EDITORIAL

If this journal's mission is to analyse the discipline (globally, but with a notable focus on Europe), identifying not only its strengths but weaknesses, then this issue of *EPS* goes to the core of that mission through the two hard-hitting symposia it hosts, both of which may prove to be uncomfortable reading for European and other political scientists.

A self-critical profession that constantly poses itself new challenges is, we believe, a healthy profession, and the ECPR was delighted to host a roundtable at its General Conference in Budapest in September 2005, which provided the origins of one of these symposia. The symposium proceeded on a controversial assumption, posing the question, 'Why is European political science so unproductive and what should be done about it'. The assumption (that European political science *is* 'so unproductive') derives partly from an article published in this journal in 2004 by Simon Hix, whose worldwide departmental ranking and national performance evaluations 'have dramatically shown that European political science is not sufficiently competitive at the global level' (Schneider in the Introduction to the symposium). The principal focus of comparison is, inevitably, North America, especially as other surveys have also confirmed the greater scholarly productivity of American political scientists.

Of course, there are important caveats that must go with any such assumption, relating to the plausibility of publications in international political science journals as a measure of productivity, the 'linguistic factor' present in most of Europe (i.e. the possible bias against non-English journals) and the considerable variation in productivity within Europe itself. Yet, the authors, aware of these caveats, proceed on the basis that, if, as seems likely on most indicators, there is a case to answer, a search for the reasons and possible solutions is a valid exercise. We agree and are delighted to host the symposium in this journal.

The authors look at four areas. The first is the funding of research (and teaching), where Gerald Schneider identifies four structural problems in Europe in the allocation of money to individuals and institutions. The second concerns the organisation of the profession of political science in Europe, which Bernard Steunenberg finds to be structurally regulated in a way that makes it difficult for a genuine competitive European political science 'market' to develop, characterised by high levels of staff mobility. The third area concerns career incentives and development, where Katharina Holzinger explores the diversity inside European systems, arguing that 'Anglo-Saxon, as opposed to ''continental'', approaches to doctoral training, post-doctoral practices, recruitment procedures and research assessment are more conducive to a profession that can compete at the global level'. The final area, analysed by Nils Petter Gleditsch, concerns the publication behaviour of European political scientists, which, he argues, is insufficiently ambitious when it comes to choosing journals in which to publish due to a reluctance to risk rejections, traits that (using Norway as an example) he puts down to a system which fails to provide sufficient incentives for publication.

The symposium contains a number of specific recommendations, some of which are addressed to the ECPR – as the institution that represents European political science globally – and which the organisation's Executive Committee will be

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minded to consider. Perhaps the most interesting point about this symposium is that, while its chief object of comparison is the United States, the direct comparison is limited to references to the apparent differences in *performance* of Europe and North America and not to the putative reasons for these differences. In other words, while the factors that apparently limit productivity in Europe are identified and explored, the contrasts (assuming they exist) in the American system are not touched upon, so we remain unaware of how these factors work in (one assumes) different and more productive ways in the American case. In short, to complete this evaluation requires a closer analysis of the American case, and we hope in a future issue of this journal to do just that.

In any case, if Americans reading this issue are busy taking comfort from this symposium, they should not overlook turning to the other, in which the discipline at the global level is taken to task for not being scientific enough. This is not because of faulty methods but rather, it is claimed, due to the fact that political science overlooks the predictive half of the scientific method, in its addiction to 'canned statistical programmes'. In Taagepera's words, 'valuable research stops in its tracks, just short of reaching fruition…'. This, for the author, also explains political science's limited influence outside of the Academy. As long as political science refuses to engage with the more imaginative, predictive aspect of the scientific method, he suggests, so it will continue to fail to make a contribution to politics and society, and political scientists will continue to be circumscribed in their influence.

What is impressive about the articles making up this symposium is that, unusually in political science collections, they explicitly look at the sciences and their methods, as well as the role that economics has played in the social sciences in taking the scientific method forward, and, in doing so, the authors draw out common deficiencies in political science and identify what needs to be done to make political science more scientific. For the authors, this is not a question of starting again from scratch, but rather completing a methodological leap that has long been overlooked or shunned. This is not to suggest that it is straightforward, easy or will go unchallenged. Indeed, in the final article of the symposium, Bernard Grofman reveals his scepticism about how far political science can, in fact, move in a genuinely scientific direction. More importantly, he outlines how the discipline has, for a hundred years, been a battleground for different interpretations, characterised by 'a repeated pattern in which prominent scholars push for a more scientific approach to political science…only to see a reaction away from abstraction and toward more relevance and/or away from quantification toward more humanistic approaches, followed by a swing of the pendulum back toward science'. In this respect, this symposium can be seen as advancing a particular cause, which is likely to be challenged from another direction.

Seen together, these two symposia, almost paradoxically, complement, contrast and talk past one another all at the same time. Certainly, they are ambitious, challenging and provocative, and we welcome responses and comments from others in order to take these important debates forward.

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