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Political Science in Central and Eastern Europe: National Development and International Integration

Introduction

The emergence of political science in Central and Eastern Europe can be analyzed from two points of view. First, we can look at the development of political science from a historical perspective. To consider the past, to know where political science comes from in these various countries, helps us to understand how it is shaped today and where it might go in the future. Second, we can analyze the discipline's own discourse, its orientations, concepts, theories, and methods. This allows us to understand what political science considers important problems and how it processes these problems theoretically and empirically. We hypothesize that problem selection is affected by the problem agenda of the nation state. Theory development, however, transcends national boundaries and is subject to a global discourse. Both the historical and the analytical perspective have their own potential and contribute to a better understanding of "...the way in which decisions for a society are made and considered binding most of the time by most of the people" (Easton, 1953: 129-148).

In this short essay, we will address both the national development and the international integration of political science as a discipline. The section on national development touches upon the Communist past and the institutionalization of a modern political science in the decade of the 1990s. International integration will be discussed in terms of both the discipline's own discourse and the various organizational networks that link political scientists and their institutions across national borders. The analysis is based mainly on two surveys of the state of the discipline in Central and Eastern Europe. The first one covered the period of the 1990s up to the year 2000. The project was supported by the Thematic Network Political Science and included Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (Klingemann, Kulesza, and Legutke, 2002). The second survey, which was initiated by Max Kaase and Vera Sparschuh, has produced country reports for the same set of countries, pushing the time frame a bit further.

1. National development

Our assessment of national development will not cover the time before the establishment of Communist regimes. However, we hasten to remind readers that Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and partly also Bulgaria and Lithuania have an intellectual heritage going back to the first half of the 20th century. In this discussion, we cover three topics. First, we describe the impact of the Communist era. Second, we look at the institutionalization of Political Science as an academic discipline after 1989, including the main areas of teaching and research as well as the main theoretical approaches. Third, we discuss the institutional conditions of a national discourse among political scientists, such as the emergence of political science journals and the establishment of national political science associations.

The Communist legacy

To understand the national development of Political Science, it is useful to remember the past. In the countries under study, the most recent historical impact came from the Communist past. Under Communism, "Political Science" was reduced to the study of Dialectical and Historical Marxism-Leninism. Courses were obligatory for all students and mainly covered Marxist philosophy and theory, political economy, and Scientific Communism. Chairs in these areas were established in all

academic institutions. What was taught could hardly escape the Party's ideological control. However, politically relevant objects were also dealt with in History, Sociology, and Social Psychology – disciplines closer to empirical study and less subjected to ideological control. It is important to understand that the degree of Communist Party ideological control of academia was different in different periods and different countries. The grip of censorship was most severe under Stalinism and was rather liberal in the Gorbachev era. Bulgaria and Romania experienced national Communism. Slovenia, as part of the Yugoslav Federation, had the most advantageous conditions for the development of a modern Political Science. Departments of Political Science were established there early on. The Yugoslav Communist Party had few objections to participation in the “Western” discourse. A rough typology based on the rigidity of the Communist system as a condition for the development of modern Political Science distinguishes three groups of countries:

- Countries with a high degree of ideological control:
Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania;
- Countries with a moderate degree of ideological control:
Hungary and Poland;
- Countries with a low degree of ideological control:
Slovenia.

Thus, we can attempt to distinguish between different sets of conditions for the development of Political Science as an academic discipline. In some countries, ideological control by the Communist Party was greater than in others. It is plausible to assume that these differences helped or hindered the development of Political Science after 1989.

Institutionalization of political science after 1989

There are no official statistics that are strictly comparable across the countries under study. However, relying on country reports describing the state of the discipline around the turn of the century, we count about 41 departments at state universities offering a bachelor's, master's, and/or doctorate in Political Science. The number of BA, MA and PhD students was approximately 16,000; they were taught by about 550 professors or full-time lecturers. This snapshot is incomplete, because it does not take into account private academic institutions offering Political Science. It is hard to generate systematic information about this part of the system of higher education, because many of these institutions have a rather short life span. On the other hand, we find some rather well-respected institutions among them, such as the Central European University in Budapest or the Collegium Civitas in Warsaw.

