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# **The Rise and Fall of American Political Science: Personalities, Quotations, Speculations**

ERKKI BERNDTSON

**ABSTRACT.** The article tries to link the development of American political science with a major concern of the discipline, democracy. However, the concrete forms of this development have been molded by different factors (e.g. practical politics, economic interests and cultural variants). Looking at the interplay of these factors, this paper traces the rise of American political science to a hegemonic position in the world, from the founding of the School of Political Science at Columbia University in 1880 to the heyday of behavioralism at the beginning of the 1960s, coinciding with the rise of America's role as a superpower and with the growth of representative democracy. A possible decline in the position of American political science is envisaged because of changing international power relations, problems of representative democracy and the present diversification of the discipline, which may lead to a situation where there is no American nor any other geographically specific political science, but instead different political discourses depending on locality, situation and politics.

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## **Political Science as a Science of Democracy**

'The study of politics in the United States is today something in size, content and method unique in Western intellectual history', was the argument with which Bernard Crick started his book *The American Science of Politics* in 1959. In regard to size, at least, the situation has not changed much. As William G. Andrews has recently noted (1982: 3), the United States, with some 15 000 to 16 000 political scientists, has 75–80 percent of the world's supply. The rise of American political science into a hegemonic position in the world was accomplished over a period of some 70 years, beginning about 1880.

However, there are signs of crisis in American political science and its absolute hegemony has clearly vanished. The growth of political science as a discipline worldwide is producing different kinds of approaches. Although many European political scientists, for instance, still adhere to 'American' theories, they are at the same time more and more conscious of the limitations of those theories. In the United States, on the other hand, interest in the work of European scholars who are not even, strictly speaking, 'political scientists' (e.g. Jürgen Habermas, Claus Offe, Joachim Hirsch, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Anthony Giddens, Quentin Skinner, Juliet Mitchell) has been growing, even among 'mainstream' political scientists.

In this light one may ask, 'Has the rise of American political science come to its end? Will there be some kind of decline or will American political science return to a new ascendancy?' These are crucial questions not only for the development of political science worldwide, but also for an understanding of present and future politics. A decline in esteem for American political science may indicate a decline in the US position in the world, or even the coming of a new era where the role of political science will be quite different from what it is today. In this sense an analysis of the development of American political science is of the utmost importance.

In an earlier article (Berndtson, 1983) I argued that there are four phases of development in American political science, which can be labelled by using the concept of democracy:

1. the formation of representative democracy (1880 to 1920);
2. the emergence of the problems of representative democracy (1900 to 1940);
3. pluralist democracy as a solution to the problems of democracy (1920 to 1965);
4. the crisis of pluralist democracy (1945 to the present).

To envisage these phases as beginning in 1880 is somewhat artificial, as the formation of both representative democracy and political science was underway some time before 1880 (in relation to political science, see Haddow, 1939). However, 1880 has been taken as a starting-point because the first academic institution of political science, the School of Political Science, was founded that year at Columbia University. Because the school was created mainly through the efforts of John W. Burgess, he is often considered to be the founder of the discipline.

The four phases outline real historical development and reflect the alleged changes in the study of politics that can be discerned in political-science texts. If there is one shared feature in the texts of such classic or influential scholars as John W. Burgess, Westel Woodbury Willoughby, Charles E. Merriam, Harold D. Lasswell, David Easton, Robert A. Dahl, Theodore J. Lowi, etc., it is a common theme which centers around the concept of power – or its different forms such as 'sovereignty', 'authority', 'influence', 'administration', or 'decision-making'. In each case a concept of power is further conceptually linked with a form of social organization, in this case a system of democracy.

The phases therefore represent theoretical frameworks and basic concepts of political science which can be discerned through the 'reading' of the texts (see Berndtson, 1983: 90–94). The overlapping of phases, however, shows that every phase contains not only a prophecy of what is to come, but an analysis of the past. In this sense the phases must be understood as 'analytical'.

Interpreting political science as a science of democracy is of course nothing new. This is one of the major theses of David Ricci in *The Tragedy of Political Science* (1984), and the same idea has been presented not only by critics of the present state of political science (e.g. Lipsitz, 1972: 179), but also by those who have wanted to turn political science into the science of democracy (e.g. Lasswell, 1942). I have tried to argue that this 'permanent condition of political science' is reflected in the specific 'theoretical objects' which political science has produced in different periods of its development.

