in the American English corpus, 1840-2019 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).²⁸

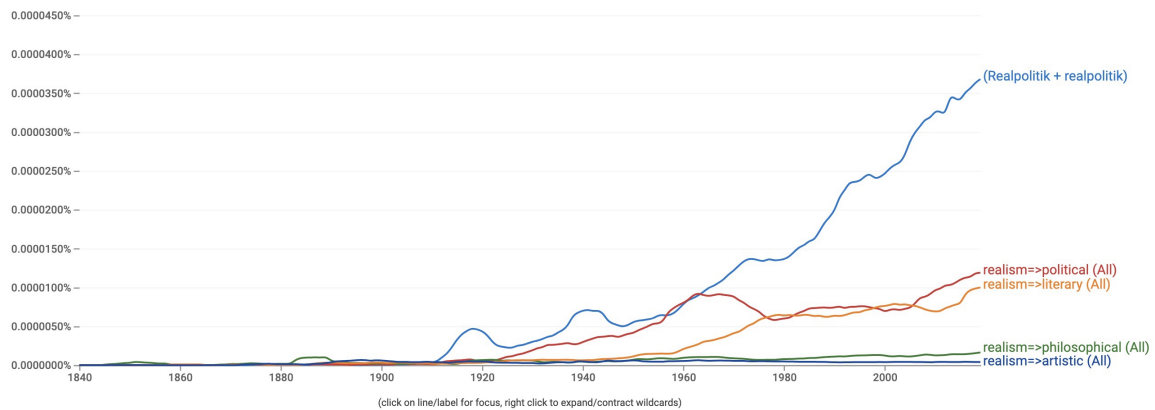


Figure 5. N-grams for “Realpolitik”, “political realism”, “philosophical realism”, “literary realism”, and “artistic realism” in the American English corpus, 1840-2019 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).²⁹

²⁸ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Realpolitik%2Brealpolitik%2CRealism%2Brealism%2Crealism%3D%3Epolitical%2BRealism%3D%3Epolitical%2Brealism%3D%3Epolitical%2BREALISM%3D%3EPOLITICAL&year_start=1840&year_end=2019&corpus=28&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2C%28Realpolitik%20%2B%20realpolitik%29%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2C%28Realism%20%2B%20realism%29%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2C%28realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20Realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20realism%3D%3EPolitical%20%2B%20REALISM%3D%3EPOLITICAL%29%3B%2Cc0>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

²⁹ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=realism%3D%3Epolitical%2CRealpolitik%2Brealpolitik%2Crealism%3D%3Ephilosophical%2Crealism%3D%3Eliterary%2Crealism%3D%3Eartistic&year_start=1850&year_end=2019&corpus=28&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=true>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

“Realpolitik”). It upholds what was understood from the dictionaries in diachronic analysis: before the 1910s, “realism” was a more incident concept in philosophy than in other areas. After that, “political realism” became the most present variant but for two moments around 1980 and 2000 when it is briefly surpassed by “literary realism”, and an earlier moment – inside this investigation timespan, presented in detail in *figures 7 and 8* – when in the aftermath of the World War in 1918, the usage of “political realism” lost the momentum of its first rise that was evident since 1910, being overtaken by the old most incident variant, the philosophical one, just to lead its rivals again from 1923 on. So it is clear that N-grams suggests that the consolidation of the concept of “realism” is taking place in the American political scene right in that period, time, and place selected as the focus of this history of the concept for no other reason.

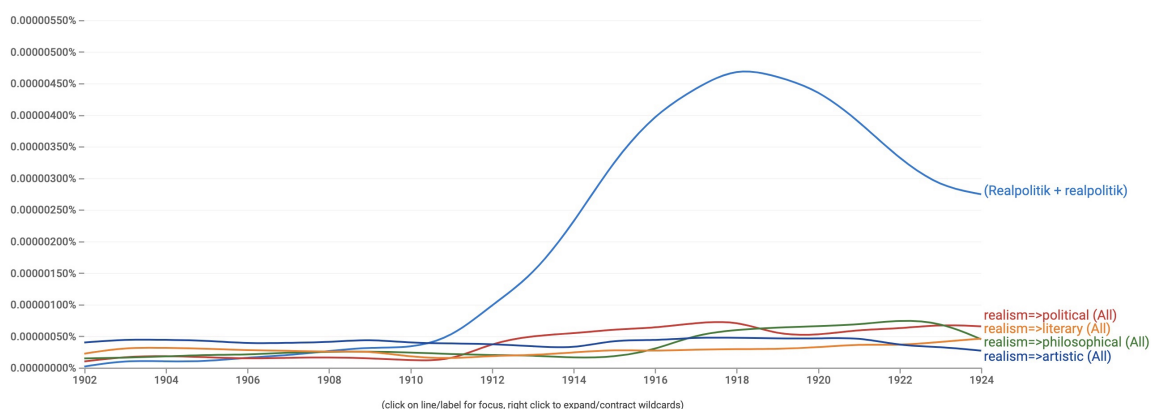


Figure 7. N-grams for the tags “Realpolitik”, “political realism”, “philosophical realism”, “literary realism”, and “artistic realism” in the American English corpus, 1902-1924 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).³¹

³¹ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Realpolitik%2Brealpolitik%2Crealism%3D%3Epolitical%2Crealism%3D%3Ephilosophical%2Crealism%3D%3Eliterary%2Crealism%3D%3Eartistic&year_start=1902&year_end=1924&corpus=28&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=true>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

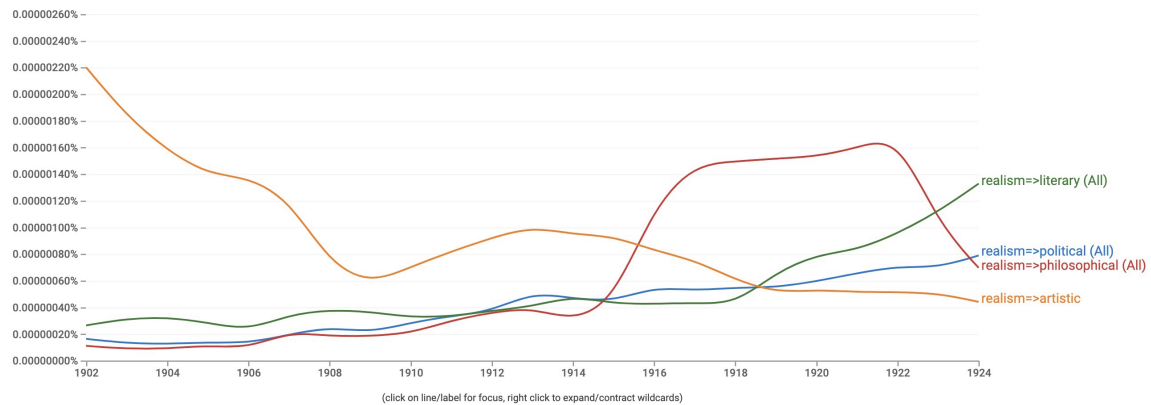


Figure 9. N-grams for “political realism”, “philosophical realism”, “literary realism”, and “artistic realism” in the British English corpus, 1902-1924 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).³³

It seems interesting that the curves for “realpolitik” and “political realism” in the American and in the British English cases, shown in figure 11, have an overall similar behavior in the long run. It indicates that the history of the reception of “*Realpolitik*” and its translation to “Realpolitik” and “political realism” may have been well interconnected. Still, it is necessary to pay attention to the particular interest – strident at times – that the British have shown for “Realpolitik”. The apparent bumps in the use of “Realpolitik” during World War I and II in the American English N-gram, look like a glaring explosion during the Great War and a lesser one in the following conflict in the British case. As suggested in an earlier footnote, John Bew suggests in his masterful history of the concept of “Realpolitik” (2016) that the British have been harsher in their anti-German sentiment than the Americans (whose hysteria was strategically stimulated by the British in various ways). Still, that could not explain the sharper rise in the usage of “Realpolitik” in British English since the early sixties.

³³ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=realism%3D%3Epolitical%2Crealism%3D%3Ephilosophical%2Crealism%3D%3Eliterary%2Crealism%3D%3Eartistic&year_start=1902&year_end=1924&corpus=29&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=true>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

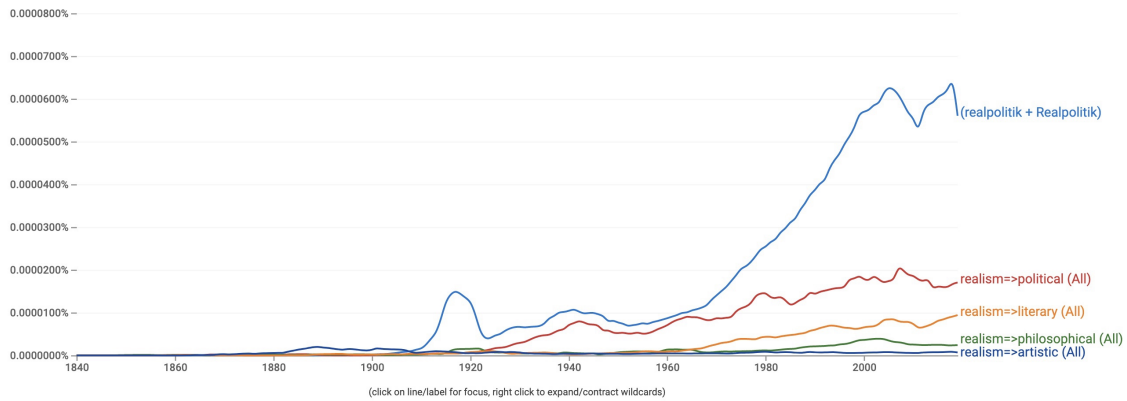


Figure 10. N-grams for “Realpolitik”, “political realism”, “philosophical realism”, “literary realism”, and “artistic realism” in the British English corpus, 1840-2019 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).³⁴

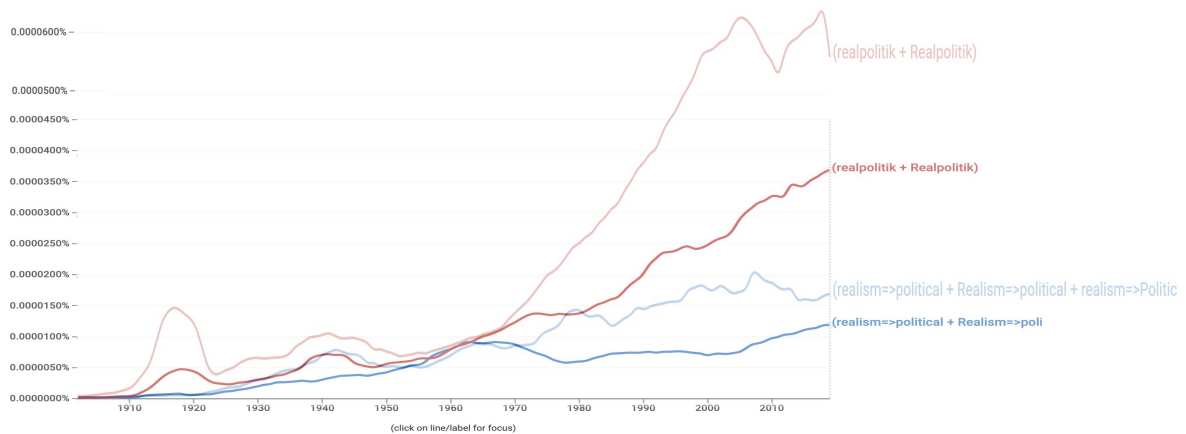


Figure 11. N-grams for “Realpolitik” and “political realism” in American English (solid red and blue) and in British English (opaque red and blue) corpuses, 1902-1924 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).³⁵

In the next, last N-grams analyzed, the term “political idealism” is included and compared. First, in *figure 12*, there is the incidence of “political realism” and “political

³⁴ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=realpolitik%2BRealpolitik%2Crealism%3D%3Epolitical%2Crealism%3D%3Ephilosophical%2Crealism%3D%3Eliterary%2Crealism%3D%3Eartistic&year_start=1840&year_end=2019&corpus=29&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=true>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

³⁵ N-grams and related data available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=realism%3D%3Epolitical%2BRealism%3D%3Epolitical%2BRealism%3D%3Epolitical%2CRealpolitik%2Brealpolitik&year_start=1902&year_end=1924&corpus=28&smoothing=3> and <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=realism%3D%3Epolitical%2BRealism%3D%3Epolitical%2BRealism%3D%3Epolitical%2CRealpolitik%2Brealpolitik&year_start=1902&year_end=1924&corpus=29&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2C%28realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20Realism%3D%3Epolitical%20%2B%20Realism%3D%3Epolitical%29%3B%2C%2C0%3B.t1%3B%2C%28Realpolitik%20%2B%20realpolitik%29%3B%2C0%3B>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

idealism” in the American English corpus (which is fairly close in the trajectories’ forms and values of the British case for these entries). The specific political usage of “idealism” was four times and a half more incident than that of “political realism” by 1917. In fact, this number represents another World War I-related “bump”, as it was argued in the analysis of the “realpolitik” N-grams (though “political idealism”, differently from “realpolitik”, will stagnate in terms of its incidence in American English).

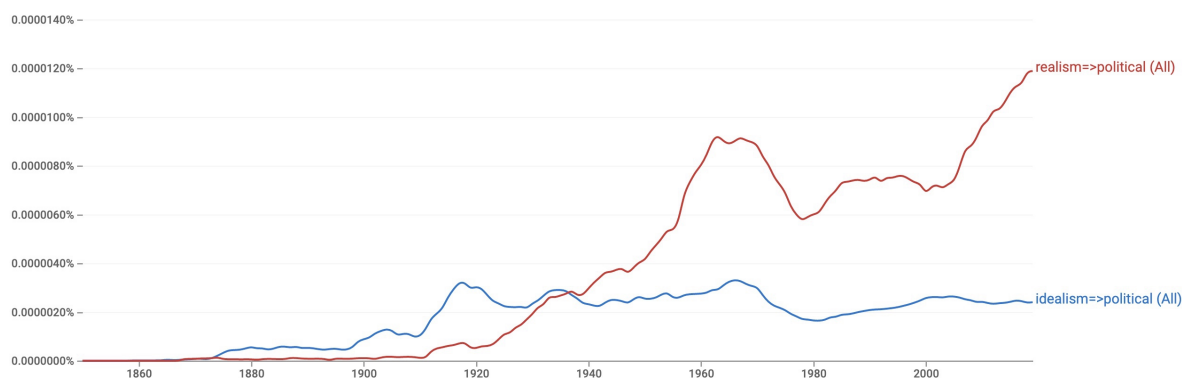


Figure 12. N-grams for “political realism” and “political idealism” in American English corpus, 1850-2019 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).³⁶

Figure 13 closes around these overlapping “bumps”, including a comparison with “political realism” enabling another important conclusion: in that time, the focus of this conceptual history, the curvature of “political realism” does not respond to the stimulus of the tragic events of 1914-1918 as the curves for “realpolitik” and “political idealism” do (the “bumps”). It is as if the debates on the war and its peace negotiations were dominated by these terms. The anti-German sentiment made “realpolitik” a hotly contested concept, which may explain the very high incidence of the term as used both by people who tried to apply its more genuine intent of understanding the limits and possibilities of politics and by those who would condemn it as a barbarian mode of international behavior. And while “political realism” does not experiment with this patent bump, it does have a minor one, almost unnoticeable if it was not the beginning of a mostly solid rise in its incidence, overcoming

³⁶ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=idealism%3D%3Epolitical%2Crealism%3D%3Epolitical&year_start=1850&year_end=2019&corpus=28&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=true>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

“political idealism” for good by the end of the 1930s, as if its translating function to “realpolitik” was starting to catch up.

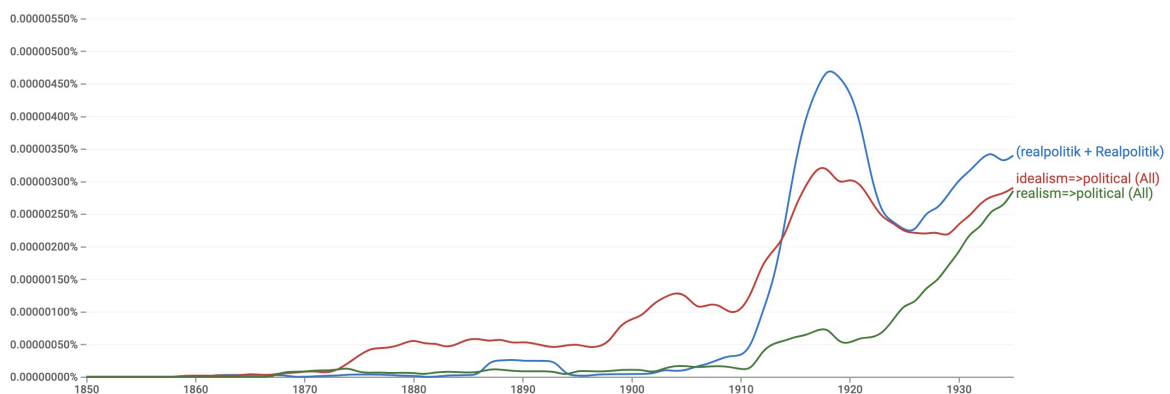


Figure 13. N-grams for “Realpolitik”, “political realism” and “political idealism” in American English corpus, 1850-1935 (Case-insensitive, Smoothing:3).³⁷

Against the revisionist literature on the “Myth of the First Great Debate” (KAHLER, 1997; WILSON, 1998; SCHMIDT, 2012a), it shows that the concept of “political idealism” could not be an invented category to fill the critique of an intellectual movement identified with “political realism”. “Idealism” was a more developed term in American political language at least ten years before the consistent rise in the incidence of the terms “realpolitik” and “political realism” in US texts, even experiencing its first boom by itself, before the debut bump of “Realpolitik”, and to a lesser degree, “political realism”. The argument Carr supports to the story about the realist critique against utopia (a frequent synonym for “idealism”, in lexical and academic senses) may be correct in its process of tracing the “myth” critique proposed to be inverted, but only if it traces the story back to another twenty years’ crisis: that of the opening decades of the twentieth century. According to the N-grams, Carr’s moment is another one, that of the defining consolidation of “realism” in the specialized discourse, at least in terms of its incidence in the American political language leaving behind the stagnated opposing concept. While the trajectory of “political realism” is still a rising one today, the one for “political idealism” has crawled below the point of its top bump, which is precisely the context of World War I and its aftermath years.

³⁷ N-Gram available at: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=realpolitik%2BRealpolitik%2Cidealism%3D%3Epolitical%2Crealism%3D%3Epolitical&year_start=1800&year_end=1935&corpus=28&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=true>. Accessed on: Feb. 28, 2021.

“Realism” in the historic lexica of the English language: traveling and translating between *Realpolitik* and *Machtpolitik* to *realpolitik* and the World Wars

Combined, the qualitative approach of analyzing dictionary entries along the most relevant English language publications and their ongoing editions and the quantitative approach of the N-grams now form a complementary background to the intellectual-conceptual history pursued onwards. As a diachronic analysis, it reinforces the relevance of the time and place under the focus of this investigation on political language. The political use of the terms “realism”/“*realpolitik*” and “idealism” make them concepts with synchronic aspects related to diversity and contest over their possible meanings and usages. The explosion in their use around the First World War anti-German sentiment in America, amplifies the relevance of studying the precedents of this reception in the German political debate around *Realpolitik* in the last half of the nineteenth century.

Historically, realism was a progressively common term used in English as a general form of practice evaluation, an idea that was made common sense out of the original specific usage it had in philosophy from which it also brought the opposition to “idealism.” The concept available to the wider public under that term, however, in an almost inverted sense it had as a concept in philosophy, when it believed that the ideas students search to effectively explain reality are not only referential, they do exist in reality itself. For political realism, words have a more not only a referential but a deceiving function, not having a strong attachment to reality “as it is.” This generic realism – the simple disposition to dealing with reality with no intermediaries – was very coherent with the general trends that made Auguste Comte’s call for positivism and, as referring to a general scientific attitude towards knowledge of the social, it spread throughout many specialized areas of practice and thought. But “realism” is not a necessary theoretical concepts. It did not become a concept in itself in most specialized languages of social sciences, but for two areas, as the dictionaries and N-grams revealed: Law and Politics.

The thesis to be further explored in the chapter ahead carries four lessons from this lexical-historical analysis. First, it understands that this specialized use in politics, not simply a generic term used in many different fields of practice, is consistent with an explanation associating it with the reception and translation of “*Realpolitik*”. Despite only the current

version of the *OED* presenting “political realism” as a synonym for “*Realpolitik*”, as it is also the case with the bilingual *Oxford-Duden English-German Dictionary*, the N-grams showed not only that the first detachment of the political usage of the term “realism” from other specialized ones happened in the precise years of the original overlapping bumps in the incidence trajectories of “*realpolitik*” and “political realism.” Second, notwithstanding the 1981 *Compact edition of the OED*’s finally attaching “realism” to a specific political use, the fact is that it was predominantly about the “international” (or the “foreign”) politics in only two other lexicons beyond that, which had made it ultimately explicit through the selected usage example from the German-American IR scholar John Herz. The two main bumps in the N-grams for these two specific terms coincide with one another and with the years of the two World Wars and their peace settlements, which suggests its main application was directed to the “international” indeed. The conceptual history ahead is set to evaluate it, even though in the forgotten pristine sense, “*Realpolitik*” was more about domestic goals.

Third, in the translation process from the German “*real*” in “*Realpolitik*” into the English “real” in “realism”, the meaning was, more than lost, mythically distorted, leaving behind most of its “politics as a possibility” meaning to adhere to “politics as reality” (or “politics as calculated chances of success in reality”). Though the dictionaries, especially the *OED*, have evolved towards a cleaner definition of “*realpolitik*”, indicating the idea of the “practical politics” (or even better, the “politics of the possible”), the incidence of the meaning definition as an assertive authority claim of “reality as it is” persists. With that non-obvious understanding of an apparent obvious, harmless translation clear in mind, IR scholars could do better with the concept of “realism” in the study of politics and the political, even (or especially) the German *émigrés* contribution to IR in the US, as it was the case of Hans Morgenthau. Finally, the fourth lesson is about the timing of the realist-idealist debate in IR. Traditionally understood to have its high points in Carr (1939) and Morgenthau (1954), it should be revised to include the investigation of its manifestation in the WWI period and before, in a moment when IR was yet to be formally founded in Aberystwyth and Georgetown in the aftermath of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. This investigation may reveal the pre-history of the discipline IR as a potential source of more inspiring readings of that precious concept of *Realpolitik*/political realism in the modern study of International Relations.

Chapter V: “*Realpolitik*” and “Political Realism”: Conceptual Innovation, Reception and Distortion of in Mid to Late-Nineteenth-Century Germany

Down the whole line of human science, a realistic conception advances steadily and powerfully. This movement is the hallmark of the times we live in; a mark that is greeted with a joyful look by those who faithfully strive for the goal of all research, the truth, with a shy and uncertain eye by those who do not feel strong enough to endure the truth.

Max Seidel, *Grundzüge einer Allgemeinen Staatslehre*, 1873.

The history of the concept of “political realism” – and by extension, the discipline of International Relations and the studies and practice of American foreign policy – has a significantly earlier roster than that associated with the generation of Morgenthau and his compatriot migrants working international politics from within their new home country’s academic and political milieu. The lexical history pursued in the last chapter gathered indications that this conceptual claim may find further evidence to the linguistic and semantic possibilities engraved in historic dictionaries published along the decades. The etymological works of the English language registered the semantic connection between “realism” as a political concept and the German loanword “*Realpolitik*.” They also registered the polyphony, rarely harmonious, between different senses of the concept, revealing the essential contest over it. This form of manifestation also makes clear the relevance of the concept to political rhetoric following the history of the political within the last two centuries.

Following that etymological knowledge, the pre-disciplinary conceptual history that unfolds ahead presents the very origins of this conceptual history in the German political thought of the nineteenth century. This final chapter’s purpose is twofold. The primary target is historical. As it reconstructs the genealogy of the concept from before the tailoring of *Realpolitik* 1853, it demonstrates the presence of most if not all distinct meanings registered in the English language lexical history and particularly developed as a specialized language in IR and American foreign policy as earlier observed in chapters four and three, respectively. The second, less formal goal pertains the the concerns of the field of political theory, and more broadly of the theories of IR. In distilling the elements composing the original conception of *Realpolitik* it intends to gather inspiring elements from Rochau’s book and its primary reception to promote a framework from where to develop a renewed realist

alternative that may effectively contribute with engaging the complexities of world politics today.

