National Traditions in Political Science

When the International Political Science Association (IPSA) was founded in 1949, political science as an independent discipline at universities existed mainly in the United States. The general opinion in Europe was that “[p]olitical science, as a distinct branch from speculation concerning political phenomena or the history of these phenomena, is of fairly recent development, more recent, certainly, than other social sciences such as law, political economy and sociology” (Salvadori 1950, 1). It was only after the Second World War when the discipline started to develop outside the United States. This happened first in Western Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. In order to discuss about possibilities for international co-operation in the study of politics, a conference was organized in September 1948 in Paris to plan the project on methods in the field. In a declaration given after the conference, it was stated (see Coakley and Trent 2000, 16):

“Political science evolves within national frameworks. In each country it has received the stamp of that country’s particular historical traditions, educational mould, constitutional system, social structure and philosophical conceptions”.

National variations were understood as natural and justified. At the same time it was seen as necessary to learn from others in order to avoid isolation and prejudice, to broaden one’s horizon and facilitate mutual understanding. The aim was not to abolish intellectual diversity of the study of national subjects or the variety of methods (juridical, historical, philosophical, sociological, psychological, statistical) by a single conception of political science (see Coakley and Trent 2000, 14-18).

The project on methods in political science led to a report of forty-nine articles describing the state of political science around the world. In Introduction to the report, Massimo Salvadori identified five existing national traditions in the study of politics:

“A national criterion, adopted on the basis of the material assembled in this volume, would perhaps enable us to distinguish five main types of political science. These are in alphabetical order, the American, British, French, German and Soviet Schools of thought.” (Salvadori 1950, 9; see also Trent and Coakley 2000, 3-4). John Coakley (2004, 172) has elaborated these types by characterising them in the following way:
the American approach was characterised by an openness to methodologies from the other social sciences. Its influence on the study of politics could be seen in the Middle East, and parts of Asia, such as China
- the British approach had been embedded in moral philosophy, but had slowly started to assert its independence. Its influence on the study of politics could be seen in most Commonwealth countries, including India
- the French approach was rooted in the Roman law tradition. Its influence had spread to other Mediterranean countries as well as to Latin America
- the German approach had originated in constitutional and administrative law and evolved into a systematic study of the state. Its influence was felt in Austria, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and even Japan
- the Soviet approach was characterised by Marxism-Leninism and, as Salvadori noted in his introduction had, “spread to several neighbouring countries” (Salvadori 1950, 9).

Since these early years, political science has grown enormously, reaching every corner of the globe. In this situation it is legitimate to ask, how much and in what sense do national approaches still affect political science as a discipline? Has political science become a truly international science in the “age of globalization”? As the American political science in the 1940s and 1950s was far more developed organisationally and in numbers than the study of politics in Europe and in other parts of the world, the American discipline gained a hegemonic position within political science. This can still be seen in discussions about political science as an American discipline (see Gunnell 2002).

**National Traditions and Scientific Disciplines**

As students of politics setting up the IPSA were aware, a given country’s particular historical traditions, educational mould, constitutional system, social structure and philosophical conceptions have given birth to different national traditions in the study of politics. How the political system is organised, guides political scientists to emphasise different problems in their research. As Thibaud Boncourt has noted in comparing the French and British political sciences, “political science is to a great extent ‘culture-bound’… In France, disciplinary transformations parallel those of ‘the one and indivisible French Republic’. In Britain, they relate to a more pluralistic political culture” (Boncourt 2007, 287).

