

The Profession

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Political Science and the 21st Century: From Government to Governance

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Years ago when I was teaching at Kansas State University, a Professor of Horticulture confronted me with the question: "You say you are a political scientist. . . . tell me, what is scientific about politics?" I retorted: "Well, what is cultural about horticulture?"

What Is Political Science?

This exchange did provoke me to give much more thought to what is political science. Stuart Chase has stated that the test of a scientist is the ability to predict with accuracy (Chase, 1948: ch. 17). Surely, by this standard, political science is not very scientific. And there is a lack of general agreement as to the scope of our discipline.¹

Nevertheless, there is one fundamental concept I believe that does serve to give some unity to political science, and that is the concept of "power" (Robson, 1954: 17). So, when I am asked what is political science, I say that it is above all the study of "power" in society. Then, I proceed to define power as the capacity to allocate resources. I

explain that political scientists are interested in all questions relating to power: who has power, how power is acquired, how it is exercised, how it is transferred, how it is lost, etc.—or who gets what, when and how. Then I say that political scientists are interested in the study of any institution in society that exercises power: the school, church, labor union, business, government.

I then elaborate: of all institutions that allocate resources—or have power—we are interested primarily in government,² because government is the most powerful and coercive institution in society. And since government organizes the nation-state, we also study the nation-state as the context in which government exists. And we therefore also study the relations between and among nation-states (and particularly their governments) and this we call international relations.

I suspect few political scientists would disagree with this logic. It is my contention, however, that this conception of political science is becoming obsolete and will no longer serve us as well as we enter the last decade of the 20th century and prepare our students for the 21st century.

Momentous World Change

Although social scientists need to rethink the concept of power (Boulding, 1989), we political scientists need not abandon our concern with this concept as providing the central unity of our discipline. I do argue, however, that governments of, within, and between nation-states should no longer command such an exclusive hold on our attention. We need to shift more attention from government to governance. Why governance? Let me explain.

We humans are in the midst of momentous world change wrought by revolutionary advances in science and technology. Ours is a time of "macrotransition," but, whatever label we affix to it, accelerating world change has created an interdependent global environment, a fragile, vulnerable global system, of which all of us are a part (Cleveland, 1980; Boyer, 1986).

Ours is a time of: a world teetering on the brink of ecological disaster; the persistence of mass poverty and hunger; the depletion of nonrenewable fuel and energy; death control surpassing birth control; exploding populations and scarce resources; oil

spills and nuclear accidents; the greenhouse effect; and ozone depletion in the atmosphere.

It is also a time of: the discovery of renewable physical and biological resources; the exploration of outer space; superconductors; the knowledge explosion; and the sudden acceleration of our analytical processes by virtue of the historically incomparable inventions of the computer, the satellite, and the silicon chip. In short, it is a time when the compartmentalization of the world into nations, into sectors (agriculture, energy, trade), and into broad areas of human concern (environmental, economic, social, political) is beginning to dissolve. It is a time of the growing obsolescence of the nation-state.

My theme is that we need to develop tenable concepts, theories, policies, and institutions by which we can deal with such momentous change. We cannot afford to continue to remain prisoners of our obsolescent past. As political scientists, we must understand that nation-states are limited in their power to deal with world crises. We must become global in our vision, teaching, and research. We must think unhabitually.

The World as One Unit

Let us consider information, for example. One can argue that the most important human resource in the world is information. Indeed, it expands when used and may even be in chronic surplus. Business practice traditionally consists of exchange transactions: "A" gives up something to "B" and receives something in return of equal value—a zero-sum occurrence. But if "A" gives something to "B" which "A" also retains, it is not an exchange transaction; rather it is a sharing process with many positive-sum implications (Cleveland, 1980, 8-9). This is how information differs from other resources.³ My point is that neither political scientists nor economists have developed any theory for explaining or thinking about a world economy consisting mostly of sharing transactions or about the implications, for that matter, of a politics of

sharing a plentiful resource (such as information or solar energy) as distinguished from a politics of allocating scarce resources.

The world has become one unit. It is no longer possible to separate economic from political and environmental issues. Many forms of development (acid rain, the dumping of hazardous wastes) erode the world environment, and environmental degradation undermines economic development. Poverty is a major cause and effect of global environmental problems. It is therefore futile for governments alone to attempt to deal with world environmental problems. Needed are broader institutions and perspectives that focus on world poverty and international inequality. These should become central concerns of our discipline.

We need to shift more attention from government to governance.