Engaging with primary sources of the debate and the most important and the recent contributions in contemporary literature, the chapter explores the gestation of the concept not simply as an intellectual invention of a solo genius. It reconstructs the context before Rochau, when, the race for industrialization, the rise of popular classes in politics, and the intensification of interstate war – which for Germans ended in the invasion of their lands by Napoleonic troops – led to the debate of the appropriateness of German political thought to guarantee peace and development to its peoples. That is the way on which “realism” departed from its original specialized philosophical use to mean more a generic appeal to what is real what is effective, that which works in reality. As aesthetics found the significance of the term and increasingly formalized it, the spread of scientific attitude through the issues of social life guaranteed “realism” was the trend of the times. The fabrication of “*Realpolitik*” brought it into the specialized vocabulary of politics for good. But it did not come as a clearcut definition. It entailed the contradictions of the its author and its context. It also included the contending interpretations it was given during its infancy to the distortions it consolidated during maturity, most of which became the norm in referencing the concept in contemporary specialized usage.

Either translated from Germany or directly from homy interpretations, this linguistic process resulted a polyphony of significants contained in the concept. Besides a simpler notion of a scientific posture towards understanding the art of politics, “*Realpolitik*”, together with “realism,” its English counterpart, acquired a more “reason-of-state” or “power-politics” – ultimately “Machiavellian” – pejorative sense. Before it appeared in the English usage, a mythical process – one of deception, hiding, and distortion – took place in the Bismarckian Germany, leaving in more broad terms two variations for the meaning of “political realism” and even more “*Realpolitik*” to be traded whenever expediency suggested so. Both are contemporary traits of IR and American foreign policy studies and making, which origins the literature generally refers to the post-World War II consolidation of the discipline. They have both opened and closed conceptual development avenues on which the realist theory tradition in International Relations as a more specific part of the broader cultural process that consolidated the view of a Liberal America by the half of the twentieth century.

The three main sections ahead will do the historical work itself, divided chronologically to capture three moments of the conceptual pregnancy, its birth, and maturation. A further concluding section goes theory-building, looking for the lessons the original concept, its reception and transfiguration may open to the field of IR and the studies and practice of foreign policy, American as well.

“Political Realism” before “*Realpolitik*” in Germany

The acknowledgment of “*Realpolitik*” as a German mid-nineteenth-century neologism coined by a political journalist named August Ludwig von Rochau is now a common reference throughout the realist tradition and its presentation in IR handbooks. The connection between those concepts is inevitable, even if there is a plain contradiction to how it is used around the discipline. In one dimension, a more cognitive one, sometimes it is unproblematically understood interchangeably with political realism, both meaning the same general attitude towards the knowledge of politics, especially international politics. Other times, precision is demanded to separate the broader generalizing take on the political phenomena from the more immediate concern with particular policy decision-making processes. In another dimension, a more normative one, the issue is divided between those who see *Realpolitik* as this general understanding of political realism of any political agency, specially statecraft, from those who take it as a disease of the body politic, descending from a wicked morality, never the essence of political agency, but standing against the development of civilization. Germany and its role in the two World Wars of the twentieth century are usually examples of this deviation.³⁸ Be as it may, the fact is that the connection is unavoidable. And the search for the conceptual history of these entangling concepts is to be found in Germany, for one side or the other.

A look at the moment before the consolidation of realism/*Realpolitik* in the German political lexicon allows for the reconstruction of the context in which a simple, general characterization of someone’s expression as being truthful to reality (not always to one’s advantage) incorporated a compound of specific meanings defining an ideal type of politics with Rochau in 1853. As the last chapter indicated, English dictionaries indicated the etymological origins of “realism” as a concept in philosophy, with the first appearance

³⁸ A close classification is given by Menzel (1953, pp. 1-5).

registered in a translation of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* of 1797. In its original German, printed in 1781, Kant "invents the now common philosophical term 'realism'." (HEIDEMANN, 2021, p. S3231). The idea of a counterposition between "*idealismus*" and "*realismus*" as philosophical positions in relation to human cognition appears in the *Fourth Paralogism* of pure reason, that of the relation of cognition, ideas, and the outer world. In fact, Kant begins by demising the position of a vulgar, empirical idealism, an impractical epistemological position for him (KANT, 1996, p. 401):

Hence by an idealist we must mean, not someone who denies the existence of external objects of the senses, but someone who merely does not grant that this existence is cognized through direct perception, and who infers from this that we can never through any possible experience become completely certain of their actuality.

By opposition, the realist believes in the existence of the objects of our cognition, external to our senses, thus independently existing apart from the ideas that represent them. To be more precise, Kant distinguishes these categories by being transcendental (metaphysical) or empirical (non-metaphysical). That idealist above, then, is the empirical one, who opens the way to transcendental realism, refusing to ascertain truth to any claim based on the presentation of our senses, while ascertains the reality of thing to a matter of faith. Kant defends the opposing combination of a transcendental idealist playing the empirical realist, or as he proposes, the dualist (KANT, 1996, p. 402):

he can grant the existence of matter without going outside mere self-consciousness and without assuming any thing more than the certainty of presentations in me and hence the cogito, ergo sum. For he accepts this matter and even its intrinsic possibility merely as appearance, which as separated from our sensibility is nothing. Hence matter is for him only a kind of presentation (intuition), called external; they are called external not as referring to objects in themselves external, but because they refer perceptions to the space wherein all things are external to one another, although the space itself is in us.

Transcendental idealism claims that our representation of objects in space/time may reach no more than their appearances, but empirical realism, guarantees that represented objects do exist outside the cognizant mind (HEIDEMANN, 2021). Apart from the challenge in assessing the deep complexities of Kant's gigantic contribution to ontological, epistemological, and ethical debates, what is relevant to note here is that his employment of the newer conception of "realism" to the "refutation of idealism" had specialized gists that did not make other generic applications as available (though he also used it for the development of his aesthetics, opening the way to the artistic and literary usage of the concept). Therefore, in the promotion of his "idealist" conception of politics and the solutions to the problem of inter-state war in his *Perpetual Peace* (1795), he mentioned his opposers

not as the “realist” but as the “*praktische politiker*.” It should be instantly obvious the curiosity in that this form is very consistent with many lexical references to the meaning of “*Realpolitik*” both in German and its translation to English, the notion that “*real*” in the Teutonic etymology was not simply linked to a broader notion of reality per se, but to that which is related to practical activities – therefore “*Realwerk*,” a word from the 17th century now out of use, and the more recent “*Realschule*” which had great penetration in the English language through its implementation in some regional educational systems with a large presence of German immigrants in the US (see chapter 4). As Kant puts it in the introduction to his famous essay (KANT, 2006, p. 67),

the practical politician tends to look disdainfully upon the political theorist as a mere academic, whose impractical ideas present no danger to the state (since, in the eyes of the politician, the state must be based on principles derived from experience), and who may show his hand without the worldly statesman needing to pay it any heed (...).

A very recent analysis on the political and legal debates Kant was immersed in during his life recurs to the later (then anachronistic) semantic structure offered by the counterposition realism-idealism, as well as that opposing liberals and conservatives (though etymology indicates “*liberalismus*” will only be available by the 1820s). As the author points out, “Some of Kant’s contemporaries criticized his philosophy of politics and law from positions close to political realism and conservatism in the broadest sense.” (ZILBER, 2023, p. 1) It is only from such a broad take assimilating “realism” with “conservatism” in such a presentist move – a very usual one indeed – that the claim may make sense. Kant did not use realism or idealism in this political sense in his *Perpetual Peace*, though he had the words available for other senses. And the realism he would supposedly be engaging against is that caricatural one, made of the schism between morals and the political, the prison of anarchy, evil human nature, distrust, lust for power, and the understanding of the balance of power as a kind of arms race resulting in deterrence. Kant may, in fact, have exaggerated his opponents’ ideas – he drew “an absurd and obscurantist picture of the views on human moral nature that contradict his own” (ZILBER, 2023, p. 3) One of these critics with whom Kant engaged, Friedrich von Gentz has even been described as possessing the “keen insight of the *Realpolitikers*” in 1933 or the “precursor of modern *Realpolitik*” in 2012, anticipating the foundations Rochau would record half a century later (D’APRILE, 2013).

Notwithstanding, this customary localization of Kant's international political thought as a liberal idealist is not as settled as it may seem. The fact is that his thought has been dealt with some discord in relation to where he really fits in along the realism-idealism divide (WILLIAMS, 1992, p. 100). The conceptualization of realism and idealism in politics was not available to Kant, but it is not difficult to imagine he could have also placed himself in dualist terms, as his philosophical standpoint suggested. Michael Williams has long maintained that Kant's critical take on international politics was coherent with the three Kantian philosophical critiques. And though Williams believes Kant's contribution exposes the inadequacy of realism in IR, he equates it with a distorted meaning of *Realpolitik* as the theory "represented by the 'miserable comfort,'" and "evidenced by the 'state of war' prevailing in the Europe of his day" (WILLIAMS, 1992, p. 109).

The complication here may be that of an anachronistic use of *Realpolitik*. Hajo Holborn, an American Historian of Germany, wrote in 1960 about this tendency of historical imprecision over the concept: "it should not be used, in my opinion, except for the statesmen who entered the scene in the decade after 1848, and even then it calls for exact definition" (HOLBORN, 1960, p. 95). Accordingly, the emergence of realism as a political concept, far from reaching a point of representing a distorted utilitarian mechanism emptied of any moral concerns in Waltzian structural realism or being a mere continuation of old Machiavellianism, Hobbesianism or *raison d'État*, would have to wait till the coinage of *Realpolitik* to find its genuine expression. Still, there is a common understanding that Rochau's invention could be better understood as a perspicuous reading of his own *Zeitgeist*. In that sense, the exploration of the problem of realism set out by Kant inspired similar reflections in arts and literature manifested in the reaction against a perceived artificiality of Classicism and Romanticism, locked into themes of distant times or luxurious social privileges. In 1826, the concept first appeared with its new terminology in the French literary magazine *Mercure français du XIXe siècle* (BRITANNICA, 2023). It may only be logic that the term also began to be explored in political debates, initially as a generic rhetoric appeal to (a particular breath of) reality, but progressively incorporating traditional themes of political philosophy into it, such as the themes of power, statecraft, morality, pragmatism, reason, and so on. And, not being Machiavellian in the pejorative sense, it is evident to historians of the *Vörmärz* the spread of liberal re-interpretations of the Florentine political thinker as a legitimate Republican

expression of the confidence in the utility of the national state and the belief in the idea of progress in whose works on the Italian situation “the struggle for emancipation, freedom, and human rights, the redemption from religious constraint, servitude and despotism takes on an explosive form.” (GERVINUS, 1837, quoted on TROCINI, 2009, pp. 88-9). The environment was increasingly working to make Rochau’s conceptual innovation a contextual product, which Federico Trocini reconstructs with quotations of contemporaneous observers, such as the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach in 1842 heralding the era of a “spirit of realism”, the writer and literary critic Theodor Fontane observing that “what, in every respect, characterizes our age is its realism,” while denouncing the fatigue with “speculation,” and Karl Rosenkranz, another philosopher, noting the demands of the working class against the aristocrat political moralism, pointed that “the masses turned their backs on it, accusing it of empty idealism, incapable of assessing the concrete interests of the present and such as to make men unhappy through false claims to reality.” (Quotes on TROCINI, 2009, p. 13). *Realpolitik* was “in the air” when Rochau set to write his book by the mid-nineteenth century (MENZEL, 1953, p. 85; TROCINI, 2009).

Consistently with the *begriffsgeschichte* notion that the meanings composing a concept may precede a particular label word, Alan Kahan has scrutinized the political thought of David Hansemann, the Prussian banker, *Vormärz* liberal politician, and Minister of Finance of the short-lived Frankfurter 1848 regime, as being a representative of a refined interpretation of what Rochau only later would propose under the concept of *Realpolitik*. Hansemann is described as diverting from the common moralist liberalism of his fellow contemporary partisans, displaying “a predilection for *Realpolitik*, the focus on power and pragmatism broadly disseminated among German liberals only after 1848 and 1866” (KAHAN, 1991, p. 280). Kahan identifies this kind of labeling of Hansemann’s work as far back as 1901, when his biographer called him “one of the few *Realpolitiker* of his generation” (quote in KAHAN, 1991, p. 291), though the rubric itself was not available to his own times. It is pretty interesting to note that at the beginning of his political career, Hansemann would precisely assume the term Kant used to identify the target of his critique, the “*praktische politik*,” not without a contrasting assessment of it: “Practical politics consists of the capacity to preserve durably and increase the power of the state both internally and externally, in so far as this is possible in given circumstance.” (quote in KAHAN, 1991, p.

282). Other fellow liberals of his time could recognize his differentiated vocabulary, eventually calling his doctrine “*Pragmatismus*,” and “thus a necessary counterbalance to the idealism of the majority of the United *Landtag*” of 1847 and 1848, the first sketch of a parliamentary constitutional Prussian monarchy (KAHAN, 1991, p. 294). Straightforwardly (KAHAN, 1991, p. 283):

Hansemann’s emphasis on power and on the middle class as the new source of power separates him from his predecessors and establishes him as the founder of liberal *Realpolitik* before the word was invented and the power of the middle class proclaimed by von Rochau in 1853.

In fact, Hansemann explored coincident themes a couple of decades before Rochau’s book: “The focus on power, on the state, on the relationship between internal affairs and external strength, above all the attention paid to the possible rather than the ideal,” all of which would not be repelled by conservatives, and a genuinely liberal claim that “only a state whose constitution duplicated that of its society, a state which based itself on the strongest and most progressive elements of that society, the middle class, could be internally and externally strong.” (KAHAN, 1991, pp. 282-3).

Revolutions could be dangerous to the capacity of a state to mobilize against foreign enemies, thus the old aristocracy had to avoid it to save their own regime – their status, much more than any notion of nation-state. In that context, the Enlightenment, the printing press, and industrialization and trade led to the rise of the middle classes, their force expressed in terms of property (much beyond land), education, capacity and experience, and the relevance of public opinion, meant an overwhelming political challenge to the old powers of the nobility, church, and bureaucracy. The liberal formula had the upper hand. Incorporating the middle classes into the governmental structure meant avoiding a revolution engrossed by the masses, where the real danger to the Crown lay. And Prussia had the advantage in engaging with this historical consolidation of modernity, compared to the slower moves of the Habsburgs in the south. Prussia had entered the club of European great powers, but to stay there, Hansemann argued it should adapt again to the challenge of middle-class political integration, as the French July Monarchy had successfully done by then.

Hansemann’s pre-*Realpolitik* did differentiate his thought, in form and substance, from most German liberals in the *Vormärz*. Their idealism was such that they concede that political participation was more a matter of spirit than of effectively holding the instruments of power. For Kahan, “there was an emphasis on ideas, on the spirit, on Kantian and humanist

moralism and Hegelian world-spirit. Little of this is present in Hansemann's political thought. The words that are given value above all others in his discourse are power and utility." (KAHAN, 1991, p. 290) In this sense, freedom is not a value that was relevant to the political order in normative terms, but in instrumental ones, as a condition to avert the worst dangers to the state, from a lack of economic competitiveness to a proletarian revolution. Thus, his proposal for a parliamentary regime of government under a constitutional monarchy, preserving some good chunk of the land-aristocracy's privileges, was not a matter of injustice but of effective political gains, in this case, the very stability of political order in an age of great power relocations.

Once the French monarchy fell in February 1848 and the tectonic waves started hitting German lands, Hansemann, "certainly a bourgeois, certainly a capitalist, and certainly a partisan of the hegemony of his own class" (KAHAN, 1991, p. 295), tried to articulate liberal reforms with the Prime Minister Bodelschwingh – to make the *Landtag* more representative of the German Confederation, free the press, and embrace a constitution –, but he was too reactionary for them. As social pressures amounted, the King tried to avoid a revolution by dismissing the Prime Minister and committing to those reforms on March 18, but it was too late. That was the day Berlin witnessed a revolution broke out. As the bourgeoisie feared a more radical socialist overthrow, it aligned with the nobles to form a moderate cabinet to be led by the banker and more traditionalist liberal partisan Ludolf Camphausen. Hansemann stepped up as his Minister of Finance. He had a central leading role in the new government, but it translate into no Camphausen's action to implement the institutional reforms – especially a purge in bureaucracy and the provincial aristocrat reactionaries – that Hansemann proposed in order to form a transparent and powerful constitutional regime for Germany. After Camphausen's cabinet fall, the noble Auerswald assumed as the new Prime Minister, and Hansemann, who underestimated the lasting power of the aristocracy, remained in his cabinet post due to his popularity. In also ignoring the power of the military – not power in terms of material, state-organized violence, but as social forces in terms of *Realpolitik*, indeed: universal conscription made the army an effective social force capable of politically engaging the lower working classes. In fact, an amendment that tried to impose support to the Frankfurt National Assembly from army officers precipitated the fall of Hansemann's ministry in September. Two months later, King Frederick

William IV successfully acted to suppress the parliament's power, completely dissolving it by May 31 of the next year, fully restoring his Prussian monarchy. Hansemann became increasingly isolated from the left, while not fully adopted by the right. He would remain a member of the upper house until 1852. He would be forgotten by the liberal elite until 1858 when he was invited back to a secure bid for a seat at the House of Representatives. If he was first an opposer to Bismarck's rise, he had begun to consider the Iron Chancellor's strategy of German unification by force by the year he would die in 1864. "Thus the lonely *Realpolitiker* of a past generation looked at the pre-eminent *Realpolitiker* of a generation of *Realpolitik*." (KAHAN, 1991, p. 305).

True, *Realpolitik* became much more frequently attached to the "*Blut und Eisen*" foreign policy led by Otto Von Bismarck than to Rochau, its legitimate inventor. Hansemann, especially worked from Kahan's refined intellectual historical contribution, clearly promoted in advance the essence of the concept to be named and developed in the book of 1853 in an unpaired intellectual move for his own time. However, the move of incorporating the appeal to reality – or potentially more precise, to the practical – in the very identification of such a concept of politicization, expediency, and prudence in politics has hardly been reflected as a novelty in political thought in itself, even if undoubtedly inherited from older (and contemporaneous) related ideas. *Realpolitik*, the concept of realism in politics, would be genuinely coined in a context when it seemed necessary to choose a redundant linguistic identity to leverage acknowledgment of the empirical consistency that should be demanded of any thought aimed at depicting reality.

The history of the concept newborn concept in arts and literature, which has probably been the more direct influence on the more specialized incorporation of it in the practice and study of politics, reveals some of the complexity of the move. Despite one can find works of incredible accuracy in this sense throughout past generations as far as the ancient's world Hellenistic and Roman sculptors and their impressive human figures carved out from marble, their creators did not feel the need to have their work recognized as an expression of "realism." They would probably feel confused if they had to explicitly explain to the public that their work was intended to capture "reality as it is." Furthermore, "realism" initially carried no appealing weight, but was very a pejorative one. Those mid-nineteenth-century painters, sculptors, and literary authors who first consciously assumed the label were actually

despised through its use for what the elite of artistic and literary critics perceived as the lack of creative imagination which defined the earlier dominant styles of classicism and romanticism (from which those condemned were not fully breaking with) or the defeat of poetic representation to the sensible truth. That scorn could easily be related to the new movement's principle of avoiding the celebration of the life of the richest and most powerful in society and engaging with the middle and lower classes' ordinary realities, their less-than-glamorous dramas and ventures.

Certainly, the French painter Gustave Courbet became a pioneer in the inversion of the asymmetric value of that label. After having a collection of paintings rejected by the jury of the 1855 *Exposition Universelle* under that accusation of "realism," Courbet independently organized the "*pavillon du réalisme*," a structure constructed in parallel to the greater event, in which every piece of his exposition – including the famous "*The artist's studio*" – received that physical title plaque nominating the work as "Realism," though he saw no real meaning in it (ZANETTA, 2021). One French aesthetic theoretician working on the formulation of "realism" as a conscious program, Jules Champfleury wrote a letter to a friend commenting on Courbet's audacious protest. Author of the main non-fictional effort on the label, *Le Réalisme* in 1857, his contribution is recognized today as having criticized how "overly simplified interpretations of realism can coincide with judgments of quality" such as that responsible for the rejection of Courbet's works leading to his reactive insurrection (PAPPAS, 2013: 54). Champfleury's own words make it clear that, after the fall of the 1848 February Revolution and the restoration of the French Empire, "realism" was still mostly used as a pejorative tag (translated from the original in CHAMPFLEURY, 1857, pp. 271-273):

Mr. Courbet, strong in public opinion, who, for five or six years, has been playing around his name, will have been hurt by the refusals of the jury, which fell on his most important works, and he appealed directly to the public. The following reasoning was summed up in his brain: I am called a realist, I want to demonstrate, by a series of well-known paintings, how I understand realism. Not content with building a studio, hanging canvases there, the painter launched a manifesto, and on his door he wrote: realism.

If I address this letter to you, madam, it is for the lively curiosity full of good faith that you have shown for a doctrine which takes shape day by day and which has its representatives in all the arts. A German musician, M. Wagner, whose works are not known in Paris, was severely mistreated, in the musical gazettes, by M. Fétis, who accused the new composer of being tainted with realism. All those who bring some new aspirations are said to be realistic.

We will certainly see realistic doctors, realistic chemists, realistic manufacturers, realistic historians. M. Courbet is a realist, I am a realist: since the critics say so, I let them say it. But, to my great shame, I confess that I have never studied the code which contains the laws by the aid of which it is permitted to the first comer to produce realistic works.

The name horrifies me with its pedantic ending; I fear schools like cholera, and my greatest joy is to meet clearly defined individuals. That is why M. Courbet is, in my eyes, a new man.

The painter himself, in his manifesto, said a few excellent words: “The title of realist was imposed on me as the title of romantic was imposed on the men of 1830. The titles, at no time, gave a correct idea of things: if it were otherwise, the works would be superfluous.” But you know better than anyone, madam, what a singular city Paris is in terms of opinions and discussions.

The ironic move Courbet made by assuming the label “realist” to his work became essential in its identification with the public opinion of the masses, stroke by the popularity of the daguerreotype and the first films by the Lumière brothers, and consequentially the effectiveness of its intended radical social critique (ZANETTA, 2021). The aesthetics project Champfleury synthesized from the criticism towards realists as well as their defenses started from a stand against the ornamentation of aristocratic and bourgeoisie life standards in arts and literature. Everyday reality is rarely consistent with those earlier adornments. The vast majority of common people's daily experiences were far harsher. However, he displayed much awareness of the complexities involved in using that concept labeled from a commitment to “reality as it is.” He would engage with the polysemy hosted by the label, both denouncing the eventual naïvety of approaches to reality ambitiously claiming the title for their supposed precision and, at the same time, challenging the complexity involved in devising an effective emancipatory approach to the limits and constraints found in reality as that which is given (PAPPAS, 2013).

Those first derided as realists – in political-ideological terms, a group with more Republican tones, opposing the restored Monarchy – would become the new aesthetical paradigm two decades later. Even earlier critics of the idea of a realist program in arts and literature became less opposed to the idea or even adopted it as their own banners, such as the poet Charles Baudelaire and his recognition that realism was not about a negation of imagination, but a very sharp display of it (ZANETTA, 2021). The realist attitudinal disposition (still a disenchantment for some) to deal with life as tragic and unpleasant as it might be was part of an impacting critique against the extreme social inequalities developed in the era of industrialization. All of this realist movement happened in a moment that History and the sub-discipline of the History of Art were being founded, going through its institutionalization in the context of a wider Western wave of university reform in the second half of that century (WITTROCK et al., 1991, WALLERSTEIN, 1997) thrust, coopted, or “succumbed to the spell of French positivism,” sharing with Saint-Simon the dream of synthesizing all social phenomena explanations around the law of gravity and by the positive

philosophy of Auguste Comte and his proposal for a kind of “Social Physics” which he would term “Sociology.” (MENZEL, 1953, p. 10-11; SMITH, 1996).