Most political scientists also agree that modern political science needs democracy to develop, as political science has always been dependent on free scientific argumentation and communication between scholars. Under authoritarian systems political science as a critical and free study of politics is difficult to conduct (e.g. Salvadori 1950, 8-9). This does not mean that politics cannot be analysed under authoritarian regimes. It only means that conditions for the objective study are not favourable in non-democratic countries. Even under authoritarian systems there can be research on politics, which can be identified as political science. A good example is the Universidad Complutense de Madrid during the Franco dictatorship. The study of politics was introduced in Madrid in the 1950s, but the curriculum was restricted and “[t]o avoid political controversy the dominant approach to the subject was legalistic and constitutionalist” (Etherington and Morata 2007, 325). On the other hand, democracy does not guarantee that the analysis of politics will be objective and/or critical. As Raymond Aron noted at the time IPSA was founded, “[t]here are always men to govern and others to
interpret the acts of the governors, either glorifying or denigrating them. However, there are not always men with a sufficient degree of detachment, interest and information to describe how in fact the community runs public affairs” (Aron 1950, 48).

Although the study of politics is dependent on the nature of political systems, many other factors affect the production and transmission of knowledge as well. Organised academic teaching and research needs structures and resources, which society provides through private or public means. In that sense funders (private or public) can guide research. Academic research is also moulded by intellectual traditions (philosophical conceptions), which vary from one country to another, even from one university to another. As universities must be organised in some fashion, this has led into different higher education structures. The current disciplinary system is a product of this development.

This simplified picture of modern higher education points out only that disciplinary practices and their output are influenced by many interdependent factors. In writing about the lack of scientific study of politics in France after the Second World War, Raymond Aron referred to the widely held explanation that the existing French university system accounted for the weak state of political science in France. He doubted, however, that that was an adequate explanation. Instead, according to him a more plausible explanation was the French scepticism as to the scientific method in the study of politics and, on the other hand, political apathy among the French population. The French were not interested in having a clear view of their political entity (Aron 1950, 51-55).

National traditions in political science as a discipline must be understood from this broad social and cultural perspective. But what is a discipline? It can be argued that an academic research field needs three different elements to be identified as a discipline (Cairns 1975; Becher 1989). First, there must be relatively similar academic higher education structures at universities. These must be recognized also internationally. Departments (or clearly identified subject units) are the basis of a discipline. Organisations must, however, cooperate with each other and create an institutional culture with accepted norms and values. Scientific associations, disciplinary journals and other publishing outlets form an institutional basis for a discipline. Thirdly, a discipline must have a defined “knowledge domain” which differentiates it from other disciplines. There must be a relatively coherent body of knowledge defining the discipline with research areas, methods and theories.

When the IPSA was founded, scholars were well aware of these things. From that arose two essential questions:

1) Can politics be studied scientifically, that is, using the same methods as natural scientists use?

2) Can politics be studied as an autonomous research field?

These two questions divided the five political science approaches identified by Salvadori. The American approach emphasised the scientific study of politics as an independent discipline. Instead, especially the British and French scholars were sceptical about an affirmative answer to the first question. The best example of this scepticism is Bernard Crick’s book *The American Science of Politics* (1959) which argues that the idea that politics can be understood by the method of the natural sciences is embedded in American political culture. Political science is an idea in a particular country, not of a discipline or profession (Crick 1959, v).
On the other hand, German scholars were more divided on the issue, as the German study of politics had to reconstruct itself after the War. Klaus von Beyme has described how German political science has been a highly fragmented discipline from the beginning in its outlook and metatheoretical views, consisting of four main schools, 1) the normative-ontological school of Freiburg under Arnold Bergstraesser, which extended to Munich and included “single combatants” (e.g. Eric Voegelin), the early mainstream political science by traditional liberal institutionalists (e.g. Dolf Sternberger, Ernest Frankel, and Carl J. Friedrich from Harvard/Heidelberg), 3) method-conscious behaviorists concentrated in Cologne and Mannheim (e.g. Rudolf Wildenmann) and, 4) Marxist oriented political scientists (e.g. Wolfgang Abendroth in Marburg) (Beyme 1982, 170). As some of the returning émigré scholars wanted to introduce American political science in Germany, this made part of German political science more responsive to the idea of scientific study of politics.