In this sense, the first phase is a period where the state was considered as the politically organized form of society, the form defined through the concept of sovereignty. Political scientists concentrated on problems of the state: government

and its functions were studied from philosophical, historical and judicial angles with an eye to developing democracy.

In the second phase, the study of politics began to change. The development was quite logical: the state as a political organization of society became a meta-group of society. From the study of the functions of the state one moved into the study of behavior and the political struggle of citizens and groups. Historical and comparative analysis was changed into statistical, psychology-based empirical research, the concept of sovereignty changed into the concept of power, and demands for liberty and freedom were transformed into an analysis of the functioning of representative democracy.

In the third phase, political science came to be centered around the problems of stability of political systems, political socialization and legitimacy. The concept of the state diminished to that of a government which operated in the political system. Power as a central concept of political science was fragmented and perceived in terms of authority and influence. This was also an era of the 'behavioral study of politics' with a strong emphasis on quantification, measurement, theory construction and value-free research.

The fourth phase seems to represent a diversified discipline, with its mainstream and critical currents; but in the background, there is still a question of democracy. Analyses of the functions of the state, demands about the relevance of research, polemics about the right method in research, all reveal attempts to create a new theory of democracy and even a new society. In a way we are back to the problems of the first phase. There is a new interest in the question of 'right' political organization of society.

Used in that way the concept of democracy partly explains the view of political science as 'in many ways a peculiarly American discipline' (Friedrich, 1947: 978). Political science began to develop in the United States partly because the system of democracy was far more advanced in the United States in the 19th century than it was in Europe.

The development of American political science can and must be analyzed along with other strategies. Actually, behind the theoretical reconstruction presented above, was the 'ordinary' sociology of science approach. It would have been impossible to reconstruct the phases without knowing about the institutionalization and development of American political science as well as the development of American society. The next task is to move back into history to look at how these theoretical objects have risen from the discursive practices of political science. By that I mean that political theory is in most cases produced in social practices, where the practical needs and social practices of politicians, administrators, industrialists and political scientists intermingle. I am attempting such a task in this article to evaluate the present state and future possibilities of the discipline, and I am utilizing three main arguments:

1. the goals of practical politics have had a strong influence on the development of American political science;
2. the study of politics, politics itself, and different material interests in society (e.g. the economy) have been intertwined in so many ways that they comprise an inseparable unity; and
3. this unity contains mechanisms which bring certain scholars to the surface while burying others.

**The Rise of American Political Science***Columbia's Choice: Berlin, London or Someone in America*

Those who have described John W. Burgess as the founder of American political science have also emphasized the German roots of the discipline. Many leading American social and political scientists went to study in Germany after the Civil War and Burgess was one of the most able scholars among them. After his return, he managed to sell the idea of a school of political science to the trustees of Columbia University (e.g. Crick, 1959: 21–31). The purpose was to combine the free traditions of American democracy with the standards of science and efficiency in Germany and the French model of the *Ecole libre des sciences politiques* to provide professional training for the Civil Service and for citizenship training (Crick, 1959: 27; Karl, 1979: 10).

Two points should be made here. First, the meaning of political science at the School of Political Science at Columbia was that of the French *sciences politiques*. It was a collective name for courses in history, political philosophy, economics, public law, sociology and diplomacy, and the development at Columbia must be viewed in relation to comparable developments in social sciences in the United States at that time. For instance, in 1877 Herbert Baxter Adams set up the Johns Hopkins Historical and Political Science Association, and in 1881 a department of political science was founded at the University of Michigan (e.g. Waldo, 1975: 27).

Second, the importance of Columbia is to be understood in the light of it being a general center of the social sciences in the United States at the end of the 19th century. It had the most famous men in the faculty (e.g. John W. Burgess, John B. Clark, William A. Dunning, Frank Goodnow, Munroe Smith, Edwin R.A. Seligman, Franklin H. Giddings), who further enhanced their reputations through founding the *Political Science Quarterly* in 1886 (the first journal of political science, although its contents clearly reflected the idea of political sciences).

