Title
Political Science since World War Two: Americanization and Its Limits

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Many histories can be told of political science. Some start in classical Athens. But if we are specifically interested in political science as one of a set of institutionally differentiated disciplines that together make up contemporary academic social science, it was born in America early in the twentieth century. The prominence of America then and now may seem to point to a narrative of Americanization. However, we will argue that this narrative needs tempering with recognition of the influence of Europe on America and the way in which different traditions modify ideas adopted from elsewhere. The history of political science is one of contingent transnational exchanges in which ideas are appropriated, modified, and transformed.

The direction and extent of the transnational exchanges varies across different aspects of political science. While the Americanization narrative may appear plausible in the case of the institutions of political science as an autonomous discipline, it becomes hard to sustain once our focus shifts to intellectual history. When we look at the British case, for example, we will argue that: new empirical topics arose in political science from exchanges in which British figures played as great an initiating role as Americans; new quantitative techniques were more commonly developed in America and then adopted in Britain, but they were modified in the process of adoption; and the postwar history of American political science has been dominated by new theories – from the positivist theories of behavioralism to rational choice theory – that had little impact on British political science.

The Institutions of Political Science

American scholars pioneered the institutions of political science an autonomous discipline. In 1903 they founded the world’s first national political science association, the American Political Science Association (APSA), and in 1906 the young association began a journal, the American Political Science Review (APSR). The association had rapid and noteworthy success in attracting members. An initial growth spurt took it from a membership of 204 in 1904 to 1462 just over a decade later in 1915, and membership subsequently doubled during the interwar decades to cross the 3000 mark by the early 1940s (Somit and Tanenhaus 1967: 55, 91). In their home universities and colleges, members of the APSA took the lead in forging departments devoted to political science understood as a field apart from history, philosophy, law, sociology, and economics.

Whether we retrospectively celebrate or bemoan these developments, we should not think that they were obvious or inevitable. The prior generation of scholars who, during the 1870s and 1880s, had given shape to America’s first research universities at Johns Hopkins and Columbia had not approached the study of politics as a freestanding field (Adcock 2003). Moreover, with the sole exception of Canada, where a national political science association was founded in 1913, scholars in other countries were in no rush to imitate the path of institutional differentiation pioneered in America. For almost half a century, the existence of an autonomous discipline of political science was a North American anomaly.

The disciplinary path blazed by American scholars exemplified their growing independence from the academic metropoles of Germany, France, and Britain. But trans-Atlantic exchange did not abruptly end. While it ebbed somewhat, the flow of intellectual trade remained principally westward until the Second World War. As we will see, for example, early American forms of proto-behavioralism and pluralism drew inspiration from the British scholars Graham Wallas and Harold Laski. The American discipline also received Europeans directly into its ranks, as earlier transplants—like Carl Friedrich, a student of Alfred Weber, who joined the Harvard faculty as its department was rising to disciplinary preeminence in the 1920s—were followed by émigrés from the Nazi regime—such as Leo Strauss, Hans Morgenthau, and Karl Deutsch. Much of mid-century American political science cannot be understood without attending to trans-Atlantic migrations of ideas and individuals. The general lesson here is that the institutional trajectory of political science need not correspond to the intellectual trajectory of the traditions and debates in which political scientists participate.

America’s institutionally differentiated political science went from an anomaly to an international model in the years around 1950. In the aftermath of World War Two, America enjoyed heightened prestige because of its military ascendance and its role in creating new international organizations and in aiding European reconstruction. Against this backdrop, the recently founded UNESCO set out in the late 1940s to promote political science. Its initiative spurred the founding of the International Political Science Association in 1949, and national level associations in France in 1949, Britain in 1950, and West Germany in 1951. Just as APSA had founded a journal some half a century before, so did each new national association: the Association Française de Science Politique began La Revue Française de Science Politique in 1951, the British Political Studies Association began Political Studies in 1953, and the Deutsche Vereinigung Politische Wissenschaft began Politische Vierteljahresschrift in 1960.

