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French Political Science at a Turning Point

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This paper outlines the origins and institutionalization process of French political science since 1945. It sketches the present state of the discipline, and it analyses recent trends that appear almost as a form of 'de-institutionalization'. Overall, the discipline is quite well entrenched and is independent in terms of recruitment with its own teaching and research branches. However, political scientists suffer from a relative lack of visibility in the public space in comparison with their colleagues from more prominent disciplines. In many fields French political science remains invisible at the international level, though this may change considerably in the years to come. The main element of uncertainty comes from the ongoing reforms, the redefinition of the partnership between universities, the *Instituts d'Etudes Politiques* and the CNRS, and the way the autonomy of universities will be implemented.

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Introduction

The French academic landscape is changing fast, with the law of 18 April 2006 (Programme Law for Research), the creation of a National Research Agency (ANR) in 2005 and an Evaluation Agency of Higher Education and Research (AERES) in 2006, the law of 10 August 2007 on the liberties and responsibilities of universities (LRU), the reorganization of the relations between universities, CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research) and our 'grandes écoles' (report of François d'Aubert, 14 April 2008), the projects of breaking down the CNRS in Institutes, the uncertainty on the place of Social Sciences in CNRS, and so on.¹ This paper will try to outline the origins and institutionalization process of French political science since 1945, sketch the present state of the discipline and analyse the recent trends that appear almost as a form of 'de-institutionalization'.



The Institutionalization Process

Origins

The history of French political science goes back to the creation of the *Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques* (Free School of Political Sciences) by Emile Boutmy in Paris in 1871, with the objective to train French elites by teaching sciences seen as useful for government (economics, history, law and social sciences). At the time, political science as such did not exist, and was closely linked with legal, moral and philosophical considerations.² In France, its origin goes back to the publication by André Siegfried of his major book, *Le Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest* (1913), a geographical and sociological explanation of electoral behaviour that sets the foundations of a 'science' of politics. But the audience of the book remained limited before World War II and it was only after 1945 that political science developed as an autonomous discipline, distinct from law and philosophy. Its specificity comes from the fact that it has developed in three different and sometimes conflicting institutions: universities, *Instituts d'études politiques* (Institutes of Political Studies) and the CNRS.

Universities vs Institutes of Political Science (IEP)

A typically French institution is the *Grandes Écoles* (literally 'Great Schools' or specialized institutes of higher learning). In sharp contrast with public universities, they have a policy of highly selective student recruitment and high admission fees, and are much more independent from a financial and educational point of view. They possess a virtual monopoly of access to management positions in public administration, large firms and communications sectors. After World War II, French political science developed in parallel within the universities and within the Institutes of Political Studies (*Instituts d'Etudes Politiques, IEP*), which in many ways can be considered as 'grandes écoles'.

- The Paris *Institute of Political Studies* (Sciences Po Paris), a semi-autonomous public establishment, arose from the old *École Libre de Sciences Politiques (ELSP)*. With the decree of 9 November 1945, two bodies replaced the ELSP, the IEP of Paris or 'Sciences Po' and the National Foundation of Political Science (*Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, FNSP*), to encourage the study of political science and economics. The French Political Science Association was born at Sciences Po in 1949, and its journal, the *Revue française de science politique*, was launched in 1951. The first doctoral programme in the discipline was also created there in 1956. In an effort to decentralize universities, the French government of the period created at the same time as the IEP of Paris six other regional Institutes of



Political Studies (in Bordeaux, Grenoble, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Lyon and Alger, the latter soon to be replaced by Aix-en-Provence), to which were added the IEPs of Rennes and Lille in 1990. These institutions with selective recruitment were relatively independent in comparison to the universities to which they are attached, and today account for a quarter of political science instructors and contribute significantly to research in the discipline. Logically, it is within these establishments that, as we shall see, the most important research centres of the discipline have developed.

- In law faculties, a national regulation of 1954 introduced political science as a compulsory discipline in the degree programme. The action of a few individual professors in public law (Maurice Duverger, Georges Vedel, etc.) was also decisive in giving the discipline institutional recognition and an independent status from the 1950s onward. Thus, a majority of professional political scientists are still employed in law faculties. The first university political science department was created at the University of Paris I — Panthéon-Sorbonne in 1971.³ The following year a centralized nationwide staff recruitment procedure ('agrégation de science politique') was established to select university full-professors to this discipline every 2 years (following the model of law, economics and medicine) (see Milet, 2001). Also, since 1983 French political science has had its own representative body and role in the university selection process of the Ministry of Education and Research: Section 4 of the CNU or National Council of Universities (*Conseil supérieur des Universités* which became in 1987 *Conseil National des Universités*, with 77 sections), whose role is to 'qualify' (declare apt to teach) the new doctors in political science.

University vs CNRS

The second specificity of French political science stems from the existence of a national public research institution, the CNRS, distinct from universities and the IEPs. The CNRS was created by a decree of 19 October 1939 and was reborn after World War II by a law of 12 August 1945, with the objective of coordinating public funding and supporting science and academic research in all disciplines, including social and human sciences. It created a body of full-time researchers with large autonomy. The law established a 'science parliament', the National Committee, defining the CNRS's main orientations. Each disciplinary section has a specific commission (with two-thirds of its members elected by the researchers and the other third nominated by the government) in charge of the recruitment and evaluation of the researchers and research units. In 1982, CNRS researchers obtained the status of civil servants, guaranteeing them permanent employment (*tenure*). At first associated with law in a 'Section des études juridiques et politiques', Political science became an



autonomous section in 1982 and since 1991 it is coupled with the sociology work and organisations: ‘Sociologie du travail’ (‘section 40: Pouvoir, sociétés, organization’). The CNRS currently has a three billion euro budget and supervises 26,000 agents, of which 11,600 are researchers and 14,400 are administrative and technical staff agents in around 1,260 laboratories. As for political science *per se*, there are 200 researchers in section 40, representing approximately 43% of the discipline.