A closer look at the alleged German roots of the discipline reveals not only German roots but a sharp conflict between the German *Staatslehre* and Anglo-Saxon political thinking of that time, which was to mold the theoretical object of the first phase of American political science. The conflict was clearer at the political level, even within Columbia University. Burgess came to be identified as the pre-eminent representative of German ideas and protagonist for the American–German alliance in world politics (Burgess, 1904, 1908). At Columbia his major opponent in that respect was William A. Dunning (Dunning, 1914). Burgess's leanings towards the idea of German *Staatslehre* led him into a bitter quarrel with Frank J. Goodnow, his colleague at Columbia and the first president of the American Political Science Association (Karl, 1974: 35).

The most Anglo-Saxon oriented American university at that time was probably Harvard. Its president (a political scientist), A. Lawrence Lowell, 'imported' leading English political scientists to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. His personal acquaintance with such scholars as James Bryce and Graham Wallas was also marked by political considerations. They had a joint interest in defending Anglo-Saxon civilization against German 'barbarism'.

Many other leading political scientists followed the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Woodrow Wilson wrote *Congressional Government* (1885) to argue for the necessity of reforming US political institutions according to models offered by the English political system. Wilson's authority was Walter Bagehot, and his criticism of

Table 1. *Country of Origin of Books Reviewed in Political Science Quarterly (1886–1925)*

Years	Books published in:				
	USA	Germany	England	France	Other countries
1886–1890	136	70	77	61	23
1891–1895	149	61	106	55	47
1896–1900	162	53	57	57	35
1901–1905	188	26	64	25	16
1906–1910	175	49	63	33	31
1911–1915	174	20	95	34	28
1916–1920	205	11	75	13	32
1921–1925	187	11	79	20	35

Burgess's idea of political science was manifest in his review of Burgess's major treatise, *Political Science and Constitutional Law* (1850), where he wrote that Burgess 'has strong powers of reasoning, but he has no gift of insight. That is why he is so good at logical analysis, and so poor at the interpretation of history' (Baker, 1927: 106–107). It is possible that Wilson was also talking about the German *Staatslehre*.

The conflict was 'solved' during World War I and 'Burgess, for all his great influence as a university administrator and founder of political science, left no intellectual disciples at all' (Crick, 1959: 31). Many of those who still adhered to German social science on a personal level did their best to help spread the ideas of the coming second phase of political science, Westel Woodbury Willoughby, for example.

American political science chose the Anglo-Saxon tradition and stayed with it. Berlin was forgotten, but although London was attractive politically, it was not attractive scientifically. The trend away from German studies is illustrated in Table 1 by figures concerning the book reviews published in *Political Science Quarterly* between 1886 and 1925. Instead, American political science began to look at the problems of the United States. Universities had developed, certain political problems had been solved, the ties with Germany had been cut, and there was no need to look at England either. The practical concerns had changed.

William A. Dunning could write in 1907:

So far as concerns speculation that is chiefly juristic there is *a priori* ground for the correctness of the tentative generalization, for where the goal has been definitely reached in the progress toward constitutional democracy, as is the case in Great Britain, France and the United States, reflection on what is gives way naturally to reflection on how it came to be so; while among peoples whose constitutional problems are still in a considerable degree unsettled, discussion will turn on those questions of sovereignty, rights and ideal organization which are the core of systematic political theory (Dunning, 1907: 693).

To this Charles C. Williamson could only add:

Although the controversy as to the best form of government seems now to be settled in favor of representative democracy, students and statesmen everywhere, and particularly in the countries which have had most experience with it, are

disappointed with its results. This partial failure of popular institutions to justify themselves demands a political inquiry more fundamental than our present minute study of political history or the widespread discussion of recent experiments in representative institutions (Williamson, 1909: 696).