The Soviet approach differed of course in many ways from the Western approaches. In principle it could accept the idea of the scientific study of politics (from the perspective of Marxism-Leninism). It could not accept, however, political science as an autonomous discipline, as Marxism-Leninism offered an explanation to politics. Neither did the idea of a separate discipline of politics fit well with the British, French and German traditions of the study of politics, as, for instance, most contributors to the methods in political science report voiced “the opinion that political science can be studied only in the larger framework of the social sciences” (Salvadori 1950, 8).

The British authors emphasised that “[i]n political theory we must give a prominent place to the history of political ideas” (Robson 1950, 294) and “nearly all English thinkers are agreed that you cannot understand any system of government or, indeed, any political idea, without knowing its historical background, origin, and growth” (Robson 1950, 306). If politics was to be taught as a social science, it was to be done with other social sciences. G.D.H. Cole described the British situation, “[a]s far as I know, no British University offers a first degree in Politics alone; and I believe Oxford is breaking new ground in offering a post-graduate course leading to a degree (Bachelor of Philosophy) in Politics, side by side with similar courses in Economics and in Philosophy” (Cole 1950, 617). The British understanding of the study of politics is also manifested by a decision to call the British association Political Studies Association, not Political Science Association (see Grant 2010, 16-13).

German and French scholars agreed with the British, although for different reasons. Lazare Kopelmanas emphasised that the term “political science” is familiar to scientists of the Anglo-Saxon countries, but it does not refer to a clearly defined scientific discipline in France, where one is used to understand the study of politics as part of “political sciences”, as “practically all of the social sciences could be qualified, at least in certain aspects, as political sciences” and “[t]he contrast between the conception of political science as an independent science and that of political science as the connecting bond or the result of the different political sciences corresponds exactly to the basic theoretical disagreement which, at the present time, divides sociologists as to the nature and methodology of their science” (Kopelmanas 1950, 647-648). This French understanding of the study of politics is manifested by the two different paths in the French higher education. As French higher education system has been marked by the duality of the system since 1945, consisting of universities and “Grande Ecoles”, political science has developed above all at the Instituts d’Etudes Politiques (IEPs), while at the universities it has been mainly part of the law faculties (Blondiaux and Déloye 2007: 137). At the beginning of the 1950s political

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1 Although the latter name also had its own supporters.
Institutions were viewed more from a legal than from a sociological angle at the law faculties (Duverger 1950, 370). Instead, the study of political parties, public opinion and elections were studied in history, sociology and demography at the IEPs without any well defined scientific discipline (Goguel 1950, 503). This situation has left its mark on the French study of politics.

In Germany, the vast majority of “state science works” between 1880 and 1933 had been devoted to legal interpretation of positive law. However, under the label *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (general state science) there was a controversy, “whether the study of the state belongs to the field of sociology or to that of legal science, in other words whether the concept of State is to exist legally or sociologically” (Adamovich 1950, 23). Thus *Allgemeine Staatslehre* tradition understood politics (the functioning of the state) as the combination of legal and sociological aspects and, in that sense politics was part of the legal framework of society. The German *Staatslehre* tradition was, however, partly discredited after the War, which gave an opportunity for new openings in German political science. Because of the pluralism of the discipline, it was possible to see political science both as an independent discipline and as part of the other social sciences.

The State of European political Science

The political science approaches, described by Massimo Salvadori, reflect the state of the study of politics in big nations after the Second World War. In sixty years these approaches have changed, although they have retained some of their elements. To study only national traditions is a problem, however. Big nation approaches do not help to understand the logic of European political science properly.

It is still a common practice to write the history of political science in one country only (see, however, Stein 1995; Boncourt 2007, 2008; Klingemann, 2007, 2008). In the following an attempt is made for a comparative analysis of European political science using different sources. It is based on recent books on the state of political science in Europe (Klingemann, Kulesza and Legutke, eds. 2002; Klingemann, ed. 2007; Eisfeld and Pal, eds. 2010), selected journal articles and conference papers as well as the analysis of the websites of the Members of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR). The websites have been an important source of information especially on different organisational structures of political science units.