Factors of unification

In spite of these institutional cleavages, unifying factors are nevertheless at work. Specific representative bodies have emerged. First, as we saw, there is the French Association of Political Science (*Association Française de Science Politique*, AFSP) hosted at the FNSP of Paris. Today it has approximately 600 members. In 1995, an Association of teachers and researchers in political science (AECSP) was created, and in 1996 the National Association for the candidates to the professions of political science (ANCMSP) was created for aspirants or recently recruited teachers and researchers. Now the three associations work together in tight partnership.

Another unifying factor is the institutional representation of university teachers to the National Committee of CNRS (though the reverse is not true; one finds practically no researchers in the CNU sections) and since the 1990s there has been increasing partnership between the CNRS and universities, with the creation of ‘mixed’ research units (UMR); today 25 are attached to section 40 of CNRS.

Nonetheless, this institutionalization of French political science remains largely incomplete. It remains strictly dependent, in terms of teaching, on the training offered by law faculties⁴ and on its status as a ‘generalist’ discipline intended to train the French elites in the IEPs.

The State of the Discipline

Distribution

Demography

In all, the community of French political scientists, meaning here all those who make their living by teaching political science or doing public political science research or both, amounts to slightly more than 570 individuals, of whom 57% have the status of teacher–researcher⁵ (see Table 1 below for their geographical distribution) and are part of a university structure (a faculty or an IEP). The remaining 43% come from institutions devoted exclusively to research (the CNRS or the FNSP). In practice, a number of ‘full-time researchers’ also devote some of their time to teaching and most ‘teacher-researchers’ do research as



Table 1 Geographical and gender distribution of teachers and researchers in French political science in 2004–2005 (University and CNRS–FNSP)(%)

	<i>Professors</i>	<i>Assistant professors</i>	<i>Researchers</i>		<i>Total</i>
			<i>CNRS</i>	<i>FNSP</i>	
<i>Geography</i>					
Paris and IDF	42	36.3	54.3	79.6	47.6
Regions	58	63.7	45.7	20.4	52.4
<i>Gender</i>					
Women	8.7	34.8	41 (25 of DR)	39	40
Men	91.3	65.2	59 (75 of DR)	61	60
	<i>N</i> = 131	<i>N</i> = 193	<i>N</i> = 200	<i>N</i> = 49	<i>N</i> = 573

IDF: Ile de France, DR: research director.

well. Yet the coexistence of these two academic bodies, with different statuses and traditions, constitutes a characteristic of the French system, and is significantly more apparent in political science, as the proportion of members who are ‘public full-time researchers’ is considerably greater than in other comparable disciplines (such as law, history or sociology).

The French academic of today is either an assistant professor (*Maître de conférences*, MCF) or a full professor (*Professeur des Universités*, PR). The former are recruited following a complex two-stage selection procedure. As we saw, the national selection committee (CNU) evaluates candidates’ files each year. On average, between 70 and 80 Ph.D. dissertations are defended every year in the discipline. Of those who are candidates, the section accepts approximately one-quarter. Subsequently, these qualified candidates may apply for available university positions. Assistant professors have the same workload as full professors (128 hours of lectures per year). The latter are recruited via a procedure of higher education professional selection. A nationwide competition (*concours d’agrégation*) is organized every 2 years, offering between four and eight posts for the entire country. A jury of seven full professors⁶ makes the selection, based on a competition that lasts several months and comprises many oral presentations on at least two of the principal subdivisions of the discipline (political sociology; international relations and institutions; administration, management and public policy; political theory/history of ideas and political thought; and social science methodology).

To the actual number of political scientists holding an academic position, one should add the potential reservoir of recruitment, with the 70–80 political science Ph.D. dissertations produced every year. During the 2004 term, section 4 of the CNU accepted 70 candidates, an unusually high proportion amounting to 38% of the total number of applicants. The number of qualified candidates



should be compared to the number of positions available (both in higher education and public research), which does not exceed 15–20 per year. This represents a structural deficiency in job opportunities for young French Ph.D.s in political science, who are often condemned, despite the excellence of their academic credentials, to a precarious situation and an uncertain professional future. This constitutes one of the most critical challenges currently confronting the discipline. As an example of this crisis, in 2008, section 40 of the CNRS examined 170 applications for just five researchers' positions.

Yet things could change in the near future. By 2010, approximately 40% of the full professors, 30% of the assistant professors and half of the CNRS researchers will reach the age of retirement.

Gender imbalance

Another striking feature of the profession is its gender structure. Roughly, women represent only 40% of the total (Table 1). Their place is increasing slowly but they still are a minority. The balance is, however, different from one body to another. There are more women in CNRS positions than among the assistant professors or the FNSP researchers (41%, 35% and 29% respectively). The higher the position in the hierarchy, the stronger the male predominance: women constitute less than one in 10 of full professors, and even in the CNRS they represent only a quarter of the senior researchers ('directeurs de recherche', who are above the 'chargés de recherche').

Geography: the weight of Paris

The geography of French political science is structured by the presence of IEPs in several regions. Cities in which IEPs were created alongside universities are strongholds of the discipline, with strategic centres of teaching and research, and a concentration of instructors and students ready to pursue an in-depth curriculum in the discipline. Elsewhere, the presence of political science is much more limited and random, with certain notable exceptions (Amiens, Antilles-Guyanne, Montpellier, Nancy, Nice, Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, etc.).

In spite of the research decentralization policies, the significance of Paris remains striking. It is worth noting that Parisian institutions house almost a third of French political science instructors. These figures can be compared to those on the production of Ph.D.s. In a recent paper, Nicolas Mariot and Olivier Godechot show that 58% of all political science Ph.D. dissertations between 1990 and 2001⁷ were produced in the region of Paris, with a marked predominance of the political science department of the University of Paris I ($N = 31$) and the IEP of Paris ($N = 15$). One should add that many instructors who teach outside Paris have their residence in the capital, reinforcing its actual weight.

