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IERI E OGGI: THE STUDY OF ITALIAN POLITICS

Forty Years of Political Science in Italy: A Few Comments on a Happy Anniversary

Christophe Roux (University of Nice)

The study of political science as a discipline is often an interesting collective professional assessment¹². In today's Italy *la scienza politica* is established in the academic landscape as illustrated by the recent publication of an edited book dealing with *Forty Years of Political Science in Italy* (Pasquino, Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013). Forty years ago indeed, in 1973, an 'Italian Section of Political Science' (*Sezione Italiana di Scienza Politica*, SISP) was created within the 'Italian Political and Social Sciences Association' (*Associazione Italiana di Scienze Politiche e Sociali*, AISPS). Successively Giovanni Sartori, Norberto Bobbio and Alberto Spreafico acted as presidents until 1981, when this political science 'section' became a proper 'society' i.e. a fully-fledged independent political science association, comparable to APSA in terms of scope¹³. To be sure, there were harbingers in earlier decades: a 'birth', with the rise of elite theorists (Mosca, Pareto, Michels) after the isolated remarks of Macchiavelli; a 're-birth' with the launching of the journal *Il Politico* ('The Political', subtitled 'journal of political sciences') by Italian jurist

Bruno Leoni – maybe better known in the United States than in Italy, especially for his *Freedom and the Law* (1961). While from the late 1950s the first milestones in the study of Italy were published in the United States (e.g. Banfield 1958, Almond and Verba 1963, LaPalombara 1957, 1964, Tarrow 1967), several pioneering studies were published in Italy too (e.g. Alberoni *et al.* 1967, Manoukian 1968, Galli 1968, Poggi 1968,). This period was the occasion for an intense transatlantic collaboration. Later on Giovanni Sartori edited a famous *Antologia* in 1970 (Sartori 1970a); the year after the *Italian Political Science Review* (now in English but at that time published only in Italian as *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* or 'RISP') was launched. The creation of the 'SISP' in its 1973 version was an important moment that fostered the institutionalization of the community. Italian political science shifted from being a stock of knowledge produced by few isolated intellectuals to become the work of an organized community (Kuhn 1962). It is not surprising that the first relevant assessments of the state if the discipline quickly followed from the mid-1980s (e.g. Graziano 1986, 1987, 1991, Morlino 1989, 1991). However, as the introduction claims, '*in terms of number of authors or amount of topics, something like this had never been accomplished in the previous assessments made in the discipline*' (Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013, 13). In this short article I would like to share some instant comments this

¹² I am very grateful to Filippo Tronconi for his comments and suggestions on a earlier draft on this article. I obviously remain the only responsible for shortcomings of any sort.

¹³ The acronym (SISP) remained the same then and Spreafico kept on serving as president. From then he will be followed by Mario Stoppino, Luigi Bonanate, Giorgio Freddi, Leonardo Morlino, Maurizio Cotta, Fuvio Attinà, Mauro Calise, Gianfranco Pasquino and, from late 2013, Pietro Grilli di Cortona.

stimulating book inspired me. In doing so, I will first address the thirteen central chapters that deal with the state of the art in a number of subfields or research themes. Then I will consider separately the suggestive introduction (Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013) and conclusion (Pasquino 2013) because they consist of thoughts on the state of the discipline as a whole.

Forty Years After: a Journey into Italian Political Science

A Collective Assessment: Still 'Good but not Enough'?

Thirteen thematic chapters, twenty-six leading scholars, about two-hundred pages of dense synthetic reports and an impressive sixty page-long bibliography: here is the core of the book that analyzes the state of the art and the specific contribution Italian political scientists gave to it. Three chapters deal with what can be seen commonly as subfields: 'concepts and methods' (by Mauro Calise and Roberto Cartocci), 'public policy' (Luigi Bobbio and Antonio La Spina) and 'international relations' (Fulvio Attinà and Sonia Lucarelli). The ten remaining chapters have to do with various aspects of the study of politics: 'democracy and democratization' (Giovanni Carbone and Pietro Grilli di Cortona), 'political communication' (Donatella Campus and Gianpietro Mazzoleni), 'public opinion and political behavior' (Paolo Bellucci and Pierangelo Isernia), 'participation and social movements' (Roberto Biorcio and Donatella della Porta), 'party organizations' (Oreste Massari and Fulvio Venturino), 'electoral systems' (Alessandro Chiamonte and Roberto D'Alimonte), 'representation and political class' (Maurizio Cotta and Luca Verzichelli), 'government and legislative