Of course, the creation of national associations and journals did not give immediate birth to full-fledged disciplines. It took decades for the institutions and ethos of an autonomous political science to diffuse across varied levels and aspects of the academy in France, Britain, and Germany. But this had also been true in America. Thus, the institutional development of political science in postwar Europe may plausibly be narrated as a process of “Americanization.”

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It was influenced by the American model, and its stages and tempo corresponded to the earlier American experience: the founding of a national association and journal pointed toward a disciplinary autonomy that took several decades to be realized in the form of differentiated institutions and instruction across a range of academic settings.

The emergence of political science disciplines in Europe frames, but cannot answer, a common question and anxiety: did Americanization characterize not only institutional but also intellectual trajectories in political science? Rather than hazard continent-wide claims, we will address this question in the more limited setting of Britain. A shared language and other ties might suggest that Britain was especially permeable to American intellectual influences. Yet even here the Americanization narrative obscures more than it illuminates. British scholarship did adopt ideas from America, especially certain empirical topics and techniques. But this element of Americanization should not obscure two equally, or indeed more, significant intellectual dynamics. First, exchanges after 1950 built on trends that began earlier, and initially took shape as much, if not more, from British influence on American scholars as vice versa. Second, there were and are trans-Atlantic divergences, with ideas being modified by local traditions rather than simply adopted wholesale, and with some ideas from one country barely registering in the other. All aggregate narratives simplify, but the Americanization narrative becomes outright misleading if pushed too far beyond the institutional into the intellectual history of postwar political science.

**New Empirical Topics**

The years around 1950 mark not one but two turning points in the history of political science. At the same time as new political science associations were being founded in Europe, the American discipline was experiencing a wave of self-criticism. The curtains were rising on what has come to be known as the “behavioral revolution.” When explicating behavioralism in American political science we should not take its own revolutionary self-characterization for granted. To clarify how this multi-faceted movement of the 1950s and 1960s stood in relation to previous intellectual trends, we need a sense of what those trends were. A sense of these trends is especially significant for a comparative study of political science in Britain and America, since the principal trends in both countries in the first half of the century were often common ones in which British figures played a pioneering role.

Political science arose as an autonomous discipline as part of a broad epistemic shift in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This shift was one from developmental historicism to modernist empiricism as the dominant mode of knowing human life. The developmental historicism that dominated the nineteenth century located actions, norms, institutions, and even states in broad temporal narratives governed by largely fixed principles such as those of nation, liberty, and reason. Examples of this developmental historicism include not only Hegelian

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idealism but also Comtean positivism, Whig historiography, and early evolutionary theories. All such developmental historicism was challenged initially by the rise of new forms of logic and only slightly later by the crisis of faith in reason and progress associated with World War One. These challenges facilitated the rise of modernist empiricism. Modernist empiricists typically turned away from historical forms of explanation toward formal classifications, correlations, and appeals to synchronic systems and structures and the formal location and function of units in them. One notable manifestation of modernist empiricism in the study of politics was the crafting of new analytic frameworks for cross-national comparison by Herman Finer, who left the LSE for the University of Chicago in the 1930s, and Harvard’s Carl Friedrich. Finer and Friedrich abstracted from nation-by-nation presentations to propose frameworks of general categories as guides to comparative analyses of institutions and politics across modern nations.

The rise of modernist empiricist modes of explanation occurred alongside a shift in topics of interest to political scientists. Although these trends tended over time to mutually reinforce one another, each had had its own roots, and participation in one did not necessitate participation in the other. By the turn of the twentieth century developmental historicists as well as modernist empiricists, had begun to look beyond topics associated with institutional history, constitutional law, and the philosophical theory of the state. They believed that these older agendas reflected a pre-democratic Europe and were insufficient to the mass-based politics that had developed with the extension of the suffrage. Students of politics championed a new range of topics reflecting the belief that the distinctive politics of modern democratic societies could be understood only if the dynamics of mass-based political parties and public opinion were studied alongside formal government structures and decisions. They hence began to investigate how parties and public opinion actually worked. The most important work inaugurating this investigation was the British scholar-politician James Bryce’s *The American Commonwealth*, which curtailed historical and legal pursuits to devote hundreds of pages to parties and public opinion. Many American scholars were influenced by Bryce’s seminal book, including most notably Harvard’s A. Lawrence Lowell, who later repaid the trans-Atlantic debt with *The Government of England*.