The overall figures cited above hide an unequal distribution across countries. The size of the university system, including Political Science, is obviously linked to the number of inhabitants and the wealth of a country. The numbers of inhabitants of the countries analyzed here range from 38.7 million in Poland to 1.5 million in Estonia, and per capita income in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia is more than double that of Bulgaria, Romania, and the three Baltic states. Thus, it is not surprising that small countries such as Latvia (1), Slovenia (1), and Estonia (2) support just one or two Political Science departments, whereas Poland (10), Slovakia (6), Hungary (5), the Czech Republic (5), and Romania (4) support four or more. Lithuania and Bulgaria are exceptions to the rule. Though rather small and not so well to do, Lithuania has established five universities, all offering Political Science. Bulgaria, on the other hand, supports Political Science at just two state universities. Quantity, however, must not be equated with quality. Slovenia is a case in point. Although there is just the University of Ljubljana, this university has invested heavily in its Social Sciences, including Political Science. Thus, by all standards, it can compare itself today with the best institutions in the field worldwide.

Klingemann, Kulesza, and Legutke (2002) present results of a survey of Political Science departments granting a BA, MA, or PhD, which offer insights into main areas of teaching. 37 of 41 departments completed the questionnaire. Comparative Politics (29), Theory and Methods (27), and Political Philosophy (27) were the subjects most frequently taught. Political Economy (14)

marked the lower end, while National & Area Studies (25), International Relations (25), Political Sociology (24), and Public Policy (22) ranged in between. This picture is pretty much the same across countries. However, Lithuania, Romania, and Hungary tend to place more emphasis on Public Policy, while the Czech Republic, Poland, and Lithuania are more likely to stress international relations. Thus, with the exception of Political Economy, most students in Central and Eastern Europe are offered and taught all important sub-fields of modern Political Science. The neglect of Political Economy is surprising. It may, however, be a reflection of the high importance that was placed on a particular variant of Political Economy in the study of Dialectical and Historical Marxism-Leninism.

The research agenda of Political Science shows a clear link to the problem agenda of the country under consideration. Transition from autocratic to democratic rule including institutional reforms, the emergence of a competitive party system, elections, parliaments, political elites, and problems related to efforts to join the European Union and NATO are of concern to political scientists across these countries. There are, however, also problems that are nation-specific, such as Hungarians in the diaspora, Russian “minorities” in the Baltics, the fate of the Roma, or the disintegration of the Yugoslav Federation, to name just a few.

We have hypothesized that Political Science, like most other academic disciplines, should respond to problems of the society that supports it. By and large, this seems to be the case. Nevertheless, theories and methods used to understand and research these problems are much more linked to the international discourse. Results of the survey mentioned above show that the Historical Approach (32 times), Systems Theory (27) and Functionalism (19), and Neo-Institutionalism (18) have been mentioned as the most important theoretical approaches. Game Theory (5), Marxism (5), Existentialism (2), Phenomenology (2), and Cybernetics (1) were situated at the very end. Behavioralism (16), Organizational Theory (16), Rational Choice (14), and Hermeneutics (12) ranged in between. As far as the Historical Approach and Systems Theory and Functionalism are concerned, this result holds for all departments under investigation. Beyond that, we can observe more country-specific patterns. (West) German data from 1996 are available for comparison (Klingemann and Falter, 1998). As demonstrated in Table 1, the general pattern is quite similar.

Large differences in emphasis occur with Hermeneutics and Phenomenology. These two approaches seem to have lost explanatory power for problems facing Political Science today in general and for the explanation of problems of Central and Eastern European countries in particular. Theoretical approaches do not come from nowhere. Much of the discourse in this area has taken place in the many research projects initiated internationally and carried out in cooperation with scholars of the region. One example is a series of projects devoted to the analysis of competitive elections in Central and Eastern Europe (Klingemann and Taylor, series editors).

Establishing national discourse and interest representation

The creation of opportunity structures for communication is a precondition for building a national community of political scientists. Two elements are of key importance: the availability of political science journals and the establishment of a national political science association.

Ten years after transition, there is a rather well developed and differentiated field of professional political science journals. This is particularly true for Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania. In fact there is not a single country that fails to offer a journal to publish and discuss political science topics in its own language. At the same time, most of the journals – especially in the smaller countries – are confronted with severe financial problems.

In some instances, publication of a journal is linked to a national political science association. The establishment of such an organization is another step toward providing possibilities of professional communication and interest representation. National political science conventions are part of the routine of the discipline in most countries. At the time this essay was written, political scientists in all countries under study, with the exception of Estonia and Latvia, have created

national political science associations. However, in these very small countries with just a few political scientists, meetings have been organized together with colleagues from other social sciences such as sociology, social psychology, or communication science.

