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## Fifty years of political science in Europe: an introduction

Thibaud Boncourt, Isabelle Engeli, Diego Garzia

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## Chapter 1

### **Fifty Years of Political Science in Europe: An Introduction**

**Thibaud Boncourt**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

**Isabelle Engeli**, University of Exeter

**Diego Garzia**, University of Lausanne

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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 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Consortium for Political Research, to be celebrated in 2020. Decade anniversaries are symbolically important moments in the life of an association. ECPR's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated with a pamphlet retracing the evolution of the consortium (Newton and 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 institutionalising 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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-20<sup>th</sup> 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 institutionalised. The International Political Science Association, for instance, is also celebrating an anniversary, its 70<sup>th</sup>, 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 recognised 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 et al. 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 criticise 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 towards 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 specialisation 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 neighbouring 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.

## **Beyond Numbers and Memories: A Broad Take on the State of European Political Science**

Numerous fascinating publications have reflected on the history 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 take often 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 “behavioural 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 et al. 2007) tend, for example, to prioritise “interpretation”, with intellectual connections between US and UK 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 take to 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 and 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 et al. 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 et al. 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 ethnical 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, the 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 et al. 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, and in particular 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 sections. 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 have been 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 overarching structure.

### **Is there a Distinctively European Blend of Political Science?**

Political science developed at contrasted time and pace across world regions. The discipline became institutionalised at a relatively late stage in Western Europe compared to its development in the United States, but relatively early compared to its institutionalisation in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America. This diversity in trajectories is further fuelled by the fact that not all Western European countries followed the same road to institutionalisation. 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 Section 1 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 Section 1 depict “European political science” as a broad church, characterised 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 neighbouring 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 ‘flavour’. Thus, the key point is that European political science is characterised by pluralistic traditions, which make it both less cohesive and more diverse than its US 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 analyses 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 fuelled 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, characterised by a high degree of internal diversity, linked to its roots in multiple neighbouring disciplines. Internal diversity has persisted, but its nature has changed over time: in spite of ambitions, from the 1960s onwards, to find a ‘common ground’ notably around the comparative method, political science has become increasingly ‘balkanised’ 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 characterise methodological developments in the discipline. In Chapter 5, Russell Dalton looks back at the development of behaviouralism, 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.

### **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 analysed as a profession. As such, it has to meet the challenges of being organised by a set of norms (such as intellectual standards, hierarchies, evaluation and advanced criteria) and regulatory bodies (such as professional associations, evaluation boards), in a way that complies with law and the dominant norms of inclusiveness, probity, meritocracy, etc. It is also marred by struggles and inequalities that have to do not only with intellectual debates, but also with organisational (e.g. between universities, departments, associations, journals) and individual competitions (between scholars), in a context of limited financial resources. Section 2 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 jeopardise 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 European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), the European Political Science Network (EpsNET), the European Conference 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 internationalisation 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 accessed 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 who are under increasing political and/or financial pressure.

The last two chapters of Section 2 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 progresses have 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 take place through a number of mechanisms that reinforce one another across all aspects of academic life: the institutional barriers in career progression go hand in hand with gender gaps in citations, publications, marks of esteem and leadership

positions. To become gender inclusive, the profession does not need to fix the women scholars but rather fix the system.

The picture is even bleaker in terms of race and ethnicity. In Chapter 10, Shardia Briscoe-Palmer and Kate Mattocks contend that the investigation of marginalisation in the discipline should go beyond the inclusion of women to assess the extent to which the increasing calls for more diversity in academia have had effects on the discipline of political science. In spite of a telling lack of data, they show that the issue of race is still largely ignored in European political science. While the student body is increasingly diverse, the profession has remained largely dominated by white scholars. When scholars of Colour have access to institutional positions, their work is marginalised and their presence is too often ignored, contested if not worse. Reflecting on the irony for a discipline about power to forget the social organisation of privileges, Briscoe-Palmer and Mattocks plead for a profession that finally takes the stock of its racialisation and acts towards reflecting in its composition the diversity of the world out there.

### **European Political Science in a Changing Environment?**

Managing its internal diversity is not the only challenge facing the discipline. European political science also faces a series of external incentives and pressures. These chiefly come from public authorities, whose funding is increasingly conditioned upon evaluation schemes that assess the quality of research and teaching against quantitative performance benchmarks. Such evaluations take into account the impact within academia of the knowledge produced (e.g. is it published in well ranked journals?) but also within society at large (e.g. are scholars engaged in diffusing their work to laypersons?). Together with the increasing pressures to secure funding from private actors, these evolutions mean that European political scientists increasingly need to be concerned with the ‘impact’ and ‘relevance’ of their work. To an extent, the survival of

the discipline depends on its ability to strike the right balance between internal and external relevance. This is especially true given the threats that political science has been subjected to in European states that veer away from democracy. Section 3 tackles these questions at its core: to what extent is the very existence of European political science threatened? How does it cope with the pressures it is subjected to? What are the challenges that come with the ambition of being ‘relevant’ to power and society? The four chapters in Section 3 reflect on issues of *impact* and *relevance* from different angles. The picture that emerges is that of a profession that is nowadays increasingly able to offer advice to and even exert an actual *impact* on its object(s) of study. However, its heightened *relevance* outside the academic realm comes with challenges as well – mostly originating from those actors targeted by the profession on the basis of its established normative and theoretical underpinnings.