In addition to writing books on each other’s countries, Bryce and Lowell also did pioneering comparative work on contemporary politics in continental Europe and the British-settler colonies.

The interwar decades witnessed further developments in the study of politics. Bryce and Lowell had introduced new empirical topics associated with mass-suffrage societies, but they continued to conceive of democracy in terms of the sovereignty of a collective will. Such concepts of democracy and the state began to lose ground to pluralist alternatives only after World War One. Once again the new intellectual departure involved trans-Atlantic exchanges, for while American discussions of pluralism later developed a distinctive hue, their rise owed much to British

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scholars, especially Harold Laski, who spent several years lecturing at Harvard and then Yale. Laski brought the term “pluralism” and British debates about sovereignty into the American academy. Equally, his time in America made it central to his democratic theory.¹²

A final development in political science prior to the Second World War was initially specific to America. Alongside its normative theoretical expressions, pluralism here combined with the rising tide of interest in empirical topics associated with mass democratic societies to inspire work on pressure groups. A string of future APSA presidents—Peter Odegard, Pendleton Herring, and E. E. Schattschneider—built their careers on such studies.¹³ By the end of the interwar period empirical research on public opinion, parties, and pressure groups was coming to be known collectively as the study of “political behavior.” Such research was not the province of any one department. Odegard and Schattschneider were introduced to it as doctoral students at Columbia, and Herring at Hopkins, while at Harvard the tradition established earlier by Lowell was extended by Arthur Holcombe (1924, 1933), and at Chicago by Charles Merriam (1922) and his students Harold Gosnell (Merriam and Gosnell 1929) and V.O. Key Jr (1942). The state of the discipline volume put together by the APSA in the 1940s went so far as to hold that “political behavior has largely replaced legal structures as the cardinal point of emphasis among political scientists.”¹⁴ If this claim was an overstatement, it still suggests that the study of political behavior was prominent in American political science before the onset of the “behavioral revolution” of the 1950s and 1960s.

It is telling that the one intellectual trend missing from interwar Britain involved empirical work. Research into British pressure groups would eventually take flight, but only in the 1950s, some thirty years after the topic was taken up in American political science. Moreover, its inaugurators at that time would include the recent Harvard PhDs Samuel Beer and Harold Eckstein alongside W. J. M. Mackenzie (one of the British scholars most attentive to American political science) and S. E. Finer (Herman Finer’s younger brother).¹⁵ Empirical work on British political parties was also somewhat lacking in the interwar decades: the classic study of the subject, Robert McKenzie’s British Political Parties, dates only from 1955.¹⁶ Thus while the British Bryce stands at the very fountainhead of inquiry into new empirical topics, such inquiry had been subsequently taken up and extended far more fully in America than Britain. This contrast might be seen in light of the much smaller number, and different institutional home, of British scholars. When the British Political Studies Association was founded in 1950 it had only around a 100 members. The APSA, by contrast, had already surpassed 4000 members during the 1940s. As

well as being fewer in number, British scholars of politics remained intellectual generalists trained and housed in fields such as history, law, and classics.\textsuperscript{17} The prerequisites and incentives for an extensive and expanding body of empirical scholarship on contemporary political behavior scarcely existed in Britain during the first half of the century.

The growth of the empirical work that distinguishes interwar American political science provides a starting point for understanding the later behavioral revolution. This growth occurred at some remove from contemporary theoretical developments. The empirical study of pressure groups largely developed, for example, less as an illumination of the new pluralist theory of democracy, than as a critical exposition of the obstacles to realizing democracy conceived in older terms as the expression of a collective will.\textsuperscript{18} By 1940, the gap between empirical work and theory was becoming a locus of anxiety within the American discipline. Benjamin Lippincott in particular charged his fellow political scientists with atheoretical empiricism.\textsuperscript{19} When Lippincourt reiterated this complaint in UNESCO’s 1950 worldwide review of political science, he was far from being a lonely voice: the same worry was voiced by most American contributors.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, when David Easton’s 1953 behavioralist manifesto \textit{The Political System} diagnosed American political science with “hyperfactualism”, it offered an evocative reformulation of a criticism that had been gaining adherents for some time.\textsuperscript{21}