process' (Marco Giuliani and Francesco Zucchini), 'judicial systems' (Giuseppe Di Federico and Carlo Guarnieri) and 'European Union' (Luciano Bardi and Stefania Panebianco). This distribution into 13 main research sectors roughly follows the one identified in the introduction (Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013) on the basis of SISP members' research profile¹⁴. They are reported in table 1, following the labels used in Italian.

¹⁴ Marta Regalia and Marco Valbruzzi, personal communication, 27 and 28 March 2014. I thank both authors for their kind answer.

Table 1. Main research fields of SISP members in 2013.

Research field	%
Policy and public administrations	19.1
International relations	11.3
Party systems and electoral systems	10.8
Political communication	9.4
European Union and Europeanization	8.3
Political parties	8.0
Social movements and groups	7.7
Democracies and democratization	6.9
Public opinion and electoral behavior	6.9
Representation and political class	5.8
Government and legislative process	3.9
Judicial systems	1.4
Political methodology and theory	0.5
Total	100.0

Source: Regalia and Valbruzzi (2013: 13).

Of course this choice may be criticized because of the risk of overlap (e.g. ‘party organization’ and ‘party systems’), questionable merging (e.g. ‘political methodology’ and ‘political theory’) or inability to highlight more conventional subfields (such as ‘Italian politics’ or ‘comparative politics’). However it is understandable that the editors wished to reach a balanced compromise between intellectual categories and the actual division of labor in the community. Under this respect their strategy appears very acceptable.

Overall, the book offers a journey that is as fascinating as it is useful, due to the now considerable amount of books, chapters, journals, doctoral dissertations and conference papers that have contributed, year after year, to the consolidation of political research in Italy. It is hard to sum up the uneasy synthesis all authors were able to provide in their rather short chapters. How did they proceed? Usually the scholars involved in the book make an inventory of previous scholarship; they offer a brief intellectual genealogy and highlight the most relevant research topics or research

questions on which Italian political science has focused since the 1970s (and often before). Sometimes they try to sum up the core findings in a given field, possibly with reference to the orientations pursued by international research; sometimes they write down quick remarks regarding dominant methodological orientations; sometimes they conclude with critical considerations on the subfield or the discipline and present and future challenges. The result is a rather impressive and rigorous accumulation of knowledge. It would be an illusion to pretend to study Italian politics seriously without taking into account the relevant Italian scholarship.

However, are Italian political scientists satisfied with their disciplinary outcomes? Overall the answer is positive and the dominant tone is homogeneous. In the field of democratization studies, the assessment is ‘*fundamentally positive*’ (Carbone and Grilli di Cortona 2013: 62); ‘*the richness and originality of the literature in the last decades [in political communication] have highlighted that political communication is a fertile subfield within*

political science' (Campus and Mazzoleni 2013: 76); as for social movements there has been a '*notable wealth of studies about unconventional political participation*' (Biorcio and della Porta 2013: 105); the study of electoral systems appears as a '*central topic in political science*' (Chiaramonte and D'Alimonte 2013: 135); regarding political elites '*Italian scholars have been able to keep on following the track of a tradition*' for which Italy is '*a motherland*' (Cotta and Verzichelli 2013: 150); Italian legislative studies have been able to integrate international research (Giuliani and Zucchini 2013: 168); '*an assessment of the contribution of Italian political science to the study of the judicial system can be only positive, from a general perspective at least*' (Di Federico and Guarnieri 2013: 184); in the field of policy analysis, while '*still in the 1990s one had to resort to handbooks translated from English or French*' nowadays '*there is a substantial range of handbooks written by Italian scholars*' (Bobbio and La Spina 2013: 197); EU studies are '*in good health*' (Bardi and Panebianco 2013: 218) whereas '*IR in Italy are a consolidated research and teaching subfield in political science. With the rising amount of scholars [in the field] the range of IR topics (...) has been broadened*' (Attinà and Lucarelli 2013: 233).