Political science research is primarily conducted in mixed research units that are dependent both on universities and on the CNRS, in which full-time



researchers (belonging to the CNRS or the FNPS) and university instructors work side-by-side. In addition to CNRS researchers, there are a significant number of private researchers of the FNPS⁸ in certain research units (in Paris, Bordeaux and Grenoble). Appendix A shows the distribution of researchers from section 40 of the CNRS in the research centres. The figures do not include the research centres existing out of France,⁹ nor the Research units that depend on another section of CNRS, even though they may include political science researchers.¹⁰ Conversely, some of the research units listed in Appendix A may include researchers from other sections of the CNRS.

Since the 1950s, major research centres have been created at the initiative of the FNPS in Paris¹¹ and in the following regions: *CEVIPOF*, *Centre d'Etudes de la Vie Politique Française* (Sciences Po Paris, 36 full-time researchers) focused on French political issues and, in particular, on election analysis, and *CERI*, *Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales* (Sciences Po Paris, 45 full-time researchers), which is oriented towards international politics and area studies; *SPIRIT*, *Science politique, Relations internationales, Territoire*, which is a result of the fusion of *CERVL*, *Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur la Vie Politique Locale* (Sciences Po Bordeaux, 12 full-time researchers), specializing in local politics and others research teams (European politics, international relations and comparative politics), *CEAN*, *Centre d'Etude d'Afrique Noire* (Sciences Po Bordeaux, six researchers) specializing in the study of African politics and *PACTE*, *Politiques publiques, Action politique, Territoires* (Sciences Po Grenoble, 19 full-time researchers), which was oriented principally towards the study of public policies and quantitative research methods.¹²

However, in recent years, other important research centres have sprung up with the help of the CNRS. These include *IREMAM* (*Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman*) in Aix-en-Provence; *CURAPP* (*Centre Universitaire de Recherches Administratives et Politiques de Picardie*) in Amiens; *CERAPS* (*Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Administratives, Politiques et Sociales*) in Lille; *TRIANGLE* (*Action, discours, pensée politique et économique*) attached to the ENS of Lyon; *CRPS* (*Centre de Recherches Politiques de la Sorbonne*) in Paris; *CRAPE* (*Centre de Recherches sur l'Action Politique en Europe*) in Rennes; and the *GSPE-PRISME* (*Groupe de Sociologie Politique Européenne — Politique, Religion, Institutions et Sociétés: Mutations Européennes*) in Strasbourg; *ISP* (*Institut des sciences sociales du politique*) attached to the University of Paris X and the ENS of Cachan. These developments demonstrate the vitality of French research in the field.

The evolution of French political science educational framework

The application of the *LMD* (*Licence-Mastère-Doctorat*) reform initiated by the Bologna process prompted the key French university centres (those with



sufficient scope to offer education at the graduate level) to redesign their academic offering, sometimes further specializing in either research or professional orientation.¹³ The thorough implementation of this reform at the start of the academic year of 2005 gives us a complete picture of the present situation (Appendix B). The data presented are limited to research-oriented education, with the eventual goal of a doctorate in political science.

Appendix B tells us a great deal:

- The decline of some traditional components of the discipline such as political philosophy and political theory (even if there have been recent attempts to revive this field of study) and the study of political institutions focusing on constitutional law.
- The importance of political sociology¹⁴ (understood here as the predominantly sociological analysis of French political phenomena) on the one hand, and the study of public policy on the other. These two sectors have become the bases of the 'normal' training in political science in France and will be taught in every political science programme from now on.¹⁵
- The structural weakness of subfields such as European studies and international relations, even if the trend is towards a rapid shoring up of these sectors.
- The emergence of a new subdiscipline, historical sociology of politics.¹⁶

Prevalent fields of instruction

Generally, student education offered follows the recent evolution of French political science research:

- The emphasis on political sociology conveys not only the traditional importance of work devoted to France and its institutions (see the preceding report of Pierre Favre in 1996), but also the strength of the 'critical' sociological research trend such as is reflected in the writing of Pierre Bourdieu.¹⁷
- The study of 'public policy' (or public action), both in terms of teaching and research, is growing quickly and tends to constitute an almost independent subfield at the heart of the discipline, with its own conceptual vocabulary,¹⁸ giving rise to its own theoretical controversies.
- The development of the study of international relations and research devoted to European politics is more recent, but meaningful. It corresponds to the creation of specialized periodicals and professional associations, and is gaining increasing recognition.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the number of teachers and specialized researchers in these fields remains low compared to specialists in 'political sociology'.²⁰
- A general and preoccupying feature is the weakness of quantitative approaches and survey research.



Eventually, French political science shows distinctive traditions that set it apart from dominant international paradigms. The dialogue with certain neighbouring disciplines (sociology, history and anthropology) is favoured to the detriment of other more formalized disciplines such as economics or psychology.²¹ Case studies, interviews and field work are much more widely used than survey questionnaires or comparative analyses.²² Approaches such as the rational choice model are also relatively rare in the French context²³ and the influence of issues arising from American political science is significantly weaker than elsewhere.

However, this intellectual independence, sometimes criticized as ‘parochialism’, does not prevent increasing international collaborations or the importation of analytical frameworks considered innovative, such as in the field of the sociology of mobilization or the theory of international relations. More and more advanced French students do some of their studies in foreign political science departments, participate in international conferences and become familiar with international debates. The unshackling of French political science, which others would characterize as a perverse effect of globalization or ‘joining the international mainstream’, is increasingly a reality.

