Discipline and History: Political Science in the United States
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American Political Science in Its Postwar Political Context

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The history of political science may be written in a number of ways. One is through interviews or "oral histories" featuring firsthand accounts by participants.[1] Another way—and the approach adopted by several contributors to this volume—is to trace the history of political science as an intellectual enterprise. Illuminating as these approaches are, I shall take a third route. Mine is less an intellectual than an "institutional" history. That is, instead of emphasizing the ideas and theories that have constituted political science, I propose to focus on the political contexts and institutional matrices that have helped to shape and direct the discipline.

My thesis, simply stated, is that the development of American political science cannot be understood apart from the changing historical and political contexts in which it has found itself and to which it has responded. Such developments as the behavioral revolution and the turn toward "science," in something like a positivistic sense, can accordingly be viewed politically as that discipline's rational and self-interested response to the climate and temper of the times. My aim in what follows is to clarify, qualify, and substantiate this thesis by highlighting a number of important episodes in the development of political science in the postwar period.

My essay proceeds in four stages. In the first, I sketch several features of the social and political landscape on which political science in the 1940s found itself and which it, in turn, tried to help shape. Second, I recount the rhetorical stratagems and arguments employed by political scientists to garner public recognition, financial resources, and political legitimacy for their discipline. Third, I try to trace some of the sources and consequences of

Previously unpublished essay.

1. See *Political Science in America: Oral Histories of a Discipline*, Michael A. Baer, Malcolm E. Jewell, and Lee Sigelman, eds. (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991).

political science's success in this endeavor. Finally, I recount the reasons for the failure of political science to fulfill its postwar promise.

I.

The social sciences, and political science in particular, became increasingly prominent in the wake of World War II. The discipline owed its growing prestige to a number of developments. The creation of the welfare state during the Great Depression of the 1930s, American hegemony following the allies' successful prosecution of World War II, and the political climate of the Cold War created an atmosphere in which the claims of political scientists came to have a certain appeal. Thus it is in the postwar period that we see for the first time the creation of an institutional infrastructure—governmental granting agencies, private foundations, the modern multiversity, and the increasing professionalization of the social sciences themselves—for supporting social science research and training. Through this combination of circumstances, the social sciences—and the so-called 'policy sciences' in particular—came into their own.

The New Deal, and the birth of the American welfare state, helped to alter popular attitudes about the proper relation between citizens and their government. These include changing beliefs about government's responsibility for alleviating social ills, for engaging in limited economic planning (by, among other things, regulating the money supply, bolstering the banking system by regulating banking practices, insuring individual deposits, and the like), for mediating between the interests of capital and labor, and generally checking the worst social and economic excesses of an otherwise untrammelled laissez-faire market economy.

But, important as the New Deal was in changing the political climate in which American political science became ever more prominent, it pales in comparison with World War II. The war greatly increased opportunities and resources for research and disciplinary advancement. Before 1940, most social science research was funded from private sources. Even during the Depression, government monies allocated for social science research were spent mainly on gathering and publishing statistical information. The war changed all that. "World War II," as Harry Alpert of the National Science Foundation notes, "was undoubtedly the major catalytic event leading to the expansion of the federal government's programs in [the social science] field." Indeed, he adds, the present-day prominence of the social sciences in America

> is a product of World War II and of the postwar era and represents novel developments both with respect to the magnitude of the funds involved

> and the types of problems and disciplines supported. The events of the war on both the military and civil fronts, and the problems of postwar readjustment . . . provided the social sciences with dramatic opportunities to demonstrate their practical value and essential role in modern society. As a result, social science research firmly established its legitimacy as a fundamental contributor to our national life.[2]

A report released by the Russell Sage Foundation in 1950 noted that in "the prosecution of World War II . . . social scientists were converted into social practitioners. Their services were comparable to the function of engineers and other specialized technologists in applying knowledge of the physical scientists [*sic*]."[3] Physicists might say how atoms behaved and engineers how weapons worked, but social scientists could explain, predict, and, possibly, help to control the behavior of those who pulled the triggers and dropped the bombs.