The times were coming. Along the 1840s there were announcements of a rising “spirit of realism,” the establishment of an “age of realism,” “tired of speculation”, “false claims to reality”, and “empty idealism.” (Quotes in TROCINI, 2009, p, 13) In very consistent ways, a 1935 work on the mid-nineteenth century rise of realism and nationalism certified that (BINKLEY, 1935, partially quoted on MENZEL, 1953, p. 3):

Realpolitik, the ‘new’ politics of the ’fifties, contrasted with the politics of Metternich’s day as realistic literature contrasted with romantic literature, as the ample synthesis of science contrasted with idealistic philosophy. It was not derived from realism in science nor in literature; it had its independent roots in the political and military experience of Europe; and yet it conformed to the larger cultural pattern.

The new concept was already born.

The Liberal Foundations of *Realpolitik*: The coinage of the label-word and consolidation of the concept

Two years before Courbet’s exposition subverted the idea of “realism”, the liberal nationalist Ludwig von Rochau published his *Grundsätze der Realpolitik, angewendet auf die staatlichen Zustände Deutschlands* (usually translated as *Principles [or Foundations] of Realpolitik, as applied to the state of affairs in Germany*), meant to reach partisans of the *Märzrevolution* – the 1848 Springtime of the German peoples – in the reorganization of their immediate goals and strategies after the violent restoration imposed by the Prussian Crown. The young Rochau himself was a revolutionary from the earlier frustrated liberal rebellion of 1833 when a group of fifty students attacked the guard house of the free city of Frankfurt, an episode known as the *Wachensturm*. For his participation in the events, he was imprisoned and sentenced to a lifetime, but he could manage to escape and find refuge in France three years later. There he developed his writing skills, working as a news correspondent for liberal outlets in his country. Amidst the turbulence starting in 1848, he found a way back in to directly testify as a publicist about the brief full-blown revolution and its monumental backslide as Prussian-led Confederate troops crushed the *Frankfurt Nationalversammlung* no longer than 14 months after its installment. With the restoration of the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, Rochau fled again to Paris in 1850, where he was to witness the failure of the local revolution that would inspire Karl Marx’s book on *The Brumaire 18th of Louis Bonaparte* (though it is very unlikely that he knew Marx’s essay [TROCINI, 2009, p. 123]).

After traveling through the south of the French country, Spain and Italy, he moved to his definitive German settlement in 1851, in Heidelberg, where he would publish his most famous book a couple of years later.

Its impact on contemporary political language is out of the question, as the analysis of historic lexicons and N-grams in the last chapter demonstrated. Rochau's *Realpolitik* stood as a guide to the liberal nationalists' political strategy according to the landscape of new political forces that now characterize the consolidation of modernity in the nineteenth century. The context of the mid-nineteenth-century Europe was made of an Enlightened spirit, and, materially, a vigorous industrialization resulting in emergent social classes altercations, all clearly captured in Hansemann's thought. However, the leap that consolidated *Realpolitik* was Rochau's fuller integration of these new modernity factors with the rise of nationalism as both a domestic political force, greatly capable of mobilizing public opinion and activism, and an international one, heavily imposing new challenges to great power politics, especially the looming eventuality of the formation of a German nation-state around the main industrial center of Europe through military means. Rochau devised the concept in order to engage with a domestic challenge: "how to build a stable and liberal nation-state in an unsteady and rapidly changing environment, without recourse to violent convulsion or repression." (BEW, 2016, p. 17). Nationalism, domestically, was an effective ideal in avoiding eventual disarrangements in the balance. As Rochau emphasizes, "the love of the country and the national sense are the natural and indispensable mediators in the struggles of the political party spirit, struggles which the state needs for its higher development, but which, without mediation, regularly end in its downfall." (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 14). *Realpolitik* reflected his understanding that the healthy management of the different social forces composing the state for the benefit of its development was the sole fundament of political order. And, despite its domestic focus, the logic of the balance of power and that later imprecise attachment of the idea to Bismarck's foreign policy made the concept ready to be popularized as an approach to foreign policy.

For offering that new reading of politics in modernity, *Realpolitik* should definitely have a place in the efforts of understanding the changing conceptual processes, redefinitions, or inventions of the *Sattelzeit*. Unfortunately, Koselleck and the editors of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (the historical dictionary of German political concepts) did not give it a proper

entry (nor considered it). Anyway, even if *Realpolitik* became so present in current political discourse, Rochau's book and even his name were rapidly forgotten. As an older generation historian, Hajo Holborn, once noted (1960, p. 95):

Rochau's book was very quickly forgotten. But the term *Realpolitik* remained current and either denoted a policy contemptuous of all ideals and ideologies and following the interests of the state or it was merely identified with a policy exclusively employing power for the achievement of its ends.

Still, Holborn's own work represents a continuous effort over the last century to remember that there was once an original conception of *Realpolitik* in that *Nachmärz* German book. Over the decades they have helped preserve quite a different meaning from that pejorative usage which has insisted to follow its conceptual history with significantly greater impact in the (American) English political language. It helps that no full translation has ever been offered. If one considers the ultimate relevance that the reception and translation of "*Realpolitik*" into "political realism" in English – or even as a loanword, "realpolitik," preserving much of its German pronunciation in those Anglophone environments – and the dominance of its label-related tradition in the American (and British) academic discipline of IR, the fact is most puzzling. The work is rarely mentioned, and when it is so, it is treated with irrelevance or imprecision. Even the most relevant additions on the conceptual history of power and realism like Stefano Guzzini's have overlooked his potential in unleashing a more critical approach to realism, limiting references to his work as contributing to a historical sequence of appeals to study political reality with law-like explanations (check, for example, GUZZINI, 2002; 2005; 2013; 2015). The providential international turn in intellectual history and the ideational and historical turns in IR (ARMITAGE, 2012b), as explored in the first chapter, has thrust renewed interest in Rochau's writings from its place in redefining the political (TROCINI, 2009; PALONEN, 2014; KELLY, 2017; CAR, 2019). Beyond Rochau, them, one particular work stands out in terms of its breath in producing a more precise long-term history of the concept of *Realpolitik*: the acclaimed *opus* of John Bew (2016), a central backbone to this and later sections in this chapter, investigated the translation of the concept from its coinage in Germany to its reception processes in Britain and the US. This literature rescues the relevance of that conceptual innovation locating its more genuine meanings and usages, and pointing to how it has been transformed while still gaining life in the German context of the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, and still further in its later distinctive resignifications within those Anglophone contexts.

Federico Trocini's meticulous contextualist intellectual history of Rochau with great access to the current developments especially in German and Italian literature on the subject asserted that these efforts (TROCINI, 2009, p. 222)³⁹:

have made it possible to review most of the interpretations formulated over the last few decades and to “exonerate” him (*scargionato*) of the accusation of having been essentially an unscrupulous “propagandist of strength” and a spokesman for that post-forty-eighter liberalism disillusioned and prone to opportunistic political maneuvering ...

That recovery may not mean a simple, uncontroversial answer for the very book is full of conflicting messages lending space to rival interpretations of the meaning of his political theory – if there is one indeed. Besides the low precision and consistency displayed in his works, as Bew scrutinizes them, it absorbed from all the main ideologies of the time – liberalism, conservatism, socialism, and Marxism – making it difficult to be squared uniquely into any of them (BEW, 2016, p. 22). Here, his work is presented under five different themes, not necessarily referred in these same precise terms by Rochau:⁴⁰ a) the challenge of mobilizing politicization for the progress towards consolidating (and defending) a liberal democratic regime; b) the centrality of power and the balance of social forces for the achievement of political order; c) the role of morals, utopia, and idealism in politics, and partly a deliberative, partly a utilitarian apprehension of it; d) the controversy of art vs. science in the practice and comprehension of politics; and e) the more precise meaning of the *topos* of the possible in the *Realpolitik* discourse, defining in more restrictive or open the idea of possibilities in politics. As these dimensions continuously intersect and this presentation does not intend to be exhaustive of the book, the text ahead does not get separated into sections for each of them. They are treated opportunely as the themes of the book itself historically unfold. Hence, together they form a cohesive political theory proposal of rescuing an undistorted concept of *Realpolitik*. And that certainly is simultaneously an exercise of antiquarianism and presentism.

Designed as a call to fellow liberals “to ‘get real’ about the nature of politics if they were to achieve their aims,” *Realpolitik* was crafted to be the conceptual systematization of this much-needed acknowledgment (BEW, 2016, p. 8). The “realist” appeal, commanding an

³⁹ The works of Federico Trocini, originally in Italian, are freely translated here. So it is with that of Ronald Car (2019)

⁴⁰ Bew presents in four: a) the law of the strong; b) balance of power and the middle class; c) ideas and political effectiveness; d) modernity and the relevance of public opinion and nationalism (BEW, 2016, pp. 32-39).

attitude of faithfulness to what is real is unquestionable, but would only be explicit in Rochau's preface to the second volume of the book in 1869 – an opportunity he took to answer his many critics –, where he unproblematically translated back and forth “*Realpolitik*” to “*politischen Realismus*” (ROCHAU, 1869, p. VIII) or simply “*Realismus*” (ROCHAU, 1869, p. IX). The Finnish political scientist Kari Palonen correctly calls for caution with that this connection between “realism” and *Realpolitik* (PALONEN, 2014, p. 135):

To claim the quality of ‘realism’ as belonging exclusively to one’s own policy or to deny its use by one’s opponents is one of the most frequent devices used in politics-literature. Such claims are prominent among the positivists of the second half of the nineteenth century for whom the normative criteria in general were almost epiphenomena.

Still, that evidence shows that disconnection is not consistent. In line with Duncan Kelly, “a genealogy of modern realism ... might begin with Rochau’s *Realpolitik*” (KELLY, 2017, p. 2). Furthermore, he defends that *Realpolitik*, for that concern, is definitely aligned with realism as an artistic approach, in which the middle-classes lives were a central subject. Kelly regards “Rochau’s book was subtitled to reference the specific conditions of the emergent German state while chiming neatly with the general rise of literary and artistic realism” (KELLY, 2017, p. 6). The lexical history of the last chapter attested that the rising trends of these entries made them significantly frequent through the second half of the nineteenth century. Its availability as this generic appeal applied in any other social activity cannot precede much of that innovation of “*realismus*” by Kant in 1787, and not with a specific political design much before *Realpolitik* in 1853. Other label words may have immediately preceded it, such as “*politique expérimentale*” by the French positivists (PALONEN, 2014, p. 135) or the “*pragmatische politischen*” used by Kant himself in *The Perpetual Peace*. But “realism” only acquired more than simple rhetorical significance but a political one with the attachment of it to the popular catchy label of *Realpolitik*, calling attention not simply to what was real, but certainly to a particular perspective of it.

The reality, in that mid-nineteenth-century context in Germany, had to do with the once idealistic proposals for German national unification and constitutional reform that became inevitable and expected progress due to the rise of the liberal middle class. However, it was also about the incapacity of liberal elites to secure the support of the middle classes, or even more actively recognize the social force contained in the lower masses, as well as the remaining effective power of reactionary local aristocracies. Also, reality meant that support

from the Habsburgs to the national cause of a “greater” German state submitted to a national elected parliament was very improbable, even with the fall of the European liberal movements “nemesis,” the Chancellor Klemens von Metternich against the Viennese commoners of the Austrian own *März* revolution. Locked in a multinational state with the Hungarian Crown, Austrian resistance towards unification of the German Confederation meant that only Prussia had the strength to impose the national state without their southern relatives. Bismarck would later confirm it not with constitutionalism and representative institutions but with blood and iron.

Realpolitik was both welcome and despised, both in intellectual settings as in professional politics. Rochau was “neither a great leader nor a great political theorist in a period replete with both” (BEW, 2016, p. 21). Still, his writing was reckoned as a “dignified, sober, earnestly truthful—in a word, German—fidelity to matter of fact, without German exuberance of reflection and theorizing.” (BEW, 2016, p. 29). Interestingly, such a “non-ideological tone” was not seen as genuinely German a generation ago, when Kantian idealism dominated the German spirit. Hansemann’s intellectual style, as pointed out in the last section, was seen as an import from British thought to check local idealism. As Kahan records, Hansemann “strove to emulate British practicality as opposed to German moralism.” (KAHAN, 1991, p. 291) But that generation was enough to see a tidal change in the image that German sciences and industry had undergone back in English-speaking contexts, where loanwords, especially related to these specialized languages developed by Germans, were now spread (see chapter 4).

In its first incarnation, still, *Realpolitik* was meant as a sincere critique of the movement’s naïvety. Imagining that the liberal principles of the revolution towards a constitutional and representative government would be enough to move history to their side, they ignored the law of *Stärke* (strength) – a mix of *Macht* (power) and *Herrschaft* (authority/dominion) – that could not be ignored if any higher moral principle was to be instantiated in any particular society. “Sovereignty is a term of power and he who treats it as a legal term will always arrive at unsustainable results.” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 23, translated on BEW, 2016, p. 30). The legalism of the liberal revolutionaries led them to an uncompromising position. As Palonen indicated, *Realpolitik* intended to teach them that “constitutional decisions are held to be inoperative if they are not supported by the ‘reality’ of existing social

forces and opinions. Political questions are less concerned with truth than with people's willingness to support them" (PALONEN, 2014, p. 133). The centrality of the idea of the law of the "social forces" has led to an unduly equalization of *Realpolitik* with *Machtpolitik* and a supposed need to capitulate to anyone holding superior material manifestations of power such as "counting heads." *Realpolitik* is about a more social, plastic, intersubjective definition of power. In Rochau's words, "an idea which, regardless of whether it is right or wrong, fulfills a whole range of ages is the most real of all political powers." (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 28)⁴¹. By the same token, *Realpolitik* should not be assumed to be a mere continuation of the older traditions of *raison the état* or Machiavellianism notions of morality and balance of power in politics.

The reasons for placing of Rochau's heritage as a new Machiavellian chapter of intellectual history are plausible. E. H. Carr introduced the Renaissance thinker as "the first important political realist," for having introduced three "foundation-stones" of this tradition: causation in history, the submission of theory to practice, and the preponderance of power over morality in politics (CARR, 1946, p. 62). Machiavelli is usually remembered for a shocking brute advice in a time of monumental challenges: the need to deal with "reality as it is" than with "reality as it should be." However, he did not use that construction anchored on an assumption and invocation of "the real." In *The Prince*, what you find is the idea that "there is such a distance between how one lives and how one ought to live, that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done achieves his downfall rather than his preservation." (MACHIAVELLI, 2005, p. 53). Nevertheless, Bew makes it clear that Rochau's concept detaches itself from that longstanding tradition inherited from (or assembled around) Machiavelli. The concept of "political realism" was not available there at the dawn of modern statehood in Northern Italy. Rochau, a man of the then consolidating modernity, understood those lessons typical of the *raison d'État* were not sufficient to address the new revolutionary conditions of the new political dynamics in modernity. (BEW, 2016, p. 17)

⁴¹ Free translation. From here on, in the absence of similar passages quoted by other contributions on Rochau's work and properly referred to as such, every quotation from his works were freely translated.

This understanding needs the deconstruction of a distorted, almost automatic meaning, still dominant in references to *Realpolitik* – if not to plain political realism – from whatever emotional sides related to it: the predominance of material resources in thinking about power in politics. But to Rochau, it was about an era of legitimation processes highly dependent on public opinion. Power could not be divorced from the rise of a large industrial bourgeoisie not simply for their direct responsibility over an ever-growing share of the country's wealth, but mostly because of their control of the newspapers, and their articulation with the lower classes as their workforce. Still, the notion of prudence – another central feature of the concept – undoubtedly included adequate access to military arms too – never as an overwhelming concern, but with the reasonable consideration of the issue of the security of a political project in its real context. Good intentions, ideas, and norms, even considering the ultimate relevance of gaining public opinion, were never enough in themselves. As Rochau adverted (1853, pp. 26-7):

The law of moderation, which is at the same time that of prudence, demands of the majority that they hold themselves together as much as possible with commanding attention to weapons, and that they renounce goals the fulfillment of which would involve dangerous self-fragmentation. ... Therefore there is also his more damaged policy than that which treats parliamentary or political questions in general as dogmas, which accordingly strikes down all grounds of prudence and responsibility with an appeal from conviction and conscience.

However, once again, the notion of strength or force, was not exclusively defined in military or economic terms. It was not exclusively to “be found by rank, or by wealth, or by a number of heads” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 19). For Rochau, power meant effectiveness, its content to be analyzed at each new political interaction in actual situations. Due to this general notion of strength being determinant to political dynamics, the ability of people to enter form groups of aggregated identities, interests, and force is essential for political engagement: “All state activity, every political upheaval is conditioned by the fact that the individual unites his strength with the similar or related strength of others to form a common weapon and common use.” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 27). And, consequentially, the immediate potential that such groups have of interfering in the political order – the concept of balance of power – becomes foundational to the practice and science of politics. Rochau stated that (1853, p. 5):

The respectively good or the right constitution is that which allows all social forces to come into their own according to their full value. ... A false constitution, on the other hand, is that which denies the political organs to the social forces, and thereby makes their effective use more difficult or impossible.

The imposing logic of the balance of power meant that effective governments (political orders) are those successfully identifying and balancing the most relevant social forces, incorporating emergent groupings – such as the middle class and their necessary political integration through democratic institutions – while purging the declining ones – such as reactionary bureaucracies or local nobility (BEW, 2016, p. 32). In Rochau’s pen, “the right representation is that which brings to transgression what is entitled to transgression.” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 19) According to *Realpolitik*, representative regimes must incorporate the “correct expression of social forces” for if it is not the case, “then the representation must inevitably become a lie.” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 21) Lie, in this case, means political disorder, social violence, and so on. The calculation of and action on this delicate balance is a matter of daily dedication of responsible political agents. This argument leads to the question of art and reason in political activity, the space for a science of the political, and the expectations for intentional intervention over the future of political regimes and international relations.

Palonen’s longer conceptual history of politics-as-activity indicates that Rochau’s *Realpolitik* added to the perennial debate of expediency versus values in politics by introducing analytical criteria for evaluating policies that avoided the “purely moral and legal appraisals of a policy according to its realizability,” a typical liberal argument (PALONEN, 2014, p. 132). Assessment and calculation were essential to improving the quality of political decisions and actions, and *Realpolitik* was presented as the science of politics. Right from the opening page of the book: “The study of the forces which shape, sustain and transform the state is the starting point of all political knowledge, whose first step leads to the insight that the law of the strong exercises a similar dominion over political life as the law of gravity exerts over the physical world.” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 1) That seemed to make the fine calculation of power and its systemic balance not only a possibility but a political duty. The presence of Newtonian science metaphors here cannot be underestimated. Balance, forces, laws, and calculations. The context of *Realpolitik* and other conceptions of politics as activity was that of the establishment of natural sciences (PALONEN, 2014, p. 89). The positivist *Zeitgeist* above all expressed by Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, was inevitable. Johanna Menzel, a student of Rochau’s thought in the year of his *Foudations*’ centenary, had it precisely put: “There exists at least a significant parallel, if not a more direct influence, between French positivism and what came to be called German ‘political realism,’” for Rochau

was outrightly exposed to that local school of thought during his *parisien* self-exile (MENZEL, 1953, p. 10) and Bew noted that “his theory of *Realpolitik* bears the marks of Comte’s book, *Politique Positive*, which appeared around the same time.” (BEW, 2016, p. 23. Also p. 28).

As the concept is usually presented as centered around the idea of politics as the “art of the possible,” that could lead to the contradiction of understanding politics as amenable to the tools of science. One could argue that the slogan was worked not by Rochau, but by Bismarck. And Bismarck, though more usually associated with *Realpolitik* than its very inventor, never used the concept. Besides, the association is reductionist to the complexity of the concept presented by Rochau, being the reason for the pejorative reference to *Realpolitik* as vulgar, barbaric *Machtpolitik*. Linking this controversy over the artistic or scientific nature of *Realpolitik* could be solved by linking it to the theory-vs.-praxis conundrum. Still, it cannot function as a simple separation and differentiation. If Rochau’s metaphors to hard science indicate the positivist commitment of the approach, he was also clear of the impossibility of establishing the empirical operationalizations of the concept of strength once and for all, dealing with investigation as a much more case-by-case initiative, making the researcher definitely an artist too. Each national case point to different unique reasons to explain the failure of the 1848 revolutions, all failing in the next two years. Bew pinpoints that this less generalizable claim about politics “was to be a founding observation of *Realpolitik*,” (BEW, 2016, p. 18) – the case of observation for the explanation of the ideal type being the processes surrounding the liberal movement in the German states in the aftermath of the restoration of the King of Prussia by crushing the Frankfurt Parliament. In that sense, *Realpolitik* could be understood as a concept for developing a kind of historical-political sociology.

At the same time, the practitioner not just does politics, but looks towards sharpening his craft with a more systematic comprehension of it. Moreover, besides this more technical concern, Palonen registers that (PALONEN, 2014, p. 89):

a kind of non-scientific, ‘romantic’ naturalism also played a specific role in the German context. The most famous example is Otto v. Bismarck’s view that the art of politics cannot be taught and that it requires certain ‘natural talents’ which he saw as lacking in his opponents.

Such idealizations as the “statesman by birth” and “political instinct” were only to be found in German literature, Palonen stresses. Apart from the romantic impulse here, the

insistence on understanding the conduct of politics as art, there were also plenty of pragmatist critics of the trend in the scientification and the search (or determination) of regularities in politics, for it imperiled the creative character of political decisions and knowledge of it. At the same time, it meant some normative progress, introducing some degree of predictability in political behavior which was to avoid most of the absolutist arbitrariness. German thought of the early twentieth century proposed the solution to the controversy of politics as art or science, through the “‘criterion of the ‘teachability’ of the practice as a condition of theorization.” Palonen remembers that this was an old theme that could “be directed against the Bismarckian assumption of the art of politics as requiring ‘natural talents’.” (PALONEN, 2014, p. 130)

These kinds of critiques were still made from a technical conception of politics, which does not reach the more ethical issues involved. In fact, together with the assimilation between *Realpolitik* and a material, militarist *Machtpolitik*, the other parallel main venue of distortion of Rochau’s original concept is the claim that this expresses an amoral, or even immoral, understanding of politics and the political. Classical realists in the post-World War II discipline of IR defined realism in opposition to utopia (CARR, 1946) or legalism (KENNAN, 1951), or idealism (MORGENTHAU, 1954). For Bew, in Rochau’s language “real *Realpolitik* eschewed liberal utopianism but it did not jettison liberal idealism in itself.” This moral aspect was crucial to an emancipatory political theory, which was the perspective of liberalism by the half of the eighteenth century. Thence, “it held out a vision of the future and a guide for how to get there rather than a fatalistic acceptance of the world as it was.” (BEW, 2016, p. 28). The essence of Rochau’s *Realpolitik*, from the outset, could avoid any misreading of his book on this issue. It was clear how ideas matter, not for their inner truth or moral superiority, but for how spread and tightly held they are, as manifested by public opinion. In the longer term, the liberal Rochau believed liberalism was inevitable. The better distribution of wealth and education forming a liberal public opinion could only be restrained by an unworthy leader who deliberately promoted the perpetuation of poverty and ignorance. Nonetheless, there were popular ideologies effectively fed by such poverty and ignorance. For Rochau, “Lies and all other kinds of immoral behavior, even crime, can not only demand but even exact a certain political recognition regardless of the fact that their nature is hostile to society and the state.” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 9, translated on BEW, 2016, p. 39). Aside from

his teleological belief, he knew modernity was not the automatic realization of liberal political and moral social improvements. As long as politics was about the conquest of public opinion, liberals had to keep the masses politicized, and educated in support of these values.

This is an important take on Rochau's 1853 conceptual move. Bew's contribution is definitive in exposing the German liberal as a believer of the Enlightenment progress to bury the "not only misguided but 'immoral'" maxim of "might makes right" – the most substantial misinterpretation of the common distorted take of *Realpolitik*. Politics for him was about the will, values and ends. It was about the idea of liberal progress in establishing a political order that reflected the pluralism of forces to be included in a healthy balance, standing relatively in freedom from one another. The problem was that his fellow liberals had lost sight of the "foundational truth" of politics," the need to reckon with these prevailing forces, even if they did not immediately share the same political values (BEW, 2016, p. 33). As such, *Realpolitik* was about compromise. Not the long-run ideological goals, but in the name of the possible immediate gains that can be cumulatively achieved on that route.