There are two main problems in regard to the data and the focus of analysis. First, although the ECPR is the most important political science association in Europe, and has since its founding in 1970 been an essential organisation getting Europeans to co-operate with each other (Newton and Boncourt 2010), many political science institutions are not its members. As of June 11th, 2012, the ECPR had 318 members on its membership list, 272 of the members being European institutions from 32 European countries, 45 members being from
outside Europe (Canada had 12 members, the United States 19 members). As Hans-Dieter Klingemann has estimated that around the year 2005 there were 698 political science units in Europe (347 in Western Europe and 351 in Central and Eastern Europe), this means that less than half of European political science units are ECPR members.

It can be argued, however, that this in itself is not a problem. Most of the leading European political science institutions are members. The real problem is that the ECPR is lacking members from the Central and Eastern Europe (former European socialist countries), as there were only twenty-nine members from these countries compared with 243 from Western Europe (cf. Mény 2010, 15). That is why the analysis is unbalanced in the sense that the Western European countries receive more attention than the Central and Eastern European countries. Besides, as political science has existed in Central and Eastern Europe only some twenty years, national political science traditions are still taking shape.

The weak state of political science in some of these countries may be seen also in the fact that many countries do not have any ECPR members. European countries are in the process of creating a common European Higher Education Area through the so-called Bologna Process with common standards and practices at European universities at the moment. Forty-seven countries have thus far joined the project (see, the Bologna Process website: http://www.ehea.info/). The countries belonging to the European Higher Education Area which do not have any institutions as ECPR members are: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Georgia, Holy See, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine. Although political science may not be well advanced in all these countries, there are political science units in them (even in Andorra and Liechtenstein). Besides, political science associations exist at least in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Serbia and Ukraine.

However, also the Western European political science is unevenly developed. Many observers argue that Britain is the leading European political science community today (e.g. Mény 2010: 13). On the other hand, it can be argued that German political science has developed into a strong discipline as well. In contrast, Italian political science has remained a compact, but small discipline, while France has only recently began to show interest in international co-operation.

As can be seen in the table on the next page, this argument can be corroborated by empirical facts. Around the year 2005, British universities had more professors (419) and organisational units (93) in political science and more members in its disciplinary association (1650) than any other European country. Germany was not far behind with 313 professors, 67 organisational units and 1400 members in its association.

Other European countries fell far behind the UK and Germany. France had 131 professors, 41 organisational units and 600 members in its association. The figures for Italy were much the same (128 professors, 37 organisational units), except for the members of its association

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2 ECPR has only institutional members (universities, research institutes). European institutions are automatically full members, non-European members are associate members. Associate members can, however, apply to become full members after six consecutive years’ membership. Both membership categories enjoy much the same benefits, except that associate members cannot stand for, or vote, in an Executive Committee election and may not direct a workshop at the ECPR’s Joint Sessions of Workshops.

3 Hans-Dieter Klingemann has also estimated that there were (around year 2005) some 10,000 political scientists working in European academic institutions (Klingemann 2008, 376).
(only 280 members). In that sense, political science in France and Italy is relatively weak, even compared with many smaller European countries. Although the number of professors and organisational units are lower in smaller countries, the relative strength of political science in these countries can be said to be stronger than in France and Italy.

Table. Political Science in Europe: Basic Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>ECPR members 2012⁵</th>
<th>Political science units (c. 2005)⁶</th>
<th>Professors (c. 2005)⁷</th>
<th>First Chairs⁴</th>
<th>Political science associations since⁸</th>
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⁴ As of June 11th, 2012. Counted from the ECPR website (http://www.ecprnet.eu/).
⁵ Klingemann (2007, 20)
⁶ Klingemann (2007, 20)
⁷ The dates of the first chairs are based on the information in the articles in Klingemann, ed. (2007). In regard to the UK and Spain, the information has been clarified from other sources (Grant 2010, 6; Vallés 1991, 435-436).
As the figures show, British, German and French approaches are still in an important position in European political science. But these approaches can be broadened to include also other European countries. Instead of describing national approaches, it is more interesting to try to describe regional approaches.