A good deal of effort was accordingly devoted to studying the attitudes and behavior of wartime GIs. One of the now classic studies—*The American Soldier,* by Samuel Stouffer and his associates—was originally undertaken for the very practical purpose of improving the selection, training, and performance of military personnel.[4] The "policy sciences" (as Harold Lasswell was later to term them)—political science, public administration, and allied disciplines—were called upon to analyze the effects and assess the effectiveness of various wartime policies.[5] They studied farm subsidy programs, recycling schemes, ad campaigns for war bonds, the draft-registration system, the beliefs and behavior of the American soldier, the determinants of military morale, race relations in the military, the social effects of the bombing and shelling of civilians, the effectiveness of different kinds of propaganda, the social causes of the spread of venereal diseases, and dozens of other war-related phenomena. So much in demand were political and social scientists that finding, recruiting, and training them became a considerable problem.[6]

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2. Harry Alpert, "The Growth of Social Research in the United States," in Daniel Lerner, ed., *The Human Meaning of the Social Sciences* (New York and Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1959), p. 79.

3. Russell Sage Foundation, *Effective Use of Social Science Research in the Federal Services* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1950), p. 42.

4. Samuel Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier,* vols. 1 and 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949).

5. Harold D. Lasswell, "The Policy Orientation," in Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell, eds., *The Policy Sciences* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1951), pp. 3–15.

6. John McDiarmid, "The Mobilization of Social Scientists," in Leonard D. White, ed., *Civil Service in Wartime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), pp. 73–96.

II.

At the end of the war, most political scientists returned to the academy from whence they had come. But if they had helped to change the course of the war, the war had also helped to change them. No longer "ivory tower" academics, many political scientists became, by their own account, harder-headed realists with a soberer sense of political possibilities and limitations. During the war, as Robert Dahl was later to observe,

> a great many American political scientists temporarily vacated their ivory towers and came to grips with day-to-day political and administrative realities in Washington and elsewhere: a whole generation of American political science [*sic*] later drew on these experiences. The confrontation of theory and reality provoked . . . a strong sense of the inadequacies of the conventional approaches of political science for describing reality, much less for predicting . . . what was likely to happen.[7]

The new sobriety took a number of forms. One was a turn away from the formal and legal analysis of institutions to a deliberate and self-conscious focus on actual political behavior. Another was a decided preference for "scientific" modes of inquiry and a suspicion bordering on hostility towards "traditional" concepts (e.g., "the state") and approaches (especially political theory or philosophy). Thus began the "behavioral revolution," which picked up steam and influence through the 1950s and peaked in the decade that followed. And, like all modern revolutions, this one had its manifestoes and its own program for reforming and indeed remaking an ostensibly backward and dormant discipline.

These developments did not, of course, occur in a political vacuum but took shape and color within the complex political context of postwar America. Although one war was over, another had begun. If World War II had been a war of weapons—including, toward its end, the most fearsome weapon of all—the Cold War was above all a war of ideas and ideologies, of psychology and propaganda. It was, in a phrase not yet coined, a struggle for the hearts and minds of men. In this long twilight struggle, political scientists had, or purported to have, something special to contribute. Before making that contribution, however, political scientists had to receive a greater measure of public recognition and acceptance, not to say pecuniary support. And this

7. Robert A. Dahl, "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest," *American Political Science Review* 60 (December 1961): 763–72, 764.

required that they allay the suspicions still harbored by many members of the public and their political representatives.

This postwar battle was joined in the attempt to persuade the federal government to fund peacetime research and to support the education of future social scientists. Of the several skirmishes fought at the time, one was especially noteworthy. The Magnuson-Kilgore bill for the establishment of a National Science Foundation, introduced into the Congress in 1945, contained a provision for establishing a social science division. This proposal occasioned considerable debate in the Congress and prompted prolonged hearings, at which a parade of prominent political scientists made the case for an intimate connection between funding their disciplines and serving the national interest.