That seems to be the logic when evading the frontier of domestic politics of even a unified Germany. Bew precisely points out that "the first volume of *Foundations of Realpolitik* was a discourse on domestic state-building rather than a treatise on foreign affairs." (BEW, 2016, p. 42). National unification with the creation of new balancing institutions could reduce the effective access to state power by the declining landed aristocrats and include the middle class in the political process. Yet, at the same time, that unification would bring the dissatisfaction of neighboring countries which would try to avert it by the force of arms, and a new German state had to be strong enough to resist. The last chapter of the book's essential message was devoted to foreign affairs: unification was essential to avoid another Napoleon, a direct reference to Louis Bonaparte, marching through German lands. Thence, at the same time he understood that rapidly emerging morality of the time, nationalism, was crucial in domestic relations, serving as a cement to preserve equilibrium, he presumed the great disruptive potential it had in the relations between states, stimulating system-imbancing foreign policies of economic and military competition, eventually ending in more violent tragic outcomes (BEW, 2016, p. 32). In terms of its commitment to liberal values, "*Realpolitik* had a markedly illiberal edge when it came to the national cause." (BEW, 2016, p. 42). Liberal in terms of domestic politics, it had to be

illiberal outside, excluding the plenitude of rights pertaining to foreign peoples, at least provisionally. Advancing agreement with later realists – Morgenthau on Vietnam, Waltz on Iraq, Mearsheimer on Syria – Rochau wrote on the “absurd to attempt to transfer the European idea of civic liberty onto a Turkish or Hindu state.” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 28-9, quoted and translated on BEW, 2016, p. 38). It is not that “there is no moral obligation in politics, but rather that there is a limit where the actual possibility to fulfill this obligation ends” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 9-10, quoted and translated on BEW, 2016, p. 39). For Trocini, it meant an “unscrupulous” movement away from the more traditional separation between the morality of the state and that of the individual, as in Machiavelli, which was already insufficient for the idealists farther to the left but shared by contemporary liberals, such as the historian Georg Gottfried Gervinus (TROCINI, 2009, p. 88-9).

Kelly, for his turn, suggested that what Rochau tried to do was to link public morality to the success of the modern state in delivering public welfare, in a route opened by Frederick the Great’s *Anti-Machiavel* “a coming to terms with Machiavellian Realpolitik that replaced it with a form of *Wohlfahrtsratsrason* (welfare state reason), a domestic response to the uncertainties brought about through global economic competition and territorial expansion.” (KELLY, 2017, p. 18). He pursued to overcome a blank Machiavellian analytical framework, departing from a cold-blooded *raison d’État* to a moralized, national reform towards a welfare *Staatsrason* (KELLY, 2017, p. 5). While Rochau’s *Realpolitik*, according to Kelly, must be treated as a legitimate historic political theory, for its concern did not fall with normative formulations in abstraction – an appropriate topic for philosophical speculation – his theory was not absent of moral discussion. It did reach effective desirable ideas, values, norms, and rules that show consistency with the centrality of *Macht* (power) as the necessary condition of governing. The goal is the provision of national welfare. Power is defined in terms of the ideational and material forces peculiar to the historical context. It is nothing like what will be developed under the guise of structural “realism” in the later American theory of IR. Rochau’s concern was with political theory, and not with the elaboration of a worldview, or a philosophical critique. It targeted a practical method for taking and analyzing political decisions and policies, stone cold by the disillusionment with the liberal movement, granting them valorous advice, not a final condemnation of their idealism.

Another impacting take of what Rochau's *Realpolitik* and its take on the separation and opposition of power and morality is that relating it to the early development of contemporary populist ideologies. Ronald Car notes that "in Rochau's work, the two constitutive subjects around which populist democracy rotates become crucial: the people as the repository of consensus and the elite vested with power, bound, willingly or not, by a moral inseparable bond." (CAR, 2019, p. 176) In the era of mass politics, *Realpolitik* captured the changing dynamics between power and morality. It induced a parallel relationship between the government and the people. It tried to escape a circular argument between the superior force of government and its superior morality, as attested by public opinion. That made possible not only *Realpolitik's* democratic notion of the living social forces expressing themselves in public opinion. It also meant that, if the relevant political ideas are those which effectively work, the populist could subvert public opinion in his favor, no matter the real configuration of social forces. People may give up political and civil rights in the hands of a "savior of the nation" putting the constitutional order in peril. Car concludes that the perspicacity of Rochau's *Realpolitik* is to avoid that circular notion in favor of a relational one, where the government and the people are actively and constantly managing their (re)balancing, reflecting the fluidity and storms of an evolving modern society. According to Car, it is this balance which guarantees a less biased decision-making procedure, and the "gradual establishment of a democratic public culture capable of bearing the heavy economic, social and cultural burden of modernization." (CAR, 2019, p. 183).

The concern with more precise power calculation skills by politicians is the moment that *Realpolitik* as the art of political balancing risks leaving the issue of morals almost at a dead end. Menzel precisely linked it to the issue of scientific metaphors of Rochau's conceptual modeling, "too closely on Newton's idea of gravity" failing to grasp the normative consequences, "the human context within which all power is exerted," of his reduction of politics to the law of power. Power is taken as a "neutral quality," to be measured analogously to "the volume or weight of bodies" in the explanation of the political behavior of individuals, groups, and institutions. In her conclusion, "conceived as a quasi-natural dimension of political bodies, the concept of power failed to carry the full weight of the ethical implications which should properly be attached to it." (MENZEL, 1953, p. 26). The fact that Rochau also assigned in many passages that ideas had a supreme place in the

explanation of power, its balance, and the effective political order, the notion that “the *Zeitgeist* (*had*) the value of universal law, to which every political action was required to comply, otherwise risking being unworkable” (TROCINI, 2009, p. 90), even this kind of commitment could not save his work from being read as an ideology of the state, material power glorification. It surely could not help his own writings of the contradictions it opened.

It could be argued that was not exactly a contradiction, neither a logical nor even a moral one. It was about a prudential advance respecting the limits of the possible in any particular temporal, spatial, and ideational context. However, it could well be read as apologizing at least indifference, to most imperialism in international relations. It is interesting how the academic setting in the United States became constituted over these same premises: Political Science founded on liberalism and contained pluralism to study American democracy and International Relations parting from the anarchical, helpless, illiberal nature of international politics (see chapters 2 and 3).

Once the book circulated, the catchword made its job, pushing Rochau’s idea into a great debate among liberals. And the concept gained a life of its own. In the aftermath of the 1866 victory against Austria, liberals parted ways, a dissident group founding with Rochau the National Liberal Party in 1868 to proceed the accommodation with Bismarck’s government. Earlier, the Progressives had been deeply critical about the Chancellor’s since his appointment in 1862 and even before, as a rising Conservative politician. With the split of the liberals, many who remained in the Progressive Party did explicitly support the *Realpolitik* formula of appeasing the monarchy with the immediate goal of creating the national state, while creating political dependency on their support to later negotiate further development in the liberal program. Beyond them, as the historian Gordon Mork concluded in his examination of the formation of the National Liberal Party (MORK, 1971, p. 59-60),

Conservative German historians have seen the ‘capitulation’ as the height of *Realpolitik*. Liberal critics of Germany have agreed that capitulation occurred, but have interpreted it instead as proof that Germany is without a vigorous and meaningful liberal tradition.

Along the way, the concept was popularized for the idea of “the attainable” in the definition of political goals and strategies. The most sounding critiques at the time pointed at the lack of a realistic take on politics, turning it into a game of passive acceptance of exclusion, underestimating the emancipatory nature of political action directed against rusty power structures. Bew rescues a radical democrat named Jakob Venedey as leading this

opposition. In an 1864 book, he also complained that German liberal and radical traditions were not strong enough in the country as its other national counterparts, and it proved so in the capitulation of its idealism before *Realpolitik*. Despite Rochau himself differentiated naïve, dangerous utopia from refined and necessary idealism as a constitutive of *Realpolitik*, Venedey introduced “*Idealpolitik*” as its frontal antagonist (VENEDEY, 1864, translated and quoted on KRIEGER, 1972, p. 421. Partially quoted on BEW, 2016, pp. 50-1):

Realpolitik is nothing but German political twaddle so long as the leaders of the National Union are not really, actually, called upon to lead German politics. So long as they are only called upon to lead the spirit of the people to the great goal of German unity, ... their task is to pursue *Idealpolitik*! ... Whoever knows history knows that John Handen [Hampden], Cromwel, O’Connell and Cobden, Franklin and Washington, Luther and Stein were *Idealpolitiker* who defended their principle so long as it was unsuccessful in reality, until they finally achieved the power to be *Realpolitiker*.

Venedey is a determinant step in the conceptual history worked by Bew. In his words (BEW, 2016, p. 51):

Venedey added two new innovations in the discourse surrounding Rochau’s word. The first was the use of *Realpolitiker* as an adjective, or a label, for those acting in this way. The second, of greater importance, was the idea of *Idealpolitik* as an opposing force, which also had great political successes to its name. In the English-speaking world, this was to live on in the form of the anti-realpolitik tradition...

The counter-conceptual asymmetrical semantic structure (KOSELLECK, 2004) defining the foundational debate of realists and idealists in International Relations (see for example, MORGENTHAU, 1954, Chapter 1; SMITH, 1995) was not an original feature of the concept of *Realpolitik*. At first, it was not defined as belonging out of the normative discussion, as it has been cleared by his book’s reading above. It was all about liberal progress. It was also about the national bond that could help alleviate the harshest movements in the always delicate balance of social forces. Still, it was never about an ultimate, independent, absolute, or determinate preponderance of moral considerations in the solution of political conflicts among “*die lebendigen öffentlichen Kräfte*” (“the living public forces”, ROCHAU, 1853, p. 179). That moralist stands among liberals was a dangerous depoliticizing move as it handed the organization of social life to supposedly self-asserting ideas and not to vigilant political engagement.

Rochau’s approach to devising the concept of *Realpolitik* may have consciously – even if inconsistently in its results –, tried to overcome the problem of the now-called “analytical dualism” of treating the relation of different co-constituted aspects of reality as an interplay between independent phenomena (see chapter 1). The tendency of that nineteenth-century German thought, as Menzel exposes, was the dominant monism that “tried to obviate,

the traditional European distinction between mind and matter, reason and instinct, that dualism, in short, which had served as the necessary framework of all the great European systems of ethics.” As she does not find a determinant of proof of Rochau’s acceptance of these ideas, she can only infer that (MENZEL, 1953, p. 27):

some of the implications of his statements, as well as the kind of misinterpretation he suffered, can be understood only if we take into account the whole climate of opinion that had been influenced so decisively by Hegel—a popularized Hegel to be sure—and whose ethical sensitivity had been severely blunted.

For its very origins, it would be antithetical for *Realpolitik* to exclude the pursuit of a political ideal of its conceptual definition, all the more to oppose it with the pursuit of political ideals. Given the context and intentions constituting Rochau’s book in 1853, only an extreme cynic and opportunistic reading could allow that. Even considering the issues around the second volume of the book in 1869 – the central theme of the last section of this chapter –, it is difficult to ignore the gains liberals attained with the accommodation process (only if they were to lose most of them again in Bismarck’s later conservative [re]turn. *Realpolitik* had a message not only to liberals but to socialists and even the conservatives in power. In order to fulfill his goals, Bismarck co-opted the rising social forces of the bourgeois and the proletarian classes, incorporating their demands and getting in response their support for unification, “unifying the nation and building a welfare state.” (BEW, 2016, p. 36). Rochau and the party of the National Liberals did have some success: civil and criminal codes for the new *Reich*, stable exchange rates with the gold standard, and the opening of the domestic market, and severely downgraded the power of Catholicism in politics through the *Kulturkampf*. According to Mork, (1971, p. 75):

The National Liberals ... needed him (Bismarck) too much to risk alienation from the government. Instead of becoming Bismarck’s partners, they sometimes seemed to have become his captives. Nevertheless, he needed them as well ... The National Liberal party, prior to 1880, was never his docile tool; at most it was a difficult ally which often caused him much discomfort.

By the end of the 1870s, Bismarck initiated political and economic reforms that were to make him closer to conservatives again. With the support of center and right-wing National Liberals, Bismarck’s *Realpolitik* did not need to concede to the left anymore. For Rochau’s work in 1853, the liberal revolution in the Germanies failed – in the sense of consolidating a new representative system with his *Mittelstand* united as a party at the center of the legislative process – because the middle class did not display a “‘class consciousness,’ (a phrase Rochau lifted from Marx).” (BEW, 1853, p. 36) As his conceptual approach echoed his contemporary socialist (from “*socialismus*,” a term which Rochau pioneered the

introduction into the German lexicon in 1840 [TROCINI, 2009, pp. 8, 13]). Later, nationalist conservative readers of Rochau towards the end of the century like Henrich von Treitschke, an important node in *Realpolitik*'s conceptual history to be explored in the next section, tried to hide the influence Rochau had from Marx or the French socialist culture. As Trocini recounts, "Treitschke, who, tracing the image of a young exile mostly indifferent to the flattery of French culture, have reduced the relationship between Rochau and socialism in terms of a purely occasional meeting, destined to leave little trace of himself in the mature work." (TROCINI, 2009, p. 69). Rochau did, in fact, mature his political thought with his distancing of the radical student movements and revolutionary violence, but it is clear to Trocini that from this line of thought he brought his sharpest critical tools for the political analysis of German realities and the "polemical framework of reference" to insert his critique into the public debate against the "Daydreams" of socialists [*Träumereien des Socialismus*] in 1840 or his lament against the lack of *Realpolitik* from liberal companions (TROCINI, 2009, pp. 13, 70).

It was an eclectic, synthetical framework. *Realpolitik* genesis made it a promising conception of the political made to confront the increasingly polarized and violent era. In Bew analysis (BEW, 2016, p. 22),

it contained an uneven mix of German, French, and English political philosophy and sociology and does not fit easily within the main intellectual traditions of the nineteenth century: liberalism, conservatism, socialism, or Marxism. If anything, it borrowed elements from each.

The connections between *Realpolitik* and these currents of modern political thought. Its origin within liberalism was the main issue in this section. Its appropriation by conservatism is progressively becoming clear, but it is to be fully realized yet, the theme for the next section. Until then, a final comment on the connection with the socialist discourse is worthwhile. It has been already introduced above, with the inspirations from Saint-Simon and his critique of French socialist utopias while appropriating its strategies for political engagement. Still and all, the more interesting direct connection is with no one else but Karl Marx himself. From Marx, he may have been inspired by the critique against the bourgeois revolution, which "lost all understanding of the present in an inactive glorification of the future" (MARX, 1851 quote on BEW, 2016, p. 27). Bew alleges that "Ludwig von Rochau never mentioned Marx directly, though he borrowed a number of phrases from him," like "class consciousness" as detailed before. One foundational assumption of *Realpolitik* was

clearly a “a version Marx’s argument”: the notion that ideas unsupported by real social forces are no more than “illusions.” (BEW, 2016, p. 27). The fact is that the critical spirit and the “get real” attitude of *Realpolitik* were equally caught in the mid-eighteenth-hundreds “air” by the Rochau’s contemporaneous German fellow. In an awarded intellectual biography produced by Rolf Hofseld originally in German, he emphasizes that *Zeitgeist*: “The period after the defeat of the revolution witnessed the advent of realism in the arts, Realpolitik, positivism, and—for Marx—so-called scientific socialism. Even the mythos of the French Revolution lost some of its sheen for a while”. (HOSFELD, 2013, p. 87)

But the proximity may have been much more intense than Bew reported. The chances that they have personally exchanged ideas by the year and a half that Marx lived in Paris are very credible. It was a decisive moment in Marx’s intellectual life. According to Jonathan Sperber in his biographical study of Marx as a man of the nineteenth century (SPERBER, 2013, p. 97),

Living in Paris brought Marx into close proximity with radicals from other countries, but becoming an émigré meant new and often quite different contacts with Germans. ... Many dissident German intellectuals were living in the French capital, including Young Hegelians and other radicals Marx had met in Berlin and Cologne, but also a host of new acquaintances. Two well-known examples were the celebrated poet and man of letters Heinrich Heine, ...; and August Ludwig von Rochau, onetime student radical and later unconventional liberal, who would coin the famous term *Realpolitik*.

Both this biographers of Marx agree that not only him, but many forty-eighths worked on the development of this “more realistic, power-oriented position.” (SPERBER, 2013, p. 242). Bew also quotes a passage from Carr’s 1869 book “*The October Revolution*,” in which the Englishman, while not referring directly to Rochau (he did refer to him as the coiner of *Realpolitik* in a footnote of his earlier *Twenty Years’ Crisis* [1946, p. 97]), observed that the 1848 aftermath was the “age of *Realpolitik*” when all the different ideological opponents to the conservative aristocracy “began to think in terms of what was practically possible rather than of what was ideally desirable.” (CARR, apud in BEW, 2016, p. 28). For example, there is Johannes Miquel, an old Marx’s comrade, once member of the Communist League, later turned a National Liberal and future Prussia’s Minister of Finance, was precisely transformed by – or to Marx, succumbed to – the idea of *Realpolitik* in the early 1850s (HOSFELD, 2013, p. 103). “Miquel fell still farther under the influence of the zeitgeist’s new liberal ‘Realpolitik’” and gave up revolutionary expectations of social revolution, considering it “nothing but a ‘figment of the imagination,’ at best a ‘violent act of politics’ that unwittingly

only played into the hands of incorrigible conservatives.” (HOSFELD, 2013, p. 98) Another old, distancing comrade, Ferdinand Lassalle, was later remembered by Marx as also going astray

Marx even justified the extension of his exile in London in the fear of being caught in the *Realpolitik* mood as his old associates unfortunately did. Hosfeld indicates Marx wrote a letter to a friend in 1865 complaining about them being that degenerative kind of “realistic politician.” The correspondence, originally written in Danish, reveals he used the very word in different passages of it (MARX, 1865):

... Lassalle kom ind på disse afveje, fordi han ligesom hr. Miquel var ‘realpolitiker’, kun af større format og med mægtigere mål for øje! ... de er ‘realpolitikere’. De vil tage hensyn til de bestående forhold og ikke overlade dette privilegium på ‘realpolitiken’ til d’herrer Miquel & Co. alene. ... De vil altså tage forholdene, som de er, ikke tirre regeringen osv., ganske som vore ‘republikanske’ realpolitikere vil “tage” en Hohenzollerkejsers “med”. ... jeg ... ikke er noggin ‘realpolitiker’ ...

(Lassalle got on the wrong path because he was, like Mr Miquel, a ‘realistic politician’, only on a larger scale and with grander aims! ... they are ‘realistic politicians’. They wish to take due account of the existing state of affairs and not leave this privilege of ‘realistic politics’ to Mr Miquel et comp. alone. ... They thus want to take the circumstances as they are, not to irritate the government, etc., quite as our ‘republican’ realistic politicians want to ‘put up with’ a Hohenzollern emperor. ... I am not a ‘realistic politician’ ...)⁴²

Marx knew the concept and despised its reformist character, while he may have praised its crude power relations focus on the possibility of success is devising political action. Though it is not clear if he caught it from Rochau’s book or even if he knew his Parisian exile acquaintance was responsible for it. Maybe, if he had read it, he would not have had such a submissive reading of it. It was most probably caught among the public debates of the time, and it already had that distorting taste which was to characterize the concept over the years, with an increasingly conservative signification as it was attached to Bismarck’s policies – at home, but mostly abroad. Marx even came to support the war with France in a letter to Friedrich Engels. It was justified in the name of national unification, for that would also allow the centralization of the workers’ organization. Moreover, “the French deserve a good hiding” as he wrote to his partner (MARX quote on HOSFELD, 2013, p. 114). Justice made to Marx, he denied perpetual peace on the grounds of the permanence of war under capitalism. *Realpolitik*, although teleological in terms of the realization of a liberal

⁴² Translation available at: <https://wikirouge.net/texts/en/Letter_to_Ludwig_Kugelmann_February_23_1865>. Accessed on: Jun. 25, 2023.

welfare state, but more immediately policy-oriented, blamed the miscalibration of moving social forces. Peace was then dependent on the politicization of the society around the virtuous calculation of that balance to unleash a prosperous system of welfare states.

“*Realpolitik*” in Germany, volume II: Liberal Distortion and Conservative Appropriation of the Concept in the Late-nineteenth Century

As National Liberals proceeded with their association with Bismarck’s government in Prussia, especially after the swift victory against Austria, when unification seemed unavoidable, *Realpolitik* distanced itself from Rochau. While the concept gained thrust by the 1860s, its meaning had consolidated an analogous reference as that of materialism to natural science and to economics, and realism to literature and arts – “there corresponded *Realpolitik* in the sphere of foreign affairs.” (BEW, 2016, p. 66) He was not cited as frequently as the concept, but its meaning seemed to follow the path of his party’s (and personal) alliance with the Iron Chancellor, becoming much more evidently attached to the Prussian conservative than to its liberal author (BEW, 2016, p. 68). It was quite an inversion in the ideological commitments and quite a reduction in the breadth from its origin. Beyond Bismarck, the concept was even misleadingly associated with the Austrian Count Metternich, the nemesis of German liberals (BEW, 2016, pp. 19-22). Metternich and Bismarck were too big historical figures for the otherwise ordinary political activist and publicist. For all that, Rochau reclaimed his original connection with the concept by launching a second volume of the book in 1869 (the preface is dated October of the previous year), an opportunity he seized mostly to answer commentators and critics of the 1853 publication. Still, he could not help himself reinforcing the semantic distortions that were already underway.

Critics, especially liberal opponents, took the concept as a “slippage” of its commitments to liberal values, conceding too much to a glorified version of German nationalism (BEW, 2016, p. 50). Bew notes that later post-Nazi regime historians of the *Sonderweg* (special path) shared this wicked meaning associated with *Realpolitik* and included it in the post-1848 revolution cumulation of certain ideas, decisions, and acts that led towards Germany’s decadence from the liberal modernization trajectories of the rest of the industrializing West (BEW, 2016, p. 67). In this sense, many of the remaining political left already saw the National Liberals’ progressive settlement in Bismarck represented “a

fatal compromise” of the liberal project in Germany (BEW, 2016, p. 49). It was just as fatal to the concept of *Realpolitik* itself.

As a politician, Otto von Bismarck called the attention of the leading German conservatives and Friedrich Wilhelm IV himself for strictly defending anti-revolution positions in the post-1848 reactionary context. In 1849 he was elected to the Prussian Parliament and acted against any constitutional route that could lead to a merger of his country into a broader German state. In 1851 and the next year, the King appointed him as the Prussian envoy to the *Bundestag* in Frankfurt, not without suspicion – “no major figure in either Prussian or, after unification, German politics shared Bismarck’s views on foreign affairs, even fellow conservatives.” (RATHBUN, 2018, p. 8). He did ride through dangerous curves to overcome the junior position Austria ceded to Prussia. He began to test the limits of Austrian primacy in Frankfurt. In foreign politics, he was already playing the balance of power in the backstage by the time of the Crimean War, which opposed Austria and Russia. In serving the new King Wilhelm I, he was sent to Saint Petersburg and Paris, and he started to see the advantage of German unification without Austria to consolidate the Prussian power in Europe. Incapable of admiring the values of liberalism and social democracy, Holborn asseverates he was “conscious of the need for mass-support (*and*) he turned to nationalism.” (HOLBORN, 1960, p. 97) Showing great analytical capacity for *Realpolitik* analysis, in which power is more social than military, he wrote a letter to the then Prince Wilhelm, a year before his coronation, that “the national idea is stronger than the Christian idea, even among Social-Democrats and other democrats, maybe not in the country, but in the cities.” (BISMARCK quote on HOLBORN, 1960, p. 97) Nevertheless, the liberals pushed against the rise of the military state budget to modernize the army and to extend compulsory military service, almost leading to the fall of Wilhelm. It was when Bismarck was appointed prime minister as a last resort to save the King’s crown. With great efforts to avoid negative public opinion against militaristic policies, Bismarck was able to bypass the parliament and its liberal opposition majority. With the swift victories over Denmark in 1864 and 1866, the liberals’ stand became very fragile. Bandwagoning with Bismarck was becoming a more realistic strategy to attract the focus of the government to their social and economic agenda.

