

## *Chapter 1*

# **Fifty Years of Political Science in Europe**

## *An Introduction*

Thibaud Boncourt, Isabelle Engeli,  
and Diego Garzia

The idea for a volume reflecting on the achievements of and challenges facing political science in Europe emerged in the course of discussions about the fiftieth anniversary of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), to be celebrated in 2020. Decade anniversaries are symbolically important moments in the life of an association. ECPR's fortieth anniversary was celebrated with a pamphlet retracing the evolution of the consortium (Newton & Boncourt, 2010). The pamphlet highlighted the significant drive of the association to expand, diversify, and shape political science in Europe. Over the last ten years, the ECPR has strengthened its efforts in consolidating its institutional membership base and securing record attendance to the general conferences, joint sessions of workshops, and methods schools. More and more scholars from previously little represented regions—Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, and beyond—are joining ECPR activities. The ECPR journals and book series are publishing more than ever before. The ECPR has also significantly improved its commitment to gender equality in the profession by first publishing regular gender equality reports and then institutionalizing a gender equality plan and a code of conduct in 2018. In all these aspects, ECPR's fifty-year trajectory is a professional success story. It is safe to say that the Consortium has succeeded in shaping the political science landscape in Europe and supporting the development of a European political science community that has been taking a leading role at the international level.

For this fiftieth anniversary, the editors and the ECPR executive committee decided to move away from another history of the ECPR and, instead, reflect

on the past, present, and prospects of political science in Europe. In lieu of focusing on the evolution of the ECPR as an association, we invited contributors to reflect on the evolution of and the prospect for our discipline within the broadly defined European perimeter.

Political science is now well established in Europe. Since the mid-twentieth century, the number of university departments, professional associations, and scientific journals dedicated to the discipline has steadily risen on the continent. Some of the discipline's venues are now solidly institutionalized. The International Political Science Association, for instance, is also celebrating an anniversary, its seventieth, in 2019. European journals like the *European Journal of Political Research*, the *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Party Politics*, *West European Politics*, and the *British Journal of Political Science* count among the most cited political science journals worldwide. The discipline also has a shared intellectual cannon, with a number of scholars widely recognized as key figures in the conceptual development of a blend of "European political science." The discipline has more professionals and produces strong cohorts of graduates and PhDs (e.g., Sapiro, Brun, & Fordant, 2019). Political science is also relatively successful in the disciplinary competition, as it manages to secure for itself a substantial share of the European funding available for the social sciences and humanities (Bach-Hoenig, 2017).

These achievements, however, also come with a number of challenges. Political science suffers from a general decline in the amount of public money available for research and from the rise of precariousness in academia. Along with other scientific disciplines like climate science, sociology, and gender studies, political science, and political scientists also come under fire from politicians and activists of different political persuasions, who criticize its alleged ideological biases and contest scholarly expertise altogether. The discipline is also being pressured to justify its market value by producing more and to prove its *impact* and *relevance* for society. Early career scholars are expected to publish at unseen quantity for the previous generations. The rise of open-access journals is a promising development toward a more inclusive publication environment, but it comes with the downside of a growing number of so-called "predatory" journals and conferences, which publish any work regardless of its quality—provided the author pays a substantial fee. At the same time, grant capture has become the symbol of academic success while funding success is still displaying some patterns of inequalities related to gender, the type of research, and the geographical location of universities across Europe. If these evolutions are driven by the specialization of knowledge production, they also follow a market bottom line. Failure to comply with the performance standards, or to do so in a way that fends off competition from neighboring disciplines, puts the very existence of political science under threat across local and national contexts. Such processes turn political

science (as well as academia more generally) into an increasingly confusing and anomic universe, where it becomes harder for scholars to keep track of recent findings and to assess the quality of what is being produced.

In such a fluid and uncertain context, the purpose of this volume is to take stock of how the discipline has been built, what state it is in, what its achievements are, and what challenges it faces. It hopes to refine our understanding of the direction the discipline is going intellectually, and to feed professional debates about its structures and institutions.