To look back to those encounters is to see something of the suspicions still harbored by the public and its representatives toward political science and its sister disciplines. It also helps explain the discipline's emphasis on "science" and its vaunted value-neutrality. Among the several themes that emerge from these hearings, the following were particularly prominent. The first goes something like this: We politicians know, and are awed by, what the natural sciences can do. A short time ago they gave us the atomic bomb and victory in the Pacific. We are therefore willing, and even eager, to support their researches. We are less certain about the social sciences, and perhaps political science in particular. What have they done for us lately, or ever, for that matter? A second theme, with variations aplenty, is that political science and the other social sciences are not really scientific, after all; they are really only common sense, disguised in an uncommonly arcane jargon designed to confuse and mislead laymen and legislators. A third theme is that the social sciences, far from being normatively neutral or value-free, embody or represent values that are somehow inimical to those that Americans hold dear. The cherished values of personal privacy and freedom seem somehow threatened by social scientists intent upon probing and analyzing our attitudes, beliefs, and innermost secrets. A fourth theme concerns costs and benefits. How are Americans to know whether, or to what degree, their tax dollars are being well spent by social scientists, and spent in ways that promote the national interest instead of the interest of individual academics? I shall touch briefly upon each of these themes.

One after another, social scientists and their allies in government and the military attested to the important role played by their respective disciplines in World War II. They noted, for example, that wars are not fought with weapons only but by, and against, human beings. In order to wage a successful war, we need to know about more than the number of soldiers our adversary has in uniform, the size of their coal and ore stockpiles, their oil reserves, refinery

capacities, and the number and types of weapons at their disposal. We need to know about our enemy's culture, national character, political system, class structure, history, and traditions. We benefit by knowing something about the psychological makeup of their leaders and the morale of their citizenry. These matters, which are outside the ken and competence of natural scientists and military men alike, are quite properly the province of political science and the other social sciences. Appearing on behalf of the War (later the Defense) Department, General John Magruder of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—the wartime forerunner of the CIA—put it this way: "In all of the intelligence that enters into the waging of war soundly and the waging of peace soundly, it is the social scientists who make a huge contribution in the field in which they are the professionals and the soldiers are the laymen." The general went on to suggest that World War II could scarcely have been waged, much less won, without the aid of sociologists, anthropologists, economists, and others. It was they, as much as the spies behind enemy lines, who supplied the "intelligence" that aided the allied victory in the European and Pacific theaters. And what was true of World War II would, he concluded, be even truer of future wars.[8]

The way in which General Magruder was thanked by the chairman of the committee tells us a good deal about how the war had helped to change popular attitudes toward the social sciences. Since "there is a sad lack of public understanding of the social sciences and what they do," said the chairman, "statements like this are badly needed." Because "we had to utilize the social scientific facilities of the country to the utmost during the depression, trying to pull out of it," he continued, "the general impression was out that it was sort of a playground of welfare workers and things of that kind alone." Now that we know that the social sciences have proven themselves to be militarily useful, he averred, this mistaken impression can be corrected.[9]

Without exception, the social scientists testifying before congressional committees stressed the "scientific" character of their disciplines. All the sciences, natural and social, were said to subscribe to a single method—the "scientific method" of objective observation and controlled inquiry. The only differences between the natural and social sciences were ones of degree. They studied different subject matters and dealt in different degrees of probability; otherwise they were essentially identical. Thus, for example, Dr. E. G. Nourse, the vice president of the Brookings Foundation, assured the senators that "formal divisions between natural, biologic, and social science are arbi-

8. Testimony of General John Magruder, 31 October 1945, in Senate Committee on Military Affairs, *Hearings on Science Legislation, S. 1297 and Related Bills*, 79th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), pp. 899–901.

9. Ibid., pp. 901–2.

trary." Useful as they are in some respects, these formal divisions run the danger of obscuring "the inherent unity of science. The basic problem of all science is to get fuller and more accurate knowledge as to the materials to be found and the forces which operate in our world. . . ." Far from being wholly disinterested and academic, research into these forces is undertaken "in order that they may be so controlled and utilized that mankind may have a safer and more satisfying existence."[10]

Not content simply to assert the methodological similarities between the natural and the social sciences, some chose to go on the offensive. William F. Ogburn of the University of Chicago pressed a pincer attack. He began by noting that the innovations introduced by the natural sciences—the steam engine and the atomic bomb among them—create unintended social consequences. To understand and to find ways of dealing with these consequences is the task of the social sciences. Ogburn then advanced a second argument about the social sciences' ability to "aid in national defense." The advent of the atomic bomb has made all-out war obsolete and unthinkable. Modern warfare, he maintained, is "total war [which] must be fought not only with munitions but also with institutions." Social science research, he testified, "is just as necessary for national defense as is research in radar or jet propulsion" because "modern wars are total wars. Hence we need the mobilization of our social resources as well as our mechanical ones." The "obligation of the natural scientist . . . is to work on the weapons. The groups to whom the Nation should look are the social scientists whose function is to study social institutions."[11] Inefficient or malfunctioning social institutions are as bad, if not worse, than malfunctioning weapons. Nay more: the Cold War being more a contest of ideas and institutions than of weapons, the social sciences were arguably more indispensable than the physical sciences.