These are the concerns of the World Commission on Environment and Development, created by the United Nations, in its 1987 report entitled *Our Common Future*. Calling for major institutional development and reform, the Commission stated that "the challenges are both interdependent and integrated, requiring comprehensive approaches and popular participation." According to the Commission, governments have been incapable of responding to these challenges, because they are too independent, fragmented, and have narrow mandates with closed decision processes. Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable, said the Commission, but it will require new global institutions for effective cooperation to manage ecological and economic interdependence (World Commission, 1987). I submit that these challenges should also become central in our discipline.

Conceptual Lags

The technological revolution of our time reveals many other conceptual lags. As Harlan Cleveland

has noted, we are casting aside such notions as the so-called "inner logic of technological change and the invisible hand of the market."⁴ In other words, we have abandoned much of our faith in the "automaticity of the market" and are insisting instead on social direction for the new technologies and on political bargaining in the market place rather than in government alone (Cleveland, 1980, 9-10).

Similarly, doctrines of full rights and responsibilities, emphasizing productivity, full employment, universal entitlements to basic human needs in the pursuit of happiness, and racial and gender equity, are replacing in importance the old New Deal-welfare state-social minimum values, such as social security, public housing, and unemployment compensation. It used to be that when we confronted a social problem, our response was to create a government agency and give it a big appropriation. Such an approach no longer suffices.

In short, nongovernmental institutions are increasingly performing public functions. In New Castle County in Delaware, there are 46 nongovernmental United Way organizations that are performing family-supporting functions. They are not government agencies, but they are nevertheless participating in what may be called "governance." In the future, we will be having more and more governance, and less and less government.

Beyond Government

Clearly we are moving beyond government to governance. We may define governance as the action of government plus its interaction with its nongovernmental partners in the process of governing—in their collective relationship with the economy and public policy. "If we are going to govern ourselves, without inflating our governments more and more," observes Harlan Cleveland, "the nongovernments in our society will have to think of themselves quite self-consciously as part of governance" (Cleveland, 1980, 14-15; 1985). It is imperative for political science to give priority attention to nongovernment institutions and their

allocation of resources.

I do not mean to ignore the attention political scientists have given to nongovernment actors in the past at subnational, national and transnational levels. After all, the group-based view of politics dates from 1908 when Arthur Bentley published his seminal study on what he called “social pressures on the process of government” (Bentley, 1908), and much of the pluralist/anti-pluralist debate centers on extragovernmental centers of power and influence. At the international level, also, multinational corporations and nongovernmental organizations are receiving increasing attention by political scientists among others. Rather than call for a break or departure from the past, therefore, it is more accurate to say that I am calling for an emphasis of the broader concept of governance, embrative of a synthesis consistent with past themes and newer directions within our discipline.⁵

Imperatives of the technological revolution include increasingly shared governance between government and nongovernment institutions and the replacement of older social values and social power associated with property, wealth, production, and industry, by the newer values associated with knowledge, education, and the intellect. If the dominant figures of the past hundred years have been the politicians, entrepreneurs, business and industrial executives, the new leaders are scientists, mathematicians, economists, and the engineers of the new computer technologies.

In the United States, we are undergoing what Don K. Price has called “the diffusion of sovereignty,” by which he means the diffusion of central authority that has come about by the fusion of economic and political power (Price, 1965: ch. 3). Most high-grade civil servants view themselves as scientists, engineers, or other professional specialists, rather than as administrators, even though most of them perform primarily executive or managerial functions. A 1969 study revealed that over 20 percent of all high-trade government employees had entered laterally from outside the national government into senior grades and they stayed on. Another 15 or more percent were “in-and-outers” who had moved

from federal employment and back again one or more times (Bureau of Executive Manpower, 1969). The loyalties of many high-grade civil servants, according to Frederick C. Mosher, are primarily to their professions and programs, rather than to their agencies, the government, and the public as a whole (Mosher, 1968, ch. 4). Clearly, at our national level the current scientific revolution is moving the public and private sectors together.

We are in the midst of a trend-setting era of privatization, free markets, contracting-out, structural adjustment, decentralization, restructuring, deregulation, sustainable development, empowerment, and participation. This is a time when the formulation and implementation of public policy seem increasingly to be undertaken by nongovernment institutions that deserve more attention by political scientists. Even socialist systems (by virtue of various so-called “perestroika” and “glasnost” movements) are abandoning centralized planning by the few for participation by the many (Kingston, 1988). Participation means that throughout the world we see definite signs of more openness and less secrecy—or less government, if you will—not as an ideological preference but as a technological/economic imperative. This is to say that ideologies and national boundaries are being transcended by international science and global technologies (e.g., jet-propelled transportation, transistor radios, and space technologies), whereby concepts of national ownership, national sovereignty, and national citizenship are giving way to concepts of a global village and the common heritage of humankind.