But this demand had a special American background. The role of political scientists was quite other in the United States than it was, for instance, in England. Harold Lasswell visited England at the beginning of the 1920s, from where he wrote to Charles E. Merriam:

Now I am quite willing to admit that in some cases this avowed or unavowed 'prudence' does account for the worshipers at the shrine of 'a social science which is really scientific'. But I submit, at the risk of pulling grandpa's beard, that the most important influence is more subtle. Here in England these academicians have a sense of power. They actually feel that they have a hand on the wheel of state. Their opinions are widely read and quoted in *The Times*. They meet at this throbbing metropolis of London the men who run things, and they can hope to influence them at dinner parties, club lounges, week-ends. In politics they find the boys they knew at Oxford or at the Settlement . . . or whose great grand-uncle married an equally great grand-aunty. What about the U.S.? Scattered over three thousand miles, as the crow flies west-east, lacking political problems of convulsing magnitude for the most part, lacking traditions of the Lord and Professor (at the risk of vulgarity, the Lord and Master) combination . . . our serious students of social problems moon in their cubby holes over plans of world reformation which include long eras of time, or plans of world comprehension which require an infinity in which all lines meet in fruitful union with reality . . . they are relatively impotent, and driven to vagaries in consequence (Lasswell, 1923).

American and British political sciences were in different situations which led to different kinds of interests concerning politics and its study. This was another factor in favor of the development of political science in America rather than, for instance, in England.

### *Chicago*

Columbia was the center of political science in the first phase of American political science, but in the 1920s the University of Chicago took its place. Chicago was the place to go, the city 'on the make', with its skyscrapers, architecture, jazz, gangsters and the social sciences. Donald Slesinger, the first full-time executive secretary of the Social Science Research Committee of the University of Chicago, wrote back east:

I believe that in the next quarter of a century the social and economic capital of the United States will move from New York to Chicago . . . How is this section of the country prepared to handle its new responsibility? The answer is that it isn't. It ought to be a center of progressive thought and social experimentation instead of which it is the most nearly Fascist part of the United States . . . the University of Chicago comes pretty close to being the first University in the United States. But the city takes no particular pride in it, and its citizens do not give it nearly the support it deserves. Yet it grows because it has intellectual vitality, and continues to exert a marked influence on education all over the world . . . The people who

remain behind are the industrial buccaneers, . . . the gangsters, and the university professors. And they stay for similar reasons. Mid-America has tremendous vitality, great potentiality, and the industrialist, the gangster and the university professor have well-knit organizations back of them with the vitality and potentiality of the region. I know what intrigues me about the place. We are faced with the necessity of choosing between living graciously on the Atlantic Seaboard or in Europe on the cultural capital of the past, and living in a sense the life of the intellectual pioneer building up – creating the cultural capital of the future. It is the faith in the future that keeps us here when we don't like it (Slesinger, 1933).

With respect to political science, Columbia was still important (and Harvard developed into a third center), but Chicago's foremost status grew from many different factors. Some were positively related to Chicago, but there were also 'accidental' factors. There was a fruitful academic atmosphere with an emphasis on pragmatism, people willing to push for empirical research (Albion A. Small was an important force), a close-knit intellectual community (people lived nearby, not the case, for instance, at Columbia), people interested in going into politics and making friends with local and national politicians and industrialists (Charles E. Merriam leading the way), and courage to experiment with new kinds of data and methods. Chicago was the fastest-growing part of the most American part of America (New York being, in fact, quite atypical) with many social problems to offer for study by political scientists (immigration, race relations, city planning, machine politics and vice among them).

The practical concerns of political scientists developed in Chicago. It was American soil (although occasionally American progressive political scientists could find allies among the British Fabian political scientists, like Graham Wallas), and this Americanism was best represented by Charles E. Merriam who in many respects molded the American science of politics into certain forms. While the development could have been the same elsewhere, it would not have taken place in Chicago without Merriam. Even the Chicago School of Sociology owes much to Merriam. His influence was a result of skillful handling of personal relations with men of power and money (about Merriam in general, see Karl, 1974).

Merriam had always been fascinated with city politics. He was a Chicago alderman from 1909 to 1911 and 1913 to 1917. In 1911 he lost his candidature for mayor, and in 1919 he failed to receive a Republican party nomination in the primary. That was more or less the end of party politics for him; he had tried to be a scholar *and* a politician, next he wanted to be a scholar *in* politics.

In 1923, Merriam became chairman of the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago and began to push for the scientific study of politics, putting his energy into organizational and program matters of political science at large. From that time, Merriam became a central figure in American political science through his position at the University of Chicago and in national organizations (American Political Science Association, Social Science Research Council). His personal relations with men like John D. Rockefeller and Franklin D. Roosevelt were important assets to him.