Political scientists went to great lengths to assure the senators that they were not ideologues or reformers but scientists devoted to the disinterested pursuit of truth. Dr. John M. Gaus, president of the American Political Science Association, worried aloud about "those who sneer at the social sciences, and research in such fields, as too greatly influenced by the prejudices of their participants to constitute true sciences, presumably characterized by dispassionate inquiry."[12] Nothing, he assured his audience, could be further from the truth. Political science and the other social sciences were genuine sciences, and as objective as any of the natural sciences. Others agreed.

10. Testimony of Dr. E. G. Nourse, 29 October 1945, in *Hearings on Science Legislation*, p. 757.

11. Testimony of Professor William F. Ogburn, in *Hearings on Science Legislation*, pp. 765, 767.

12. Testimony of Dr. John M. Gaus, 29 October 1945, in *Hearings on Science Legislation*, p. 747.

Ogburn, for example, insisted upon "a differentiation between . . . knowledge and ethics." To illustrate his point, he likened the social scientist to a natural scientist charged with the task of inventing a poison gas. Just as "it is not in his province as a scientist . . . to say whether that gas shall be used for spraying fruit trees or for killing human beings," so it is not the business of the social scientist, qua scientist, to ask how social-scientific knowledge is to be used. The social sciences would be "greatly confused by the mixing in of values with the consideration of knowledge. I think if that distinction is kept clear, the role of the social scientist is seen very much better." As far as ethical ends and political interests are concerned, then, social-scientific knowledge is—or at least ought to be—normatively neutral.[13]

Despite these assurances, several senators and congressmen remained openly skeptical. Some even saw in the social sciences the specter of scientific socialism of the Soviet variety.[14] This piece of semantic confusion later led some social scientists to refer to themselves as "behavioral scientists," in hopes of avoiding the socialist stigmata. But if this stigma was easily scotched, others were not. The image of social scientists as nosey "welfare workers and other things of that kind" persisted in the popular imagination. This suspicion was voiced succinctly by the irrepressible Congressman Clarence Brown of Ohio:

> Outside of myself, I think everyone else thinks he is a social scientist. I am sure that I am not, but I think everyone else seems to believe that he has some particular God-given right to decide what other people ought to do. The average American does not want some expert running around prying into his life and his personal affairs and deciding for him how he should live, and if the impression becomes prevalent in Congress that this legislation [to establish a social science division within the National Science Foundation] is to establish some sort of an organization in which there would be a lot of short-haired women and long-haired men messing into everybody's personal affairs and lives, inquiring whether they love their wives or do not love them and so forth, you are not going to get your legislation.[15]

13. Ogburn testimony, in *Hearings on Science Legislation*, pp. 768–69. See the similar claim in George A. Lundberg's postwar polemic, *Can Science Save Us?* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), especially pp. 48–50.

14. This charge was aired and denied in the 1952 report of the House of Representatives Select Committee (Cox Committee) investigating tax-exempt foundations. "Many of our citizens," the report said, "confuse the term 'social,' as applied to the discipline of the social sciences, with the term 'socialism.'" Quoted in Harry Alpert, "The Knowledge We Need Most," *Saturday Review*, 1 February 1958, p. 38.

15. Testimony before Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, House of Representatives, 79th Congress, 28–29 May 1946 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), pp. 11–13.

The congressman's words proved prophetic. The social sciences did not get their legislation, less because of the specter of socialism and the fear of short-haired women than because of other considerations. When at last the National Science Foundation (NSF) was created by Public Law 507, passed by the 81st Congress and signed by President Truman on May 10, 1950, it did not include a social science division. The prestige of the natural sciences, along with the residual suspicions surrounding the social sciences and assorted considerations of fiscal economy, proved to be too great an obstacle to the passage of legislation for which social scientists had lobbied long and hard.