2. International integration

The national development of Political Science is closely connected to international integration. A solid home base is of great help when entering the discourse abroad. We can observe efforts of cooperation between “the West” and Central and Eastern Europe involving individual political scientists and their academic institutions since 1989. Over time, the exchange of ideas and cooperation has grown in scope and intensity. This has been true both for American and Western European academic institutions and foundations. Technically, the availability of the Internet has greatly facilitated this process. In this short essay, we cannot do justice to the many forms this discourse has taken. What can be done is to cite a few examples that refer mostly to Western European projects.

Former immigrants like Iván Völgyes in Hungary and Rein Taagepera in Estonia were among the first to extend a helping hand to political scientists in the East. *Large-scale comparative research projects* like the European Values Study and the Work Values Survey, the Post-Communist Publics Survey, and the Comparative Party Manifesto Project, to name just a few, were very dependent on national talent and proved to be a good training ground for both sides. Examples of a more *institutionally-backed cooperation* could be observed in the Baltics and in Romania. The universities of Oslo, Aarhus, and Umea engaged the universities of Tartu, Riga, and Vilnius in a project titled “The Politics of Transition in the Baltic States”. And organizations such as the Association des Universités Partiellement ou Entièrement de Langue Française/Université des Réseaux d’Expression Française quickly established ties with Romanian academic institutions. As the most prominent example of *foundations*, the Soros Foundation helped to support academic institutions such as the Central European University in Budapest and funded a multitude of research projects through its Open Society Fund. Last but not least, we should mention the *European Union* and its programs, such as the Tempus Program, which have helped to organize meetings, exchange students and faculty, and carry out research.

In 1993, nine Central and Eastern European countries formed the *Central European Political Science Association (CEPSA)*. In September 2000, this association launched a new political science quarterly, the *Central European Political Science Review*, published in English. This development has greatly contributed to an exchange of ideas across national boundaries. In addition, one international and two European political science organizations have served as integrating institutions of the profession. The *European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR)* is most important for organizing comparative research. It is based on institutional membership and currently has more than 20 members in the countries under study. Founded as recently as 2001 by scholars from all parts of Europe, the *European Political Science Network (epsNet)* is concerned mostly with problems related to teaching Political Science. Individual and collective members come in almost equal numbers from Western and from Central and Eastern Europe. Finally, the *International Political Science Association (IPSA)* has made a conscious effort to integrate national political science associations and individual political scientists in the global discourse. All the countries that are dealt with here and have a national political science association also cooperate with IPSA. Needless to say, the *American Political Science Association (APSA)* has attracted a great number of Central and Eastern European scholars to become individual members, just as it has in most other parts of the world. The more than 16,000 American political scientists and their conventions form a center of gravity that cannot be ignored.

Conclusions

More than ten years after the great transition from autocratic rule to democracy, we can observe a lively political science community in Central and Eastern Europe. Institutionalization has progressed. Contours of a research agenda are visible that reflect the problems facing societies in various phases of a process of economic, social, and political change. There is participation in the discourse on theory development. In addition, students of Political Science have experienced a fair chance in the labor market. But this happy note is not meant to obscure that the material and financial conditions the discipline has to struggle with in most of these countries are inadequate, to say the least. In many instances, academia is unable to compete with private business for the best talent – with all the accompanying negative long-term effects for the development of the profession that entails.

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Table 1: Theoretical Approaches*

Theoretical Approach	Central and Eastern Europe 2000		West Germany 1996	
	1**	(32)***	2**	(52)****
Historical Approach	2	(27)	3	(38)
System Theory	3	(19)	6	(18)
Functionalism	4	(18)	1	(54)
Neo-Institutionalism	5/6	(16)	7	(16)
Behavioralism	7	(14)	5	(26)
Rational Choice	8	(12)	4	(31)
Hermeneutics	9/10	(5)	9	(13)
Game Theory	9/10	(5)	10	(12)
Marxism	11/12	(2)	12	(4)
Existentialism	11/12	(2)	8	(15)
Phenomenology	13	(1)	11	(10)
Cybernetics				
N	(37)			(316)

* The comparison omits Organizational Theory, a sub-field asked in the 2000 Central and Eastern European survey but not asked in the 1996 West German survey.

** Rank order;

*** Number of departments mentioning the respective theoretical approach;

**** Proportion of respondents mentioning the respective theoretical approach as important or very important for their own research work.

A MAP OF STATE UNIVERSITIES IN
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
TEACHING POLITICAL SCIENCE



■ capital ○ university included ● university not included
 The digit in front of the symbol indicates the number of the universities included