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Theodore J. Lowi

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Theodore J. Lowi

Department of Government, Cornell University, USA

Abstract

This is a story about competition between a primitive political science, a modern political science, and their significance to the future of political science and the state. The old-fashioned political science is comprised of storytelling, otherwise called case studies. The modern, pure political science is committed to the incorporation of the methods of pure science. The difference between the two is the origin of an on-going debate within political science. When the state suffers a threat to its sovereignty, it seeks to suppress or coopt domestic centers of power. It patronizes the pure science because it shows some promise of valuable service. Chile is a significant example. And the older political science will suffer due to its tendency to expose pathologies and its inability to remain neutral. Thus, once the state tends toward authoritarianism, the storytelling political science is likely to suffer because thorough analyses find their way toward criticism, to pathology. Once the state has intervened, the national association may respond but with too little support, and the individual practitioners may have to retreat to their national association and to the International Political Science Association, which may speak for all of the 60+ national associations. The International Political Science Association will be the canary in the coal mine. The Nobel awaits.

Keywords

authoritarianism, state, primitive science, pure science, pathology, regularity, causality, rationality

Prognosis does not imply anything about the desirability of the course of events that one predicts. If a doctor predicts that his patient will die presently, this does not mean that he desires it. (Schumpeter, 1942: 61)

I became a political scientist at Yale during the rise and decline of McCarthyism, but it had little effect on me until its revival in the mid-1960s in Chicago. The infamous House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) set up shop to investigate and expose the alleged revival of communism, and their focus was on a few public health doctors who were first to reveal findings regarding the perils of cigarettes. (And yes, they had been left-wing activists during their college days.) Subpoenas were issued, but instead of invoking his Fifth Amendment right to remain silent,

Corresponding author:

Theodore J. Lowi, Department of Government, Cornell University, 115 White Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853, USA.

Email: TJL7@cornell.edu

the most prominent of the alleged suspects, Dr Jeremiah Stamler, brought suit against HUAC's violation of his First Amendment rights.

Immediately upon my arrival to join the University of Chicago, in September 1965, I was recruited to get signatures and raise money for Stamler's case against HUAC. And after three appeals in four years up to the Supreme Court and one petition against the House of Representatives, Stamler failed to kill HUAC. But HUAC, finally after three more years, was ordered by the Court to change its name to House International Security Committee (HISC) and to accept a more restricted set of rules for fighting communism (Lowi, 1976: 527–534).

The Stamler case is a good, double-edge story. First it shows how easy it is for an authoritarian movement to suppress normal politics. Second—and more to the point of this essay—it shows how much just one political scientist can contribute to political science through a simple story, to wit: In the process of raising money and support to use the highest court against the national legislature, I found my own brand of political science: *I became a pathologist*. In other words, I became a student of the pathologies of the body politic.

Stories about the pathologies of the body politic have been told before there was a political science. Pathologies were the stories for radicals, special pleaders, and others who have used extreme cases to attract support. But with the coming of an institutionalized political science—an actual founding date (1903) with a constitution and an upper bourgeois leadership of college professors and civil leaders—stories about pathologies were exiled. If political science could be a science, it would have to commit itself to stories about regularities. Professor Woodrow Wilson came home with his PhD, through Germany and England to Johns Hopkins, and he preached political science by copying European practices. The title of his American Political Science Association (APSA) presidential address was 'The Laws and the Facts,' to make the government run regularly.

This devotion to regularity was the key to the history of politics as a science, and it has not only persisted through the history of American political science but has also followed similar patterns of regularity in all the European countries that fostered political science after their revival following World War II (WWII). But US political science did not remain focused on elite regularities. There was just not enough science in the old-fashioned science, because it was mainly storytelling, through case studies.

The first big break away from elite regularity was APSA's embrace of psychology, and behavioral science was the perfect move. Lessons were learned during WWII that money and lives could be saved using simple behavioral techniques to 'weed out' recruits even before training them. Another attractive feature of psychology was use of content analysis focused on the Italians and Germans to expose and resist and to imitate what came to be called propaganda.

But a still larger incorporation into political science was random sample survey polling. Well before political scientists were doing their first opinion surveys, practitioners from even pre-World War I were providing all sorts of help to mass commercial markets when eager political science users of behavioral science were having to 'prove' that any use of political polling was not an affront to the constitution.

With this advance of psychology, political science fell so far behind that APSA could not get anywhere near recognition as a science by the new but rich and powerful National Science Foundation (NSF). It was not until the late 1950s that APSA gained NSF recognition, and that was due entirely to a few APSA elders who were finally able to demonstrate a large enough presence of behavioral science in the major PhD-granting universities.