Progressives had found themselves opposing the ultra-conservative Bismarck since he appeared in the Prussian and the Confederation political scene. In a sense, from the

Realpolitik point of view, Rochau's party political position was becoming increasingly unsustainable, not in moralist terms, but in terms of practical gains for advancing the liberal project. With the Progressives divided, Rochau led the major section of the party willing to lean their political support towards the government's push for national unification in exchange for those immediate goals. That eventually happened after the Seven Weeks' War with the creation of the National Liberal Party in 1867. Holborn registers "Bismarck's statecraft was called '*Realpolitik*' already by his contemporaries, particularly by those German liberals who after 1866 were eager to make their peace with Bismarck even if this implied the abandonment of most of their political faith." (HOLBORN, 1960, pp. 94-5). The flattering from liberals was appreciated by Bismarck as he appeared as a politician above party divisions. For liberal critics, *Realpolitik* became a common trope in justifying accommodation. It did not take long for the concept to sarcastically turn into the best description of the chancellor's foreign policy, despite he "never used it." (BEW, 2016, p. 22) Still, it was Bismarck's "unsentimental logic ... (*which*) was to become forever associated with the concept of *Realpolitik* (and *Realpolitik* became associated with blood and iron)." (BEW, 2016, p. 47) Now the military budget got retrospectively approved, ending the constitutional crisis. To many liberals and even conservatives, the move was a sign of a liberal waiver, a mere capitulation to Prussian old feudal aristocracies.

That was how the concept got attached to Bismarck, reinvigorating it for a second decade, but increasingly defined as a departure from liberalism in the name of the national realization. In that sense, more than the publication of a second edition in 1859 to deal with conceptual precision, the second volume to be published in 1869 was his chance to justify the alliance of National Liberals with Bismarck (BEW, 2016, p. 31), claiming otherwise that "a number of general liberal misunderstandings and the opposition's habitual self-delusions were made the victim of political truth." (ROCHAU, 1869, p. III, quoted in BEW, 2016, p. 53) By then, "the unification of Germany had seemingly become inevitable, an outcome whose time had not yet come but whose ideas and inspiration were now part of the liberal and bourgeois *Zeitgeist*, incapable of being resisted." (KELLY, 2017, p. 7). It was the dawn of the public success of Bismarckian militaristic policies to unify the country against its neighbors. Rochau's new preface explained the term chosen to appear in the very cover of the book: "From the outset, the title of that work placed itself in opposition to political idealism, as well

as to the fantasy and emotional politics by whose obscure intrigues the German people were had been led astray for all too long.” (ROCHAU, 1869, p. I). A hint that he had already conceded to the opposition Venedey created with *Idealpolitik*, engaging in this polemic counter-conceptual fight his original book did not conceive, i.e. jettisoning idealism. Maybe he really intended the opposition since he first worked with the notion of *Realpolitik*. Anyway, Rochau certainly found the polemic valuable to feed public opinion with his political ideas. Most of all, despite this counter-conceptual turn and other amendments, he would helplessly insist the second volume maintained the original idea. “In the writing of 1853 there is not a single point that the author would have to take back or weaken or consider to be settled.” (ROCHAU, 1869, p. III) Thus, he did recognize the word now had been popularized but slipped away from his precise original intentions. For him, the second volume was not to introduce inconsistencies then, but only “supplementation or reinforcement” of *Realpolitik* (ROCHAU, 1869, p. IV).

Menzel presented the book on these three great topics, indicating the damning logical consequence of each. First, the reinforcement of the scientific character of the concept, which turned the empirical commitment into the justification of power. Second, the moral function of the state was equated with its power, the means were subdued by the ends of statecraft. Third, he placed a prudential argument of moderation to avoid arbitrary political excesses but that could never guarantee the political wisdom necessary to reflect on the reality and danger of crooked indignity and devious brutality. For all that, Menzel agrees that “the transformation of *Realpolitik* into a cult of power was not entirely fortuitous and that, moreover, Rochau himself cannot be entirely absolved from all responsibility for this change.” (MENZEL, 1953, p. 84).

In terms of power, the author had a dubious take on “reinforcing” the concept of power in its social dimension while “supplementing” it with a decisive more materialistic take on it. On one hand, there was his broader understanding: “the power which he had in mind was social rather than military power.” Strong states were the ones aligning themselves with the societal forces, and nothing altered the fact that “today (*it*) rested with the bourgeoisie.” (HOLBORN, 1960, p. 94). Thence, *Realpolitik* had something to teach to each of the main social forces in modernity. He still wanted to reach liberals and its middle-class electoral basis. The bourgeois was the main drive to Germany’s modernization in terms of its

entrepreneurial appetite for education, work, and wealth. However, *Realpolitik* did have a message to the working class, recognizing in the proletarians a strong social force mostly for their number and relevance in public opinion. But their incorporation was meant to take the form of social policies, even some participation in government, not in universal suffrage though. And there were also lessons delivered to the conservatives. Beyond the critique against liberals' naivety, it also was a denunciation of Bismarck partisans' anachronism. Authoritarian decisions against civil liberties, first of all, press freedom, were unsustainable. Aristocrats had to understand that they pushed against the greatness of a nation which, in the context of economic modernization, had to do with the values of liberalism, for him (besides political freedom of association, of expression, the rule of law). (BEW, 2016, pp. 57-60). That search for equilibrium was Rochau's own *Realpolitik* in practice.

On the other hand, the intoxicating materialist and, even more, militaristic thrust was clear in the second volume. If he first charged the ideas of the *Zeitgeist* as definitive to constituting political power, now he would assume that "when it is a matter of trying to bring down the walls of Jericho, the Realpolitik thinks that lacking better tools, the most simple pickaxe is more effective than the sound of the most powerful trumpets." (ROCHAU, 1869, p. VI, quoted in BEW, 2016, p. 56). The commitment to an empirical science of politics, instead of speculative or abstract intellectual efforts at it became even more strict, less dubious. The statist nature also came to the forefront. And consequently, the criteria of expediency. All of this in his same passage (ROCHAU, 1869, p. 57):

Politics, as a theory of the state, has little or nothing in common with philosophical research; it is rather an empirical science, like natural history, and accordingly practical politics cannot have the task of realizing any speculative system; Statecraft is rather, as its name suggests, nothing other than the art of success applied to specific state purposes.

Those who took success for something less than essential in politics were playing the wrong game. He could not be clearer. But the materialist take on it is not settled. In this second volume, Rochau tried to overcome a possible excessive materialism he had pushed to displace idealism in the first book. Now he defended that 'realism is a form of political pragmatics, a tool to be used to cut through the "shadow boxing" [*Spiegelfechtere*] of political ideology.' (KELLY, 2017, p. 7) In Kelly's interpretation, it was only here that he proposed *Realpolitik* as a midway between the extremes of idealism or materialism.

An influential contemporary critic, Constantin Frantz, a Prussian philosopher and diplomat who denounced the bellicose attitude of both Bismarck and the Progressives had a more acid reception to the second volume. In a work reviewed in Britain in December 1872 – inclusively marking the first appearance of the concept in the English language (BEW, 2016, p. 87), he despised the conception already with that pejorative taste of its definition on (FRANTZ, 1872, quoted on THE ILLUSTRATED REVIEW, 1872, p. 346):

Whither shall we drift if, instead of the Gospel, a so-called matter-of-fact policy (*Realpolitik*) is to gain ground, which, from the outset, divesting itself of all ideal demands, expressly aims at nothing but the power and the greatness of the nation, and attempts to confine our minds within the narrow sphere of supposed national interests? Certainly not to a system of peace. ... Christianity knows nothing of such matter-of-fact policy, and those who teach it disown Christianity, in order to place the worship of nationality in its stead.

Prussia wanted to impose a Roman notion of empire, while Frantz believed national unification was to bury one of Germany's most important political heritage to civilization, the notion of "federalism." It was to be expanded throughout Europe in the name of equilibrium and peaceful order. Crimea, Italy, and the Prussian-Austrian war were the signs that national rivalries would eventually drain European civilization into deadly extensive great power conflicts. His argument had a moral, Christian basis, and condemned those who taught *Realpolitik* for glorifying the nation-state over God. He complained about the sectarianism that fueled Protestant Prussia in averting the traditional German pluralism by excluding Catholic Austria from a healthy balance in a future Teutonic state. However, despite a celebrated critic of *Realpolitik*, he carried explicit anti-Semitic tones in his description of the nationalist movement as a Jewish conspiracy in favor of corrupting materialism (while future German anti-Semites would criticize his opposition to the national cause as the Jewish conspiracy of the turn). (BEW, 2016, pp. 51-2)

Rochau despised Frantz's accusation of anti-idealism. In fact, he did not agree with the opposition set between *Realpolitik* as a politics of compromise and the politics of idealism. Nor he agreed that *Realpolitik* was solely "political materialism". To "deny the rights of the intellect, of ideas, of religion or any other of the moral forces to which the human soul renders homage" would mean to contradict that political conception (ROCHAU, 1869, p. VII, quoted in BEW, 2016, p. 55). Yet, inconsistency let these unwanted kinds of interpretation flow. The continuation of Rochau's book did imply the superior pragmatic relevance of power over freedom. The new imbalance was clear. Once he equated those terms. Now he had made them asymmetrical, freedom was reduced to a function of power relations,

Realpolitik as “*faustrechtliche*” – the aphorism of “might make right.” As Menzel puts it, Rochau defended it was not about compromising freedom, but making “a realistic choice because in choosing power one got freedom into the bargain” (MENZEL, 1953, p. 71) None of that must necessarily mean a corrupt deviation of *Realpolitik*. Consistently with his understanding of power represented by the living social forces, it would be cynical to defend a satisfying political order to most social groups if each of them is not able to express the elements of power to autonomously promote the defense of their diverse interests amidst a healthy balance of power. A romantic reading of political order blocked most national liberals’ understanding of it. Thus that more fierce definition of power was not unwarranted, in that it could still be coherent with the goals of social and economic justice of the left political spectrum.

Rochau understood that political ideas could be appreciated in a conceptually neutral way, in terms of how they are made possible by power relations. Pervasive inequality in social relations (“the seizure or appropriation of property”) is what makes power and liberty possible. Understood out of romantic tones, his words are consistent with the science of political morality (ROCHAU, 1869, p. 12):

... freedom is also not a product of state law; for we see that the most solemn constitutional parties are not able to guarantee even the shadow of them. Freedom is not even a universal postulate of political reason; for there are peoples and public conditions within which it would be the greatest of all evils. Political freedom certainly has its legal, its ideal, its principle side, but the core of its essence is a sober fact: freedom is power.

An absolute commitment with any moral principle simply cannot be real. It could end up in disastrous consequences – war, genocides, famine – when, in the occasion of an overwhelming historical political challenge, it simply excludes political alternatives that do not fit in that holy normative framework. That conception allows him a science of political morality, not the philosophical, speculative approach – which nonetheless did not alleviate the issue of how to approach the normative critical reflection as part not only of students but responsible politicians, the students’ very object of inquiry. Rochau recognized the “sober fact” of power – as a classical argument from early modern political thought. The balance of different forces appeared as the true possibility of those political values: reason and liberty (KELLY, 2017, p. 7-8). This remained a refined balance of power theory, applied to domestic politics with its many corollaries such as its anti-hegemonic nature. In talking about the need of churches to overcome sectarianism, Rochau wrote that they “cannot and will not be

forbidden to win ground and soil from one another in small and small details, but the renunciation of all plans and attempts at mass conquest is today a commandment of public reason and one's own interest." And he reinforced that the same goes for "the main shareholders in the public power." (ROCHAU, 1869, pp. 69-70, partially quoted in BEW, 2016, p. 59). For *Realpolitik*, the need for each group to contribute with their share to state power and an effective balance of power was a matter beyond self-interest, it involved an ethical responsibility with the whole political system.

In this case, the primary political system was a modern state. The second volume gave newer contours to *Realpolitik's* understanding of the polity. Consistently with the idea that politics demands a Newtonian empirical science, the object of investigations could only have been an expression of nature. In the words of the author, "the state is a Realpolitiker by nature, if only by virtue of the conditions of its existence, and has therefore always had to put up with being treated as a poor sinner by political idealists and dreamers." (ROCHAU, 1869, p. VII). According to Kelly, "by making it independent of sentiment or feeling, he nonetheless seemed to want to give it a life of its own" (KELLY, 2017, p. 8). And that made "reason of state" a necessary referential concept to *Realpolitik*, something which was not given in the first volume.

The international issues of European politics were only marginally explored in the first volume of the *Grundsätze*. In the second edition of the 1853 book six years later, with early signs of a French expansionist war towards the German Confederation or Austria, Rochau reinforced the foreign issue of *Realpolitik* in the new preface, where he made it oppose *Gefühlspolitik* (sentimental politics) and *Prinzipienpolitik* (principled politics) – themes he would come back in the second volume – and demanded pure egoist-interested alliance with the south Germans. Rochau demanded "wholehearted preparations for the potential war," (quote on BEW, 2016, p. 45) and argued that the masses were much more motivated by a German *Volksgeist* than the traditional landed elites. Unification was not only a domestic strategy to advance the liberal plan but a question of international security as the more than thirty different and disorganized German army unities were no match for the French national army. In book two, a decade later, a Franco-Prussian war was not a matter of if but when. Book two could not escape giving the international affairs of Germany a more central role in *Realpolitik*. Its final chapters were dedicated to this discussion indeed.

Contrasting with the dominant structural versions of realism in IR, Bew notes how, for Rochau, “the internal political structures of states had a significant influence on the course of their foreign policy.” (BEW, 2016, p. 61) That resonates with Brian Rathbun’s argument that *Realpolitik* is consistent with the neoclassical realist theory of foreign policy, which gives primacy to the workings between domestic and transnational groups trying to seize the choice and implementation of the political paths taken by the state in relation to the constraints of the international system (RATHBUN, 2018, p. 54). The French Bonapartist-controlled press stimulated provocations with Germans with war threats whose folly was denounced by subsequent long silences on the issue. However, as rationality and deliberation were essential traits of a vigorous *Realpolitik* – prudential, never fanatic. The lack of these traits in such erratic behavior of the French put Europe in danger of a great power war, for Rochau (BEW, 2016, p. 61) As he wrote, “since the coup d'état of December 2, 1851... Europe understands there is a powder keg under its feet, and Germany in particular hardly feels safe about the next day.” (ROCHAU, 1869, p. 173). Rochau understood that an alliance with Russia, even with all the disturbing influence the Czar had over many German states, was vital against the French immediate threat. Bismarck reached the same view of the situation: everything had to be done to avoid a two-front war with both powers at the same time, a prudential lesson to be ignored after the death of Wilhelm II. The alliance with the British, who saw in Germans a tip of the balance between opposing bids for continental hegemony from France or Russia, was seen as only a temporary solution until Germany could provide for its own national security. And there was the international issue the Jewish question. Rochau believed the Jews had to be fully incorporated into the national cause in the name of modernization of Germany. The represented dimensions of power – wealth and intelligence – made them entitled to political representation in the future German parliament. Bew is very emphatic at this point: “Anti-semitism was neither rational nor pragmatic; it had no place in Rochau’s understanding of *Realpolitik*. By forgetting this lesson, and succumbing to the irrationality of hatred, many those who boasted of their *Realpolitik* after Rochau fell at the very first hurdle.” (BEW, 2016, p. 64). In terms of the accusations of *Realpolitik* being blamed for Hitler’s “Final Solution,” that can undoubtedly make no sense to the history of intellectual thought and the concepts here explored.

The scientific pretension of *Realpolitik* also found a new context in the writing of volume two. In 1859, Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, provoking a scientific revolution in biology. Progressively, trials to apply evolutionary language to other fields spread out, be it as metaphors to social analysis or even as real, naturalist hypothetical models. The cumulation of efforts to study society in those terms came to be recognized as “Social Darwinism” by 1877. Surely, Social Darwinists would take it too far, but it is undeniable that they also represent the *Zeitgeist* of experimental discursive treatments of the social world with the tools of the scientific revolution. Rochau also felt the demand to make *Realpolitik* more adequate to the scientific spirit.

As discussed above, Rochau maintained the clear distinction between the study of politics as philosophical research (“*philosophischen Forschung*”) and as empirical science (“*Erfahrungswissenschaft*”), a passage that may have ignored his earlier flirt with that dual, more intersubjective conception of the political as art and science, of knowers and doers, reinforcing the positivist take of politics-as-discipline. Politics-as-activity, this one directly related to statecraft, was to be understood as the art of success (“*Kunst des Erfolgs*”) applied to specific state purposes (ROCHAU, 1869, p. 57). Indeed, the notion of success was the word that best expressed Germans feeling after the Prussian victory in the war with its German neighbor in the south. As another liberal bourgeois wrote at that time: “I am no devotee of Mars ... but the trophies of war exercise a magic charm upon the child of peace. One’s view is involuntarily chained and one’s spirit goes along with the boundless rows of men who acclaim the god of the moment – success.” (quote on MORK, 1971, p. 59)

Assessment of policies, as he had already argued once, is a matter of calculation. However, contrary to the demands of the scientific method, the second volume did not do much to overcome the redundancy (or maybe tautology) between political strength, success, and public opinion. One appears to be a function of the other, all retaining that intersubjective constitution to the contempt of positivist science. Basically, he reaffirmed that the analysis of political behavior, the objective judgment of it in terms of the success (to be) achieved (ROCHAU, 1869, p. V),

involves no appreciation, it involves no renunciation of one’s own judgement, and least of all it demands willful submission. Rather, it is merely a matter of measuring and weighing and calculating the facts that need to be dealt with politically. Whether these facts were brought about by violence and baseness, or by justice and nobility, is certainly indifferent for the purpose in question.

It reinforced the opposition with utopia and now even with idealism. Palonen also sees in that passage the “etatist” (sic) character of Rochau’s signification, defining “the state is the one and only true subject of policy” with an “internally unitary character” (PALONEN, 2014, p. 133). This element will be practically compulsory in any definition of the assumptions of “political realism” by IR theory handbooks a century later. In fact, once Bismarck was definitely attached to the proverb, it became a colorful rhetoric which variously fed the political thought of important German thinkers, serving as a reference to dealing with the concept of “the possible.” That is one question of less historic value in terms of the original debate on *Realpolitik*. But, in retrospective gaze, it made a determinant path for the development of political thought, for good or for bad. The level of complexity of this debate is typical of contemporary political theory, and the incredible critical and systematization capacity of the political theory studies of Kari Palonen. As a history of the conceptualization of the activity of politics in terms of a struggle with time, the *topos* of possibility clearly presents its relevance, for ‘the possible is not only a question of ‘what’ or ‘how,’ but also of ‘when’” (PALONEN, 2014, p. 224).

The basic issue can be stated as that: what does it mean to refer to the possible as a condition of political action? And, if politics can be studied through the methods of science, generating and testing hypotheses of political behavior, how the notion of politics as the “art of the possible” may open new possibilities and widen the horizons of expectations? In an environment of positivism impacting the conception of politics, *Realpolitik* and its “law of the strong” could be an easy prey to pseudoscience and its perverted interpretation of Darwin’s theory as “the survival of the strongest.” Much more so if, as Palonen implied, Rochau’s *Realpolitik* volume two really expanded his concessions to a naturalistic sociology, with an explicit Darwinist language. Furthermore, that survival competition was not about the dynamics of agential performances, but as the objective determination of reality in which the will has little relevance. Escaping Rochau’s authorship, the idea of *Realpolitik* completely lost the sense of intervention in reality as chance along its successive reinterpretations, transforming the concept into an understanding of politics not as the art of dealing with the thrill of diverse possibilities but as the resignation in accepting the only possible policy (PALONEN, 2014, pp. 133-134).

Realpolitik did introduce the *topos* of the possible into the conceptual history of politics through definitive association with Bismarck and his speech on the “art of the possible” (*Kunst des Möglichen*) in an 1869 public speech. The possible was added to other *topoi* of the political, like facticity and desirability, in order to assess policies (PALONEN, 2014, p. 132-3).⁴³ As the chancellor never used the neologism, Rochau did not use the slogan in his volumes of the *Grundsätze*. The author did frequently associate *Realpolitik* with the horizon of the “attainable” and also had this restrictive sense of the future. Palonen understands that Rote’s “intention was not to introduce the possible as a conceptual level of reality beyond facts and claims, but rather to open a conceptual horizon for legitimate limitations of claims.” (PALONEN, 2014, p. 217). By the way, the possible marked a different criteria from that of success, which comprised the only concern of Social Darwinists.

Success can only be evaluated retrospectively. In its turn, the *topos* of the possible has a teleological function, it may translate success prospectively, anticipating the possibilities of successful results in the end. If the possible may lead to restraining certain political decisions, success is “a *conditio sine qua non* for all politics” (PALONEN, 2014, pp. 133-134). But still, the introduction of this *topos* created – in terms of bringing it to discursive intersubjective consciousness – a new space for political engagements.

Realpolitik conceptualizes the political by that which is attainable. It makes a claim of assessing political action before action is taken, when it is still about the horizon of expectations, not when it is already part of the space of experiences of the past, where the *topos* of success apply. As Rochau denounced political idealists (1869, p. 60):

By applying the standard of the idea to reality, by comparing what is available, not with what is probable under the circumstances, or at least possible, but with one’s own ideas of the absolute best, one easily comes to the conclusion that everything that exists is destined to perish, from which the justification of the most extreme resolutions then follows of itself.

Here Rochau even differs that which is simply possible from that which is probable, rising the chances of success then. At the same time, it is not about the availability of the best

⁴³“The rhetorical term *topos* refers generally to a site in which one can search for ideas, concepts and arguments.” Palonen works with different *topoi* of politics, forming “a repertoire (*that*) serves as a narrative device for arranging the conceptions and the fragmentary debates between them.” (PALONEN, 2014, p. VI) Beyond the *topos* of possibility, other *topoi* worked by him are irregularity, judgment, policy, deliberation, commitment, contestation, situation, and play&game,

ideas, but the possibility and probability of their implementation due to the adequate credit given to them by the societal forces of the moment. Bew also emphasizes *Realpolitik* is all about the art of appraising the possibilities for a particular political project in considering the constraints and opportunities offered by an actual context of social forces made of material resources and ideational factors (BEW, 2016, pp. 31-2). In a similar way, Kelly suggests Rochau tried to identify the lessons to be taken from the liberal failure of 1848 in Germany, summarizing them as (KELLY, 2017, p. 9):

a post-revolutionary political theory that re-described liberal ‘idealism’ around 1848 as political ‘realism’ in the 1850s and 1860s, in order to show that the untimeliness of those early demands had nevertheless become timely now, making their adaptation an obligatory part of a newly realistic account of contemporary politics.

The conceptual innovation may have intentionally induced the reenergizing of the liberal movement away from an eventual loss of mobilization in a crucial historical moment. Before going deeper in the complex issue of the *topos* of possibility, it is interesting to explore the performative features of the concept of *Realpolitik* for what it did with(in) the political relations of its time. The main debate in the historiography of Germany surrounding the role of Rochau’s *Realpolitik* is if it meant the liberals’ capitulation to Bismarck, leading to the frailty of the movement in national politics and tragic long-term consequences for the country and international relations. As the American historian Leonard Krieger dramatically contends (1957, p. 347):

political The emergence of political realists alongside the old idealists within both the moderate and radical wings of the liberal movement transplanted the age-old relationship between the transcendental notion of freedom cherished by the intellectuals and the authoritarian world of existences outside them into the very souls of the liberals themselves.

Another German historian, Gordon Mork proposed a historical revision in the hypothesis of liberals having given up fighting against Prussian authoritarianism and aristocratic privileges in the name of the *kleindeutsch* unification. His findings suggest that the National Liberal Party founding program launched in 1867 never included a full parliamentary democracy, but a constitutional monarchy and a liberal legislation pack. It was an exchange of support: Bismarck’s national unity and the Liberals’ economic prosperity legislations and institution of and respect for civil and political rights (MORK, 1971). The partnership between Bismarck and the National Liberals was the very founding act of the party in 1867, leaving behind the uncompromising progressives. From the unification of the German Empire to 1879, they were the dominant force in the *Reichstag*, being the main allies

of the chancellor. Liberals were able to reach the establishment a civil and criminal code to the country. In the management of German economic life, they secured a policy of following the Gold Standard. The country advanced bilateral international agreements to liberalize trade relations. Industrialization thrived. With him, the country was not embarrassed to wage wars with conservative regimes. Within Germany, Bismarck forced the downfall of local aristocratic authorities and even started a campaign to weaken Catholics and the Church in national politics, the famous *Kulturkampf* in 1873. With the country's most important social groups in a viable equilibrium of their forces by the end of the decade, Bismarck proceeded to dispel his dependency on National Liberals and let the conservative parties flow into the government and play with their (and his) anti-socialist fears to advance his new agenda of economic and political reforms.

