

STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

**THE STUDY
OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE
TODAY**

WJ M MACKENZIE

THE STUDY OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE TODAY

STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The purpose of the collection 'Studies in Comparative Politics' is to provide the students of politics with a series of up-to-date, short, and accessible surveys of the progress of the discipline, its changing theoretical approaches and its methodological reappraisals.

The format of the individual volumes is understandably similar. All authors examine the subject by way of a critical survey of the literature on the respective subject, thus providing the reader with an up-to-date *bibliographie raisonnée* (either separate or contained in the text). Each author then proposes his own views on the future orientation. The style tries to bridge the often lamented gap between the highly specialised language of modern political science and the general reader. It is hoped that the entire collection will be of help to the students who try to acquaint themselves with the scholarly perspectives of contemporary politics.

S. E. Finer
Ghița Ionescu

Already published

LESLIE J. MACFARLANE: Political Disobedience
ROGER WILLIAMS: Politics and Technology
WILLIAM WALLACE: Foreign Policy and the Political Process
W. J. M. MACKENZIE: The Study of Political Science Today

Forthcoming titles

C. H. DODD: Political Modernisation
BERNARD CRICK: Elementary Types of Government
L. A. WOLF-PHILIPS: Constitutions
GHIȚA IONESCU: Comparative Communist Politics
A. H. BROWN: Soviet Politics and Political Science
D. A. KAVANAGH: Political Culture
S. E. FINER: The Study of Interest Groups
G. K. ROBERTS: What is Comparative Politics?

STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

published in association with

GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION

a quarterly journal of comparative politics, published by
Government and Opposition Ltd, London School of Economics
and Political Science, Houghton Street, London, W.C.2.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Professor Leonard Schapiro, *University of London (Chairman)*

Professor David Apter, *Yale University, New Haven, Conn.*

Professor Bernard Crick, *University of Sheffield*

Professor Julius Gould, *University of Nottingham*

Professor James Joll, *University of London*

Dr Isabel de Madariaga, *University of Lancaster (Business Manager)*

EDITOR

Professor Ghița Ionescu, *University of Manchester*

ADVISORY BOARD

Professor S. E. Finer, *University of Manchester (Chairman)*

Professor Daniel Bell, *Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.*

Professor K. D. Bracher, *Bonn University*

Professor Robert A. Dahl, *Yale University, New Haven, Conn.*

F. W. Deakin, *St Antony's College, Oxford*

Professor Jacques Freymond, *Director of the Institut des Études Internationales, Geneva*

Professor Bertrand de Jouvenel, *Paris*

Professor Masao Maruyama, *University of Tokyo*

Professor John Meisel, *Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario*

Asoka Mehta, *former Minister of Planning, New Delhi*

Professor Ayo Ogunsheye, *University of Ibadan*

Professor Giovanni Sartori, *University of Florence*

Professor G. H. N. Seton-Watson, *University of London*

Professor Edward Shils, *University of Chicago and King's College, Cambridge*

Professor E. Tierno Galván, *late of the University of Salamanca*

The Study of Political Science Today

W. J. M. MACKENZIE

Professor of Politics, University of Glasgow

Macmillan Education

ISBN 978-0-333-13275-3 ISBN 978-1-349-01377-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-01377-7

© W. J. M. Mackenzie 1970

Reprint of the original edition 1970

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may
be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any
means, without permission.

First published by Mouton/UNESCO 1970

First published in Great Britain 1971

Published by

THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD

London and Basingstoke

Associated companies in New York Toronto

Dublin Melbourne Johannesburg and Madras

SBN 333 13275 0

The paperback edition of this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Contents

Preface	9
1 Introduction	11
2 Delimitation of Scope	13
A. Subject matter	14
B. Objectives	22
C. Fundamentals of method	27
3 The Ecology of Political Science	32
4 Research in Progress	39
A. The categorisation of research	39
B. International relations	42
C. Public administration	51
D. Power, force, influence, authority	58
E. Constitutional states	63
5 Concluding Remarks	85
Notes	91

Preface

I am grateful for the opportunity to explain briefly the context of the chapter here reprinted from Part One of the UNESCO volume on *Main Trends in Research in the Social and Human Sciences*.

This context was important to me in various respects.

First, there had been argument within UNESCO as to whether politics should rank as a social science or as a humanity, and I came rather late, as a not very distinguished new boy, to represent political science within a group of world-famous scholars; it included at the outset (among others) Roman Jakobson, Oscar Lange, Paul Lazarsfeld, Claude Lévi-Strauss, P. C. Mahalanobis, Jean Piaget, Stein Rokkan and E. L. Trist. Oscar Lange died in 1965 and was at first replaced by a group of his pupils; Lévi-Strauss and Mahalanobis withdrew under the pressure of other work. But the 'seminar' remained a formidable one; and this may perhaps excuse me if the chapter seems to some to be too apologetic in tone.