Up to a point, all this was a healthy intellectual heating up between the old-fashioned storytelling and the (relatively) new *causality*. Yes, above all, to have a *modern*, true white-coated laboratory

science, you had to demonstrate causality. And no concept survives in a true science until it has at least met the criteria of operationalization and quantification.

Later, in the 1950s, political science made another embrace, to imitate economics. Economics had become the language of the state. The state was not yet the focus of 'state theory.' The state was to be the backdrop, to be studied as process, not as substance. Process was to be the psychological equivalent of causality. And political science, following our two Nobel economics awardees,¹ should be the study of *rationality*, where we political scientists ought to have been focusing on *irrationality*. The following comment demonstrates the preference of a science of causality in economic terms, designed for the politics of the distribution of resources:

Ostrom ... starts from an analytical framework that lists all variables at the micro, meso and macro levels of policy interaction ... To give an example, Ostrom lists all explanatory variables that could account for the provision of a common pool resource threatened by overuse [namely, irrationality]. The list systematically describes all variables ... that may account for the complex phenomenon. (Ostrom, 2008: 73)

Ostrom's economic science for political science is nailed down by still other political scientists, particularly well by Gary Goertz, drawn from Ostrom's APSA presidential address (1997):

Ostrom identifies eight conditions for her key outcome of "institutional functioning." But the first six are necessary, and the last two are the essential ones, "monitoring" and "sanctions" which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the outcome of *institutional functioning*. This locks down the scientific aspect, and the eight variables give us the predictable work of government (namely, common-pool regimes)—however, with the caveat that rational and lasting regimes require 'clear mechanisms for monitoring rule conformance [please note well] and *graduated sanctions for enforcing compliance*. (Ostrom, 1997)

These selections are *scientific (sic)* re-statements of an early 20th century political science statement of *the state and its government*. I am tempted to assert that Max Weber did it better, but the Ostrom et al. approach gives political science more modern scientism.

This critical review has been written from a US perspective, with its embrace of lab science, the white coat, and a cross-sectional, a-historical coloration of pure science. But that does not mean that we are alone. My second experience was France, the European embrace of American political science. Upon my arrival for a year in 1967, I was struck dumb by the dominance of everything from political psychology, to political sociology, to political socialization, and to public opinion research at Sciences Po, with a large and growing responsiveness at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). I learned less of German political science, but I saw and was impressed by the tremendous German output of America-type cross-sectional and cross-country behavioralism—with published results in many respects superior to ours. Later in the 1960s, the Japanese were also taking on behavioral political/psychology.

Thanks to the lengthy effort to put governments directly into recovery—national and world recovery—economics had become almost everywhere the language of the state. In the United States, economists in government were impressive to political scientists, but the stronger impression came from the United Kingdom and France—respectively the 'political economy' at the London School of Economics and still more the building of an elite in French government through the *École Nationale d'Administration*.

The signature player to apply an economics language to politics and policy was political scientist Herbert Simon, whose work went from standard public administration—a standard textbook of

that name, *Public Administration* (Simon et al., 1950)—to a book he was working on alone at the same time, *Administrative Behavior* (Simon, 1947), that was going to move political science to behavioralism. And note well, the subtitle of the book, *A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization*. These and many other applications of administration as a flow of economic decision units would ultimately lead Simon to the Nobel Prize in Economics.

Moreover, Simon would single-handedly split public administration almost completely from political science. Here is a broad, incorporating statement of the embrace of political science as an economic science: ‘... Simon’s image of science ... stressed the need to abandon the approach of the humanities and “adopt the orientation of modern natural science” which would involve, as a first step, finding out “what the methods of natural sciences are”’ (Gunnell, 1993: 224).

Simon was only one to prepare the way for a political science made of equations, necessarily *economistic* methods, even if they didn’t work:

In the specific province of public policy ... there was an enormous difference between the equations that made possible the Bomb ... [and] how to eliminate poverty ... [or] where matters are so complicated ... [that] the available knowledge does not lead unquestionably to particular policy options. (Ricci, 1993: 45)

There is no way to enumerate and measure the scale of information seeking, giving, evaluating, surveying and analyzing in economics. It was damned impressive, the best that we can find, by Ricci: ‘... as the 1960s and 1970s wore on, Washington gained access to great quantities of information—including charts, graphs, equations, statistics, citations, and the like. None of it was false. But none of it was especially true ... not so much a matter of learning as of extrapolating and interpreting’ (Ricci, 1993: 46). But the lustre of economic methods has remained.

