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# Editor's introduction

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By now, the general profile of this annual review of political science in Europe is well established. Its primary objective is to contribute towards fulfilling the central goal that has animated the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) since its foundation – to assist in creating a genuine European community of scholars. One of the major obstacles in the path of this goal has been the linguistic fragmentation of the continent, a social and political reality that has promoted the development of separate national political science traditions. As those who study processes of political integration are aware, two approaches to community building stand out from a larger number of possible strategies. One, the assimilationist approach, has as its academic counterpart the creation of a unified community on the basis of a single language. The second, the pluralist approach, has its counterpart in efforts to recognise the existence of a number of separate national traditions while linking these through the medium of a language or languages of wider communication.

One of the major contributions of the ECPR has been to demonstrate the capacity of the second of these approaches when it comes to promoting scholarly exchange and building up a sense of identity among those tackling similar problems. The launch of the *European Journal of Political Research* in 1973 itself represented an effort to advance this objective, while the initiation of its annual review issue in 1992 carried this effort a step further. The annual review has published a range of articles describing the academic output of Europe's national political science communities in a number of domains. Its concern has been to bring to a wider public the corpus of research that has evolved within particular national academic communities, especially – but not exclusively – those which publish mainly in languages other than English.

This concern is continued in the present issue. A particularly difficult challenge has been facing European political science since the collapse of the formerly communist governed states in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s. In these countries, political science had traditionally been viewed as at best unnecessary and at worst potentially subversive of the

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existing system. Although it did maintain a formal existence in most cases, its content, with its distinctive ideological roots in an officially endorsed version of Marxism-Leninism, bore little resemblance to its West European counterpart.

In the present issue we consider developments in two of these societies. Ivan Grdešić reviews the development of political science in Croatia before and after the enormous political changes of recent years, and Adolf Bibič provides a similar overview in the case of Slovenia. These two societies had to contend not only with the collapse of the existing hegemonic power of the communist party, but also with the disintegration of the state itself. The impact of these changes on the content of political science – in terms of the formal structure of its organisation, the university syllabus and the research agenda – emerges clearly from these contributions. But the experience of Croatia and Slovenia illustrate yet another point: the voluminous literature that has appeared in these countries in the early 1990s cannot have sprung from nowhere. In particular, the reader will observe in the enormous bibliographical output reported and documented by Bibič in the case of Slovenia a phenomenon that obviously had to have had pre-1989 roots. The great bulk of the literature may well date from the 1990s, but the small community that produced it clearly did not develop a professional expertise in political science only in late 1989.

But central and eastern Europe was not the only part of the continent to experience the pangs of post-authoritarian transition. Albert Padró-Solanet's review of Spanish writing on political parties and the party system since the democratic transition in Spain draws our attention to another zone of Europe which faced problems which, while distinctive, bore some resemblance to those of post-communist central and eastern Europe. There are, of course, major structural dissimilarities between the two types of transition, but a particularly important contrast between the two is the matter of timing. Put simply, the Spanish transition took place 20 years ago, and political science in Spain has had an opportunity not only to reorganise itself but also to analyse and reflect on the political dimensions associated with the transition and with the post-transition period. This is to be seen clearly in the quality of the literature reviewed by Padró-Solanet; it is not merely extensive and sophisticated, but also well integrated into the more general academic perspectives of comparative politics in western Europe.

The quality of European periodical literature is assessed from another perspective by Clara Riba. Fitting into a tradition already well developed in the USA, she examines the extent to which European political science journals publish articles making use of mathematical techniques in political research. She distinguishes between the northern and southern parts of the continent, and uses North and South America as reference points. Her conclusion is,

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from a European point of view, a rather optimistic one. While the widespread use of mathematics in political science journals is a rather recent phenomenon, it is already well developed, especially in northern Europe, where the level of usage of mathematics is similar to that in the USA, which tends to constitute the norm or model for political science elsewhere.

Finally, we continue the practice initiated last year of providing an overview of the contents of European political science journals during 1995. In addition to looking in detail at the contents of 13 selected journals, however, we have also addressed two other issues in this section of the annual review. First, we have tried simply to list the main journals in western Europe that publish academic political science material. Even after the application of rather rigorous criteria, however, we came up with a list of more than 300 titles. Second, we have also looked at a new phenomenon, the significance of the Internet for European political science periodical publishing. This follows on from an article by Nadia Spang Bovey on the value of computer networks to political scientists that we published in last year's annual review; but it also takes us back to a point made in the first paragraph above. This is the model of the assimilationist path to the creation of a community of political scientists. Effective though the Internet is as a means of communication – or, perhaps, because of this very effectiveness – there is a risk that this will reinforce the dominance of a single linguistic group, and of the communities associated with that group. In the coming years, Europe's national political science communities will have to decide on the extent to which the overwhelming dominance of English on the Internet should be warmly embraced (implying the translation of material into English at a local level), or be accepted as a simple reality (implying its use as a language of wider communication to link geographically dispersed communities on a multilingual continent). In the challenge that lies in these technological developments, the annual review would see itself as a mechanism for maintaining the feasibility of the pluralist approach.

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