John D. Rockefeller had been one of the major figures behind the founding of the University of Chicago, and the social sciences began to develop with the same money. The major impetus came from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial which was organized in 1918 (changing its name to the Spelman Fund in 1928). Merriam's



connection with the Rockefeller money came first through Beardsley Ruml, a graduate of the University of Chicago who was elected to help manage the new programs under the Rockefeller Foundation's General Education Fund. As Barry D. Karl has noted:

Merriam knew two important facts: Ruml was a loyal alumnus who had admired Merriam, and Rockefeller took part in financing of political reform movements in New York through his backing of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research (Karl, 1974: 133).

Rockefeller money was poured into Chicago social science through the Local Community Research Committee of the University of Chicago (founded in 1923, changing its name to the Social Science Research Committee in 1930). When Merriam became president and a trustee of the Spelman Fund, his ability to direct social science research grew enormously. Under his influence money was also allocated to national organizations, especially the Social Science Research Council which had been founded in 1924 through the efforts of Charles E. Merriam.

The Social Science Research Council was a vehicle through which Merriam operated in relation to national politics. At last it seemed possible for social scientists to act as political advisors. Merriam sat on the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, appointed by President Hoover (the committee was largely planned in the Social Science Research Council with Merriam as chairman, and received money for its expenses from the Rockefeller Foundation).

Moreover, Merriam sat on the National Planning Board from 1933 to 1943. In 1934 the name was changed to the National Resources Board, which became part of the executive office of the President through the Reorganization Act of 1939. The Reorganization Act had been based upon recommendations made by the President's Committee on Administrative Management, which consisted of three men: Louis Brownlow, Luther H. Gulick and Charles E. Merriam (see Karl, 1979). In this respect, one of the men behind Merriam was Harold Ickes, who had been Merriam's campaign manager in his 1919 mayoral campaign. Franklin D. Roosevelt had appointed Ickes Secretary of the Interior, and that 'provided Merriam his most direct route into the New Deal' (Karl, 1974: 321).

The New Deal was also a route into national politics for many other Chicago political scientists who became advisors. Harold F. Gosnell was a consultant to the National Resources Planning Board, Leonard D. White was a member of the US Civil Service Commission, and so on. The list is too long to reproduce here. In this respect Chicago was a striking case of its own. The only other university that had political scientists as advisors in national organizations was Harvard. W.Y. Elliott, Merle Fainsod and A.N. Holcombe sat on the President's Committee on Administrative Management. Chicago and Harvard were, however, exceptions. Political scientists usually participated as political advisors only at the state or local level.

From these 'coincidences' American political science expanded during the 1920s, and so did American social science. In many respects Charles E. Merriam was the driving force. Through his efforts, the famous '1126' was built in 1929 and came to be regarded as *the* innovative center of the social sciences. In that building, Quincy Wright, Jacob Viner, Robert Redfield, Ellsworth Faris, Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, Leonard D. White, Charles E. Merriam, L. L. Thurstone, Harold D. Lasswell, William F. Ogburn, Harold F. Gosnell, T. V. Smith and many others

worked. Merriam was also a central figure at '1313', or the Public Administration Clearing House, which came to have a noticeable effect on the study of administration and on administration itself.

Through the Social Science Research Committee and through personal relations, the social science enterprise in Chicago was in many ways an interdisciplinary effort. The intellectual community was successfully integrated into the national politics of the country, which increasingly began to move outside its borders.

### *The World as the Midwest*

The Chicago School of Political Science had a deep influence on American as well as on international political science. When the United States took a leading role in world politics, political scientists followed the same route. Many of those who rose to international fame were members of the Chicago School. One need only look at American Political Science Association presidents from the end of World War II into the 1960s. Walter F. Dodd (1946), Harold D. Lasswell (1956), V. O. Key, Jr (1958), C. Herman Pritchett (1964), David B. Truman (1965) and Gabriel A. Almond (1966) all graduated from Chicago. Surveys dealing with the ranking of American political scientists also reveal the importance of these men. Merriam, Lasswell, White, Key and Truman are prominent in these surveys (see Somit and Tanenhaus, 1964: 66; Roettger, 1978).