At the same time however, all authors avoid any triumphalist discourse. As Giliberto Capano and Luca Verzichelli (2010) wrote some years ago, 'good but not enough' could sum up the picture. As a matter of fact the statements I artificially isolated are not the lyrics of a victory march: they mainly aim at acknowledging the work that has been done by two generations of scholars in the country. The assessment is systematically balanced with mentions to difficulties and challenges. Among difficulties the limited funds for research and libraries (e.g. Calise and Cartocci 2013: 46, Attinà and Lucarelli

2013: 232), the limited amount of scholars involved in given subfields (e.g. Carbone and Grilli di Cortona 2013: 62 in passing), the lack of specialized courses within the university system (e.g. Campus and Mazzoleni 2013: 75) are mentioned. As for challenges, it is reassuring, however, to observe that despite problems new trends are emerging, often on the empirical side (e.g. Carbone and Grilli di Cortona 2013: 62-63, Biorcio and della Porta 2013: 105-106, Massari and Venturino 2013: 116-118, Cotta and Verzichelli 2013: 145-150) or sometimes from the rise of experimental research and normative issues as in public opinion and political behavior (Bellucci and Isernia 2013: 90-91). Overall frequent empirical updates, more cases to be put into comparative perspective, and a greater methodological sophistication appear as the major trends of that new Italian political science in the making.

The Recent Dynamics of Subfields

I would like to take the opportunity provided by Pasquino, Regalia and Valbruzzi's book to go one step further by offering a very modest contribution on a specific point, namely our understanding of the subfield dynamics within Italian political science. To enrich the aforementioned overview it could be possible to have a look at the work performed by the association rather by individual scholars. A possible strategy could have been to perform a content analysis of main journals, as Sani and Legnante (2001) did a decade ago for the *RISP* and as Bardi and Panebianco (2013: 208-211) partially do in their chapter on EU studies. However, I propose to follow a different path by having a look at the nature and number of sections at SISP annual meetings from 2009 (year from which an on-line access to detailed data is available). It gives us an overview of

sections (which can be considered as a proxy for subfields) in which several panels are organized

on the basis of paper presentations. Table 2 gives us a synoptic view.

Table 2. Sections at the SISP annual meetings (2009-2014) – changes are highlighted in bold letters.

2009 meeting (LUISS, Rome)	2010 meeting (IUAV, Venice)	2011 meeting (Palermo University)	2012 meeting (Roma Tre University, Rome)	2013 meeting (Florence University)	2014 meeting (to be held at Perugia University)
Democracies and democratization	Democracies and democratization	Democracies and democratization	Democracies and democratization	Democracies and democratization	Democracies and democratization
Political theory	Political theory	Political theory	Political theory	Political theory	Political theory
Comparative politics	Comparative politics	Comparative politics	Comparative politics	Comparative politics	Comparative politics
Italian political system	Italian political system	Italian political system	Italian political system	Italian political system	Italian political system
Political communication	Political communication	Political communication	Political communication	Political communication	Political communication
Participation and social movements	Participation and social movements	Participation and social movements	Participation and social movements	Participation and social movements	Participation and social movements
Public policy and public administration	Public policy and public administration	Public policy and public administration	Public policy and public administration	Public policy and public administration	Public policy and public administration
International relations	International relations	International relations	International relations	International relations	International relations
Elections and electoral behavior	Elections and electoral behavior	Elections and electoral behavior	Elections and electoral behavior	Elections and electoral behavior	Elections and electoral behavior
Regionalism and local policies	Regionalism and local policies	Regionalism and local policies	Regionalism and local policies	Regionalism and local policies	Regional studies and local policies
Research methodology	Research methodology	Research methodology	Research methodology	Research methodology	Research methodology
EU ('European') studies	EU ('European') studies	EU ('European') studies	EU politics and policies	EU politics and policy	EU politics and policy
				Religion and politics	Religion and politics
				Challenges to the current world order	Focus on Turkey

Source : my elaboration on SISP data from <http://www.sisp.it/convegno> (retrieved on March 27th, 2014).