Besides, successfully managing the domestic balance of power, Bismarck was able to uphold the *Reich* against the international reaction against the creation of the new country which obviously moved the “center of gravity” – to use Rochau's Newtonian metaphors – of European politics. Even with the three unification wars with its neighbors in the north, south, and west he managed not to permanently disturb the balance of European powers. As a power-balancing master, the Iron Chancellor definitively became the ideal type of the *Realpolitiker* in flesh and bones. Rathbun argues that Bismarck was really a one-of-a-kind among conservatives (and most national liberals) in terms of the self-interest and empirical motivations characterizing *Realpolitik*. The “so-called romantic conservatives,” was a threat to Germany's conduction of its foreign affairs. First, they would never compromise “transnational legitimist solidarity in the fight against liberalism.” After the successful unification and Bismarck's understanding of the need to guarantee the European powers that Germany was not expansionist, he had to put down the new imperialist animus of those conservatives. “He was a rarity in Prussian politics,” Rathbun concludes (RATHBUN, 2018, p. 10) Notwithstanding, only in a distorted (in the case of Rathbun, simplified) notion can Bismarck be understood as the chief *Realpolitiker*. And that is exactly where historical development took the concept.

The presentist imposition of conservatism on the meaning of *Realpolitik* is at least logically inconsistent in historical terms. “Rochau's *Realpolitik* was clearly nothing like such a reactionary form of rhetoric.” It could never be seen as a conservatism champion, for he

was critical of how reactionaries were also depoliticizing politics by trying to resolve it from something external to it “such as the attempt to naturalize political dynasties or to justify heredity rule in perpetuity through unilateral constitutional amendment or dictatorship” (KELLY, 2017 p. 13). Fortunately, through the same presentist lenses that take it for what it eventually becomes popularized – conveniently to conservatives, not less those of a liberal kind, the concept can be rescued as a left-liberal conceptualization of politics. It did exist as a historical phenomenon, and it still lives today in the polyphony characterizing this essentially contested concept. While Rochau himself ended his career at the center of German liberalism, the concept was born when he was adept of *Linksliberalismus*. In regard to that capitulation debate, Trocini concluded that the “*realpolitisch* paradigm did not involve the reformulation of the objectives of the liberal movement” of the *Vormärz*, “but the revision of the strategies through which to achieve them.” It came as “as a sign of fundamental rethinking within the left”, that stood against the political right in favor of the middle classes and worked against its fellows’ prejudice to form alliances with the proletarian mass (TROCINI, 2009, p. 223) Earlier, Mork was assertive against the capitulation thesis in that the engagement of the National Liberal party was essential to promote the effective representation of the *Mittelstand* and the advancement of their agenda in the constitutive moment of the German empire political structure. (MORK, 1971, p. 75)

The revisionism on the National Liberal capitulation thesis has finally brought up what was presented in the last section as the first of the five themes composing this essential, undistorted *Realpolitik* in terms of a historic conceptual invention and a contemporary political theory. That is the normative challenge of continuously promoting the politicization for the progress of the consolidation or defense of a liberal democratic regime. Rochau’s 1853 call to overcome the pure speculations in favor of more material-concerned analysis of political situations “was decisive in the process of ‘repoliticization’, and not of depoliticization, of the national German movement.” This is a major conclusion of Trocini’s work on the concept: *Realpolitik* never meant the abandonment of the national-liberal project, nor an apology of their revolutionary moment to the reactionary powers that be (TROCINI, 2009, p. 221-222). Judging by its own criterion, success in the advancement of the liberal project, one could even resort to the historiographical contestation arguing on the best quality

of the German democracy and the freedom enjoyed by its citizens than is the case with the Brits across the channel before the Great War (BEW, 2016, p. 67).

But success, once more, is only part of the necessary engagement with the *topos* of possibility as a criterion for the assessment of politics. For Palonen, adding to the repertoire of the *topoi* of the conceptual history of politics, the possible opposed the *topos* of facticity (“sticking to the facts”), then performing the opening of new possibilities (PALONEN, 2014, p. 216). However, in terms not of the abstract idea of the possible, but the factual concept and its particular history, as the concept is presented as not simply meaning that which is realistic, but the only real possible alternative for success, “the possibility aspect is entirely lost in this interpretation of *Realpolitik*.” The concept became dehistoricized, “turning it into a mere slogan to be denounced” a neologism reinventing a very old mantra earlier manifested as “might make right” or “the end justifies the means.” (PALONEN, 2014, p. 134) *Realpolitik* distanced from the emancipatory qualities of “the possible,” and became a mere criterion of expediency. The British in the time of Carr would recognize this restrictive meaning by the 1940s. This negative interpretation is coherent with his argument in chapter 6 of his *Twenty Years’ Crisis*, to be called *Limitations of Realism*. The “consistent and thorough-going realist” allows no “ground for action” (CARR, 1946, p. 84). Though it was one-sided, as politics are always about the equilibrium between utopia and reality, that was his purest meaning for “realism.” In recognizing Kenneth Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics* (1979) the possible was to be restricted by a given distribution of power and their differentials between states. For his turn, Waltz explicitly recognized the concept of *realpolitik* there in many elements present in Rochau’s original idea – calculation, success, and the preservation of the state – while surely not including its middle-class liberal and social power logics, nor the citation of Rochau’s name. In his very restricted Machiavellian/*raison d’État* definition of *Realpolitik* (inherited from Meinecke, not Machiavelli) and of power as relative material capabilities (WALTZ, 1979, pp. 117; 14, 82) was to promote the further closing of the open interpretations of the possible in politics as in abstract, a game that Rochau and Bismarck themselves first put into play.

Palonen presents both of the pair as referring more to the “impossible,” as a criterion for excluding possibilities rather than to opening the future to “chance,” in a more probabilistic sense. For this reason, the historical, not abstract path followed by the concept

“the reconceptualization of politics in terms of the possible is in opposition to *Realpolitik*.” (PALONEN, 2014, p. 133) “The possible” was a mediating category marking the limits of what normative projects could be successful from the given factual – which includes the normative – disposition of reality. In this approach, consequentially, as Palonen understands, the normative and the factual are necessarily given conditions for the analysis.

In a revealing passage from the first volume, Rochau would mock his fellows with this interpretation of the *topos* of (im)possibility: “Of all the parties which faced each other in the movement of that year, the democratic was the first to realize what it ought to want and the last to understand what it could do.” (ROCHAU, 1853, p. 137) Rochau’s intention then was not to set the possible as a space beyond factual realizability “but rather to open a conceptual horizon for legitimate limitations of claims.” The argument of the impossibility of certain political projects was a form of controlling the irruption of mass politics in rising tendencies since 1789 and 1848 by reducing the range of possible normative demands while dealing with this “possible” also in the European international politics, that which mostly attracted Bismarck’s attention (PALONEN, 2014, pp. 217-219).

It seems that these considerations on the problematic constitution of the *topos* of the possible into a particular concept historical path are less present elsewhere. Trocini, Bew, and Kelly do not work with the restricting aspect of *Realpolitik*. Those latter two follow a hypothesis worked on German literature that Rochau’s intention was to open up the future, by avoiding the depoliticization of the German left liberals in a time of too much reactionary constraint against them. In a liberal sense, indeed. The treatment of time within the concept of *Realpolitik* is revealing the more consistent interpretation of the *topos* of the possible in it. Rochau’s second volume emphasized political success is concerned with the realization of interests depending on the management of public affairs in the present, the near future at most, insinuating that restrictive, negative connotation of the possible. And this makes the horizon of expectations less long-termed. As Rochau wrote in 1868 (ROCHAU, 1868, pp. VI-VII, quote in BEW, 2016, p. 15):

The *Realpolitik* does not move in a foggy future, but in the present’s field of vision, it does not consider its task to consist in the realization of ideals, but in the attainment of concrete ends, and it knows, with reservations, to content itself with partial results, if their complete attainment is not achievable for the time being. Ultimately, the *Realpolitik* is an enemy of all kinds of self-delusion.

And, thus, he emphasizes that *Realpolitik* “is not about an unpredictable long run, but aimed at the *Zeitgeist*, the normative collective moods of the given moment” (ROCHAU, 1869, p. 208). However, historical interpretations of those authors lead to a more far-sighted notion of the possible. That which was restrictive at first, consistent with immediate concerns, transforms into big social reengineering in the long term. For Kelly, Rochau was looking forward to the reorganization of his political movement “during the crises of liberalism in the subsequent decades” (KELLY, 2017, p. 9). For Bew, *Realpolitik* “held out a vision of the future and a guide for how to get there rather than a fatalistic acceptance of the world as it was.” (BEW, 2016, p. 28) Bew suggests that Rochau chose as the epigraph from Francis Bacon as a message to the learned German governing elite. In Machiavellian terms Bacon criticized their confusion of “tactical agility in the short term with a long-term strategy” and warn that they were relying too much on fortune, rather than far future planning. (BEW, 2016, p. 35). Thence, *Realpolitik* was not simply about a reactive engagement in a restrictive environment. It demanded proactive, sometimes even preemptive actions to guarantee the realization of possibilities of the future (BEW, 2016, p. 39). According to Trocini, one needs to go not further than Rochau’s concern with showed with the emergence of masses into politics, the class struggles to satisfy their particular interests, and the effects of public opinion in its day-by-day unfolding, to comprehend how *Realpolitik* was very far-sighted in identifying problems consolidating in modernity.

Despite the relevance of such an interpretation to maintain Rochau’s coherence not with a capitulation of the liberal movement, for merely advancing his own political career – that is, *Realpolitik* was still that instrument for emancipation in the long run, the fact is that Palonen’s more restrictive interpretation of *Realpolitik* and the possible reflected the prudent way to deal with the dangers of taking politics for “the art of the impossible.” (PALONEN, 2014, pp. 219-24). He remembers Hannah Arendt’s contribution to the phenomenon of totalitarianism, quoting her point that it is in the nature of totalitarian fiction not only the fabrication of the impossible into the possible but the very act of foreseeing a future guided by ideological schemes as reality itself. In Arendtian terms, “the ‘everything is possible’ thesis marks an unpolitical claim that is alien to the action of plural agents, who accept each other insofar as they do not treat each other as fabricable ‘things’.” (PALONEN, 2014, pp. 223-4). The work of Stefano Guzzini has presented a much more relevant position in this

regard while giving a nice hint of contemporary IR interpretation of the *topos* of the possible. In his studies on the concept of power in the discipline, Guzzini explores its performative dimension in politics (GUZZINI, 2005). As he proposes, the definition of a situation as an issue of power is in itself constitutive of alternative possibilities. Not in restrictive ways, but prospective ones, by pointing to the idea of political reality to open new spaces of possibility. As he asserts, “attributing ‘power’ has the effect of ‘politicizing’ issues, moving actions into the scrutiny of a public realm where justifications are needed”. It profoundly affects any political dynamics. Guzzini correctly suggests that this performative understanding of the concept of “power” must be traced back from “developments in German political theory to political realism in International Relations.” (GUZZINI, 2005, p. 495) In that intellectual political tradition, he continues (GUZZINI, 2005, p. 511):

“Power” implies an idea of counterfactuals; i.e., it could also have been otherwise. The act of attributing power redefines the borders of what can be done. In the usual way we conceive of the term, this links power inextricably to “politics” in the sense of the “art of the possible”.

With the consolidation of “power” as the central concept of politics, to the point that both concepts became one new significant, “power politics.” However, realism, born as part of the comprehension of the statecraft, induced the contest over the concept of power as a very trace of politics, extending the activity and its performative effects to much beyond the original responsibilities of the state to spheres of the “civil society” like economy and education (not to say today’s issues of religious and sexual identity). The critique points to the transformations of “embedded liberalism”, in which politics go beyond the actions of states, implying the need for new resulting dynamics, like international regimes. As “politics diffuse,” responding not only for the more socially-inclusive enfranchisement but also for the opening of dangerous possibilities of state authoritarianism. Modern politics became a dangerous game “of both an expansion of ‘politics’ as a potential field of action, and a perceived contraction of ‘politics’ as real room for maneuver” as power has gone structural, a conclusion of the critical, post-positivist agenda in IR: “power analysis has become a critique of classical ‘power politics.’” (GUZZINI, 2005, p. 518-9) Despite his brilliant analysis of power, Guzzini seems to have ignored that Rochau himself had opened that material conception of power to its social constitution in his original *Realpolitik*, not that reduction of *Realpolitik* as *Machtpolitik*.

By the 1870s, *Realpolitik* was definitely flying with its own wings. When Rochau died in 1873 his reading of the concept already enjoyed little agreement among his contemporaries. The fascination with his candor in the 1853 book led to intoxication with power two decades later, and his counseling on moderation found indifference. As Menzel concludes, “Rochau was more realistic than the later generation which distorted his concept of *Realpolitik*.” (MENZEL, 1953, p. 85). The post-Bismarckian Germany would make it a synonym with the *Weltpolitik* of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Conservatives took on hold of *Realpolitik*. In Rochau’s conception, it was not to become part of the discourse of chauvinistic nationalism (much less to anti-semitism).

The most usual suspect here, if not fully convicted, is the German historian Henrich von Treitschke. The prominent mid-twentieth-century historian Friedrich Meinecke accused him of the “surprising deviation” that took place in Germany about a century before. Treitschke’s interpretation of *Realpolitik* eclipsed the original approach’s distinctiveness until the *Grundsätze* had vanished from public memory already by the late 1870s (TROCINI, 2009, p. 232-233; BEW, 2016, pp. 68-9). Treitschke, simply Leopold von Ranke’s successor as official historiographer of Prussia after his passing in 1886. First a “half liberal”, respecting Bismarck’s successes, he progressively turned into a fervorous conservative nationalist after unification, proudly celebrating the chancellor. It was much earlier, as a young fellow of Rochau in the National Liberal Party, that he started to write on the association of *Realpolitik* and Bismarck by praising his craft in promoting the *raison d’état* in international relations. Treitschke’s translations of his distorted *Realpolitik* finally reached the anglophone world. By WWII he was remembered as the prophet of National Socialism in the second half of the previous century (BEW, 2016, p. 69). He read it as soon as it was published, and gave it an “enthusiastic reception” (HOLBORN, 1960, p. 95). As Treitschke himself confessed once *Realpolitik* “fell like a thunderbolt into many a young mind.” (TREITSCHKE, quote on MEINECKE, 1962, p. 396) and felt he needed to spread to compatriots “how brilliant *Realpolitik* is” (TREITSCHKE, quote on BEW, 2016, p. 70). Treitschke thought the little book laid many more relevant lessons than the big treatises on politics, mostly due to its final passages concluding on the need for a German unification by the imposition of a superior power that happened to be Prussia. He was interested in the liberal element of *Realpolitik*, but he thought that nationalism was to prevail over it in the

future. Their generalization and vulgarization of *realpolitik* by Treitschke had the worst traits of German nationalism, indeed. While Rochau had rejected anti-Semitism and viewed German Jews as part of the nation, Treitschke was an anti-Semite. And while Rochau had been focused on the unification of Germany, Treitschke, who lived until 1896, turned his attention to the foreign policy of the newly united Kaiserreich.

Patron of an aggressive militarized Germany, he planted “the seeds of what was to be called *Weltpolitik*” (BEW, 2016, pp. 75-6) Treitschke took *Realpolitik* for a new, refined version of the Machiavellian tradition, if not strictly a “reason of state” claim with a definition of the states as power itself – thence power asserted in opposition to other sovereign states. He commended “the brilliant Florentine” as “the first to infuse into politics the great idea that the State is Power.” (TREITSCHKE, 1916, p. 85) As he wrote, “the State is power, precisely in order to assert itself as against other equally independent powers.” (TREITSCHKE, 1916, p. 19) Despite the impossibility of a political order without significant consideration to morals, there could only be space for any moral guarantee under the scope of an established power that had, through power, guaranteed itself among other powers. Consequentially, he concluded, “the power of ideas in the life of the State is only limited. It is undoubtedly very great, but ideas by themselves do not move political forces. If they are to influence public life effectively they must find support in the vital economic interests of the people.” (TREITSCHKE, 1916, pp. 24-5) The same Treitschke was able to write passages where his explicit intention to bring the elements of power and morals in fuller symmetry: “The State is not physical power as an end-in-itself; it is power for the purpose of protecting and furthering the higher types of human spiritual possessions.” (TREITSCHKE, quote in MEINECKE, 1962, p. 399) Sometimes Treitschke was capable of expressing a clear moral condemnation of any pure doctrine of power. Still, despite his ambiguities, Treitschke’s *Staatslehre* was, in the end, a “cult of power,” as Meinecke would later recall (MEINECKE, 1962, p. 392).

He displayed that outspoken Florentine opposition between the morals of individuals and those of the sovereign (“the State is not to be judged by the standards which apply to individuals” [TREITSCHKE, 1916, p. 99]), lending justifications at the same time to state violence in the name of national security while scorning foreign interventions in the name of moral deeds. In his especially dramatic expression, “we praise the state which draws the

sword to fend off ruin from itself, but sacrifice for an alien nation is not only unmoral but contradictory to the idea of self-maintenance, which is the highest content of the state.” (TREITSCHKE, 1916, p. 94) The German historian Karl Metz has denounced Treitschke’s authoritarianism, and imperialist nationalism, inspired by social Darwinism, and an agitator of hate against Jews in Germany. In the name of his xenophobe nationalism, he also fed hate against Austrians on the figure of Metternich, and against the English and their liberal-type kind of illusions. In Treitschke there was no more a duality between ethical principles and *Machtpolitik* calculation. He was all about “mathematical politics.” These conceptions were now well far beyond Rochau’s *Realpolitik* (METZ, 1982) Treitschke de-historicized *Realpolitik*. He interpreted its lesson to liberals as simply “the state is power.” It had explained “revolution from above,” and cleverly anticipated the events of 1866. (TROCINI, 2009, p. 229) And he justified state violence in terms of a special political morality: power.

Beyond the nineteenth century, *Realpolitik* continued its trajectory of distortion. In many cases, there even was not needed direct use of the term for it to be associated with the German concept. German nationalists, such as General Friedrich von Bernhardi, without any acquiescence of Rochau or his terminology, wrote *Germany and the Next War* to provoke compatriots into a future he more than desired. Describing war as a natural necessity and England as the major threat to his country, he professed that both powers were on a crash course not avoidable by any moral scheme or international arbitration, such as the Hague Conventions then proposed. The book – published originally in German in 1912, and translated to English in 1914 – set a strident alarm among the British about that “full-blooded school of *Realpolitik*.” In America it also was received as the old *Machtpolitik* theme, now poisoned by the “Prussian Jingo”, the “famous *Realpolitik* of the Prussian school” (BEW, 2016, pp. 10; 96-7). In Bernhardi’s book the word “realism” is absent, but the oppositions between the real and utopia, politics and morality, material power and ideals. In fact, as he wrote about the aggrandizement of the individual through the state, he revealed a conceptual opposition that occupied that place then: “War, from this standpoint, will be regarded as a moral necessity, if it is waged to protect the highest and most valuable interests of a nation. As human life is now constituted, it is political idealism which calls for war, while materialism—in theory, at least—repudiates it.” (BERNHARDI, 1914, p. 26) Idealism was

counterposed by materialism in politics. But idealism did not have necessarily that negative charge modern IR realism imposed.

Differently from utopianism, it did not always mean reckless, imprudent behavior, idealism could really be a relevant element of the best politics. Waging war, fighting in the frontline, was also an act of an indispensable idealism for him. After all, in material terms, competition – at the extreme, war – is the locomotive of all “real progress.” (BERNHARDI, 1914, p. 34) Arguing from social darwinist logic on the balance of power, nationalism, and domestic liberal economic relations, he advised against the interests behind the apparent highest moral appeals, such as universal peace. He defended that “every means must therefore be employed to oppose these visionary schemes. They must be publicly denounced as what they really are—as an unhealthy and feeble Utopia or a cloak for political machinations.” (BERNHARDI, 1914, p. 37). Utopias were usually a result not of nationalism, the popular idealism, but a feature of those highly educated, unhelpful for the cause of the country. “This nation possesses an excess of vigour, enterprise, idealism, and spiritual energy, which qualifies it for the highest place; but a malignant fairy laid on its cradle the pettiest theoretical dogmatism.” (BERNHARDI, 1914, p. 256). Moreover, those who defend the end of it were not only utopian but immoral, for eternal peace would lead to moral and intellectual stasis and degeneration. As if expressing an evolutionary pattern, he claimed that “the weak nation is to have the same right to live as the powerful and vigorous nation” (BERNHARDI, 1914, p. 34) – a social darwinist expression of the aphorism of “might make right.”

The great German sociologist Max Weber exemplifies another chapter in the history of *Realpolitik*, one that gained influence in the aftermath of the First World War. As a student, Weber attended classes of an elderly Treitschke and despised his colleagues and other professors’ admiration for his chauvinism and anti-semitism more than the very responsible for those public rants. He was not impressed by the concept of *Realpolitik*, which he thought was no more than *ex post facto* common sense, a form to justify why people tend to support policies that somehow promise success. As he wrote about the accommodation of the National Liberals with Bismarck, which he saw as a capitulation, “people try to embellish such behavior with the slogan ‘*Realpolitik*.’” (WEBER, quote on BEW, 2016, p. 152). And he chastised his compatriot's peculiar behavior: if other nations do practice power politics, the

Germans are those who need to announce it out loud with that slogan. Even though, Weber is recognized as a crucial link in the development of contemporary realism. Being a critic of the helpless situation of Germany between the revolution and the *Diktat* of Versailles, he developed a “realism of limits rather than possibility ... encased by the beholder’s own immediate preoccupations” (BEW, 2016, pp. 152-3).

Here Palonen makes this interpretation of Weber’s realism seemingly inconsistent. For him, Weber went beyond the vague, tautological of the maxim of the possible attached to *Realpolitik*. “Correctly understood, it is true that successful politics is always the ‘art of the possible’. It is no less true, however, that the possible was very often only achieved by reaching for impossibilities lying beyond oneself.” (WEBER quote on PALONEN, 2014, p. 221) Weber was introducing a variation of that reading of the *topos* of the possible, the “art of the impossible.” He witnessed revolutions inspired by an extensive interpretation of the possible to create what the movement was idealistically convinced to be possible He was part of the post-Bismarckian context in which a reductive version of the *topos* had no decisive audience. As an anti-positivist, Weber did not find convincing the calculating aspect of *Realpolitik* and its reductive take on what was possible in politics. All emancipatory political movements must experiment with extending the horizons of the possible and attain what first appeared as an impossible result. Summarizing his reading of Weber and his concept of the “art of the impossible”, Palonen wrote that “the political point is that there are no rules in politics regarding the preference of more cautious over riskier chances (*à la Realpolitik*), or vice versa, but the agents must choose what kind of *Machtanteile* they want to use in a given situation.” (PALONEN, 2014, p. 231). Progressively, the *topos* of the possible in the definition of politics became less about “what is possible”, as it was in Rochau, to “what are the resources and alternatives of action needed to make it possible” in the Weberian reconceptualization of “art of the possible.” Weber thought that a charismatic leader was needed in German to promote the emancipation of the country from the constraints imposed by European powers. Nonetheless, as a pioneering study of realist thought in which Weber is the starting point, Michael Joseph Smith remembered the tragedy reserved by future developments (SMITH, 1986, p. 52):

the next charismatic leader to come on the scene in Germany was Adolf Hitler—a tragic demonstration of the force of charisma and the consequences of unprincipled *Realpolitik*. Weber obviously would have hated

the Nazis and had nothing to do with the failure of Weimar, but it is fair to say that he did not fully appreciate the “demonic” possibilities inherent in his own ideas.