The theories and research strategies of these men spread throughout the world, partially through the International Political Science Association which was founded in 1949. Its first president, Quincy Wright, was a model product of the Chicago School. The demands of the international situation came to direct the interests of many political scientists in this phase, although, of course, the demands of internal politics in the United States continued to have an important effect on the development of political science. But whereas the second phase had been interested in concrete social and political problems, the third phase was more interested in questions of legitimacy (Berndtson, 1979).

In regard to the international situation, at least some American political scientists were quite aware of their task. In the book published by Unesco describing the state of political science around the world in 1950, Benjamin E. Lippincott wrote about the tasks of political science in the following way:

Regarding the conflict between communism and western democracy, political theory has an important task to fulfill. It has, in the first place, to bring to bear the wisdom of Machiavelli, and the experience of mankind with autocracy of the past; it has to bring home to the western mind the realities of power politics in the twentieth century. It has, in the second place, to reappraise the ideological heritage of the eighteenth century, the emphasis on good will and reason, the values that made possible Yalta and the failure to establish a geographical corridor between Berlin and western Germany. It has, in the third place to provide an analysis of freedom and political change, which is superior to the Marxian. This analysis must not only be based on a more profound view of man's nature, and a dynamic conception of history, but it must also be expressed in language that appeals to the conscience, as well as to the intelligence, of men throughout the world (Lippincott, 1950: 223).

So-called value-free political science had its own values, often linked with the foreign

policy objectives of the United States. One of the leading value-free political scientists of the behavioral revolution, Gabriel A. Almond, promoting the idea of comparative political science, wrote:

Our expectations of the field of comparative government have changed in at least two ways in the last decades. In the first place as American interests have broadened to include literally the whole world, our course offerings have expanded to include the many areas outside of Western Europe – Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. Secondly, as our international interests have expanded and become urgent, our requirements in knowledge have become more exacting. We can no longer view political crisis in France with detached curiosity or view countries such as Indo-China and Indonesia as interesting political pathologies. We are led to extend our discipline and intensify it simultaneously (Almond, 1956: 391).

After World War II, money for research still came from big foundations, although the Rockefeller Foundation had stepped down and its place as a major donor was taken by the Ford Foundation. The Ford Foundation, founded in 1936, began to expand in 1948. Peter H. Odegard, president of the American Political Science Association, was among those who made a plan for the funding of social sciences from the Ford Foundation. According to figures presented by Somit and Tanenhaus, from 1959 to 1964 the foundations donated millions of dollars to political science. It is important to notice that the center of political science was changing again. Most of the money went to Harvard, Columbia and the University of California. Chicago was receding, although it was still in fourth place. Political science relocated on the coasts (Somit and Tanenhaus, 1967: 166).

At this time, American political science had achieved its highest ever world status. Behavioralism had come to Europe as *the* political science. It had introduced to European scholars new problems in the study of politics: pressure groups, voting studies, etc., and demanded exactness. These elements have been ‘of lasting importance’. But, with respect to theory, the landing of behavioralism on the shores of the European continent moved the study of politics backwards.

### **Political Science as an American Discourse on Politics**

The preceding historical sketch attempted to put forward a view of the close relationship between political science and actual politics. Is there some special discourse on politics within American political science and peculiar to American political science? David Ricci has talked about a triangle of scholarship, democracy and politics, where expertise is crucial (Ricci, 1984). In much the same vein, Bernard Crick has discussed the linkage of science, citizenship training, American democracy and trust in an inevitable progress, a manifest destiny for American society (Crick, 1959). These ideas give a certain American flavor to political science. As both Crick and Ricci have argued, the emphasis on science is peculiar to American political science and linked to the rise of American universities, which occurred at the same time as political science began to develop (Ricci, 1984).

Political scientists wanted to become authorities on politics, and a special discourse on politics was born which tried to separate itself from other discourses. Political science had scientific authority, which raised it above politicians, newspapermen, artists, writers and administrators, who each had their own ways of understanding

and analyzing politics. Political science was considered to be a discourse on these different discourses. I want to emphasize two special effects of that discourse: neutrality, and industry-like 'processing', both linked to the notion of political science as *the science*.

Woodrow Wilson once told his audience:

Such a commission would be in fact a commission to discover, amidst our present economic chaos, a common interest, so that we legislate for the whole country instead of for this, that, or the other interest, one by one. Students of political science are a self-constituted commission in the broader political life for a similar purpose. They must discover, amidst the confusion of modern elements, the common term, the common interest – or, rather, they must discover the *missing* term (Wilson, 1911: 6–7).