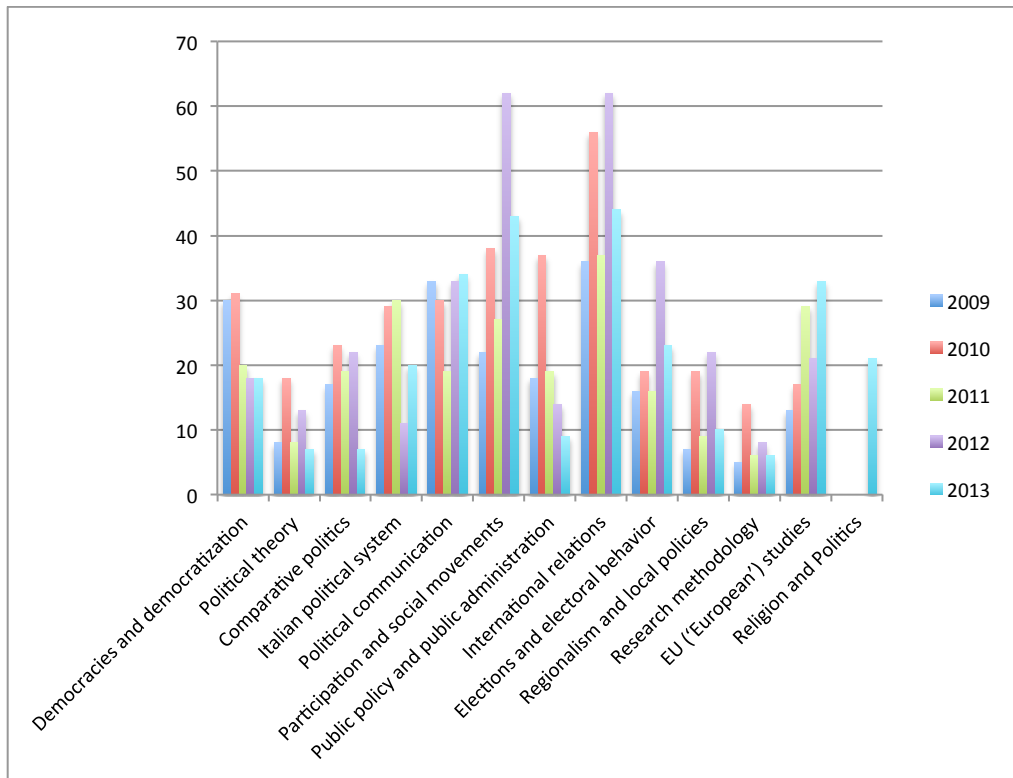
The divisions used by the SISP, itself in its organization, are roughly reflected in the book. It is clearer however: research methodology (*metodologia della ricerca*) is distinguished from political theory while 'comparative politics' and 'Italian politics' have a proper space (though it does not make disappear cases of overlap between categories). However, 'political parties', as such, disappear and an important

research sector in Italy (labeled 'regional studies and local policies' from 2014) is added. From 2013 two new sections were launched, one dealing with 'religion and politics' and the other on specific international issues ('challenges to the current world order' in 2013 and 'focus on Turkey' to be held in September 2014). From 2009 to 2013, some 1395 papers and (a minority of) round-table participations were

presented at SISP annual conferences. It is presented in graph 1 and their distribution by