Secondly, the chapter was written within a particular intellectual context and may be hard to understand apart from that context. The book as published has some of the weaknesses that afflict collective enterprises; one of these weaknesses is that most of the authors exceeded their allocation of words. In consequence, the book has 866 pages (the French edition is even longer) and may prove unreadable as a whole. But practically all of it is relevant to the present state of political science, in particular the chapters by Lazarsfeld, Rokkan and E. L. Trist. The Introduction by Samy Friedman gives an overview very skilfully, but cannot do full justice to the interaction between various chapters as they were written.

Thirdly, the production of the book was a political act, carried through against a political background of which we were well aware. My book on *Politics and Social Science* was largely written

in the first half of 1966, and at that stage neo-Marxism rated no more than a bare mention (p. 83). But by 1968 the situation was quite changed. On the one hand, there had been important cracks in the barriers which divide social science, East and West. This was perhaps most marked in economics; but there were noticeable developments both in sociology and in political science – which suggested that (at a reasonably dry technical level) contact between colleagues in these disciplines might eventually become normal.¹

On the other hand, there were in 1968 the days of May in Paris, of August in Czechoslovakia. Neo-Marxist doctrines not accorded the *imprimatur* by any communist regime suddenly became fashionable; they had been there all the time, it seems, and the Anglo-Saxons (even those who knew of them) had discounted them as trivial politically, compared with the possibility of increased mutual exchange with recognised communist academics at the professional level. Clearly we were wrong in this, or at least too slow.

All that needs be added is that the effective date of the final draft was October 1968. It must not be taken that I still think the same on all points; but I have not modified my views about the intricate and changing relationship between academic political science and the real world² of politics.

W. J. M. M.

October 1970

I Introduction

ORIGINS

Professor Lazarsfeld has referred to sociology as being in a sense a residuary legatee, the surviving part of a very general study, out of which specialisations have successively been shaped.⁵

The same might be said of political science. In the West the first deliberate and reflective studies of political life were made in Greece at the end of the fifth century B.C., and in the succeeding century. The histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, some of the pamphlets attributed to Xenophon, above all the normative and empirical studies of Plato and Aristotle were among the direct ancestors of contemporary political science. Parallel examples are to be found in the intellectual history of China, India and Islam. It seems that at certain stages in the development of great societies questions of legitimacy, power and leadership assume supreme importance; and intense intellectual effort, using the best analytical tools available, is devoted to the study of man as brought to a focus in the study of politics.

It is in this sense that Aristotle correctly defined politics as 'the master science'⁴ in his day and in his philosophical system. What he meant by 'politics' was something wider than political science as now pursued; perhaps nothing less than the comprehensive study of man in his moral and social relations. But built into the assumptions of the Aristotelian study of man was the conviction that man is primarily a 'political animal',⁵ and that economic and social relations are conditioned by politics and are significant (once a subsistence level has been attained) primarily in so far as they affect politics. It is this assumption which distinguishes proto-politics (as one might call the work of the precursors of modern political science) from proto-sociology or proto-economics, for which man is primarily a social animal or primarily a producing and consuming animal. These views of man overlap and are interwoven in our own societies; and the growth of political science

has been concerned in part with defining and disentangling the political threads in what we now recognise to be a complex inter-dependent structure, continually in process of change.

OBJECTIVITY

Political science cannot develop except in certain limited intellectual and social conditions; there must be an established practice of debate based on analysis and observation, and it must be accepted that there exist political questions open to settlement by argument rather than by tradition or by authority. In this sense political science is conditioned by political society.

But in so far as it exists, it is committed to the maintenance of strict intellectual standards, and there is no special problem about the objectivity of political science, as distinct from that of other disciplines. All scientific disciplines develop within society, and their findings feed back into society. Political science differs not in respect of the conditions of objectivity but in respect of the nature of its material. From 'proto-politics' were carved out areas in which it is relatively easy to adopt strict criteria of definition and verification (such as demography, linguistics, 'praxiology', micro-economics, and some areas of psychology). This has left political science with problems recalcitrant to the rigorous use of scientific method, and political scientists are in general well aware of the precariousness of their own situation. Their data are hard to grasp and to interpret, their conclusions are not independent of the setting in which inquiry is conducted, and their findings will (if they are politically important) 'feed back' into politics with the force of recommendations. This recognition is not incompatible with the scrupulous observance of strict rules of method; indeed, it is essential to sound method that such risks be consciously perceived and provided for. It is not surprising that much recent debate about the limits of human rationality in politics should have been disguised as discussion of method; the question 'what proves what?' is a political question if it is put in a political context.