### 1. BEYOND NUMBERS AND MEMORIES: A BROAD TAKE ON THE STATE OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Numerous fascinating publications have reflected on the historical state of political science in Europe. Building on this previous work, this volume offers a take on the common trends, opportunities and challenges across political science in Europe.

A number of these studies are shaped as retrospective accounts of personal experiences by senior members of the discipline. Such accounts often take the shape of stories that highlight the adventures and heroics of particular individuals—chiefly the so-called founding fathers of the discipline—and/or the paradigms and approaches they have contributed to develop, such as the “behavioral revolution” (e.g., Dahl, 1961). As the term “founding fathers” suggests, such histories are also primarily, not to say exclusively, written by and about senior male political scientists. The collective volume *Comparative European Politics: The Story of a Profession* (Daalder, 1997) is a prime example of this way of writing disciplinary history. By compiling individual autobiographies, the book offers a rich aggregate description of the development of a research area. More recently, Richard Rose’s memoir *Learning about Politics in Time and Space* (Rose, 2014) builds upon the author’s experiences to produce valuable considerations on the intellectual history and present state of the discipline.

Not all existing studies embrace disciplinary history in its entirety. Narratives often either put the emphasis on intellectual trends, in line with the history of political ideas, or focus on the social and institutional history and state of the profession. While it is increasingly rare for studies to turn a completely blind eye to either of these two sides of the coin, the fact remains that most focus on one of them, with the other less present. On the one hand, the contributions to the remarkable collective volume *Modern Political Science: Anglo-American Exchanges since 1880* (Adcock, Bevir, & Stimson, 2007) tend, for example, to prioritize “interpretation,” with intellectual connections between U.S. and U.K. political science often clearer than the concrete

circulations of scholars and books. On the other hand, volumes that focus on the “state of the discipline” often place a substantial emphasis on the discipline’s numbers (in terms of professionals, students, books, journals, citations, etc.) with less focus on the conditions of knowledge production itself (see, for instance, Goodin & Klingemann, 1996).

Another substantial share of the existing literature studies political science in Europe through collections of country studies. While such collective efforts have different analytical focuses, they share the assumption that the accumulation of national cases creates the conditions for the analysis of more global processes. *Regime and Discipline: Democracy and the Development of Political Science* (Easton, Gunnell, & Graziano, 1991) uses country studies to tackle the more general question of how politics shaped the discipline. By contrast, volumes that aim to assess the “state of the discipline,” such as the recent *Political Science in Europe at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (Krauz-Mozer, Borowiec, Kulakowska, & Scigaj, 2015), tend to privilege country descriptions that are rich in country-related information and peculiarities of national trajectories over the identification of common structures and questions to foster the emergence of a comparative narrative.

This volume aims to complete the landscape of disciplinary studies by adopting a different perspective. First, it resolutely focuses on the structural (European), rather than individual (country), level. Contributions veer away from individual autobiographies to focus on describing the broad processes that affect the discipline. This analytical focus comes with a diversification of author profiles, as contributors come from different countries and continents, generations, levels of seniority, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. This volume thus hopes to offer an analytical take on the discipline that is diverse enough to feel inclusive and ring true to its equally diverse potential readership.

Second, this volume bridges the gap between the social and intellectual sides of disciplinary history. Thus, it situates itself in line with the social history of social scientific ideas (inter alia Heilbron, Guilhot, & Jeanpierre, 2008). Such bridging is done within individual contributions: for example, the history of shifts in the objects that political science studied over time is shown to be partly linked to broader evolutions in society, particularly in social movements, and the story of professional associations is told in relation to that of paradigm and methods debates. This choice is also made tangible by the structure of the book, which comprises three parts. The first puts the emphasis on intellectual debates by situating political science in Europe in relation to the rest of the world at the level of concepts, objects, and methods. The second focuses chiefly on professional developments by assessing the professional structure and inclusiveness of the discipline. The third broadens the analysis to go beyond internal dynamics and study disciplinary evolutions

from the angle of the relationship between the discipline and its social and political environment.