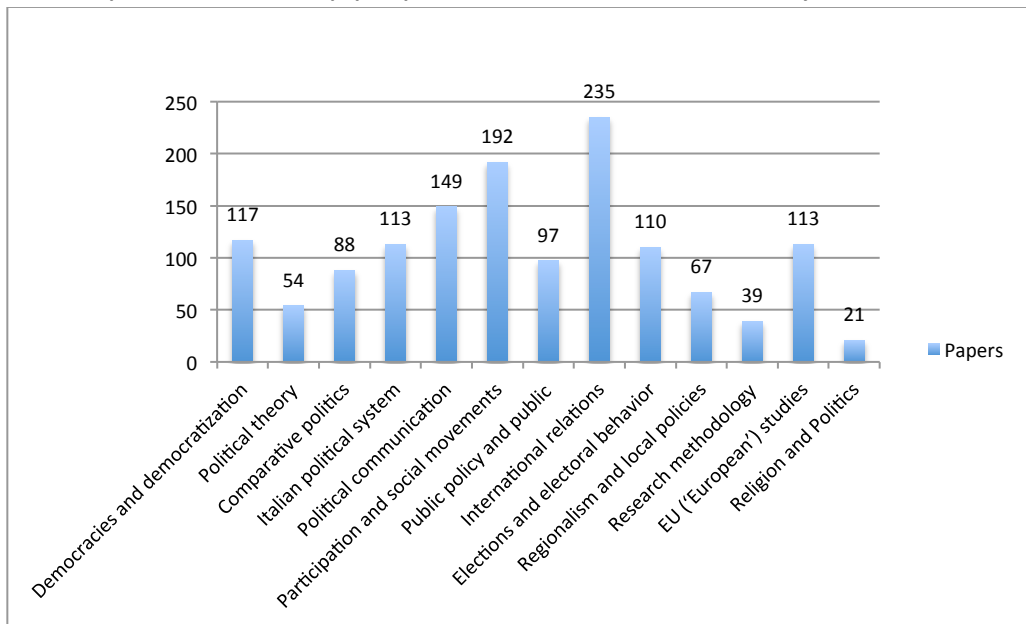
section is summed up in graph 2.

Graph 1. Amount of papers (including round-table presentations) presented at SISP annual conferences by section 2009-13



Source: SISP www.sisp.it/convegno (retrieved on March 31st, 2014)

Graph 2. Total amount of papers presented at SISP annual conferences, by section 2009-13



Source: SISP www.sisp.it/convegno (retrieved on March 31st, 2014)

From a quantitative point of view, and if SISP data are accurate, two sections are very dynamic, namely international relations and participation and social movements. On the contrary research methodology and political theory gather less papers ('Religion and politics' was only recently created and the figure regarding that item is not comparable with other data). This picture is not really surprising though it brings nuances to the soft criticism expressed by Attinà and Lucarelli (2013) on the state of their own subfield.

Italian Political Science Today: In Search of a Role

A lot is said across the pages of these *Quarant'anni* and I will not expose myself to betray what deserves to be considered as a must-read for all political scientists sharing an interest about Italy, be it as a case study or in a comparative perspective. It brings evidence, if needed; that any attempt to study Italian politics and society without taking into account the academic production brought about in Italy would not be a serious endeavor.

However the book does not tell us everything – and probably this was inevitable. Among elements that could have deserved more attention or that may be a source of research in the future, the following issues can be pointed out: the surprising absence of political theory in Norberto Bobbio's country; the limited space devoted to change in research methods across subfields and across time, especially compared to the salience of this issue in the United States; the absence of a specific treatment for comparative politics, which is has been a founding element in Italian political science; the absence of chapters on important topics (a non exhaustive list would include 'state', 'nation', 'non democratic regimes' or 'interest groups');

the unbalance between a focus on research outcomes and the only allusive remarks about the actual conditions in which Italian political scientists work. Readers interested in these issues will have to look back at contributions spread across previous assessments and now often addressed in the very useful journal *Italian Political Science*.