**From National to Regional Approaches in European Political Science**

The old American, British, German, French and Soviet approaches can be turned into the American, Northern European, Central European, Southern European and Eastern European approaches in the present-day situation.

**The American Approach** is still a global hegemon in political science. When political science started to develop in Europe, the American influence was strongest in the Nordic Countries, the Netherlands and Flemish Belgium. On the other hand, as pointed out earlier, the reception of American political science in Britain after the Second World War was often critical. Nevertheless, parts of it were adopted into the British political studies. The British approach to the study of politics has in many ways been an independent, but a practical one. The British approach has resisted the wholesale importation of any orthodoxy, being “characterised by eclecticism and a willingness to adapt and change in order to improve” (Goldsmith and Grant 2007: 382). In that sense, the American influence on Britain can best be described as “the muted impact” (Hayward 1991). This has led to a gradual change of the British liberal élite education model. The founding of new universities, especially in the 1960s, gave a chance to a new generation of political scientists to redirect the study of politics in the UK. The empirical (and quantitative) study of politics started to gain support in many places, the University of Essex being a prime example of these (Boncourt 2007, 283). The American model has been important also in Italy in the 1960s (Graziano 1987, 42) and in many Central and Eastern European countries, especially in Estonia.

The most important aspects of the American influence have been the idea of the scientific study of politics and the introduction of political science as an independent academic discipline. Behavioralism captured the minds of Northern European political scientists already in the 1950s. As Mogens Pedersen of Denmark said, “[t]he early David Easton was the hero of the day” (Pedersen 1997, 255). The independent political science departments started to develop first in the Northern Europe.

Although American political science has lost its absolute hegemony in European political science, and although it has become a much more pluralist discipline than it was in the 1950s, many European political scientists still follow developments in American political science keenly. The only common language in political science seems to be an American discipline, conforming what a Belgian/French journalist Christine Ockrent once said, “the only truly pan-European culture is the American culture” (quoted in Van Elteren 1996, 177). One indicator of the current interest of European political scientists in American political science is the membership in the American Political Science Association (APSA). In February 2012, there were 335 British members and 207 German ones. Again, of the big European countries France, Italy and Spain were far behind (France 52 members, Italy 48, Spain 32). In relative terms, smaller European countries were well represented, as Switzerland had 69, Sweden 45, Norway 42, Ireland 40 and Belgium 32 members (APSA 2012, 354).
The Northern European approach has been traditionally organised around autonomous political science departments along the American model. That has been the case in Britain from the 1960s on and in the Nordic Countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) already earlier. The Nordic political science associations also co-operate through the Nordic Political Science Association (see, http://nopsa.net). Belgian (Flemish), Irish and Dutch political science departments are also in many ways part of the Northern European group. They have close relations to American and British political science as well as autonomous political science units (e.g. Afdeling politicologie, Amsterdam). Of the former European socialist countries, especially Estonian political science can be claimed to belong to the Northern group. Political science is organised in separate political science departments and these have close relations with the American political science. Although all these countries, except Britain and Ireland, were under the German influence before the Second World War, they adopted the American approach rapidly after the War. Belonging to the Northern group is also about language, as political scientists in these countries write mostly in English in academic context. Today the Northern European universities comprise the hard core of the ECPR, having together 118 members in that organisation.

The Central European approach is also partly linked to language and culture. English is used widely, but together with it German and national languages. As the largest political science community in the Central European group, German political science is in many ways a model. However, it has been outside the Central European Political Science Association (http://www.cepsa.cz/index.php?page=main), which promotes co-operation in political science between political science associations of Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Lithuania. One can also add German-speaking Swiss universities into the group.