French political science journals: an editorial process of diversification

The dynamism of French political science research, as well as its often cross-disciplinary nature, is particularly striking if one observes the recent wholesale transformations in French political science journals.²⁴ For more than a decade, these have been extremely diversified. While the founding journals of the discipline, the *Revue Française de Science Politique* and, to a lesser extent, *Pouvoirs*, remain the most widely distributed general publications, particularly in libraries, they are facing increasing competition from a considerable number of thematic or interdisciplinary journals that have been created recently or that have become more important. This is notably the case with *Politix*, which became *Politix. Revue des sciences sociales du politique* distributed by Armand Colin or *Culture et Conflits*, now subtitled *Sociologie politique de l'international*. Amidst the recent creations that illustrate the transformation of the discipline's intellectual landscape, one must include, in chronological order, the *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée* (founded in 1994, this francophone journal is edited in Belgium and is devoted to the development of comparative politics); *Pôle Sud* (founded in 1994 by CEPEL, *Centre d'Etudes Politiques de l'Europe Latine*, this regional journal has specialized in the study of southern Europe); *Critique Internationale* (founded in 1998 by CERI, this journal specializes in international issues and cultural areas); *Raisons politiques* (also founded in 1998, this journal plans to develop theoretical and political philosophy approaches); and more recently *Politique*



Européenne (founded in 2000, this journal specializes in European studies). These creations, and they are quite numerous considering the size of the French community of political scientists and the state of publishing in social sciences,²⁵ reflect a growing specialization in both teaching and research within political science. A recent CNRS study established that some of these journals have significant international influence, though still substantially less than journals in English. Based on an ambitious bibliometrical measure,²⁶ the study ended with the following classification for political science:²⁷ out of the 42 journals that account for more than 64% of the citations, 18 are American (53.7% of the citations), 10 French (23.5% of the citations), 10 British (17.8% of the citations) and four are from other countries (including Belgium for the *RIPC*, *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*). In terms of this classification, the CNRS study considers that two journals comprise the inner circle of international journals (first-ranked): the *Revue française de science politique* (861 citations) and *Politix* (375 citations). Three other journals, *Pôle Sud* (79 citations), the *Revue internationale de politique comparée* (52 citations) and *Politique Africaine* (35 citations), belong to the influential group of journals at the second level.²⁸

The dynamic of national associations and the international role of French political science

French political science is characterized by a wealth of associations. Two indicators allow us to evaluate it: the importance of the associations' network itself, which has no fewer than three associations with complementary objectives, and the number of workshops, panels or conferences organized within the discipline. The discipline's association network is comprised, as we saw, of three associations: AFSP, AECSP and the ANCMSP. Founded in 1949, the AFSP has more than 600 individual dues-paying members, 14 working groups and plays an important role in the organization and recognition of political science research. This association has been organizing biennial national congresses. Its eighth Congress held in Toulouse in September 2007 brought together almost 600 people.

The AECSP, founded in 1995 and claiming 100 members, has assumed the role of defending the discipline's professional concerns, and has acted as an important interlocutor with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research during the latest university reforms. Finally, the ANCMSP, founded in 1996, offers candidates for university careers in political science a series of services (notably a very active mailing list informing one on jobs, conferences, controversies) and sees to the transparency of recruitment procedures within the discipline. These three complementary associations are able to mobilize in conjunction with each other (particularly at the time of the regular *Assises de la*



Science Politique (Political Science Meetings), and contribute greatly to the development of a disciplinary sense of identity and belonging, especially compared to other older and, above all, larger academic disciplines. This sociability is also responsible for the many French academic events organized around the discipline, whether they are initiated by research centres, university departments or the AFSP (AFSP alone organizes approximately 35 days of scholarly activities a year, which is significantly more than many similar organizations in Western Europe). This vitality is all the more remarkable as it does not reflect a self-closure of the discipline. These associations' activities, through their disciplinary openness as well as their commitment to internationalization, boost the international involvement of French political science.

The issue of the internationalization of French political science has probably been one of the most contentious topics in recent years. These recurrent debates, especially at the occasion of the *Assises de la Science Politique* or during the AFSP national congress, show two polarized views.

On the one hand, some believe that French political science, due to its unique intellectual and institutional characteristics, continues to marginalize itself. The recent international ranking of university political science and international relations departments by Simon Hix's team tends to support such a diagnosis.²⁹ Among the 400 departments classified worldwide, and with the caveat of an often debatable methodology,³⁰ the highest French establishment is ranked 170 (the IEP of Paris) and only a few other departments appear in the classification. The data confirm the dominant position of American political science departments (occupying nine of the top 10 spots), with the University of Paris X ranked 254th, the University of Lille II 313th, the IEP of Grenoble 324th and the University of Paris I 391st.³¹

On the other hand, one could also contend that there are many paths that will eventually converge, signalling the latent transformation of French political science. Its internationalization, despite all the debates and even obstacles associated with it, continues to advance and to significantly affect the ways of doing political science in France, without necessarily provoking the dreaded levelling down. Furthermore, it might be observed that the internationalization of French political science is entirely compatible with its claim to intellectual uniqueness. Among the structures contributing to this internationalization, it is worth distinguishing between those arising from a local dynamic, that is, specific to a given university or research establishment, and those that are related to a national policy supporting internationalization. Henceforth, in numerous university establishments (notably the IEPs which usually require their students to complete a year of foreign study) the practice will be to favour international student exchanges. Many research centres have also implemented policies of international cooperation that have often proven fruitful, even leading to such institutional groupings as those encouraged by the



CNRS. This is the case with the creation in 2005 of LEA (*Laboratoire Européen Associé* (European Associated Research Centre) entitled CODE, ‘Comparer les Démocraties en Europe’) which brings the IEP of Bordeaux (SPIRIT) together with the University of Stuttgart (ISSUS) to compare European democracies at the level of the EU, states and territories. Another example is the CEPEL’s LEA (Associate European Laboratory) called *ETAPES* (*Espaces et Temporalités de l’Action Publique en Europe du Sud*). As for others, the internationalization dynamic occurs through the publication of an edited collection, as with Anglo-Saxon publishing firms, to foster the international dissemination of research studies. CERI instituted such a policy with the partnership developed with Hurst a number of years ago (‘Hurst Series on Comparative Politics and International Relations’) and the Palgrave-Macmillan publications (‘The CERI Series in International Relations and Political Economy’).