But beyond the strengths and weaknesses, is Italian political science well institutionalized? It is a partly different question. The introduction and, to a lesser extent, the conclusion empirically address it. In that respect, the introduction provides the empirical findings of a survey conducted among SISP members in 2013 regarding several features of the profession – 58.6% of members answered (Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013: 19). Regalia and Valbruzzi borrow the criteria followed in a previous assessment made by Plümper and Radaelli (2004): beyond academic publications (and especially journals), 'one should also look at institutionalization as a process leading to: (i) a community of professionals based on shared beliefs about the aims of the discipline; (ii) a community integrated with the wider European–international scene of political science; and (iii) a discipline fully metabolized by the political culture of a country, that is, a discipline which is acknowledged as the best way to produce systematic knowledge on political phenomena' (Plümper and Radaelli 2004, 1113). I will briefly comment each of these dimensions. First I will make quick observations of the Italian academic community itself.

A Small Community

Italian political science: how many divisions? *Gli scienziati politici* do not form a huge community: 362 members in 2013 (Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013: 13), out of which

almost 200 – distributed in *professori ordinari* (full professors), *professori associati* (associate professors) and *ricercatori* (assistant professors) – have a permanent position in Italian universities, except from a small share of *ricercatori*¹. How big or small is this figure? Compared to APSA and its more than 15,000 members, SISP is obviously tiny. But even compared to most European national political associations it is a rather small community: not only smaller than the British Political Studies Association and its 1,933 members on December 31st, 2012 (PSA 2013: 5) or the German Political Science Association and its about 1,700 members (DWGS 2013) but even smaller than the Spanish Political Science and Administration Association and its 649 members in 2013 (AECPA 2013: 6) or the French Political Science Association and its 497 members in 2013 (AFSP 2013: 2) – just to make a few examples. Nonetheless, with 200 *professori* and *ricercatori*, we are close to the total amount of political scientists stably working in Italian universities: at least SISP does represent faithfully the political science community.

Despite its modest dimensions, the community suffers from severe structural unbalances. Firstly, the book offers data but does not insist on the dramatic gender gap within the profession: 70.7% of Italian political scientists are male and the higher in the hierarchy, the deeper the gender gap. Accordingly male political scientists represent 84.9% of full professors, 78.3% of associate professors, 66.7% of assistant professors and 65.4% of the remaining SISP members (presumably PhD candidates mostly) even if this figure reflects a more general trend of the

¹ In 2005, the Italian legislation opened to the possibility of hiring assistant professors with a fixed term contract. Then, according to the 2010 reform, all *ricercatori* are hired with three years contracts, and must pass a national habilitation exam to become associate professors with tenure.

Italian university and even working system (which has counterparts in some Europe countries) rather than a specific political science issue. Secondly, there are worrying differences in terms of institutional presence of the discipline. In 2013 there were some 200 political scientists with different positions, representing only 0.4% of university teachers and a bit more than 8% of those working in the *Facoltà di scienze politiche* (Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013: 10). Updated about one year later with the same source (Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research², in April 2014), we find 215 political scientists working in 41 universities (out of 95 in the country, which means that political science is absent in a number of places though its presence is confirmed in the most important ones). A striking feature is that roughly *half* of the community is concentrated in *only six* universities (almost 40 political scientists in Bologna with its two campuses of Bologna and Forlì, between 20 and 10 in Milan, Turin, Florence, Padua and Catania). It implies that, according to Italian standards, a group from 4 to 7 political scientists (as it is the case in Pavia, Siena, LUISS, Roma Tre, Federico II in Naples or Calabria, just to name a few) should be considered as medium. This numerical weakness is not new but it may become more problematic within the context of the new framework imposed by the 2010 ‘Gelmini reform’ (approved under the fourth Berlusconi cabinet). Among other things this regulation imposes from the top a drastic empowerment of *dipartimenti* (in charge with teaching and hiring) at the expense of the *Facoltà* which are left with coordination functions. By law departments must have a minimum amount of 35 or 40 full members (varying according to the size of each university, while some

² According to the data retrieved on the its Website from www.miur.it.

universities have autonomously decided to impose higher thresholds). In practical terms the only autonomous political science department (in Bologna) disappeared and political science became one component among others together with sociologists, lawyers and historians. Bologna was the exception to the rule according to which Italian political scientists cannot have a department of their own; but while they were used to be a minority in their *Facoltà*, their relative weight is now likely to become less important. Of course this situation does not mean that they will not be able to find a *modus vivendi* with their colleagues of law, history, philosophy or sociology. But in case of conflict, numbers will not be favorable.