Third, the book departs from country studies to compile chapters focused on studying specific processes. Contributions tackle such diverse questions as the distinctive intellectual character of European political science, its impact on society in general, the threats and tensions it is subjected to, and its inclusive character as a profession. While one contribution focuses on a specific region—Central and Eastern Europe—it is not to highlight local idiosyncrasies, but to acknowledge the fact that bridging the East-West gap is one of the key challenges facing European political science today. In order to further highlight the ambition to produce a coherent volume with a measure of dialogue between contributions, authors were brought together for a collective discussion of their chapters during a workshop held in June 2019 at the European University Institute. While there are still and inevitably blind spots in this collective assessment of the discipline, we believe that the contributions still provide rich material to answer three key questions for political science in Europe: *Is there a distinctive European blend of political science? Is political science in Europe cohesive as a profession? What is the current status of the relationship between the discipline and its environment?* In the following, we discuss each of these questions in turn while presenting the various contributions to this volume and its overreaching structure.

## 2. IS THERE A DISTINCTIVELY EUROPEAN BLEND OF POLITICAL SCIENCE?

Political science developed at contrasted time and pace across world regions. The discipline became institutionalized at a relatively late stage in Western Europe compared to its development in the United States, but relatively early compared to its institutionalization in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America. This diversity in trajectories is further fueled by the fact that not all Western European countries followed the same road to institutionalization. These discrepancies beg the question of whether the discipline is intellectually unified internationally or best portrayed as an aggregate of relatively different national traditions. Given the existence, in Europe, of continental political science journals and associations, the underpinning question in part I is twofold: Is there a measure of intellectual integration between European political scientists and, if so, to what extent is their work different from the political science of other parts of the world? The chapters in part I depict “European political science” as a broad church, characterized by a historical and ever-increasing diversity of objects, approaches, and methods, fed by the diversity of European political systems and lives themselves. Diversity,

however, goes together with tensions and the challenge of keeping this heterogeneous community together.

In chapter 2, Yves Mény takes this question head-on to reflect on whether there is a “European touch” in political science, notably in relation to the United States. The chapter argues that one of European political science’s key distinctive features lies in the diversity of political systems on the old continent, which has generated conceptual innovations and distinctive research agendas. The historical proximity between European political science and neighboring disciplines such as law, sociology, history, economics, and philosophy—in unequal measures across the continent—has also contributed to giving the discipline a distinctive European “flavor.” Thus, the key point is that European political science is characterized by pluralistic traditions, which make it both less cohesive and more diverse than its U.S. counterpart.

The internal diversity of European political science also has to be understood in relation to the ever-expanding scope of the objects that the discipline studies. In chapter 3, Terrell Carver analyzes this gradual expansion in detail. He argues that this expansion is in part driven by the diversity of European political systems, and by what he calls “democratic challenges” of the discipline—namely, the role of social movements in turning into “political” issues questions that were before outside the realm of “the political.” Carver highlights that the extension of the realm of “the political” has been fueled by theoretical innovations that were not exclusively, and even sometimes predominantly, European in nature—such as the linguistic and visual turns in the social and human sciences.

The diversity of European political science also comes with tensions. In chapter 4, Virginie Guiraudon looks at the tensions that arise between competing theoretical and methodological approaches within the discipline. She portrays the discipline as being, historically, characterized by a high degree of internal diversity, linked to its roots in multiple neighboring disciplines. Internal diversity has persisted, but its nature has changed over time: in spite of ambitions, from the 1960s onward, to find a “common ground” notably around the comparative method, political science has become increasingly “balkanized” and fragmented between several subfields. Meanwhile, a common “scientific habitus” has emerged, as peer-review processes have led to “more conformism in the format of research and templates of publication.” However, such common ground, Guiraudon argues, does not come without setbacks, as they provide less room for “eccentrics” or minority positions. In other words, they tend to lead to a decline of pluralism.

Expansion and increasing diversity are also what characterize methodological developments in the discipline. In chapter 5, Russell Dalton looks back at the development of behavioralism, and the tremendous rise in the production and availability of empirical data that it prompted. While this

evolution stimulated an unprecedented in the number of cross-national studies in various subfields (electoral studies, political parties, social movement studies, etc.), it also implied a growing quantification of political processes that has proven to be a long-lasting point of contention for the discipline.