The setback was, however, only temporary, and more apparent than real. Not only had private foundation support for social science research increased apace after the war; the federal government, in both military and civilian sectors, relied increasingly upon the research and advice of political scientists and other social scientists. So marked was this trend, indeed, that by 1950, the Russell Sage Foundation could report that

> the federal government has become the outstanding employer of social scientists and consumer of social science materials in the conduct of practical affairs. Expenditures of the federal government for social science research projects, either under direct governmental auspices or under contract with private agencies, and for personnel in administrative capacities having command of social science knowledge far exceeded the amount given by all the philanthropic foundations for similar purposes.[16]

When in 1953 the NSF studied the possibility of, and in 1954 unanimously approved the creation of, a Social Science Division, it did not so much create something new as it regularized the funding for a phenomenon already well established.

In attempting to counter the popular image of social scientists as nosey welfare workers or socialists or short-haired women and long-haired men, political scientists were wont to emphasize not only their discipline's practical usefulness but their own professionalism. In the in-house literature and public pronouncements of the postwar period, political scientists are likened repeatedly to technicians, to engineers, and even to physicians concerned with the "health" of American society. In 1947, the Social Science Research Council's Pendleton Herring put it this way:

> One of the greatest needs in the social sciences is for the development of skilled practitioners who can use social data for the cure of social ills as doctors use scientific data to cure bodily ills. . . . The term social sci-

16. Russell Sage Foundation, *Social Science Research*, p. 5; cf. also p. 42.

> ence technician [refers to] an individual who has been professionally trained to apply to practical situations the facts, generalizations, principles, rules, laws, or formulae uncovered by social science research. . . . Social engineering [is] the application of knowledge of social phenomena to specific problems.

"Social engineering," he concluded, "is a meaningful conception, worthy of considerable expansion."[17]

And expand it did. Measured in almost any terms—monies allocated, scope and size of foundation funding, professorships endowed and filled, fellowships awarded, surveys conducted, number of books and articles published, dissertations written, degrees granted, and so on—the postwar years proved a bountiful period for political science. These developments also set the stage for the emergence of a new but by now thoroughly familiar figure in the American academy: the academic entrepreneur or grantsman skilled in the art of securing governmental and foundation funding. Little wonder, then, that this new figure on the academic scene was soon to be singled out for special censure by C. Wright Mills and other critics.[18]

It is tempting and altogether too easy to follow in the footsteps of C. Wright Mills and the New Left, detecting in these developments a massive conspiracy to co-opt and corrupt American academicians. That there was, and is, some measure of co-optation and corruption would be difficult to deny. But these developments doubtless had more to do with functional imperatives than with the conscious conspiratorial designs of a power elite. In conclusion, one of these imperatives and its implications are worth considering.

III.

By and large, behaviorally oriented research tends to be more costly than an individual scholar or a small institution can afford. The funding for such research has therefore come, more often than not, either from federal agencies or private or public foundations. One might suppose that here, as elsewhere, the old adage applies: He who pays the piper calls the tune. If so, it is not called consciously and directly but unconsciously and indirectly. That is, these agencies and foundations by no means predetermine the specific outcomes or findings of scholarly research. They do, however, help to shape the

17. E. Pendleton Herring, "The Social Sciences in Modern Society," Social Science Research Council *Items* (March 1947): 5–6. See, further, the "oral history" interview with Herring in Baer, Jewell, and Sigelman, *Political Science in America*, pp. 22–39.

18. See C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), chaps. 4 and 5.

kinds of questions that researchers ask and answer, and the kinds of inquiries and investigations deemed worthy of support and thereby, less directly, of reporting via conferences, symposia, publications and even, eventually, pedagogy. In the 1950s, as Somit and Tanenhaus note,

> An unprecedented flow of foundation funds helped further ease the rigors of scholarly life. Whereas a $10,000 grant was a major event in the 1930's or even 1940's, so modest an amount barely occasioned mention by the late 1950's. Carnegie and Rockefeller multiplied manyfold their support of political science. Of even greater moment was the appearance of a new giant—the Ford Foundation. The lavish beneficence of this leviathan late-comer dwarfed the combined giving of the older agencies. Taking the twenty years as a whole, it would be conservative to say that the Ford complex provided 90 percent of the money channeled to political science by American philanthropic institutions.