According to the ideology of neutrality, nobody is guilty until proved guilty. An example is the discussion between elitists and pluralists. Criticizing elite theories, one of Robert A. Dahl's arguments was that nobody had provided empirical evidence that any elite (defined as a group of people) had exerted a clear influence on the outcome of a body of important decisions. Because nobody had been able to do that, there was no evidence that a ruling elite existed (Dahl, 1958: 466, 469). In this sense, American political science has represented an ideology trying to occupy the middle of the road.

The other special feature is the idea of social science as an industry. It is linked to the birth of the empirical science of politics, where every problem was considered to be researchable, and anybody with the right kind of method and the right kind of data was able to do research. 'The imperatives of publication' (cf. Ricci, 1984: 220) arose underlining a distinction between American and European scholars especially apparent in the second phase of American political science.

When, in 1927, Merriam asked Roberto Michels to write about Italy for a book series on civic education in different countries, Merriam put the task in the following way:

In general our purpose is to study the process by which, or the instrumentalities through which, various national groups produce what they call 'good citizens'. How a good Frenchman or a good German or a good Italian or a good American is produced is our problem. This result of response to the civic stimulation may of course be produced in a wide variety of ways, as through formal education in the schools, literature, poetry, art, songs, festivals, ceremonials, and in countless other ways . . . (Merriam, 1926).

For Merriam and his colleagues this task could be carried out. For Michels, it was work a scholar could spend a lifetime on (cf. Karl, 1974: 175). The book Michels offered was never published. It was not scientific enough for Merriam: it was a historical study of Italian patriotism. Merriam's students echoed their master's opinion of European scholars. Elizabeth Weber, who contributed *The Duk-Duks of Melanesia* to the series, wrote to Merriam:

Very apparently Roberto has no idea that his Italian Meisterstück was a flop, and what a collapse there will be when he does find it out; his ego will be utterly deflated . . . If these European savants were less impressed with themselves they might produce something less floppish (Weber, 1930).

A certain superiority towards European scholars was evident. Almost the only one

who disagreed was Charles A. Beard, an old rebel among American political scientists, who analyzed the situation as follows:

A third external aid to intellectual fruition is leisure – not an occasional sabbatical year, not a hot summer now and then, not a few days off every now and then, but prolonged, undisturbed, self-controlled leisure. It was in 1837 that Charles Darwin began his work on the transmutation of species; in 1842 he moved to Down where he lived quietly the rest of his days; the *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859. Had Darwin lived in the United States he might have been a successful manufacturer of corsets or died gradually as professor of zoology and curator of the museum in the University of Weissenhof. One great trouble with us in America, in universities and outside of them, is our faith in ‘doing something’. We are always going from one place to another, producing more goods today than yesterday, getting out more monographs, doing more ‘research’, heaving up great piles of printed matter. We have little faith in the immeasurable, the imponderable, and the valueless – the things that have contributed immortality to every civilization that has appeared on this planet (Beard, n.d.; cf. Beard, 1930).

### **Is There an Explanation for the Development of Political Science?**

The analysis of the development and nature of American political science together with the theoretical reconstruction presented at the outset of this article offer a certain image. Is it right or wrong? There have been and there will be different explanations.

Periodizations of the development of American political science usually look at methods, for example, the formal, the traditional, the behavioral and the post-behavioral stages (Easton, 1985), or at the present state of the discipline in terms of formative years, the emergent period, the middle years and the contemporary period (Somit and Tanenhaus, 1967; see also Ricci, 1984). These kinds of periodizations reveal either a faith in science (Crick, 1959) or a reading of history through the present in an effort to make the present legitimate. The periodization of this article tries to link the development with a major concern of the discipline, democracy. All these periodizations may be valid, but they certainly give different pictures of the development. These differences would support Derrida’s argument that we never have enough authority to insist on one interpretation rather than another, that all we can do is give counter-examples to accepted explanations in order to illustrate with more and more such examples the ultimate untenability of these explanations (see Skinner, 1985). I have had this principle in mind while writing this article.