Decline of the Nation-State

The down side of our time of macrotransition consists of mind-boggling problems we humans must increasingly confront. In contemporary political science there is much theorizing about the re-emergence of the state (Almond, 1988; Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol, 1985), and I am convinced that the nation-state is here to stay. But as Anthony Benn, for example, predicts, the

nation-state as we have known it is unlikely to survive because, he explains, the nation-state can no longer defend its citizens against nuclear assault from outside, or even from internal disorders occasioned by public demands for economic development or for greater freedom. Thus, he concludes, the nation-state is surrendering its two basic claims on the allegiance of the people: national security and domestic tranquility (Benn, 1971).

Daniel Bell also predicts the erosion of the nation-state because of its inadequacies for the tasks ahead. “The national state has become too small for the big problems in life,” he explains, “and too big for the small problems.” Bell identifies four structural problems of the future that are beyond the capacities of governments or nation-states: the “double-bind of advanced economies”; “debt and protectionism”; “the demographic tidal wave”; and “the disparity between rich and poor nations.” Because of these problems, Bell concludes, “the potential for national disorder and international violence is tremendous” (Bell, 1977).

Multinational Corporations

Dwight Waldo has added his voice to those questioning the perdurability of the nation-state of the past, which he defines as a state with nationalism added, and notes that such states are only about 200 years old. In addition to the momentous implications for governments and states of the recent technological advances in transportation and communication, Waldo adds another dimension to our discussion: the great increase in the number, size, and power of transnational and multinational organizations during our generation: organizations economic, educational, cultural, professional, scientific, and technological. There are more than 6,000 international organizations. The most significant and powerful among them are the large multinational corporations, some of which are larger in terms of net worth, annual income, and even population than several member nations of the United Nations (Waldo, 1981: 162-63). And all multinational cor-

porations in much of their activity are beyond the reach of governments or nation-states; indeed, this freedom, autonomy, or "anarchy" is the distinguishing feature of the multinational corporation.

It is important to recognize that the multinational corporation, as an institution that exercises much power in society, should become central in the study and teaching of political science. The world economy is the driving force of the U.S. economy. Multinational corporations are the main actors in the world economy; they straddle national boundaries, and the largest of them have sales which exceed the aggregate output of most countries.⁶

The revolutionary pace of technological change the world has witnessed through the 1980s will undoubtedly accelerate during the 1990s and into the next century. Rapid advances in micro-electronics, and more recent developments in bio-engineering, new materials and composites, are giving rise to new products, are refashioning existing products and production processes, and are altering the choices of location of many economic activities throughout the world. Multinational corporations are at the center of these changes.⁷

Conclusion

I believe that accelerating technological and scientific change has created an interdependent world to which the political science for the future must respond. If political science is the study of power in society, we should reach beyond government to also study and teach about nongovernment institutions that participate in the processes of governance. We have not been doing that, at least to the extent or degree necessary.

Central to the concerns of the new political science should be the development of concepts, theories, policies and institutions that transcend government and the nation-state and can deal with grievous world problems and crises.

It should be emphasized that many of the relevant institutions and forces we need to study are both local and international at the same time, and

they affect the world's poor in less developed countries as well as in our own cities. The world's poor are struggling for survival. They are the victims of poverty, homelessness, the drug culture and the drug chain, famine, gangs, and guerrillas. They are the children of Los Angeles and the Sudan whose lives are threatened by rapidly changing forces almost never mentioned in our textbooks. They remain outside the experience of political scientists, and appear beyond the reach of organized political analysis. Should we write such people off? Is there some way for political scientists to learn to study and understand their situations? The new political science must contend with phenomena that is both micro and macro in dimension; that are at once subnational, national, and transnational.

Among the institutions requiring more primary attention of political scientists are, of course, multinational corporations. They are the prime actors in the world economy which drives national economies.

In short, to prepare for the 21st century, political scientists need to study the shift of power beyond government to governance. We need to take a good look at world changes and revise our curricula, teaching, and research agendas accordingly.

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Notes

1. Compared with history, political science appears diverse and complex. Compared with law or economics, it lacks the unifying influence of a special method of thought and technical vocabulary which is used uniformly by practitioners and teachers (we cannot even agree, for example, on the meaning of the term "ideology"). Compared with any of the physical or natural sciences, political science has a less clearly defined unity of subject matter. Compared with sociology, however, political science appears more coherent and compact.