"Under these circumstances," they continue, "political scientists would have been less than human were they not tempted to manifest a deep interest in the kinds of research known to be favored by Ford Foundation staff and advisers."[19] And what was true of the Ford Foundation was no less true of other granting agencies, public and private alike.

But this is only the less interesting and important half of the story. Other costs—less tangible but no less real—are also incurred by political scientists doing research of this kind. We might even couch this in terms of a lawlike generalization to the effect that the more expensive the researches, the less independent the researcher. As Marian Irish remarks, rather matter-of-factly: "There is an understandable tendency in university circles to direct one's research where the money is available rather than into independent research. Even the most scientific research—for example, basic research in comparative politics, cross-national studies, the politics of violence, or the politics of race relations—may be mission-supporting."[20] Translated into plain English, "mission-supporting" means that such knowledge may be useful in one group's efforts to control, coerce, repress, suppress, or subvert other, rival groups.

One's scholarly integrity and independence may also be compromised in another way. To the extent that political scientists are dependent upon govern-

19. Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1967), p. 167. Cf. also Dahl, "The Behavioral Approach," p. 765.

20. Marian D. Irish, "Advance of the Discipline?" in *Political Science: Advance of the Discipline*, Marian D. Irish, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 19. Cf. her "oral history" interview in Baer, Jewell, and Sigelman, *Political Science in America*, pp. 82–106.

mental or foundation funding, they are less likely to ask certain kinds of questions. And foremost among these are questions about the locus, distribution, and uses of power. As David Easton observed in 1953, "entrenched power groups . . . are prone to stimulate research of a kind that does not inquire into the fundamentals of the existing arrangement of things. . . . History has yet to show us empowered groups who welcomed investigation into the roots and distribution of their strength."[21]

Yet, while many books and articles published during the postwar period reported on research funded by corporate or governmental agencies, few, if any, exhibit overt ideological or political bias either in their methods or in their conclusions. If there are biases, they tend to be of a more subtle sort, having to do with the kinds of issues addressed, the unarticulated premises from which they begin, and the questions that remain unasked. This can be seen even in the most distinguished work. Consider, for example, the seminal studies of prejudice, tolerance, and intolerance conducted during the postwar period. Two of the most important and influential of these—Adorno, Frenkl-Brunswick, and Levinson's *The Authoritarian Personality* (1949) and Samuel Stouffer's *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties* (1955)—share as their fundamental guiding assumption the belief that tolerance is the preeminent political virtue. That tolerance may well be a virtue in a diverse and pluralistic society such as the United States would be hard to deny. But two points are worth noting. The first is that the issue is never framed in the "normative" language of virtue. And the second is that (the virtue of) tolerance is predicated upon a particular political theory—interest group liberalism—whose practices (and prejudices) these studies of (in)tolerance then serve to legitimize if not insulate from criticism.

The postwar period also saw the publication of numerous studies of the theory, practice, and psychological appeals of communism. One of the most important of these—Gabriel Almond's *The Appeals of Communism,* sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation—attempted to discover the sources of communism's appeal, in hopes that effective psychological and propagandistic means might be found to counter it.[22] In these and other ways political science became a valued and welcome addition to America's Cold War arsenal.

It is surely ironic that during the postwar period that old staple of political description and analysis—"the state"—virtually disappeared from the social scientists' vocabulary, even as the American state was becoming more powerful than ever. Structuralists, functionalists, and structural-functional

21. David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Knopf, 1953), pp. 50–51.

22. Gabriel A. Almond, *The Appeals of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954).

"systems theorists such as David Easton preferred to speak instead of "the political system" as a "subsystem" of a larger and more benign entity, "the social system." Characterized by widespread normative consensus and the virtual absence of protracted conflict (especially class conflict), the social system looked a lot like an abstract version of the America being portrayed by the consensus historians and by social scientists who in the late 1950s announced "the end of ideology."