Let us take one more example. Robert A. Dahl (1961: 763–765) has listed six reasons for explaining the rise of behavioralism in the United States:

1. Charles E. Merriam and the Chicago School of Political Science;
2. the political sociology which came in the 1930s with the European immigrants;
3. political scientists’ involvement in the administration during World War II;
4. the Social Science Research Council and its Committee on Political Behavior (founded in 1945);
5. the fast development of survey research on political attitudes and voting behavior; and
6. the funding of big foundations.

But as I have argued, the situation has been much more complex. It may be a myth that European immigrants greatly influenced the birth of behavioralism, and it certainly is a myth that American political scientists did not come into contact with political decision-makers until World War II. Perhaps the major factor was the policies of foundations, and these can be explained in many ways.

Dahl's explanation leaves many special features of behavioralism unexplained. One is the value-free thesis. David Easton may be right when he claimed that McCarthyism had a very deep effect on it (Easton, 1985: 139–140). On the other hand, we must remember that the thesis was concerned only with social criticism, not with the political utterances of the Almond type. Further, one must remember that some political scientists had earlier difficulties (e.g. Harold Laski in Harvard at the beginning of the 1920s, Frederick Schuman at the University of Chicago in the 1930s). It is true that McCarthyism hardened the climate. Even Harold D. Lasswell had to write to Merriam to ask for written proof that he had not been and was not a member of the Communist party, or a sympathizer with Communists and Communism (see Lasswell, 1951). With these multiple explanations, I have tried to make the picture more complex than it would be with a single explanation. Many histories could be written on the development of American political science. The story would be different from either the Harvard or the Chicago perspective. I have tried, however, to emphasize the accidental, and the complexity of the situation whenever one is hard put to identify specific influences that would show the continuity of some basic ideas or the logic of some development.

The development of the discipline has been a process in which different parts interact with each other producing unpredictable results. Much depends on persons, contexts and situations. The personality of Merriam at the Chicago School of Political Science was a key factor. Without his presence the results could have been quite different. Think, for instance, of Charles A. Beard, who wrote to Merriam:

As to political science research endowment, I am simply no good at raising money. Contact with people of cash gives me no special respect for them or their talents and nothing that I write or say seems to give them any respect for me. So frankly I am out of the begging game and devoting my whole time to research on my own time and money. I do think that something big should be done with the New York Institute but I am simply no good when it comes to the doing (Beard, 1924).

There has been a certain continuity in ideas. Whether ideas are considered right or wrong depends on the situation and the status of those presenting them. For instance, in the 1950s, Hans J. Morgenthau (see Morgenthau, 1955) and, at the beginning of the 1960s, Leo Strauss and others (see Storing, 1962) criticized behavioralism in much the same way as became fashionable in the post-behavioral revolution. In their own time they were noticed, but treated more or less as curiosities.

In spite of all the complexity and unpredictability, I would argue that it is a legitimate task to try to reconstruct the theoretical objects of a discipline, and that it is legitimate to look at those discursive practices which have moulded the theoretical objects.

### **The Fall of American Political Science?**

The rise of American political science coincided with the rise of the American role as a superpower in the world. It also coincided with the growth of representative

democracy. The logical conclusion seems to be that the development of political science as we understand it is dependent on the future of representative democracy. The role of American political science, on the other hand, is dependent on internal and external changes affecting the United States. The internal contradictions in the present state of American political science may also be interpreted as reflections of those transformations which are molding American society today, for example, the move from the Midwest, the birthplace of political science, to the South and the Southwest.

These social changes prompt other crucial questions. The role of the political scientist has clearly changed. In the first phase an educator, in the second he became a political advisor whose role, in the third phase, was more and more that of a general vehicle of legitimation. In the fourth phase, a crisis looms in a new situation where there seems to be no role for political scientists, unless they can create a new one.

One thing seems certain: society has become more diversified and it is no longer possible to envisage the kind of centers in political science that existed at Columbia and Chicago. Perhaps that means that political science will also become even more diversified than it is today. Diversification is a strong trend in American political science as political scientists identify themselves as, among other things, women, black or gay political scientists. That may be a good thing in the future. General theories are always attempts to gain power, either in society or in scientific discourse. Political struggle which concentrates on specific points needs different kinds of knowledge and a different kind of intellectual. Perhaps it will lead us to a situation where there is no American or European or Asian or African political science, but instead different political discourses depending on locality, situation and politics.

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