2. Note that in many of our universities we prefer the label department of "government" rather than department of "political science."

3. As Hazel Henderson has put it: "Information behaves unlike other commodities; it is not subject to the 'I win, you lose' rules of the marketplace. If one group gives valuable information to another, both win. Thus the basic economic assumption of scarcity is invalidated" (Henderson in Boyer, 1985: 583).

4. Consider the declining interest in nuclear energy for making electricity; the tightening of food, drug, and environmental protection regulations; the increasing concerns about weather modification and genetic engineering; or the efforts to save Lockheed, Chrysler, the steel and savings-and-loan industries, and those banks heavily exposed to foreign debt.

5. Consider these facts. Today, the United States Government has fewer employees than it had 35 years ago even though its functions and costs have greatly increased. There are two explanations for this phenomenon. First, much government work has been assumed by state and local governments, which employ nearly three times the number of persons they employed in 1955. Second, much of the work of our national government has been contracted out to scientists, engineers, consultants, and other professionals in our research corporations, industrial enterprises, universities, and in other nongovernment institutions. For example, over the past 25 years, more than three-fourths of all research conducted in U.S. higher education—most of it scientific and technological research—has been funded directly or indirectly by the national government.

6. If transnational actors are becoming major allocators of resources in the world, which is surely the case, then political scientists might well ponder the perdurability and efficacy of public participation in local and national political systems. We might ask why publics, eroded of much control over their destinies, would want to continue to participate.

7. The United Nations Center on Transnational Corporations concluded its 1988 study as follows: "Transnational activities are forcing Governments to face up to the challenge of international governance. Technological change in financial service and worldwide telecommunications are making obsolete traditional national regulatory mechanisms. Global corporate alliances are modifying the play of world market forces. International movements of trade and capital have substantial impacts on the domestic economies of even the largest countries; the impacts on developing countries can be overwhelming. These and other transnational trends underscore a common theme: the successful pursuit of national policies in an interdependent world requires a global view" (United Nations, 1988: 499).

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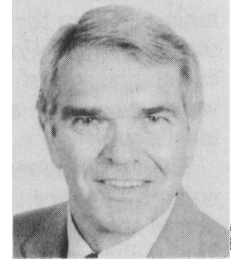
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More About Applied Political Science

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In a recent issue of *PS* (XXII, 3, September 1989, 635-639), Gary Andres and Janice Beecher call for something that seems obviously desirable but, as they themselves point out, is not easy to achieve: bridging the gap between academic political science and practical politics. Some of their arguments seem to me well-taken. But I write this response because of what they omit and distort. That is most of what really matters in dealing with this seemingly simple, but very complex, matter. Their views, as is often the case with the "obvious," are simplistic, despite the existence of literature that wrestles with the complexities.

First, though, the good points. Andres and Beecher point out that political scientists are not sufficiently used in practical politics, public and private. They exaggerate this point a bit, and they do not mention any misuse of academics by politicians (see below); but they seem to me basically to be right. They write even more to the point about the lack of sufficient flow from practical politics

to academic political science; political scientists who go into practical work are, granted a few exceptions, not given proper credit for it when they wish to return to the academy. Andres and Beecher surely are also right in calling for a predictive political science. In principle, theories that can explain (I assume that they mean "scientifically" explain, in Hempel's sense) also can predict; but actual prediction unfortunately is not common in our field, even for its crucial academic use: testing theory. And their vision of the integration of academic and practical political science surely is a laudable vision, anyway at first glance.

I hope, and assume, that they do not consider their vision new. It goes back about as far as political study itself; in fact, the separation of academic study and worldly activity is of quite recent origin. If only for that reason, periodic exhortations to mobilize political scientists for practical work in the "real world" are probably worthwhile. I did once write (in reply to Leo Strauss' accu-

sation that political scientists are fiddling while Rome burns, without realizing that Rome is burning and they are fiddling) that political mobilization of the profession was hardly needed at the time, and gave a very long paragraph's worth of still pertinent reasons (Eckstein, 1967). Still, as Ernest Lynton argued persuasively in a recent book, higher education in general nowadays falls far short of fulfilling an ancient, critical social function: training capable, needed personnel (as the ancient universities emphasized the training of clergymen and scribes) and, especially important in this age of rapid accumulation and change of knowledge, retraining people in mid-career. Among the sinners in regard to this, political science departments surely rank high.

The situation is not, however, as bleak as Andres and Beecher depict it. Note the spread of courses on practical public morality, the mushroom growth of Schools of Public Affairs, the vogue of policy studies (since Lasswell), and the