Much of "mainstream" political science in the postwar period tended to be more celebratory than critical. No need to search for the good society, said a future president of the APSA, since it is already here. American-style democracy, wrote Seymour Martin Lipset, is "the good society itself in operation."[23] Even our defects turned out, upon closer examination, to be virtues. For example, survey researchers discovered that most Americans are politically ill-informed, inactive, and apathetic. By "traditional" democratic lights, this was cause for considerable alarm. Yet according to the newly emergent "elite theory" of democracy, it is widespread political participation that poses the greatest danger to democracy. Fortunately an antidote is readily available. That antidote is apathy. Widespread apathy allows well-educated and affluent "democratic elites" to have a disproportionate say in the shaping of political possibilities.[24] In these and many other ways, the groundwork was being laid for a post-Progressive vision of a "consultative commonwealth," a "knowledge society" guided by the "epistemocratic authority" of experts.[25]

IV.

While many political scientists educated in the postwar years stayed in the academy, some went to work for government agencies and corporations. Sometimes, however, it seemed difficult to tell the difference between them. For even those remaining within the professional departments within the multiversity often worked under contract on "mission-supporting" projects. Called "the new Mandarins" by their critics and "the defense intellectuals" or "policy scientists" by their defenders, they attempted to contract a marriage between knowledge and power. From that marriage came numerous offspring,

23. Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 439.

24. See Bernard Berelson's concluding chapter, "Democratic Practice and Democratic Theory," in Bernard Berelson et al., *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

25. See, respectively, Heinz Eulau, "Skill Revolution and Consultative Commonwealth," 1972 APSA Presidential Address, *American Political Science Review* 67 (March 1973): 169–91; and Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), especially chap. 6. For a critique of these and other visions of "epistemocratic authority," see Terence Ball, *Transforming Political Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), chap. 5.

some benign and some not. Project Camelot and the Vietnam War were arguably among the most notorious and visible of these progeny.[26] Under the guise of objectivity and value-freedom, some political scientists sold their skills and services without asking any hard moral questions, either of themselves or their sponsors. The Cold War, threats of communist expansionism, America's new preeminence as a world power, the coming of the welfare-warfare state, the rise of the multiversity, and the largess of the large philanthropic foundations were among the conditions that created the climate in which a positivistic vision of an instrumentally useful and normatively neutral social science could take root and flourish.

By the late 1960s, however, this vision had begun to come under considerable strain. Not only was the lustre of the policy sciences tarnished by the Vietnam War and earlier "counterinsurgency" research programs like Project Camelot, but their demonstrable lack of explanatory and predictive power was becoming increasingly obvious. Thus, for example, ideology, far from ending as predicted in the late fifties, enjoyed a resurgence in the sixties and afterward; economic forecasts have proved particularly unreliable; all the theories of revolution have come a cropper; theories of modernization and secularization have proved singularly unsuccessful in explaining or predicting developments in the Middle East and elsewhere; and assertions about the longevity and durability of totalitarianism have proved false. And while there have doubtless been some successes, these seem in retrospect to have been few and far between.

Ironically, the present predicament of the social sciences, and political science in particular, may well have been brought about less by the failure of their theories and explanations than by their unparalleled political success in securing support from foundations and government. And as we have seen, this support stemmed in no small part from their enormously successful self-promotion during the postwar period. Promises were made, or at least implied, and credit was extended. From the relative penury of the late forties and early fifties, the social sciences came to enjoy unprecedented prosperity in the sixties. If federal and foundation funding is any index of support, political science was well supported during the 1960s.[27] A war abroad and the Great Society at home proved to be a profitable combination of circumstances.

26. See Noam Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins* (New York: Pantheon, 1967); and the essays in Irving Louis Horowitz, ed., *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967).

27. Between 1960 and 1967, federal funding for social science research increased fivefold, from less than $73 million to more than $380 million. This figure, however, covers only federal expenditures for domestic programs. See *The Use of Social Research in Federal Domestic Programs*, a Staff Study for the Research and Technical Programs Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, U.S. House of Representatives (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), part 1.

The boom did not, and perhaps could not, last. If the 1960s were the halcyon days, the decade of the 1980s was not an altogether happy one for political science. Losing much of its funding was a serious setback, to be sure; but losing its way, and perhaps its identity, is more serious still. If political science is to have a bright future, or indeed any future at all, we shall have to look to our discipline's past—not to live in it but to learn from it. It was, I believe, Bismarck who once quipped that "the truly wise man [*sic*] does not learn from his own mistakes. He learns from other people's mistakes." Political scientists could do worse than applying Bismarck's maxim to the historical study of their discipline.