The next sections follow the criteria mentioned by Plümper and Radaelli and quoted by Regalia and Valbruzzi.

Shared Beliefs about the Aims of the Discipline

By and large political science in Italy is rather consensual as far as the way of doing political science is concerned. It is not by accident: the discipline was put and kept on specific tracks in the 1970s. Gianfranco Pasquino (2013: 237) clearly underlines this feature in his conclusion: *'I believe it is possible to claim that non only in the birth phase of a discipline a certain form of unity in guidance is necessary and useful, but that keeping it on the same track for almost a decade, as Sartori was able to do, is the most delicate and decisive task to contribute to the consolidation of the discipline'*. However Pasquino seems to be worried by the current situation of *'non positive, non competitive, non responsible fragmentation (...) between schools, programs, PhD programs with non positive consequences on younger scholars' training and their knowledge of classical political science works'*. Here there may be

two different aspects at stake. On the one hand, the effective lack of a 'disciplinary culture' – against which Pasquino eminently struggled by celebrating of 'masters of political science' (Campus and Pasquino 2007, Campus, Pasquino and Bull 2011³), but which is observed in other national communities. It can be seen as a by-product on professionalization-*cum*-overspecialization, questionably applying to social sciences what British mathematician Alfred Whitehead defined as a scientific duty for hard sciences ('a science that hesitates to forget its founders is lost'). On the other hand however, the actual institutional development, especially at the post-graduate level, since the 1990s, can also be perceived as a healthy source of enrichment and emulation and a way to avoid institutional isolation. Moreover, as far as I can tell, Italy seems far from suffering from the situation of 'separate tables' identified by Gabriel Almond (1988) in terms of ideological and methodological preferences. I do not mean that there are no differences but, rather, that these differences are not translated into irreducible intellectual disagreements about how to conduct research. Maybe in relation with the limited size of the political science community, the discipline has followed a specific path: under the strong leadership expressed by Sartori and his disciples, moderate positivism rather than interpretivism; no political, religious, ethnic, sexual or gender-oriented institutionalized divisions within the academic community; no strong willingness to build connections with other disciplines.

The latter deserves a longer remark. While interdisciplinarity is advocated in some subfields, explicitly as in political communication (Campus and Mazzoleni 2013:

³ Though eventually published in English by ECPA Press the initiative came from Italy (Campus and Pasquino 2004).

76) or implicitly as in social movement studies (where scholars seem to collocate themselves quite clearly within political sociology, Biorcio and della Porta 2013), Italian political science is presented as the result of a severe institutional struggle with colleagues from other disciplines (law, history, philosophy, sociology) within the (now former) 'Faculties' of 'Political Sciences'. It has been the case in the past (Pasquino 2013: 238) but, according to Regalia and Valbruzzi (2013: 30), it is still ongoing today: *'Let it be clear: there is nothing wrong in the interaction and integration of different stocks of knowledge and approaches. But the danger to which political science is exposed is that it could become again a transversal discipline, a bit present, at low levels, in all other disciplines that make "political sciences" (plural), and absent as an autonomous and independent research field. To avoid that risk, it is good to remind that political science has a history, a specificity, a professional community (...) that cannot be mixed up or merged within the loose recipients of a fuzzy and non distinct knowledge'*. The question of size, hence, seems to be important: too small to be really divided but maybe not big enough not to be threatened in a changing academic landscape.