In Chapter 11, Ivar Bleiklie, Marleen Brans and Sven Michelsen discuss the advisory role of political science. Through a set of survey data based on responses by a large sample of European political scientists on their professional roles and four country case studies derived from this survey, the chapter assesses the scale and scope of policy advice activities, the major pathways for the provision of policy advice as well as its normative framework. Importantly, Bleiklie, Brans and Michelsen move beyond the idea that policy advice equates with formalized roles in public administration. Indeed, they show that European political scientists support and engage in various types of policy advice, and they do so primarily as opinion makers and experts. Members of the profession would seem to share important attitudes vis-à-vis policy engagement and the way in which the two roles (academic and advisory) should be balanced. However, and again, institutional differences make a difference into the exact extent to which this balance varies across European countries.

In Chapter 12, Diego Garzia and Alexander Trechsel contend that the growing interest in the discipline for digital transformations and the emerging potential of “civic technology” has led

to novel forms engagement. They concentrate on a concrete example of engagement with parties, candidates, and voters: Voting Advice Applications. VAAs are popular information-providing tools that help voters find their way around the electoral offer. These tools – originating in Europe in the late 1980s and by now prominent throughout all continental democracies – have catapulted political scientists to co-shapers of public opinion formation processes. For one thing, Garzia and Trechsel provides a timely and telling example of the ways in which European political science can engage with the citizenry in the digital age. At the same time, their case study of VAAs sheds precious light on the ethical implications of "doing impact" on our objects of study and calls for a careful reflection about the rapidly changing role of political scientists in the *onlife* era.

In Chapter 13, Anton Hemerijck reflects on comparative welfare state research and the involvement of some of its leading scholars (including Hemerijck himself) in EU social investment reforms of the late 1990s and early 2000s. He forcefully argues that academic engagement with policy makers has ultimately prepared the ground for the diffusion of social investment reform across the European continent between the late 1990s and the early 2000s. By offering first-hand insights into the practicalities of academic engagement, this (partly) autobiographical chapter conveys the idea that engagement originates from specific intellectual paradigms and specific corners of the political field coming together in favourable circumstances. In doing so, Hemerijck pinpoints the bidirectionality of the engagement relationship and specifies further the conditions under which academic engagement is likely to have bearings on policymaking.

Finally, in Chapter 14, David Paternotte and Mieke Verloo move beyond actual engagement practices to dive into the complexity of the relationship between political science and its social, political and economic environment. Paternotte and Verloo call for paying urgent attention to the risks that political science and political scientists run into in the current "turbulent" political

times. This exemplary essay does an inventory and categorisation of the current threats that political science faces, the existing responses to these threats, and those that could/should be put in place. Hostile public debate, acrimonious politics, and structural changes in academic systems cumulate to put political science in a dangerous position with regard to its capacity to speak truth to power and to thrive. Indeed, the threats currently faced by political science in Europe cannot be dissociated from broader debates on academic freedom in the region and elsewhere. It cannot be dissociated from the threats against the safety and freedom of individual political scientists either.

### **The Future of Political Science in Europe: Challenges and Prospects**

To an extent, this collection of chapters is a tribute to the success of the European blend of political science over the last fifty years. European political scientists have contributed to generating a wealth of theoretical, conceptual and methodological tools that have enhanced the breadth and depth of our knowledge about European and global politics. They have succeeded in ensuring that the discipline's internal diversity remains a major asset to this breadth of understanding. Beyond national and regional borders, the discipline appears to have a measure of internal cohesiveness and coherence. It is also more institutionalised than it has ever been, with transnational dialogue and mobility more organised and frequent. Faced with the pressures for relevance, European political scientists have also engaged with a large variety of actors within civil society, the third sector and the policymaking sphere. In this perspective, it makes sense to talk about "European political science" as a coherent whole, rather than simply "political science in Europe". However, these chapters also raise awareness of the many challenges that the discipline currently faces and calls for individual political scientists and professional bodies to take action.



Intellectual diversity and specialisation as well as organisational and individual competitions come with threats to the discipline's unity and professional inclusivity. We believe it is up to professional associations to ensure that all schools and sub-disciplines, as well every scholar regardless of their gender, race and institutional affiliation, find empowering conditions to push further the boundaries of knowledge, though history proves that this is not easily achieved. At the same time, however, one should remain cautious about the potential challenges stemming from the hyper-diversification of the discipline and its paradigms – which ultimately puts at risk the possibility for political scientists to actually talk to each other.