Compared with the Northern approach, there is more variety in organizational solutions and more direct links to other social sciences (especially to sociology). As was pointed out earlier, as German political science is intellectually diverse, this is reflected also in organizational structures. There are independent political science departments in Germany (e.g. Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Marburg; Institut für Politische Wissenschaft, Heidelberg), but political science can also be part of the other social sciences (e.g. Institut für Sozialwissenschaft, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; Abteilung Politische System und Politische Soziologie, Universität Stuttgart). There are also political science units which are linked to administrative sciences (e.g. Fachbereich Politik und Verwaltungswissenschaft, Universität Konstanz). The same is the case, for instance, with the Austrian political science. In Vienna there are even separate departments for Politikwissenschaft and Staatswissenschaft. Political science departments in the former socialist countries are also organised in different ways. For instance, Czech political science departments can be “in singular” (political science) as well as “in plural” (political sciences), while some institutes have links with law, some with e.g. civic education. In other Central and Eastern European countries the majority of political science departments are autonomous departments, due to the influence of American political science (e.g. Sasinska-Klas 2008). Together Central European universities have 77 ECPR members.

The Southern European Approach is manifested by universities in Belgium (French-speaking), Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Turkey and Switzerland (French-speaking). The old French approach in political sciences, which was rooted in the Roman law tradition, has moulded the academic structures of many of these countries. France herself has retained its traditional division into Instituts d’Etudes Politiques
and political science at law departments. In that sense, the French political science is still divided between the legal and sociological approaches in the study of politics. The same division is notable at many universities of Southern European group. Spanish political science reminds the French political science with its links to law and public administration at some departments and with sociology at some others (e.g. Facultad de Derecho/Área de Ciencia Política y de la Administración, Burgos; Institut de Ciencies Politiques i Socials, Barcelona). The same pattern can be noticed in Portugal. On the other hand, Greek political science has close links mainly to constitutional and public law (e.g. Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Athens), which is the case also in Romania.

Italian and Turkish political sciences are in many ways different from the situation in other countries in the Southern group. The main reason is that in both countries the American influence has historically moulded political science as a discipline. As noted earlier, Italian political science started as an empirical study of politics, influenced by American behavioralism. Its problem has been that it has been placed in the Faculties of Political Sciences, where it is often a minor subject (e.g. Facoltà di Scienze Politiche/Dipartimento di Culture, Politica e Società, Torino). Italian political science has been forced to compete continuously with other academic disciplines, such as, history, law and sociology (e.g. Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Giuridiche, Politiche e Sociali, Trento). Turkey is another interesting case, as it has a relatively large political science community having historical relations to American, German and French political sciences (Erozan and Turan 2004) and as organisationally Turkish departments are mostly autonomous units. However, because of historical, cultural and linguistic reasons both Italian and Turkish political sciences clearly belong to the Southern group. The same is the case with the French-speaking Swiss political science departments, although they are in many ways also close to political science departments in Central Europe. There are 74 ECPR members in the Southern European group.

The Eastern European approach can be seen as a successor to the old Soviet approach. However, it is difficult to say, if it is really possible to construct any specific Eastern European approach in contemporary European political science. The approach would refer mainly to some of the successor states of the old Soviet Union, especially Russia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Most of these countries have not played any visible role in international political science thus far. In Russia, there are some modern programs in political science (e.g. Moscow State Institute of International Relations; European University of St. Petersburg). However, there are also pressing practical problems in Russia, e.g., disproportion of academic resources between center and periphery, the undermining of the status of political science at some universities, etc. The most severe problem, however, is the increasing authoritarian tendencies in the country (Ilyin and Malinova 2008, 9). As political science can flourish best under democratic regimes, political science in the Eastern European group is in danger of becoming a narrow and controlled discipline.

The Future of Regional Approaches

The four European regional approaches are of course very rough ideal types. In reality different political science communities have become, and are becoming, ever more hybrid. In

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There are only two independent departments of political science in France, Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne) and Paris VIII (Saint-Denis).
that sense, it is also misleading to talk about pure national approaches. Germany is a good example due to its intellectual divisions which reflect different methodological standpoints in the study of politics. Different German scholars and departments have close relations with the representatives of other European approaches.