Internationalization: Tu vuoi fa' l'americano

While Plümper and Radaelli considered internationalization as Europeanization, there are reasons to define it more broadly. First, the development of the discipline has been heavily supported by the United States through a number of research and funding organization in the Cold War period (e.g. Graziano 1991, Freddi and Giannetti 2007). Secondly, because even if Europe is the less distant environment, it does not offer a clear and unified source of influence. In the early 1970s political science

in Western Europe was more institutionalized in some countries (UK, France) than other (Germany, not to mention Spain) without reaching the level of development reached by its American counterpart. Non Italian bibliographical references are almost all in English and most of them come from the other shore of the Atlantic or from scholars with a transatlantic profile. The central figure of Giovanni Sartori himself, still active as a well-known columnist at the daily *Corriere della Sera*, exemplifies such an influence. His presence is 'haunting' a remarkably high number of fields: the path-breaking *Parties and Party Systems* (1976), of course, regarding political parties and party systems; his key influence on 'conceptual cleanness' (Sartori 1970b, 2011, Collier and Gerring 2008) regarding concepts and methods, including, with a normative inflexion, on democracy (Sartori 1957, 1987); his contributions to the study of political institutions (Sartori 1963 with reference to the Italian Parliament, Sartori 1996) and electoral systems (e.g. Sartori 1984) or his emphasis on the role of television (Sartori 2014).

In any case there *is* a dynamic of internationalization and it is highly appreciated by Italian political scientists. It is a striking feature. Whilst all national academic communities have specificities rooted in intellectual traditions, cultural influences, institutional rules and financial opportunities, Italian political science does not aim at protecting or promoting a specific 'Italian science of politics' – to misquote Bernard Crick. Internationalization is something which is desired and appreciated as a mark of scientific quality. According to the SISP 2013 survey, 84% of Italian political scientists (and more than 70% among PhD candidates and PhDs) have worked with a foreign colleague (more and more along the career) and 90% participate to scientific events abroad at least

once a year, while a good part partially publish their work in English (Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013: 19-22).

A distinguishing sign towards an even stronger internationalization is the leap forward regarding the use of English as the main working language for Italian political scientists in Italy. The professional journal *Italian Political Science* was launched in 2007 in English; English is sometimes used to a certain extent in post-graduate training (it was my personal experience in Siena); and recently the RISP became an English-speaking journal following the path of North European academic communities such as Scandinavia (*Scandinavian Political Studies* is the journal of the Nordic Political Science Association) and the Netherlands (*Acta Politica* is the journal of the Dutch Political Science Association). Overall, under this respect, my impression is that Italian political science has been able to do a lot with little – suffice it to remind that it is from that roughly 200-scholar community that the past IPSA President, the ECPR past chairman and present ECPR chairwoman come from. Italian political science is not parochial anymore: it is connected.

The Struggle for Social Recognition

Compared to the starting point, the achievements are impressive. Nonetheless Italian political scientists are cautious when they consider the state of the discipline. Even for younger scholars *'nowadays Italian political science is still a forty year-old child: not grown up, still without a true 'social prestige' and still seeking for a proper role or mission in the (scientific) world'* (Regalia and Valbruzzi 2013: 10). Once again the 2013 SISP survey offers interesting insights. Italian political scientists claim that they are satisfied of their profession (74.5% ranging from 62.3% for younger scholars to 82.4% among full

professors); their judgment on the state of research in political science is contrasted ('good' for 51.9% but 'mediocre' for 41%); strangely enough, they do not believe in the scientific character of current political science (which is seen as 'hardly' scientific for 60.8% and 'not scientific at all' for 17%) – though that is not the impression the social science reader is left with after such a book. However, they massively consider – and Gianfranco Pasquino (2013: 244-247) vibrantly advocates for such a task – that political science should be an applicable knowledge (76.9%) despite its limited relevance in the Italian political life ('weak' for 69.8%, 'non existent' for 15.1%).

This gap between the intellectual relevance of the discipline and its political, social and cultural lack of influence is not specific to Italy. But in the context of the post-1990s turmoil it is felt with a special acuity by Italian scholars. Given the current situation, it is a bit sad that the struggle for relevance often looks like a struggle for existence. Nonetheless there are reasons not to be defeatist: the Gramscian 'optimism of the will' might well be needed, but *Quarant'anni di scienza politica* provides strong evidence that difficulties can be overcome. For the time being, *auguri*.

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