Of course, Smith is using the very pejorative definition of *Realpolitik* in the quotation above. But so did Weber. An “unprincipled *Realpolitik*” is not Rochau’s *Realpolitik*, which was not even to be opposed to *Idealpolitik*, but to utopian delusions, and it was assuredly committed to the advancement of the ideals of the liberal project. Thus, it is the distorted form of the concept. Besides that Weber, while Smith argues that he was responsible for the “delineation of the issues established the terms of realist discourse that endure to the present day” – not that realism is “wholly original with him,” only that he was definitively impacting (SMITH, 1986, p. 15). If Smith uses “realism” to describe the more neutral, academic meaning of the concept, he activates the German loanword to explore its more negative, devious stored senses.

Meinecke is probably the most popular reference in aligning *Realpolitik* with the international realm, *Machtpolitik*, and Machiavelli’s thought all around the concept of *raison d’état*, specially developed in his book of 1924 *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d’État and Its Place in Modern History*.⁴⁴ There, Meinecke interchanged *Staatsräson* with those distinct terminologies almost unproblematically, “to the extent that they are often presumed to mean the same thing by theorists of international relations to this day,” according to Bew (2016, p. 76). In fact, Palonen understands that this intimacy with which he traded the concepts meant he introduced the idea of the reason of state the normative dimension of policy assessment that *Realpolitik* presumed (PALONEN, 2014, p. 135). Meinecke literally succeeded Treitschke in editing the top History journal of the time. Though he also identified *Realpolitik* with Bismarck, his intention was to undo the distortion mostly caused, he thought, by Treitschke himself, and take it back closer to the original creation of Rochau. Meinecke may have failed in undoing the distortions of the concept by providing himself with new ones. But his reading did withdraw *Realpolitik* from the more jingoist taste left by Treitschke and his nationalist and anti-semitic admirers, though he was taken as “a lifelong anti-Semite” in private. In this way, the translations of his works to English were effective to make *realpolitik* a valuable suggestion for an American strategy in

⁴⁴ Curiously, the original German title did not include Machiavelli’s name at all: *Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*.

international relations against totalitarianism and expansionism by the 1950s (BEW, 2016, pp. 76-9).

The dialectic between reality and morality was at the center of his reasoning at a time when the opposition between *Realpolitik* and *Idealpolitik* was already commonsense. Meinecke had a particular taste for the argumentation over-the-counter conceptual semantic structure he found in Machiavelli, and that would mark realist theory in IR. The counterposition was not an original feature of *Realpolitik*. But it was in Treitschke's Machiavelli's readings, which was the source that Meinecke took from Rochau. Treitschke was trying to follow Rochau in reconciling the world of material power and the world of ideas, a very difficult balance for his fervorous militarist-nationalist idealism. That resulted in his definition of the state – and its morals – as a pure expression of its power. Treitschke's theory of the state claimed that the “highest ethos of the State could only be truly alive in a really powerful State.” (MEINECKE, 1962, p. 313) Rochau did a much better job from the beginning, defining *Realpolitik* as a pragmatic persistent teleological strategy, with no rollbacks in the commitment with the advancement – even if slow – of liberal values and norms. It was about the supremacy of the *Zeitgeist* and the public opinion as a space of political dispute. It was not about “jettisoning idealism.” Rochau's approach was one of a co-constitutive duality between those opposing poles. Critics imposed (or at least brought out) that counterconceptual asymmetry and Treitschke dealt with them as part of the concept itself. Meinecke intended to couple power and ideas in a more harmonious relation back again. And he pursued this interpretation from the concept of the reason of state in a revised reading of Machiavelli, whose thought he saw locked within Treitschke's appraisal of the Renaissance thinker. With him, *Realpolitik* became a theory of *Kultur* primacy, full of racial and anti-semitic tones that was in fact a cult of power – German power indeed. And he was able to catch it within Treitschke's own contradictions, as when he quotes that passage from Treitschke's idea that material power could never be an end-in-itself, that it had to fight for higher purposes.

Meinecke was part of an effort in post-World War I Germany to return to Bismarck's archives in order to free him – and altogether, *Realpolitik* – from the blame of the tragedy that engulfed European international politics in 1914. With the Nazi catastrophe in the Second World War, this effort became unjustifiable. And Meinecke was among the first German

academics to recognize the mistake in 1945. These intellectuals confessed having been seduced (if not intoxicated) by Bismarck's cumulating political success in his military campaigns. Self-criticism exposed their short-sightedness on the immediate power gains, then the long-term advancements in ethical principles (BEW, 2016, p. 227). Still, Meinecke was definitely crucial to the redemption of, if not Bismarck, the concept of *Realpolitik* and its transfiguration into IR realism in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in the US. His interpretation of the concept, though not chauvinistic or anti-semitic as Treitschke's, did merge different concepts that overshadowed Rochau's primary concerns. Moreover, being the consistency of the moral element in the politics intellectual own life trajectory an essential contextual element in filling everyone's perspectives, it is impossible not to consider that Meinecke did feed an anti-Semitism and chauvinism while Rochau never accepted it (BEW, 2016, p. 80). After all, Bew sharply puts it, "There was an important difference between being able to understand the political importance of *Zeitgeist* – as Rochau did – and being unable to see beyond it. Meinecke failed the second test. (BEW, 2016, p. 162)

Still, Meinecke's interpretation stands as a common presence behind – and maybe at the forefront – of the twentieth-century global/American IR political realism (HASLAM, 2002, p. 185):

For all that, in 1924 Meinecke successfully reinserted Reasons of State centre stage. Meinecke's significance extended far beyond the immediate impact of his two main works. All the key realists who followed, consciously or not, built their structures on the foundations he laid: the Dutchman, Spykman, the Englishman, Carr, the German, Morgenthau, the Swiss, Wolfers, and the Americans, Tucker and Waltz. These ideas, reiterated and reformulated by Meinecke, were so deeply imbibed as almost to become a commonplace; certainly below consciousness of the need for explicit attribution.

Though forgotten or distorted, the cumulating efforts on a history of Rochau's concept – and the life of the concept (before and) after him – reestablishes real *Realpolitik* a political possibility for present IR theory.

Rochau, Realpolitik, and the search for an international, political theory on the edge of modernity

The (also positive, but mostly) negative connotations which realism gathered in the vocabulary of the American foreign policy and the global/American discipline of International Relations are to be found in the second half of the nineteenth century when the Germans searched for a new institutional and normative solution to the political challenges of

modernity they faced in their particular domestic and (intra)interstate political dynamics. Their debate progressively incorporated this appeal to reality which could never sustain any agreement of what reality meant, by the way. “The questions of what is ‘real’ and what aims are worth striving for are, characteristically, barely discussed at all in this debate; they are seen as self-evident.” (PALONEN, 2014, p. 137) But they are never so. As one strives back to the past, different dimensions of the concept are found, superposing layers of meanings, that are only absent (as Harlan suggests in argument brought in chapter 1) if one looks for the “‘real’ realpolitik” as a the final true factual historic expression consisting of no ambiguities or whatsoever. But one may also search for the real in terms of effectiveness in terms of the effective polyphony that has cumulated over time in every succeeding singular moment of the path in doing a historical job. And one can look for theoretical inspiration, distilling the cognitive possibilities engraved in some more specific, and less inconsistent, manifestation of the concept, then play the theory-building game to effectively guide solutions to the most pressing complex issues of contemporary politics. With the first job done in the previous pages, some notes may be written down concerning this theory-building potential contained in a “new ‘real’ realpolitik.”

Realpolitik did slip from Rochau’s hands by 1869. “Germany had begun to learn the lessons of Realpolitik in a more unscrupulous sense than Rochau had intended,” making his new volume little relevant to pull back the concept from where it was born (MENZEL, 1953, p. 85). *Realpolitik* was not about Rochau’s conception of politics and his analysis of the German situation anymore. His contemporaries were intoxicated by Treitschke’s language of “the state as power” that promoted the brilliancy of *Realpolitik* to compatriots, including fellow liberal partisans, enchanted by the Iron Chancellor’s continuing military success in international relations. *Realpolitik* came to solidify its more pejorative meanings – not exactly false, but certainly exaggerated, just like in a caricature of a original represented object: a overt commitment with the science of politics, dismissing its more agential/ideational aspects; the materiality of interests and power; the utilitarian instrumentalization of politics; and a statist focus of political action and cognition.

Recent literature has emphasized earlier historiographic contributions to dismiss the heaviest images imposed on Rochau’s original concept over the years. *Realpolitik* was about a needed, never given, automatic rational thinking, based on objectivity and deliberation,

another primary assumption for the practice of *Realpolitik* (RATHBUN, 2018, p. 53). Engaging with public opinion was essential to the success of any initiative. But the fact that politics is not about fostering objective truths, but the prevalent opinions effectively formed among the masses about any subject. It was never about discrediting the liberal values – in fact, not even idealism in politics – as it eventually became expressed in the main self-image of the discipline of IR. This distortion, though, was not a genuine British or American fabrication, possibly inspired by World War I anti-Germanism. Certainly, that historical episode that fed scorn for all that was German among Brits and Yankees gave a new layer of meaning to this history. But the genesis of most of this distortion took place in the German domestic debate of the second half of the twentieth century, marked by popular pressure for political and economic rights, national unification, and international power politics, much before it reached the anglophone foreign policy communities. And it reached their shores, *Realpolitik* was deeply connected with other highly powerful catchy foreign loanwords – *Machtpolitik*, *Staatsräson*, *Weltpolitik*, and *Geopolitik* – available to the rhetorical goal of downgrading Germans as barbarians for their responsibilities in the most violently immoral events of the first half of the twentieth century.

The intention here was not to free Rochau from inconsistencies, they are all exposed above, especially from the perspective of the historical work. Thus, despite he must be charged for many of the scientism, materialism, utilitarianism, and statism that have cumulated over the meaning of *Realpolitik* – in fact, he and his historical social and linguistic context –, from the theory-building perspective, those more critical aspects of his proposal must be addressed in a rescue it in presentist goals. In fact, historically speaking, the historian Hermann Baumgarten was one of the contemporaries of Rochau who criticized his reductive interpretation of the *topos* of the possible due to the strict application of the scientific method – or at least the pretension through metaphors from it – to the art of politics, which led to the marginalization of its continuing constitution by normative ideals. That opened the route to understand power as a matter of calculations, rarely about critical normative reflection (PALONEN, 2014, p. 217). This systematic aspect of science over the political should be taken more humbly, allowing its criteria to the point of what could be reproduced in practice. Still, in emancipatory terms it must always confront the ethical problems of political activity – academic and practical – though the knowledge developed both in political philosophy and

political theory, even if they are taken as givens in actual analytical situations. Away from Rochau, it is needed to loosen the expectations for a law of gravity in the study of politics in the development of the realist tradition in IR – certainly a field with a large majority of positivists in the Waltzian style. The same kind of critical reception must be given to the elements of statism and utilitarianism thrust by his work.

One course to loosen that scientist take on politics is to further an understanding of Rochau's *Realpolitik* not as an explanatory theory – much less anything consistent with the gravity law – and take it for what it was, despite the Newtonian (and, worst, Darwinist in his second volume) metaphors of politics and the study of it: an attitudinal prescription towards objectivity (as intersubjectivity), a method of reading the political dynamics through the manifestation of socially powerful groups and their balancing relations, and a delimitation of disciplinary space, differing itself not from the study of ideas in social life – the particular normative givens in any analysis – but from the abstract reflection of these values, principles and norms, while not closed to the teleologies they may provide in analytical practice.

In this sense, one of the advantages offered by Rochau's *Realpolitik* is its eclectic use across the different ideologies. While it became disastrous in the extremely distorted version that reached the hands of Nazi supporters and to the observation repudiating observers, it was open to a more healthy counselling for the action of rival political groups in liberal environments. As Kelly realized (2017, p. 13):

Rochau thought it would be a grave error to assume that general ideologies can capture the realities of politics; modern forms of conservatism, liberalism, constitutionalism and democracy all contained elements of the necessary ideas to appraise political action, but on their own they were insufficient, offering a chimerical veil of transparency through historical simplifications. Here, his realism did become a style or temperament as much as a method.

Still, as authored by an individual cognizant, *Realpolitik* had its normative purpose, it was historically committed with the advancement of a liberal society – entailing the rule of law, a free press, the freedom of political association and expression, and other economic and civil rights. Still, it was permissive to different ideologies, in abstract logical terms, to the point that it has made present in the thought not only liberals themselves, and conservatives as Bismarck, but socialists (despite Marx's disdain) like Kautsky, Luxemburg and Trotsky (BLACKLEDGE, 2006; HAUG, 2009). Moreover, Rochau's *Realpolitik* may be understood as an effort at the "secularization of liberalism" in the *Nachmärz*, one which was to be "aware of the geopolitical realities," which in his time and perspective was about the necessary

critique of the universalistic transcendental liberal schemes of free-trade and institutions that were to protect the rival imperial powers against Germany (KELLY, 2017, p. 18).

With all the arguments for a rediscovery of a (and not “the”) “‘real’ realpolitik” for theory-building in IR, it must be clear that it has to go much beyond the notion defining the concept as merely “the pursuit of vital state interests in a dangerous world that constrains state behavior, ... the heart of realist theory.” (RATHBUN, 2018, p. 7). It is much too common sense a definition that serves more to disperse than to really invite further, much more complex, understanding of the concept. As the chapter proposed, a Rochau’s proposal could be organized in five main assumptions that must be well interpreted to transport it to the address the most urgent political demands of the present. First, the continuing call for political mobilization for the advancement or preservation of liberal-democratic political structures. Together with the second point, the centrality of power and the balance of social forces for the achievement of political order, it means a highly cautious following of the institutional structures that manage a healthy balance of power mobilizing politicization for the progress towards consolidating (and defending) a liberal democratic regime; third, there is the role of ideas in politics, which calls for understanding the normative givens of a society and the essential role deliberation with the public has in strengthening one’s position in political agendas, not forgetting the danger of populism in this sense; fourth, the commitment with scientific principles of unbiased empirical consistency cannot eclipse the relevance of morals, identities and purposes in studying the political world; and lastly, the relevance of the political expressions of the *topos* of the possible, which can differ legitimate emancipatory projects, from reactionary, authoritarian and even totalitarian ones.

A sound, “‘real’ realpolitik” should be of great interest in the present world political arena(s). Unsurmountable challenges spread. From the need of convincing many of the scientific knowledge alerting an irreversible climate change process, to the difficulty in implementing vaccination and other public policies in the course of a tragic global pandemic. From the peril experienced by liberal democracies, confronted with illiberal projects not mostly from foreigners but its own citizens, to threat of unregulated transnational social networks making incredible profit with fake news agitation of its subscribers. Consistently with Rochau’s concerns with social classes conflicts, there is the need to deal with a continuing excludent globalization consolidating a fourth Industrial Revolution in which, due

to deepening and widening automatization, a proletarian world class is less and less a social living force and an unacceptable misery rules their lefts. And, not less important, the classic anxiety with the moving balance of powers in the world with the rise of China, spilling into increasing foci of military conflicts around the planet, even threatening nuclear war in the case of Russians in Ukraine. The rarity of *Realpolitikers* in the world – understood not in its pejorative, but in its more genuine sense – may only aggravate all the anxiety.

Inconclusions: “*Realpolitik*” and “Political Realism” and “Anti-realism” in the global/American discipline of International Relations

I cannot countenance the traditional belief that postulates a natural dichotomy between the objectivity of the scientist and the subjectivity of the writer.... What I claim is to live to the full the contradiction of my time, which may well make sarcasm the condition of truth.

Roland Barthes. *Mythologies*, 1957.

Have courage to do your own thing, and say what you really think, not what other people have told you to think. Why else should anyone want to be an academic?

Susan Strange, *ISA Presidential Address*, 1995.

In the aftermath of World War II, the discipline of International Relations experienced a boom. That was not mostly to the realist turn the Englishman historian Carr had guided the discipline, but to the conversion that took place across the ocean, where a highly self-confident liberal democracy, the most materially dominant state (and up to some point, normatively too [COX, 2005]) of the time, with such a great influx from German scholars now a refugee in their new home country. These three factors are deeply constitutive of the form and substance with which the global/American discipline of International Relations and the practice in and studies on American foreign policy have consolidated in the second half of the twentieth century.

On the one hand, since Hoffmann’s seminal provocation (1977), the American condition of this social science has been continuously reaffirmed. The famous TRIP survey, for example, has recently attested from the outset of its analytical report conducted by Daniel Maliniak and his colleagues that “the conventional wisdom about US hegemony in the IR discipline,” in the sense of the largest IR community, the higher presence in training scholars working worldwide, that American scholars and universities remain at the top with their foreign peers, and that the very perception of these peers is mostly one of a “profession as dominated by the US academy.” (MALINIAK et al., 2018, p. 4)⁴⁵ Besides, this dominance is stuffed with a particular content. As it has been noted, since its foundation, IR “remains to

⁴⁵ Among the respondents of 32 countries, “only in Brazil, China, and Taiwan do scholars not perceive that they are part of a field dominated by the United States.” (MALINIAK et al., 2018, pp. 16-17). However, his data for the next question indicate that, contradictorily, Brazil and China answer they stand at the top in thinking US dominance in the discipline must be countered.

this day shaped by several competing paradigms, the most prominent of which is indeed the so-called “realist” approach.”(LOUIS, 2016: 1)

At the same time, as the country became more evidently the main powerhouse of the international system, realist orientations of foreign policy imposed themselves as structural constraints. Even though simple interest would not be easily sold at home if it was not tempered by the liberal purposes of the nation and its imaginary of the city upon a hill. John Ruggie recalls how presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman put in practice foreign policies – the creation of UN and NATO – that expressed this awareness of the need to engage with power politics in the international arena, while doing so through means justifiable by the liberal self-image of Americans as a polity. Their lesson was taken by the failure of the realist internationalism of President Theodore Roosevelt and the liberal internationalism of President Woodrow Wilson in securing international engagement within the framework of a League of Nations. In the end, both Wilsonians and reservationists – the liberals and the realists of the time – were defeated by the preference of the irreconcilables – the isolationists – who got their country “back to normalcy.” at least until the tragic resume of the World War in 1939 (RUGGIE, 1998d). Since then, American foreign policy has been a game of equilibrium between these orientations, forming what Mead had called “American realism.” He pointed out, “The tendency to divide our statesmen into realistic serpents and idealistic doves often misses the balance between the two qualities that our best statesmen maintain and that to some degree is intrinsic to American realism.” (MEAD, 2001, p. 99). In the end, TR and Wilson expressed understandings that fed in both these ideal types. No one ignored the weight of American liberal identity, nor the responsibilities imposed by the power status in the international scene. While their rivalry may have forced them to differentiate themselves from one another, none could present the right equilibrium between realism and (liberal) idealism to his compatriots to engage public support in Congress for the government’s foreign policy strategies (RUGGIE, 1998d).

As the final chapter demonstrated, Meinecke’s interpretations of *Realpolitik* became the main spring for the reception of the German concept in the anglophone world. He was able to clean up some aversion for the jingoist version of Treitschke – usually equated with “Prussianism” –, especially after the sinking of the Lusitania in 1913 and the anti-German sentiment in the US. But he did it by making the concept less biased by linking it to more

perennial traditions of international political thought such as Machiavellianism and reason of state, choosing out the issues of the social constitution of power or the concern with the progress of the liberal agenda at home. But that supposes that the American reception of *Realpolitik* was only made relevant by the German *émigrés* of the Nazi era who were readers of Meinecke. As chapter four recounted, there was a flood of German migrants to the US peaking during that second half of the eighteenth hundreds. Many were failed revolutionaries of 1830 and 1848, and found asylum in a country in which their compatriots made the larger immigrant community. That cultural highway established between America and Germany made the concept of *Realpolitik* available to Americans much before the so-called first debate in IR (DIAS, 2020).

One important presence in this period, inclusively resisting to the rising anti-Germanism of American fellows, is the text on *Realpolitik* by Henry Crosby Emery in 1915. By then, Treitschke's reading dominated the interpretations of the concept and Meinecke was still was to become famous, probably not having made significant impact on Emery yet. The professor of political economy at Yale had spent a visiting researcher season at the University of Berlin, where he might have been in contact with the trending literature of the time. In fact, Emery does not need to even refer to Treitschke to reach *Realpolitik* as he, differently from other ultranationalists like Bernhardt (who he also ignores), display a rare knowledge by that time of the original authorship of the concept in Rochau (EMERY, 191, p. 451), leading to a very satisfactory interpretation to that original conception in a time it was already being lost in Germany. The guns of August had already started firing almost a year before, and there was an increasing social anxiety about an eventual need to choose sides – the choice was never obvious by then. The Lusitania was lying down the bottom sea, but the memories of British invasion in 1812 or the disruptive influences in the Civil War made it more difficult than when retrospectively approached. Besides, both large British and German immigrant communities pressed one way or the other.

The article was meant as a denunciation of the blatant hypocrisy, popular among fellow Americans and the British, when referring to *Realpolitik*, as if the pursuit of the national interest was something alien to them. As if they did not also play practical politics under the guise of theoretical politics. Emery knew this counterposition as that of the real against the ideal in politics, as he noted, referred to by his anglophone contemporaries as

“political realism and political idealism.” (EMERY, 191, p. 451). But to Emery, it was clear that *Realpolitik* was not about excluding moral criteria, but the duality of morals and power that make the effective, successful politics. Interests could not be reduced to their material expressions, as it could push further the violent competition between political groups with no higher moral purpose to realize in life. But “impractical fantasies” of any ideology proposing to overcome conflict in politics were no less dangerous. Besides a language very close to that of Rochau’s book – which was “in the air,” common in other German readings Emery must have made – that other pioneering concerns with public opinion amidst consolidating liberal constitutions is there. The social nature of power is also evident. The moral duties of politics are rightly beside it. Moreover, the scientific attitude comes as a negation that *Realpolitik* is uniquely German, as Emery understands Rochau’s intent did not merely get exhausted by his country, but “as a theory of politics” to engage with “a universal problem in the political field.” (EMERY, 1915, p. 452). And, against the confusion of the contemporary debates on the war, *Weltpolitik* (he refers to *Weltmacht*, more specifically) was not to be understood as a goal of world dominion to “anyone who really understands German history and German opinion in the last generation,” but that Germany must had been recognized as “one of the world powers” (EMERY, 1915, p. 453). Finally, his reading of the ideological origins of the concept, the trial Rochau and his partisans made at combining nationalism and liberalism. As he wrote:

The idealists of Germany, whether poets, philosophers or politicians, were not content, however, to leave entirely alone the problems of political reconstruction, even if they felt themselves superior to what might seem the sordid struggles for power on the part of other nations or the petty rivalries among the German states themselves.

Consequently we see in the first half of the nineteenth century noble efforts on the part of German liberals to secure a more united national life and a higher degree of individual freedom. The chief characteristic of these efforts was, however, that they were idealistic and did not reckon with the hard facts of existing German conditions.

Emery offered a very rich genuine and precise description of the historical concept. Others like Walter Lippmann, in that same year, worked the concept in fairly unbiased terms. But, as Meinecke’s, almost a simple synonym to power politics. He claimed that the talk against *Realpolitik* as “Teutonic *Kultur*” was that same kind of scorn against “Muscovite barbarism” but hypocritically never leveled at “British Liberalism.” (LIPPMANN, 1915, p. 53). Despite Emery does not escape equating *Realpolitik* – and political realism – with power politics at times, both his and Lippmann’s interpretations of the concept clearly stood out of

the crowd, who were already making use of the word to persecute all that was German in America. After the declaration of war in April 1917, sentiment became hysteria. “In this context, *Realpolitik* was quickly associated with a non-civilised, barbarian international conduct of ‘the Huns’, as this was a frequent reference to Germans and their *Kultur*, their militarism and jingoist chant.” (DIAS, 2020, p. 9). It would take time – and tens of million deaths worldwide – for *Realpolitik* become acceptable again in the American political debates on the country’s international strategies in the face of the Cold War, at least in that more Meineckean sense in the new realist-dominated discipline of IR. Still, the bases of an anti-realpolitik political culture in the US had been constituted.