Here again, although the story is American, its influence, by a matter of a decade, the science *in* political science, would move a large intellectual step away from political thought. There was a mathematization of political science. The most ambitious political science PhD candidates were dedicating at least a semester’s work in social science methodologies. Many do it to be able to include it on their CV, and a scant few others will take more methods training in order to incorporate it in their research and analysis. This has been encouraged in virtually all PhD programs, and most political science departments have to be generous in financing this extra training.

Nothing here is intended to oppose or deride this critique. I take it as evidence of the long-standing tendency of political scientists to deride their own calling. Except for a relatively small contingent of ‘political theory’ or ‘political philosophy’ majors, virtually all other students look elsewhere and outside. I believe there is a regular, long-standing pattern of imitation. In other words, political science—in its search for a science—has become the poor relation in the social sciences.

This is not meant to be an appeal to return all political scientists back to the canon, but it is an appeal for a move back toward the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s recognition of science: knowledge acquired by study; or acquaintance or mastery of any department of learning. We could go back with this all the way to Aristotle. And from there to here it would not be to causality through large numbers but through careful observation and *comparison*: comparison between objects as they are and objects as they ought to be.

And finally, although it had not been my plan to begin this essay with the revival of the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee, the more I mingled with members of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) the more aware I became of the perils of political science. The “hard sciences” can persist if not prosper as long as they, as a group, remain

neutral and favored by government. In my own experience, the most outstanding case is the cooperation between American economists and Chilean economists with the Chilean dictatorship.

Political science within one country is the ultimate mistake if its members apply science to multiple social units, paying no attention to the condition of their own country. In other words, if political scientists held to their science, imitating the “true scientific political science,” their data would be gained at the cost of their country’s own pathologies. This takes us back to Aristotle, who was an empiricist along with a strong normative character: ‘[His] *Politics* was written only after he had given close study to the organization and operation of 158 governmental systems ... to suggest the best system possible ...’ (Hacker, 1961: 71).

Within my understanding, “the comparative method” has no established place in methods manuals. Two leading methodologists have come together with a categorization based on the *number of items* involved: ‘Here the ideal N lies somewhere between a handful and 50 ... [and] beyond 50, the method begins to lose its distinctiveness and merges with statistical methods ...’ (Gerring, 2001: 207). This claim is weakened still further by using a statistical method on small numbers *as though* the numbers were large enough to be treated statistically.

This leaves me the opportunity to make pathologists out of political scientists: (1) To be a student of pathologies is to describe and characterize what seems to be a pathology. (2) *Every political pathology is a single N*. (3) Every N must be categorized for purposes of comparison. (4) And as the Ns increase, the polity recognizes a crisis. Thus, to repeat, the first action taken by the state or village is to try to shut down political discourse. And, at that point, political science *seems* to be implicated.

When a given state confronts a crisis, it is particular to that state. Thus, it is not political science *as such* that is implicated: *It is the political science association of that particular state that is implicated.*

This is a more demanding dilemma for the newer associations and their more recent joining of IPSA. Hence, their association must encourage and foster a political science of pathology in order to bring and maintain at least some light and air to the regime. In contrast, if that national association embraces the political science of causation, that association is only inviting a regime tending toward further authoritarianism. But if a new association is in peril by publishing or sponsoring the results of its research, it is serving its own country and all other member countries, by alerting them far faster and far more thoroughly.

That is the final question and a question of finality. In 1999 (the year of publication of the *History and the Handbook of IPSA*, and also the last year of my presidency) there were 38 national members of IPSA (see tables in the Appendix). Most of them were survivors of Nazi or Japanese or Soviet occupation, and many political scientists have reported their suffering. During the decade since 2000, 14 new political science associations were formed and were admitted to membership. And according to the Secretary General of IPSA, 9 associations have formed and have a commitment to join IPSA. Even the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is another possible member.

These newly established associations within the newly established and recognized states absolutely require a political science ready, willing and able to be a political science worthy of studying its own national pathologies. And the good news is that a new political science can meet the higher standards of the more seasoned associations and the professional journals and conferences because the language of the study of pathology *is in narrative voice*. Each article and book can be a story of its own beloved country. And pure science methods can be acquired later.

In 2000, as I was completing my term as IPSA president, I was very proud to claim that there were 42 collective (state) members. I could also claim that the *International Political Science*

Abstracts had reached its 59th year, with abstracts of over 800 publications from dozens of countries in many languages. The *International Political Science Review* had become a unique meeting place for individual scholars and symposium editions. And a new and spectacular addition was the IPSA Portal (by Mauro Calise), with instant access to up-to-date guidance to the 300 most used electronic scholarly web resources of any and all websites in all the social sciences.