### **3. IS EUROPEAN POLITICAL SCIENCE A COHESIVE AND INCLUSIVE PROFESSION?**

The intellectual structure and diversity of political science in Europe cannot be fully explained without looking at the social dynamics that shape the discipline. Like other disciplines, political science can be analyzed as a profession. As such, it has to meet the challenges of being organized by a set of norms (such as intellectual standards, hierarchies, evaluation, and advanced criteria) and regulatory bodies (such as professional associations and evaluation boards), in a way that complies with law and the dominant norms of inclusiveness, probity, meritocracy, and so forth. It is also marred by struggles and inequalities that have to do not only with intellectual debates, but also with organizational (e.g., between universities, departments, associations, and journals) and individual competitions (between scholars), in a context of limited financial resources. Part II questions the extent to which European political science is cohesive as a profession and inclusive as a scholarly community. It portrays a profession that is challenged at several levels. The case of associations shows the extent to which intellectual differences may jeopardize the discipline's cohesiveness. European political science also suffers from strong national divides, most notably between Western and Eastern Europe, and from difficulties in integrating scholars from diverse gender, race, ethnic, religion, sexual preference, and class backgrounds.

In chapter 6, Thibaud Boncourt answers these questions through a comparative study of European political science associations: the ECPR, the European Political Science Network (EpsNET), the European Confederation of Political Science Associations (ECPSA), and the European Political Science Association (EPSA). Boncourt shows that the international divisions in the discipline have resulted in the inception of four main professional associations in Europe. Professional associations are seen as precious resource to gain weight in academic, intellectual, and political struggles. Divisions also have an impact on associations' membership. Their institutional structures and intellectual orientations trigger issues in attracting a large membership across all the regions of Europe, disciplinary subfields, and methodologies. As a result, political scientists from different countries, subfields, and methods background are unevenly represented across the different associations, which in turn affects the capacity of the profession to foster unity.

Drawing on a worldwide survey of political scientists, Pippa Norris investigates, in chapter 7, the implication of internationalization for the profession. The global community of political scientists is shown to share common features: across all regions, most scholars hold PhDs, subfields and methods are relatively evenly distributed, and political scientists hold remarkably similar views about the recent changes in the profession. Political scientists across the world share concerns about deteriorating working conditions and potential threats to academic freedom, increasing pressure to publish, teach, and growing administrative duties. Political scientists also share similar enthusiasm for global collaboration and knowledge exchange. There are, however, marked differences between regions with regard to academic migration: as long as they offer open job market conditions, established and wealthy academic systems in Northern and Western Europe are more likely to attract foreign talents than Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, or Africa.

The differences between Western and Eastern Europe are further explored in chapter 8. Luciana Alexandra Ghica retraces the evolution of “European” over time as perimeter for research and the formation of scholarly community. While the dismantling of the Iron Curtain has allowed for the expansion of political science, Ghica shows that we are still not at the stage of an integrated community across Europe. European political science continues to be Western and Northern European regarding the geographical scope and the distribution of power and privileges across the community. Scholars from Central and Eastern Europe remain underrepresented in European conferences and academic outlets. Despite their knowledge and skills, they have fewer financial opportunities to present their work to an “international” audience (aka Western and Northern European), they publish less often in the major journals of the field, and they almost never access positions of power in the European profession. Ghica contends that it is about time European political scientists foster an integrated scholarly community that will show solidarity with national scholarly communities which are under increasing political and/or financial pressure.

The last two chapters of part II question further the inclusivity of European political science as a profession. In chapter 9, Isabelle Engeli and Liza Mügge assess the patterns of gender inequality in European political science. Echoing Pippa Norris’s findings that women remain largely underrepresented in the profession (almost two-thirds of political scientists being men in Europe), they show that while progress has been made at the level of entry positions in the discipline, senior ranks remain overwhelmingly male dominated. Engeli and Mügge argue that, far from being solved, the leaky pipeline has remained, and this at every stage of the academic career. While blatant cases of direct discrimination are becoming more rare, gender inequality in the profession still takes place through a number of mechanisms that reinforce one another