Along the same lines, it is worth noting the increasing participation of French institutions in the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), even if the French presence still remains highly insufficient. In 2008, a dozen French institutions were dues-paying members of this network (CEPEL, CURAPP, the Political Science Department of the University of Paris I, FNPS, the IEP of Aix-en-Provence, the IEP of Bordeaux, the IEP of Grenoble, the IEP of Lille, the IEP of Rennes, The IEP of Strasbourg, the IEP of Toulouse, and *LATTS*, *Laboratoire, Techniques, Territoires et Société*). There were nine of them in 1996. Ranked according to its number of members, France came 7th, tied with Norway (12 members), behind the United Kingdom (54 members), Germany (38 members), the USA (23 members), Spain (22 members), Italy (18 members) and Sweden (15 members). Considering the differences in financial resources and size of political science departments from one country to another, it is possible to confirm Pierre Favre’s cautious diagnosis of 1996 and speak of a sustained ‘turnaround’ in the situation.³² While the number of French participants in the ECPR sessions probably remains inferior to those of other comparable European countries³³ (but close enough to its weight within the ECPR, 4% out of 300 partner institutions), the ECPR will henceforth be the focus of renewed attention. This turnaround still remains fragile and must be closely monitored in the future. One cannot be blind to the fact that today the collective resources offered by the Consortium remain largely underused by the French: there is very low participation in the ECPR summer schools (aside from that of Lille, devoted to quantitative methods), few for ECPR panels and workshops and, more serious yet, extremely low visibility of French research within the network, which remains mostly defined by Anglo-Saxon references and themes. In a complementary manner, the European Political Science Network (EPSNET) has offered opportunities for the internationalization of French political science.³⁴ During the plenary conference in June 2005, organized in Paris on the site of the



FNSP, many French participants contributed to the work of the session that focused particularly on the transformations in political science in Europe. More recently, the AFSP supported the creation of the ECSPA, the new *European Confederation of Political Science Associations*, to the activities of which it intends to participate.

Finally, at the national level, it is worth mentioning AFSP's policy of internationalization of its activities. Aside from the financial assistance it gives its members to allow them to attend the World Conference of the International Political Science Association (IPSA), of which the AFSP was a founding member, this policy also shows in the increasing availability of AFSP activities to colleagues from other countries and the progressive inclusion of AFSP activities in the network, alongside other national associations. Examples include the organization of the first conference of Belgian, French, Quebecois and Swiss political associations in Lausanne in November 2005 and in Québec in 2007, common activities with the Spanish and Italian associations in 2006, and a methodological roundtable co-organized with APSA at the last Congress of Toulouse in 2007.³⁵ All these elements change the image of French political science as lagging behind in the internationalization process. In a way, a silent revolution has taken place and is transforming French political science substantially at the risk, nonetheless, of aggravating the gap between institutions with long-term financial resources allowing for this internationalization and those whose critical size and lack of financial independence are probably insurmountable obstacles.

Recent trends

Recent reforms, inspired by a largely mythical 'American model', are today deeply changing the French academic system, and this paper might be obsolete when we publish it. The aim of these reforms is to develop science policies in a 'knowledge-based economy'. This means encouraging industry–research partnership, promoting competition between large universities to create 'poles of excellence', developing research mobility, gaining greater government control on the definition of research priorities, developing funding agencies such as ANR on the model of the American NSF (National Science Foundation), etc.

There are positive sides to these reforms. The creation of a new funding agency, the ANR, and the expansion of new sources of funding for individuals and research teams especially at the European level (ESF, 7th EU Research Framework, etc.) encourage comparative projects and international partnership. The project 'Campus' (February and July 2008) will allow for the renovation of 10 university campuses selected as the best. And the future autonomy of universities may make them more visible, at least for the largest 'poles of excellence'.

Currently, however, there are a lot of drawbacks and uncertainties. The multiplication of temporary jobs on short-term contracts is a destabilizing



factor. The reform is unfinished, piling up structures that are not necessarily coherent. The very existence of the CNRS and of a body of public full-time researchers is questioned. The CNRS has lost control over the funding of its laboratories with the ANR and of the evaluation of its units with the AERES. The Minister of Higher Education and Research (Valérie Pécresse) is calling for a division of CNRS into a number of autonomous institutes, replacing the present departments. The creation of a specific Social and Human Sciences Institute of CNRS is being debated, as well as the specific place it should give to political science, others being more in favour of the return of 'SHS' into the realm of universities. This could lead to the end of the CNRS-university partnership that governs the research laboratories (UMR), although the last report by François d'Aubert is reassuring, recommending the following:

- the preservation of the French system of research laboratories;
- the simplification of the partnership (no more than two governing authorities);
- the reinforcement of the partnership between CNRS and universities; and
- more autonomy to the laboratories.

The situation is particularly threatening for the social sciences and even more so for political science, considering its institutional fragility. As we saw, the discipline is small, not well rooted in most universities and outnumbered by law teachers. In future large autonomous university poles of excellence, the discipline might weigh close to nothing and eventually disappear, remaining solely in the IEP network. Even among the IEP, the small ones risk being absorbed in the large universities. Sciences Po Paris, with Bordeaux and Grenoble, historically the closest and the largest, have more resources to resist. As for the political science UMR, many draw most of their support from the CNRS, whose withdrawal could be very problematic. And a form of de-institutionalization of the discipline could be a side effect of this avalanche of reforms.

Conclusion

To summarize this very schematic presentation, the position of French political science as a discipline depends on the perspective adopted.

At an institutional level, the discipline is quite well entrenched and, as we have seen, is independent in terms of recruitment, with its own teaching and research branches. The dynamism of its professional associations has significantly contributed to its wholesale recognition by public authorities. Yet, it remains a 'small' discipline on a national scale (in comparison to other university disciplines such as law or sociology) and on the international scale (in comparison to some of its foreign counterparts). The absence of a real



political science department in the universities, with the two exceptions of the University of Paris I — Panthéon-Sorbonne and the University of Paris VIII, reveals this structural fragility. Nonetheless, the professionalization of political science studies has greatly increased in recent years under the stimulus, in particular, of the reform of higher education initiated by the Bologna process (the 'LMD' reform). Numerous universities, under the guidance of political scientists, have created professional Master's level programmes in the most varied fields (public affairs, public policies, political communication, international relations, development and cooperation, etc.) that attract a growing number of students. In spite of its fragility, French political science is a legitimate discipline whose 'epistemological maturity', to adopt a recent expression of Pierre Favre,³⁶ has made meaningful progress over the last 15 years.