These three services together can equalize access to the most impoverished scholars and the scholarly resources of all the greatest universities, their archives, their libraries. Thus one could determine that all these instruments and institutions make it impossible for authoritarianism to sustain itself. But it *is* definitely possible if IPSA itself plays more of a role in world democratic dialogue. Many of the more recent collective IPSA memberships were countries whose states had suffered long relations with authoritarianism. This is itself a great challenge, but it can be met if the leadership of the country and of the political science association can recall the story of their emergence and the value of their democratization. And here again, if a given state should fall toward crisis, the story of its political science can keep the flame, *if IPSA can provide the audience*.

This is not an idle plan. The very existence of IPSA is now already a world factor. To a political science association, the story of free thought is a power in itself and the exposure a damnation of pathologies. The United Nations was created for the purpose of establishing and maintaining world talk. But it fails with regard to such a variety of state interests that it is reduced to a politics of despair. The International Political Science Association seems to be a flimsy alternative. But if each of the political science associations and institutions within IPSA were organized to spend at least some of its time away from *proving its science* toward appreciating *the story of talk*, IPSA can be a factor in world affairs. Just cast an eye again on the four tables of membership. There has to be a considerable level of determination to *keep talking*. The International Political Science Association can sponsor conferences prizes for the most outstanding advancements of science, by virtue of the best quantification and the most exquisite sampling to approximate the population. But IPSA, backed now by 60 determined political science associations and its related institutions, will share a Nobel Peace Prize.

Notes

- 1 Herbert Simon and Elinor Ostrom. Simon turned down the APSA presidency in the late 1960s, due to his lack of commitment to political science; and Ostrom accepted the presidency, surely with satisfaction that rationality in political science had arrived.

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Appendix

Table A1. Original Associations

Association	Member Since
American Political Science Association	1949
Association française de science politique	1949
Canadian Political Science Association	1949
Indian Political Science Association	1949
Israel Political Science Association	1950
Polish Association of Political Science	1950
Political Studies Association of the UK	1950
Swedish Political Science Association	1950
Belgian Political Science Association	1951
Austrian Political Science Association	1951
Hellenic Political Science Association	1951
Brazilian Political Science Association	1952
Finnish Political Science Association	1952
German Political Science Association	1952
Japanese Political Science Association	1952
Italian Political Science Association	1952
Dutch Political Science Association	1954
Australian Political Studies Association	1954
Russian Political Science Association	1955
Norwegian Political Science Association	1956
Spanish Association of Political & Administrative Science	1958
Swiss Political Science Association	1959

Table A2. Post-War Associations

Association	Member Since
Danish Political Science Association	1961
Argentine Society of Political Analysis	1961
Czech Political Science Association	1964
Turkish Political Science Association	1964
Korean Political Science Association	1967
Romanian Association of Political Science	1968
Hungarian Political Science Association	1968
African Association of Political Science	1974
Chilean Political Science Association	1984
Chinese Association of Political Science (Taipei)	1989
Croatian Political Science Association	1992
Slovenian Political Science Association	1992
Lithuanian Political Science Association	1994
Political Studies Association of Ireland	1994
Slovak Political Science Association	1994
South African Association of Political Studies	1995

Table A3. Post-Cold War Associations

Association	Member Since
Political Science Association of Nepal	2001
Lebanese Political Science Association	2001
Kazakhstan Political Science Association	2002
Political Association of Thailand	2003
Political Science Association of Singapore	2003
Portuguese Political Science Association	2004
Georgia Political Science Association	2004
Ukrainian Political Science Association	2007
Uruguayan Political Science Association	2007
Cameroonian Political Science Society	2007
Society for Political Science of Serbia	2008
Luxembourg Political Science Association	2008
Colombian Political Science Association	2009
Bolivian Political Science Association	2010

Table A4. Future Collective Members

Future Collective Members	Status
Honduras	Interested in joining IPSA
Hong Kong	Interested in joining IPSA
Malawi	In process of creating of a PSA
Mexico	In process of creating of a PSA
Moldavia	Interested in joining IPSA
Mongolia	Interested in joining IPSA
Morocco	Interested in joining IPSA
Pacific Islands Political Studies Association	Interested in joining IPSA

Biographical Note

Theodore J. Lowi is the John L. Senior Professor of American Institutions and teaches in the Government Department at Cornell University. His area of research is American government public policy.