Choosing – with more or less discursive awareness – the debate triggered by the *émigrés* as the foundation of IR is to omit another previous foundation, explicitly familiar in its conceptual and semantic structures, of the identity of the discipline. Privileging Morgenthau, Wolfers, Herz in this role makes the debate less alien, more a result of the American genius while still an import, originally strange to the country’s liberal foundation. Also, that choice takes from “*Realpolitik*” what it offered in that context: a scientific kind of knowledge of power politics. It has been argued that Morgenthau organization of the 1954 *Rockefeller Conference* was a gambit of traditionalists against the new scientism of the social sciences, one which he lost (GUILHOT, 2008). However, in a sense, Morgenthau won its bet, as realism became the central conceptual reference of the field. Moreover, one cannot dismiss that not only Morgenthau’s (despite his argument against the “scientific man”) but Rochau himself, or more imprecisely – but in meaningful contextual terms –, their times have explicitly opened the paths for capturing the art of science through the tools of science. Even if their approach to social science was more of a traditionalist kind, they did not feel embarrassed to link it to nature or even to gravity.

Michael Lind wrote a review of Bew’s *Realpolitik* in which he considers that the book “depends on distinguishing realism, as a broad tradition that includes premodern thinkers like Machiavelli, from realpolitik” (LIND, 2016, p. 69) Historically, this is much questionable. The term “political realism,” stylized by Rochau’s neologism did not define the debate, Lind is right. It would happen anyway. But the precise forms opened by *Realpolitik* introduced class discussions of justice and order that still lives in the backstage of the conceptual show. The ways in which it was appropriated by conservatives, silencing these less-than-ludic

perspectives, has never completely vanished from political debate, always remaining a possibility to be more fruitfully explored to open up political spaces to these commonly marginal questions, as the many referred texts dealing with Rochau along the decades attest. Before, Rochau and since Kant popularized the term, "realism" could have been increasingly applied to politics, but in no more than its "get real" generic sense. There is even a register of "political realist" in an American literature, arts, and science magazine in 1848, five years before Rochau's publication. It had that generic appeal, without needing any further definition (MISCELLANY, 1848, p. 429). Thence, Rochau's intervention made the concept store certain emancipatory understandings of the political that were bypassed by future generations. But as history goes on, and concepts are loci of political struggles, to rescue those meanings it not only historically relevant, but also in terms of the theorizations of world politics, more widely understood than "international politics."

The main contribution of these historiographical efforts at which this dissertation also aims, Lind reassures, is that it "undermines this bogus tale of innocents at home. ... German-American intellectual exchange long antedated the interwar period" (LIND, 2016, p. 73). American sociology was deeply influenced by this community in the late-nineteenth century while, for Bew, it was never a conscious, concerted import (BEW, 2016: 205). Still, others, like James Aho thought these founders in sociology were in fact importing a "sociology of conflict" as a form of pluralism (AHO, 1975) that Gunnell recounted as a perceived threat by pluralist pragmatists founding the academic studies of politics and the liberal essence of the American polity. The anti-realpolitik stance formed as a reaction to protect American political science made it behaviorist, and policy-oriented, assuming their liberal open-society definitions as givens. With this movement, the critical debates on the nature of the political, the space for human progress in politics, and other normative reflections became marginalized in a new (outer) field of political theory (GUNNELL, 1993; 2005. See chapter 2). As Hartz noted elsewhere that, because of the absolute dominance of liberalism in American political thought, "it hardly needed to become articulate, so secure that it could actually support a pragmatism that seemed on the surface to belie it. American pragmatism has always been deceptive because, glacier-like, it has rested on miles of submerged conviction." (HARTZ quoted on CRICK, 1959, p. 80) As the consensus literature of Hartz gained popularity in the 1950s, the equally increasing popularity of Morgenthau and other

realist émigrés could be reimagined as a novelty in the US strategic culture. An anti-realpolitik narrative makes possible seeing *Realpolitik* and political realism as searching for objective facts Americans had no choice but to learn in theory; as a fact, but yet to be made an obsolete relic of the past; and as alien to the society had projected for themselves and the rest of the world yet to be civilized.

Still, the historical German-American intellectual dynamics presents an alternative reading. As a legitimate “nation of immigrants,” there was an evident constitutive connection between the German *Nachmärz* debate and later debates opposing political realists and political idealists in the early-twentieth-century America, as the ones advanced by Emery or Lippmann. Another consequence of that early debate in American academic political studies was another isolation of *Realpolitik* in the sub/autonomous discipline of IR. And, with time, that amoral conception of politics left to breed on the international, stretched its possibilities – in that more restrictive sense (see chapter 5) – becoming a full positivist, structural, material theory of IR in Waltzian neorealism (WALTZ, 1979. See chapter 1). However, an anti-realpolitik attitude in the American society interdicts this reading.

More than a realist prominence in the discipline of IR, as authors commonly assert, what is more relevant in the global/American IR is definitely the anti-realpolitik attitude that created very specific spaces of possibility for the development of dominant approaches of realism in IR. This is precisely the last conclusive argument in Bew’s book (2016, p. 309), at least in its terminology. His conclusion could move forward. Anti-realpolitik is not simply responsible for obscuring the ways in which the US (and Britain) manages to successfully mix the elements of its idealism with the expediencies of realism. It is not simply anti-realism, as the literature around Drezner (2008) also developed and consistently found it to be a kind of myth, meaning its falsity. Thus, it is not merely about avoiding or not foreign policy alternatives linked with the national interest, the openness to military options, or the need to be more selective about interventions abroad. Anti-realpolitik, in consistency with Rochau’s idea, should mean the restrictiveness to debates about the lack of political inclusion of middle-classes and popular social forces not merely as a theme of social development or normative theory, but as a condition of a political, liberal order in IR.

Two contemporary theoretical issues for the study of IR descend from this conclusion. First, the development of a realist-idealist debate in IR and in/on American foreign policy does not represent a crack within its international identity. Rochau's *Realpolitik* attention calls to the "get real" in politics was never about the irreality of political idealism. Both notions were conceived together. The asymmetrical opposition between the concepts, put in extremes of a binary relation, an event fermented in its German origins yet, was a welcome contribution to the liberal culture of the US for it represents what critical realists call the "problem-field." (PATOMÄKI; WIGHT, 2000, p. 219) It means the set of theoretical assumptions that are not challenged and whose solutions are inevitably available in their middle-ground. That problem-field should have made it obvious from the start – the development of the narrative of a debate between realism and idealism – that American foreign policy had to combine the best of both worlds. In this sense American realism (or American idealism, by the way) was not a historical achievement of great intellectuals – as the many writings presented in this dissertation suggested (e.g. RUGGIE, 1998d; MEAD, 2001; SCHMIDT, 2012b) –, but a conspicuous workable solution, never trespassing its boundaries, though. In this sense, Bew's conclusion of that American idealism guided the reception of realism to form an effective foreign policy made it much closer to Rochau than any other subsequent implementation of his real *Realpolitik*. It is quite an unsurprising closing.

In this same sense constructivism is a given solution forever posed by the realist-idealist debate, but which cannot move the science forward, for they incorporate incommensurable ontological and epistemological vices of those extremes. However, they entertain players within this space of possibilities created by the opposition itself, in an eternal swing from the boundary of boredom (the eternal peace) and the boundary of negativity (the eternal power politics). To key agents, it enables foreign policy-making in the US to legitimate its preferences, power, and actions in its international affairs, while apologizing not only to foreigners but to its own citizens in terms of the limits anarchy imposes on its liberal way of life, outside and inside (PATOMÄKI; WIGHT, 2000, p. 215). As Jervis also claimed, Walt's and Mearsheimer's denounce of American anti-realism are typical behaviors of believers in the country's liberal exceptionalism, while also very convenient to their own academic careers. When the American state fails in its international

liberal promises, their realism gets confirmed (and the state gets its justification). But when realist scholars fail in their explanation, anti-realism explains their shortcomings in explaining the world. The problem-field makes it a win-win situation for realists and for liberal idealists. The unpacking of *Realpolitik* into realism and idealism, the central semantic structure of the field, was essential in escalating this confusion and ambiguity.

The second issue, much of interest of the society from which this dissertation is written, is the place of realism to less developed countries. The answer to it, usually from both realists in the core of the discipline and *desarrollistas* in the global South is that realism is a theory for the developed countries, if not exclusively to great powers. There is an interesting exemplar passage involving the most important name in contemporary realist theory of IR and the very author of the present dissertation. Professor John Mearsheimer gently conceded a virtual talk to IR students in Brasília during the lock-down measures of the global pandemic. He was to talk about the implications of the plague to the contemporary power politics dynamics. After it, during the Q&A session, he answered to a student questioning on the relevance of realism to the conduct of Brazilian foreign policy and its challenge of overcoming its most serious vulnerabilities. In his answer, he claimed that (MEARSHEIMER, 2020b):

Extreme poverty has nothing to do with great power politics...if you want to study extreme poverty and figure out how to deal with the problem don't study International Relations as we study international relations. ... We do not have much to say about extreme poverty. But that is not because we are irresponsible, but because we deal with another subject.

For him, realism was useful to peripheral countries only as a tool to explain and anticipate the great powers' behavior. It did not serve to design their own policies. By the same token, the historian of Brazilian foreign policy, Amado Cervo, wrote on the need to develop a non-realist and non-liberal internationalist autonomous idiosyncratic conceptual path for the country's international insertion fully committed with its development. In his words back in the 1990s still, he defended that (CERVO, 1994, p. 15):

Realism dominated, in effect, the study of international relations, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. Realist theory leaned towards the Cold War and said nothing about the Third World and North-South relations. The concepts of imperialism and development that dealt with these issues did not penetrate the theory of international relations, although Latin Americans strengthened them through ECLAC thinking and dependency theories. Northerners continue to admit that theories of development since Keynes are part of the economic science, not political science. As if poverty, domination and dependence, cooperation and exploitation were not part of the real world of international relations⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The quote from Cervo (1994) was freely translated from the original in Portuguese.

Later would insist that under such conditions, the theories of the North cannot properly incorporate the political demands of the South (CERVO, 2008). Agreeing with this perspective, the political scientist Fábio Wanderley Reis expressed curiosity for this situation defining the Brazilian IR community: the low quality of academic debates on foreign policy caused by its reduction to the mere reproduction of journalistic coverage. “Intelligent” comments are plenty, but theoretical-analytical field research beyond the idiographic mode is lacking. Reis also noted that debates over Lula’s I and II foreign policy were full of references to the realism-idealism rhetoric, conveniently adjustable to sympathy or hostility towards the government. On that, he wrote (REIS, 2010: 59):

Thus, if it is a question, for example, of the actions of the Bolivian government with respect to Petrobras (*the Brazilian state-owned oil company*), Lula is demanded to act with ‘realism’, firmly defending national interests; if it is a question, however, of Cuba or Iran, the position demanded is rather the idealist defense of human rights⁴⁷

In the author's understanding, this is a problem linked to the very nature of the global/American IR discipline. Realism is much too easily accepted as a postulate in which rational calculation is not an attribute of individuals, but of the “State,” or for that matter, its official elite (REIS, 2010: 61). Such statism induces the treatment of the problem of identity as one of the “national” versus the “foreign”, and the values of equality and freedom a privilege of domestic relations in a liberal democracy, while difference condemns the anarchic international politics. In this way, international politics faces great discursive difficulties in seriously dealing with the problem of deficient development in most parts of the planet. The search for greater equality among peoples is inconsistent with the condition of differentiation between the units of the international system.

But *Realpolitik*, as a foreign policy theory, could and should be understood as the art of devising emancipatory possibilities in a world of latent conflict of interests between different living social forces. It may be no more than a vital intellectual opening to promote foreign policy strategies that make possible the development in peripheral nations in the world. It may lead to the responsibility of an organized civil society wiser for being freed from fantasies that may be embedded in offers of developed countries for international cooperation and assistance (when not intervention) in their responsible pursuit of their own expressions of social power. It may make local governments more responsible in deliberating

⁴⁷ The quotes from Reis (2010) were freely translated from the original in Portuguese.

policy choices with citizens, able to assess them in terms of the possible success of different alternatives. But, when realism or *Realpolitik* are crudely understood as no more than “the egoistic pursuit of the national interest under largely material structural constraints” (RATHBUN, 2018, p. 12), it leads to that strange agreement between North and South perspectives on the relevance of the theory to the latter. If it is to transcend the notions of amoral power politics, perverse egotism, militarist nationalism, and so on, and emphasize the elements of the ethics of responsibility with the commitment to objectivity (in the intersubjective Weberian sense), deliberation in politics, and the appropriate inclusion of social forces into a balance of power, it might open up a promising avenue.

The lessons to be taken from a real *Realpolitik* may be of no value to the historian, as Lind criticized Bew’s last chapter (LIND, 2016). But it surely is from the perspective of political theory and IR. This conclusion offers a distinct systematization of those lessons from Bew’s final chapter – maybe more different in terms of emphasis than content – and briefly applied to the contemporary political challenges, especially from this postcolonial setting. As such, when the term “‘real’ realpolitik” was here in the preceding chapter, “real” meant not the historical coherence – as it appears to be in Bew’s usage – but the effectiveness of a political strategy that successfully advances higher moral purposes in the context of modernity as it is presented today. Indeed, Kelly notes that the development of the parallel realist-idealist debate in political theory (not IR) in the 1960s and 1970s was couched with concerns with global justice, national social welfare, and huge economic inequality at the international level. For that, he defends that the intellectual history, when applied to developing political theory, must “show the value still to be found in forgotten ways of seeing some of the rather old problems we still have to deal with, and how with that in mind, we might hope to become more confidently realistic in dealing with them.” (KELLY, 2017, p. 19). And that was exactly the secondary goal of this dissertation.

The “‘real’ realpolitik” five basic assumptions suggested in chapter five may now be restated. First, it is about the continuing call for political mobilization to achieve social progress in terms of higher moral purposes, but that unfortunately may include perverted ones too. Because of that, the improvement or even the preservation of liberal-democratic political structures depend on deliberation. Even autocratic regimes do need deliberate with its composing social forces to reach those moral purposes, be them the very preservation of

the regime. Social mobilization depend on a strong civil society, which in many aspects is still lagging behind in developing countries, not because of immaturity but for the dependent development condition in which the pervasive interest of developed centers harass leaders of possible disruptive local movements. The formation of new leadership in a “‘real’ realpolitik,” consistently with Rathbun’s conclusion (2018), is part of the politicization urge, even an essential civil society strategy aiming at the state development (and the possibilities for it to develop national social welfare) in the end.

Second point, power is indeed the ultimate definition of politics. However, it must be understood as the well-manifest social forces from the outset, avoiding any simply materialistic descriptions of it. This social definition of power is promising, as it links it with perspectives brought by what Guzzini has called the “structural power.” For him, current IR experiences reconceptualisations of power that really mean a politicization tendency by the very scholars, dissatisfied with “classical ‘power politics’”. (GUZZINI, 2005, p. 519). This emancipatory effort has looked for power new technological expressions of social organization, information and knowledge control, agenda setting, and regimes functioning. While Guzzini indicates that this route led to a contradictory perception of a rising impersonal social rule, more constricting than ever, Mark Blyth made an urgent call to the necessity for not using the social conception of power to dismiss the corporeal fact of human life. The controls of the basic resources that may increase the guarantee of food and health and the avoidance of others physical violence must not be forgotten by critical theorists, born from Marxian takes on the capitalist society but all too much distracted by the elements of the ideational superstructures (BLYTH, 1997). After all, it is a precise capturing of the present state of the balance between social forces that guarantees a collectively best political order. In this sense, public defenses of social justice are vain if they are not followed by results against the extreme contraction of wealth in modern capitalist societies. *Realpolitik* “consisted in the continuous integration of a constantly changing constellation of forces.” (TROCINI, 2009, p. 226) But these social forces must present themselves as such, not simply waiting the day that redistribution comes. The relevance of civil society politicization is clear once more.

The third assumption deals with the role of ideas in politics. For *Realpolitik*, as an analytical move that could not be free of self-critique, the normative constitution of society

must be taken as given for the analytical purposes. If *Realpolitik* did not underestimate the power of ideas, it also remembered that their thermometer is the actual adherence they express, reorganizing groups in new balancing dynamics that must be continuously evaluated. Again, the essential role deliberation, political rhetoric and leadership in bringing ideas into political life. The major trap here is taking this normative givens as particularly set for each new case analysis, is presuming generalizing explanatory models which must proceed in a much more reduction and freezing of social life so as to make the model testable. *Realpolitik* opened a space for political ideological contest through deliberation and social organization. It could host Marxists, socialists, as it mostly did with conservatives. Still, the concept was born as an accessory of a political certitude on the liberalization of politics with modernity, and that cannot be effaced, especially for the dominant self-image in IR has frequently opposed realists explicitly to liberals.

With that, there comes the fourth assumption of “‘real’ *realpolitik*,” the commitment with the scientific methodological principles aiming at unbiased empirical consistency. Here it is probably the most controversial lesson to be taken from *Realpolitik*. Science is but a vulgar instrument of power if it is to eclipse the relevance of morals, identities and purposes in the actual (and potential) relations between the social groups, the effective *loci* of power in political dynamics. Caution is necessary with both insufficient commitment and overt confidence in the science on politics. One must not only guard against the naturalization of cultural arbitrariness (“the claim that knowledge is ‘entirely’ independent from history, power, and perspective”) but, in today’s context of post-truth politics, mostly against relativizations of truth (“the claim that knowledge is ‘merely’ the product of history, power, and perspective”) (SCHINDLER, 2020, p. 377). The line liberal democracies trail between these extremes is too delicate, but to fall from it may represent serious a backsliding for many Western countries.

Finally, there is the *topos* of the possible in politics. Interpretations of Rochau disagree if “the art of the possible” meant a more restrictive notion related to capitulation of the liberals, and therefore less emancipatory (or at least radical) (PALONEN, 2014) or if it had more opening performative functions, widening the horizons of expectations of a social movement (GUZZINI, 2005; BEW, 2016; KELLY, 2017). Palonen claims that one of the Rochau’s, but mostly Bismarck’s intentions with the concept, which helped the alignment

between liberals and conservatives (with the Iron Chancellor, in fact), was the preoccupation with popular, socialist revolutions if the fate of their rising as a social power was not encompassed by the managers representative instruments of the balance of social forces. The possible was then a restrictive bourgeois claim against social disruption. However, Palonen remembers that the prospective reading of political realism was realized by Weber, who in fact suggested an understanding of politics as the “art of the impossible.” Guzzini, for his turn, understands the the language of power introduced the possibility of questioning the eventual state of things or results of processes and by politicizing it and competing for public opinion over different unfoldings. As such, power and politics permeated society to the point it diffused, helping more with a restrictive space of possibilities in politics. In his words (GUZZINI, 2005, p. 518-9),

reconceptualisations of power today – i.e., today’s ‘politicisations’ in IR ... simultaneously hark back to notions of the common good, rather than only the art of the feasible. ... This leads to the following hypothesis: it is this context of both an expansion of ‘politics’ as a potential field of action, and a perceived contraction of ‘politics’ as real room for manoeuvre that informs and is addressed by the new power research programmes. These concentrate both on the new direct and indirect ways to control knowledge, agendas and regimes and on the increasing perception of an impersonal rule of the international scene. (GUZZINI, 2005, p. 518-9)

Guzzini being right, these post-positivist advancements in the discipline must pay attention to a much needed reconceptualization of political realism as being the very necessary condition of the discipline if it is to provide assistance in the urgent search for social development. While *Realpolitik* was not assured to any political ideology, though it preferred to stick with its liberal beliefs, a conception of international relations as the problem-field of *Realpolitik* may release the search for descriptive, explanatory, and prescriptive knowledge from within different interpretations of the existing normative conditions, the most desired, and the most desirable ones. As Heikki Pätomäki and Collin Wight proposed, “what we can do is much more than reject this reality, accept this reality, or retreat from this reality. It is in this emancipatory sense that we need to reclaim reality from where it has been lost in the ‘problem-field’ of IR.” (PATOMÄKI; WIGHT, 2000, p. 235) That is, to recover *Realpolitik* from the extremes of realism, and idealism, positivism and post-positivism, boredom and negativity to make it ultimately relevant again to the rediscovery of the emancipatory foundation of IR, away from its conservative and reactionary appropriation.

Accordingly, contemporary challenges urge retracting from crude power politics to real *Realpolitik*, with historical interest. And then, forward to a “‘real’ realpolitik”. Nonetheless, this rescue must never be acritical. Even in this “real” interpretation, there must be extreme care with over-politicization and authoritarianism, especially as seen with the case of populist nationalist leaders (but nationalist only in its typical populist rhetoric) and legitimating them simply for their success, and not for the common good – a topic in which Guzzini praises the contribution of this new post-positivist boulevard (GUZZINI, 2005, p. 519). With this framework, the “‘real’ realpolitik” must incorporate, and not exclude, more social groups into the political arena to effectively deal with the most pressing issues of this century. Again, the preservation of liberal democratic regimes, the prevention of climate change, the protection of global public health, the redistribution of wealth around the world, the unregulated transnational social networks and their usage by the people, and, most of all, the immediate alleviation of misery and extreme poverty. Moreover there is the rise of China. Properly understood, it is about the inclusion of large segments of humanity into the possibilities of globalization. Especially, large non-Western communities. In an international system that recurrently forgets it was founded on the structuration of colonies and the international slave trade around the world much more than Westphalia (BHAMBRA, 2020), the “rise of the rest” – and not simply of China and other states of the non-Western world as a great power but mostly of its main social forces, their most relevant political groupings, may reveal to be a great source of anxiety in the twenty-first century, eventually leading to virulent racial reactions and moral justifications from the perspective of liberalism most sincere cosmopolitanism.

The opening of the title of this last section denotes the quicksand that is to work not only with the historical subject, but also with the effort of abstract thinking, its search for logical consistency, and its sense of social urgency. That remembers a quotation of inspiring humility from the political scientist David Welch writing on the presentist abuses inferred over Thucydides. As an advice to his reader, he wrote (WELCH, 2003, p. 302):

Lest the reader fear that I am going to engage in an attack upon others, I include myself in the group I propose to criticise, because I have come to the realisation that I have unwittingly abused him as much as anyone. It is true that I find my own readings of Thucydides more compelling than others’, but it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that this conceit is hard to justify in the light of the arguments I propose to make below. What I have to say, in other words, I offer in a spirit of self-criticism.

With this same self-criticism this investigation that now ends has been constructed. In my career as a student, and later as a young researcher and professor of the field, I have been generally taught and read about the need to overcome the malicious theory of political realism. The history of the field has been recounted as one of trying to avoid realism just to find it again regenerated into a neo- version. It was presented as anti-liberal, or anti-socialist, but rarely for what it was. I used to like defining myself as a constructivist when I became aware of the complexities of IR theoretical debates during my early Masters degree. Realism was always the political tradition I studied the most, being the theory to be surpassed by our intellectual efforts. For that, I felt bothered by reading or hearing obscene moralist dismissals of the theory. Still, I felt myself an anti-realist constructivist. That was until the history of concepts and intellectual history shook me up together with IR disciplinary history in the turn marking the end of their longstanding rift (ARMITAGE, 2012b). From then, with my conversion from a full political theorist to a less-than-a-half historian, I felt more comfortable to argue on the need to avoid caricatural readings of the realist theory, especially classical authors. Frequently defending realists obviously assured me the title of a realist, from colleagues and students, to which first I promptly refused in the name of social constructivism. With time, I felt more comfortable with being called a realist as I understood the dilemmas Morgenthau experienced in engaging against the depoliticization of liberal America, and the unjustifiable war on Vietnam. Also, the development of a “realist constructivism” stance made me feel at home (BARKIN, 2003). Today I even feel sorry for the unfair “cancellation” Mearsheimer suffered in the first weeks of the Russian war on Ukraine, though I do not find his theoretical approach much a convincing path to the development of realism, being the most important representative of the restrictive, ”anti-‘real’ realpolitik” neorealists of the field. And I understood the rise of the extreme-right in Bolsonaro’s Brazil was a matter of the dangerous depoliticization of Brazilian more progressive social forces and an over-politicization of that authoritarian trend. A non-vulgar, robust understanding of political realism as a social theory of IR became indispensable. Be it as it may, in later thinking about when I resisted the label, I wish I had an answer as good as one Barry Buzan gave a student of his (forgive me at least in this one for not finding the original reference) when he was asked if he felt comfortable for being tagged a realist, along

others like Machiavelli to what he promptly denied his pupil: Machiavelli could not be taken as a realist.

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