At the social level, political scientists suffer from a relative lack of visibility in the public space in comparison to their colleagues from more socially prominent disciplines such as sociology, economics, history or psychology. Few political scientists can claim to be an influential 'intellectual' in the French sense of the term, even if some specialists from certain subfields of the discipline — following in the footsteps of electoral sociology or comparative politics or, to a lesser degree, international relations — are regularly consulted by the media or public authorities. Also, the absence of genuine think-tanks in France gives public university and research members an important role. However, one of the principal problems remains that of publication. Lacking a real system of university publishing houses (with the possible exception of the *Presses de Science Po*), political science books are limited to two contrasting methods of circulation. One comprises the large commercial publishers (Gallimard, Fayard, Le Seuil, Flammarion and La Découverte), with the usual requirements in terms of sales and profitability, which are difficult to meet for academic books. The other comprises small publishers specializing in the social sciences (the main one being L'Harmattan) whose print runs are usually confidential. The crisis in social science publishing reinforces the discipline's lack of visibility in the public arena.

On the intellectual level, French political science has gained recognition within the French university context. The signs of this are the regular awarding of prizes and bonuses to its members. However, French research in many fields remains invisible at the international level. This situation is based as much on intellectual factors (specific topics of study, different methods,³⁷ approaches, etc.) as structural factors (languages spoken, lower mobility of French researchers, self-sufficiency of the French intellectual market, and so on). This may change considerably in the years to come. The greater mobility of young researchers, the multiplication of international plans and collaboration, the growing appreciation of foreign publications and French academics' educational experiences in foreign universities are some of the many aspects of an evolution that is encouraging rapid and deep-seated change. The main element



of uncertainty comes from the ongoing reforms, the redefinition of the partnership between universities, ‘grandes écoles’ and the CNRS, and the way the autonomy of universities will be implemented.

Notes

- 1 This report owes a lot to the previous research of Pierre Favre (with the collaboration of Nadine Dada), *La science politique en France*, available on the EpsNet website at http://www.epsnet.org/publications/State_of_Discipline.htm. Also see Roux (2004); the ‘Rapport de conjuncture’ of the section 40 of CNRS in 2004 and 2006, and the chapter on France by Loïc Blondiaux and Yves Déloye, ‘The State of Political Science in France’, in H.D. Klingemann (ed.) *The State of Political Science in Western Europe*, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2007; also on AFSP’s website, *Letter* no. 4, Observatoire des métiers académiques de la science politique: <http://www.afsp.msh-paris.fr/observatoire/observatoire.htm>. All our thanks also to the data given by Fabien Jobard, secretary general of the present section 40 of CNRS’s National Committee. This paper was presented at IPSA’s Congress, “International Political Science: New Theoretical and Regional Perspectives”, Montreal, April 30–May 2, 2008.
- 2 On the origins of the discipline in France, see the seminal work by P. Favre (1989).
- 3 Today, another department has the same free UFR status as the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne: the department of political science of the University of Paris VIII (Saint-Denis).
- 4 On 15 January 2004, according to official statistics released by the National Ministry of Education and Higher Education (*Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche*, Paris, MEN, 2004), university legal programmes included 78,026 students, of whom 66.7% were female undergraduates (level ‘L1’) and 61,421 Master’s level students (level ‘M’), 65.5% of whom were female. Despite widely varying local situations, one can conclude that the vast majority of these students are introduced to political science in their undergraduate studies. It is at the degree level that specialization in political science becomes possible but only in a limited number of universities (notably in the Universities of Lyon II, Montpellier I, Paris I, Paris II, Paris VIII, Paris X, Rennes I and Versailles St. Quentin). In other university programmes (outside the IEPs), the teaching of political science is very limited and not statistically measurable.
- 5 For teacher-researchers, the total figure of 324 should be compared to that of all teacher-researchers (full professor and associate professor) from legal disciplines, which was, at the start of 2004, 7,287. The political science/law ratio is therefore one political science teacher for more than 22 teachers in legal disciplines (figures from official statistics of the Ministry of National Education and Superior Education mentioned in the previous footnote).
- 6 Including now one or more researchers.
- 7 O. Godechot and N. Mariot, ‘Devenir des candidats en science politique et “localisme”’: premiers résultats d’une enquête’, *Palaestra*, 23 December 2003, p. 69. Also Godechot and Mariot (2004).
- 8 For more details on the scientific policy of the FNSP, see the interesting 2004 report by Gérard Grunberg, scientific director of the FNSP, available on the site of *Sciences Po* at the following address: <http://www.sciences-po.fr> (heading: Recherche).
- 9 Therefore, our study does not consider the CNRS foreign units such as the *Maison Française d’Oxford* or the *Centre Marc Bloch* (Berlin) where researchers from the discipline are nonetheless regularly posted.
- 10 Which explains why the *Centre de Recherches Politiques Raymond Aron* of EHESS (UMR 8036) or the *CERSA* attached to the University of Paris II — Panthéon-Assas (*Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches de Science Administrative*, UMR 7106) are not included in our list. These two



research centres are connected to section 36 of the CNRS 'Sociology, Standards and Rules' and not to section 40.