There are also country-wise divisions based on political and cultural (linguistic) factors, two of the evident examples being Belgium and Switzerland. On the other hand, in every country one can find individuals and institutions, which do not fit into the dominant type of political science. For instance, many French political scientists have recently become more open to American political science, even so that it has become ‘an intellectually snobbish thing to have references, the more the better, to English language, journals, publications or whatever’ (Jack Hayward, in Boncourt 2007, 289-290). Furthermore, at the institutional level one can find examples, such as, the Department of Political Science at the University of Crete, which announces being “a dynamic teaching and research institution that offers courses and supervision in the major areas of contemporary political science. Unlike other Political Science divisions in Greek universities, our Department developed with the aim of serving political science as an academic discipline independent of constitutional and public law” (http://www.soc.uoc.gr/political/en/home_en.htm).

Besides, as many political science communities in Europe are still relatively young, many of these communities are still developing their own traditions and seeking international contacts. In the former socialist countries, American political science has been an important model with the British, French, German and Nordic political sciences. At the same time, many of these countries have retained academic structures from the past (e.g. large Academies of Science).

It is also difficult to place some political science communities in any particular group. For instance, does Latvian political science belong to the Northern or to the Central European group, or does Bulgarian political science belong to the Central or Southern European group? The same is the case, if there are only a few political scientists in the country. Small units can be part of any academic structure for practical reasons (e.g. political scientists at the University of Luxembourg are under European governance programme at the Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education).

In spite of these self-critical reflections, one can argue that regional approaches can help us to understand the European political science better than relying only on national approaches and traditions. Thibaud Boncourt’s comparative study of the British and French political science articles in Political Studies and Revue de Science Politique, shows how the need to legitimate a new discipline in the 1940s and 1950s led to the building of strong national traditions in both countries, which have continued during the institutionalisation and consolidation phases of the discipline to this very day (Boncourt 2007, 292). As a result, the French and British political sciences are largely unaware of each other (Boncourt 2007, 290).

Different national traditions help us to explain the nature of different political science communities. Regional approaches, however, offer broader perspective in understanding European political science as a whole. In the case of British and French political sciences, it is good to remember that these two traditions belong to different regional approaches, which are complex webs of historical, cultural, linguistic and organisational factors. It is much easier to understand other national traditions within regional approaches than between them.

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10 See Stein (1995) about the legitimisation, institutionalisation and consolidation phases in European political science.
As European political science has moved from the dominance of big nation national traditions into broader regional approaches, it is legitimate to ask: Will the next step be a truly European political science? There are signs of this because of the increasing hybrid nature of different political science communities. Also the continuing Bologna Process is harmonising the European Higher Education Area. However, for many years the language question will still be the problem. The leading position of the British (and the Northern European approach) in European political science is very much due to the dominance of English language as a lingua franca of modern political science. Especially political scientists in smaller countries are forced to publish in English to advance in the profession.

The other problem is that the Bologna Process is closely linked to the so-called Lisbon Strategy of the European Union, which has actively propagated governance and funding reforms at European universities. Parts of the Bologna/Lisbon Process are a demand to move towards interdisciplinary teaching and research and the belief among European policy makers that universities will become more efficient, if small departments are combined into larger schools within university structures (see Hansen 2011, 239). Many universities, especially in the Northern European group, have already changed traditional political science departments into schools of political science, emphasising thus vocational aspects of higher education over research.

European political science as a discipline is especially vulnerable for a number of reasons. Although political science is one of the core social sciences with sociology and economics (e.g. Furlong 2007, 402), the discipline is more heterogenous in Europe than the other two core disciplines. As this paper has attempted to show, political science is also weak in the sense that it has developed relatively late in Europe and it is not an established field in all countries. The danger is that instead of developing into a truly European discipline, political science will become a minor subject suppressed by stronger subjects in larger units. Especially, as diminishing resources of universities seem to affect the social sciences and humanities most (e.g. Billordo and Dumitru 2006: 132; Savigny 2011). More than ever European political science needs dialogue between different national traditions as well as between different regional approaches.

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