Another pressing issue to be addressed is the pervasive epistemological hybridization of the “political” with other branches of the social sciences with very little connection to it. Computational social science methods, in particular, have opened up an entirely new frontier for political science. As aptly illustrated by Russel Dalton in this volume, however, the ready availability of an almost infinite amount of data and the increasingly sophisticated nature of the analytical methods (and technological devices) available to virtually every graduate student nowadays, opens up for the potential rise of atheoretical, fully-data-driven approaches to knowledge production and development. Against this background, the emergence of pre-registration processes is a welcome development: up-front decisions regarding data collection methods and analytical techniques can reduce biases’ that would may otherwise occur once the data (or the results) are in front of the researcher. The development of similar tools, that put scientific before technological prowess, should be one of the main topics of current ethical debates.

As far as social diversity goes, its generalized lack within political science remains distressing. The hierarchy of privileges within academia has taken its toll on political science While steps have been taken to reduce the gender gap and to increase the presence of Central and Eastern scholars within European political science, much more needs to be done. In this respect, there

is need for more data collection, more reflection on the intersectional character of the exclusion processes within the political science profession, and concrete action on the part of professional associations and academic departments against marginalisation and invisibilisation. Women, people of Colour and other scholars in vulnerable situation deserve their place in the discipline, and a central one. The issue of inclusivity is made all the more acute by the rise of precariousness. The growing number of PhDs in political science conferred over the last thirty years all over the continent is far from being matched by the increase in the number of permanent academic positions. The road to tenure is becoming ever more uncertain, with obvious long-term consequences at both individual, professional, and institutional levels. Political science associations and departments face an immense task in ensuring that such tense climate does not result in deep divisions between scholars of different generations and statuses. Collective reflections on the ethics and objectives of professional mentoring are perhaps more needed than ever.

The pressure for quantified academic performance calls for collective reflection. Should political science keep meeting the increasing demands of academic capitalism, as defined by grant capture, publication and citation performance – or should it rather push forward a “slow science” approach to the understanding of an increasingly complex social and political world? An important step along these lines is the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) signed in 2012. The DORA declaration openly tackles the pervasive “publish or perish” approach of contemporary science by means of a number of recommendations. Most notably, it pushes for the elimination of journal-based metrics in funding, appointment, and promotion considerations, and for the corresponding need to evaluate the quality of research on its own merits rather than on the basis of the journal in which the research is published (impact factor). If science is to retain meaning for its practitioners and its public, such initiatives should

be encouraged and followed upon not only by statements of intent, but also by concrete changes in funding, appointment, and promotion practices.

The pressures for relevance and impact also prompt the discipline to engage with its social and political environment. Such endeavours are socially situated. They are normatively driven. And they are financially constrained. While the ethics of engagement has triggered debates and sometimes led, as in the case of VAAs, to the crafting of charters of good conduct, much more remains to be done. The desirability of engagement (under what conditions should political scientists engage with society?), the ethical implications of funding (does the need to “get money from where it is” justify engagement with any and all actors?), and the scientific implications of engagement (what does engagement do to the content, structure, and professional practices of science?) are in need of further reflection.

Pressure from the environment calls for scholarly solidarity. Paternotte and Verloo provide a worrisome account of the severity of the threats against the political science and social sciences in an increasing number of national contexts across Europe and beyond. Hungary, Poland, Turkey and Brazil are examples that come first to mind. Indeed, concrete steps have already been taken to threaten political science’s objects of study, if not its very existence. Attacks against academic knowledge go increasingly hand in hand with attacks against the job security, the safety and the freedom of social scientists. Gender studies programs have been defunded in Hungary by governmental decision. The Central European University had to relocate in Austria to be able to pursue its educational mission. When students protest in Hong Kong to protect democratic acquiescence, they are teargassed, beaten and arrested. Colleagues have been or are currently prosecuted – or even imprisoned – in Poland, Turkey, Iran, China and elsewhere. Others have lost their job and fled. Giulio Regeni was murdered in Egypt while doing fieldwork for his PhD dissertation. Perhaps political science has never been so “political”, at least not in that deadly way. This is a matter of emergency for reflection and action. How can we show

solidarity and provide support and assistance to fellow scholars in peril? What structures can we collectively put in place to resist these threats? In this regard, we welcome the fact that the ECPR has recently launched a “Scholars at Risk” programme that aims at supporting those colleagues whose academic freedom has been infringed, and calls for the development of long lasting actions. In these perilous political times, academic solidarity takes a new meaning that deserves new forms of actions.

Only a structured collective reflection will be able to pave the way for European political science to face the many, and to an extent unprecedented, challenges ahead. The more modest aim of this book, if anything, is that of raising awareness on such challenges and highlight the need for political science to adapt to a changing environment much in the same way it repeatedly (and so far successfully) did over the last half century.

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