- 11 To gauge the degree of FNSP's financial support for social science research, one simply needs to mention that between 1996 and 2003, research expenses of the IEP of Paris (which cover not only political science, but also history, sociology and economics) increased by 70%, going from below €7 million to approximately €12 million (excluding wage expenses). On this point, see the report by G. Grunberg mentioned above).
- 12 On the history of CERAT (*Centre de Recherches sur la Politique, l'Administration, la Ville et le Territoire*), which is one of the newer research units in the centre, see the recent book by A.-C. Douillet and J.-P. Zuanon, (eds.) (2004).
- 13 Given the orientation of this European investigation, repercussions from the Bologna process in terms of political science professionalism are only mentioned as a point of interest. Nonetheless, one of the important effects of the LMD reform is to strengthen professional training in French political science departments. The most common approaches have been political communication, employment linked to professional political activity both in France and at a European level, expertise in public action and the work of international organizations.
- 14 On this ascendancy of political sociology, see the convergent observations of Daniel Gaxie and Jean-Baptiste Legavre, in E. Darras and O. Philippe, (eds.) (2004).
- 15 This dominant place of the political sociology contributes to the considerable extension of the domain of scientific investigation of French political science, for instance to the field of justice and law (Vauchez, 2006).
- 16 On this historical shift in French political science, see particularly Y. Déloye and B. Voutat, (eds.) (2002) and P. Laborier and D. Trom, (eds.) (2003). The publication of this work, written under the auspices of CURAPP and GSPM, bears witness to the capacity of this sector of French political science to spread out from the single subfield of political sociology of which it was originally a branch. The importance of such disciplinary hybridization is demonstrated by the recent creation of a new research group: History and Political Science Research Group (the GRHISPO, *Groupe de recherche histoire / science politique*) within the AFSP (see Offerlé and Rouso, 2008).
- 17 See particularly B. Zimmermann, 'Une médiation', in P. Encrevé and R.-M. Lagrave (2003).
- 18 As demonstrated by the recent release of the *Dictionnaire des politiques publiques* published by the Press of Sciences Po in 2005, edited by L. Boussaguet, S. Jacquot and P. Ravinet.
- 19 On the topic of European issues in French university political science programmes, see *Politique européenne*, special edition: 'Enseigner l'Europe', 14, Fall 2004.
- 20 Still, this statement must be qualified, since many French specialists in European issues take pains to 'trivialize' these studies and avoid the establishment of an independent *ad hoc* field, specifically sociological or institutional approaches to Europe.
- 21 The implementation of the LMD reform has served to reinforce this disciplinary opening through encouraging the implementation of cross-disciplinary doctoral programmes. In particular, such was the choice of the IEP of Paris where the Doctoral Programme is transversal, covering political science, contemporary history and sociology.
- 22 On this point, see the recent work edited by M. Bachir (2000).
- 23 An important exception is the study of public policy, where this paradigm has been most common these last few years, as well as some areas analysing collective action employing the rational choice model.
- 24 For a complete inventory of these journals, please refer to the 1996 report by P. Favre, previously cited (§ 1. 7).
- 25 See S. Barluet (2004).
- 26 For a discussion of the bibliometrical approach employed, see the journal *Sciences de l'homme et de la société*, 69, May 2004, special issue: 'Les revues en sciences humaines et sociales', pp. 53–54.



- 27 Because of the particular opening of French political science, the body of political science journals considered also includes journals belonging to other disciplines (sociology, history, philosophy, anthropology, economics and geography). As concerning only political science journals in the strictest sense, the study by CNRS included *Critique Internationale*, the *Revue Française de Science Politique*, the *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*, *Politix* and *Pôle Sud*.
- 28 The CNRS study made special mention of the journal *Critique Internationale*. Its recent creation lessens its actual weight compared to more established journals. Here, refer to the study cited, pp. 79–80.
- 29 See S. Hix (2004). The methodology used, as well as the identification of the establishments analysed, was harshly criticized by Bull and Espindola (2005) and Haverland (2005). This classification confirms the modest showing of French university research in international rankings, regardless of the discipline (*Le Monde*, 23 August 2005). The dearth of financial resources (with perhaps the exception of those establishments supported by the FNSP), the dispersal of resources, internal divisions within the discipline, and the lack of visibility of French establishments are all factors that we feel serve to explain the challenging situation of French political science, particularly as a small discipline.
- 30 Among the French political science departments ranked, the *Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires* (INSEAD, the European Institute of Business Administration, ranked 172nd) appears without any justification as to its connection to political science, as does the University of Toulouse I (335th rank) with no specification as to what parts of this establishment are included. Furthermore, the list of journals examined to measure the scientific productivity of teachers or researchers of the establishments studied deserves particular attention. With the exception of several European journals (including the *Revue Française de Science Politique*), it mostly consists in North American journals or more accurately Anglo-Saxon journals, for obvious reasons of proximity, thus favouring Anglo-Saxon universities, often even North American ones.
- 31 It is likely that the identification of French establishments suffered from confusion due to the labels employed. Aside from the distinction between research centres and universities, the latter are often not very visible at the international level, because they frequently take the name of their city (with a number: Paris I, X, XII) or the name of a scientific personality (Pierre Mendès France, François Rabelais, etc.).
- 32 To complete this picture, it is worth noting the annual organization of one of the four training schools of the ECPR in Lille, France (Summer School of Social Science Quantitative Methods). The situation has much improved in just a few years. In its strategic report of 2002, the ECPR regretted that there were only eight French partner institutions. With an increase of 50% in two years, the current figure bears witness to the growing involvement of French political science in the network. However, given the critical financial situation of most of the other university centres in the discipline, a short-term improvement in the situation is not very likely.
- 33 Thus, during the April 2005 meeting of the ECPR in Grenada, two working sessions out of 30 scheduled were co-directed by French participants. The proportion was almost the same (two out of 28) the year after (April 2006). Nonetheless, these statistics do not take into account workshop leaders (within a session) or individual interventions in one of the workshops.
- 34 According to the list of collective members of the network available on the latter's web site, six French institutions were associated with it (<http://www.epsnet.org/membership/collective.asp>, consulted 30 June 2005), representing a 10% increase in collective members of the network as of this date. These are the FNSP, the Political Science Department of the University of Paris I, the IEPs of Bordeaux and Grenoble, CRAPS associated with the University of Lille II and GSPE-PRISME, associated with the University of Strasbourg III.
- 35 See Nonna Mayer (2008).



36 Nonetheless, the author notes that this maturity 'has not yet produced all the effects that one might expect' and hopes that it will become increasingly 'cumulative' and (envisions) it covering the field of inquiry more comprehensively, in Darras and Philippe (eds.) (2004), p. 19.

37 On the domination of qualitative approaches see Billordo (2005a, b).

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Appendix A

Scientific Tradition of Research Laboratories Belonging to Section 40 of the CNRS. (Classification by Rank in the CNRS Classification)

<i>Name of the research centre</i>	<i>CNRS Identification</i>	<i>Thematic approach of political science</i>
Laboratoire d'anthropologie des institutions et des organisations sociales (LAIOS, Paris)	UPR 9037	Political anthropology European politics
Centre de recherches sociologiques sur le droit et les institutions pénales (CESDIP, Paris)	UMR 2190	Public policy (Penal policy) Sociology of law Sociology of violence and crime
Centre d'étude et de recherche Travail, Organisation, Pouvoir (CERTOP, Toulouse)	UMR 5044	Public policy (Environmental policy)
Centre d'études politiques de l'Europe Latine (CEPEL, Montpellier)	UMR 5112	Public policy Comparative politics European politics Political sociology
Centre d'études d'Afrique Noire (CEAN, Bordeaux)	UMR 5115	Area studies Comparative politics International relations
Science politique, relations internationales, territoire (SPIRIT)	UMR 5116	Political institutions and territorial political behaviour Public policy European politics Comparative politics
Politiques publiques, actions politiques, territoire (PACTE, Grenoble)	UMR 5194	Public policy (Culture, security, management of risk...) Historical sociology Political sociology Methodology and quantitative surveys Area studies
Groupe de recherches et d'études sur la Méditerranée et le Moyen-Orient (Lyon)	UMR 5195	Area studies
TRIANGLE: action, discours, pensée politique et économique (Lyon)	UMR 5206	Public policy Political sociology Political philosophy
Centre de recherches sur l'action politique en Europe (CRAPE, Rennes)	UMR 6051	Public policy (Sanitary policy) European politics Political sociology
Centre universitaire de recherches administratives et politiques de Picardie (CURAPP, Amiens)	UMR 6054	Public policy European politics National politics Sociology of law Historical sociology Political sociology



<i>Name of the research centre</i>	<i>CNRS Identification</i>	<i>Thematic approach of political science</i>
Institut de recherches et d'études sur le monde arabe et musulman (IREMAM, Aix-en-Provence)	UMR 6568	Area studies
Politique, religion, institutions et sociétés: mutations européennes (PRISME, Strasbourg)	UMR 7072	Public policy European politics Political sociology
Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po (CEVIPOF, Paris)	UMR 7048	Public policy National politics European politics Political philosophy or theory Political sociology Political economy
Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI, Paris)	UMR 7050	Area studies Political economy Comparative politics International relations Political sociology
Centre de sociologie des organisations (CSO, Paris)	UMR 7116	Public policy Administrative science Political sociology
Institut de recherche interdisciplinaire en socio-économie — Centre de recherches et d'études politiques (IRIS-CREDEP, Dauphine)	UMR 7170	
Centre d'études et de recherches administratives, politiques et sociales (CERAPS, Lille)	UMR 8026	Public policy European politics Political sociology
Groupe de sociologie politique et morale (GSPM, Paris)	UMR 8031	Public policy Political sociology
Centre de recherches sur les pouvoirs locaux dans la Caraïbe (CRPLC, Martinique)	UMR 8053	Public policy International relations Political sociology
Centre de recherches politiques de la Sorbonne (CRPS, Paris)	UMR 8057	Public policy Political sociology National politics Political communication Political institutions Historical sociology
Laboratoire techniques, territoires et sociétés (LATTS, Marne-la-Vallée)	UMR 8134	Public policy
Centre d'Etudes sur la Chine moderne et contemporaine (Paris)	UMR 8561	Area studies
Institut des sciences sociales du politique (ISP)	UMR 8166	Area studies (Central and Eastern Europe) Political institutions Political sociology Public policy

UPR = Unité Propre de Recherche, CNRS unit; UMR = Unité Mixte de Recherche headed by CNRS and the University.

Appendix B

Major Curricula Patterns in the Teaching of Political Science (with Research End on Level ‘M2’) in France in 2005

	<i>Political theory political philosophy</i>	<i>Political institution</i>	<i>Political economy</i>	<i>Political history historical sociology</i>	<i>Political sociology</i>	<i>Public policy</i>	<i>Comparative politics</i>	<i>European politics</i>	<i>International relations</i>	<i>Area studies</i>	<i>Political communication</i>
University of Amiens	++			++	++	++					
IEP Aix-en Provence						++	++				
IEP Bordeaux		+			+	++	+		++	++	
University Bordeaux IV	++				+		+		++		
IEP Grenoble		+		++	++	++	+	++			
IEP Lille					++		++	+			+
University of Lille II					++	++		+			
University Lyon II (with IEP)	++	+		+	++	++	+			++	++
University Montpellier I				+	++	++	++	+		++	
IEP of Paris	++		+	+	++	++	+	++	++	++	
University Paris I	+	++		++	++	+	+		++	++	
University Paris II	++					++	++		++		
University Paris VIII	++				++					+	
University Paris IX			+	+	++	++					++
University Paris X				++	++		++				
University Versailles St-Quentin					++	+			+		++
IEP Rennes					++	++	+		++		
University Rennes I	+				++						
University Strasbourg III (with IEP)				+	++	++			++		
University Toulouse I (with IEP)					++	++		+	++		+

Source: Inquiry among our correspondents and consultation of available documentation on the Web.

++: Dominant specialization (attested by the existence of a mention or a strong expertise in this domain).

+: Minor specialization (attested by the existence of a course or an offer of training more reduced in this domain).