Growing dissatisfaction and overlapping perceptions of what ailed the American discipline did not dictate a single prescription for the road ahead. While the 1940s saw increasing calls for “the creative thinker, who must give meaning to the painstaking research that, while indispensable, is still not enough,”\textsuperscript{22} by the early 1950s it was evident that there were profound disagreements about the kind of theoretical pursuit needed, and what other intellectual departures it ought to be combined with. The behavioral movement set out to make political science more rigorously “scientific.” Its vision stood in contrast not only to that of political scientists who were happy with things as they were but also to that of émigrés such as Hans Morgenthau and Leo Strauss who offered alternative prescriptions for the discipline. Ironically Morgenthau and Strauss were housed in the Chicago political science department, where many behavioralists had earned their doctorates in the interwar decades, but which had changed character dramatically in the 1940s.

To specify what was revolutionary about the behavioral movement, we must remember that new empirical topics had long been on the rise. Many behavioralists had substantive interests in public opinion, pressure groups, and other phenomena outside formal government structures, but these interests simply extended an intellectual trend evident in all leading departments and dating from the turn of the century. The movement’s consolidation was crystallized by the efforts (and money) of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Committee on Political Behavior (CPB) established in late 1949 under the chairmanship of the Chicago graduate V.O. Key Jr. The main

\textsuperscript{17} D. Kavanagh, “The Emergence of an Embryonic Discipline: British Politics without Political Scientists,” in Adcock, Bevir, Stumson, eds., \textit{Modern Political Science}, chap. 5.
\textsuperscript{18} The older theory of democracy still infused the proposal for reforming the American political system drawn up under APSA auspices in the 1940s. See “Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System,” \textit{American Political Science Review} 44, suppl. (1950).
\textsuperscript{22} Griffith, \textit{Research in Political Science}, 237.
objective of this committee, despite its name, was not to promote the study of political behavior topics per se. If we look at the earliest articles growing out of the CPB’s efforts their common theme was instead the call to make political science “systematic.” Their overlapping aspirations had more to do with how to study politics than what topics to study.

The transformative aspirations of behavioralism lay in the departures it prescribed to make political science systematic. The behavioralists believed that systematic science depended on the cumulative interplay between theoretical innovation and empirical research, and they set out to remake both sides of this interplay. The CPB thus had two declared goals: the “development of theory” and “improvement in methods.” Behavioralism is generally remembered for the second goal, and in the next section we review its success in bringing quantitative and statistical methods into political science. But behavioralism was about more than changing techniques, and in the subsequent section we consider its theoretical agenda. The failure of the specific theories advanced by behavioralists in the 1950s and 1960s to win lasting support should not obscure the revolutionary impact of behavioralism on conceptions of the character and role of theory in American political science. The impact of behavioralism’s theoretical agenda still lingers on in many of the intellectual cleavages that today characterise political science in America. Equally, the relative weakness of behavioral theory in Britain helps to explain many of the ways in which British political science differs from its American counterpart.

Quantitative Techniques

American scholars of politics have, for the most part, always viewed their discipline as a science. But up into the 1940s they did so with little anxiety or, for that matter, self-reflection. A low-key empiricist notion of science as fact gathering and objective reporting prevailed, and it gave little reason to prefer quantitative over qualitative techniques. The behavioralists challenged the status quo dramatically. Their vision of a systematic political science was based on a more demanding conception of science. They exhorted political scientists critically to examine and improve their methods, where improvement meant, whenever possible, taking up techniques that produced quantitative data and analyzed it statistically. Quantification is not a necessary companion of heightened methodological self-consciousness, but behavioralists bound them tightly together.

The association of quantitative method with scientific advance was not born with behavioralism. We find it already in Graham Wallas’s 1908 Human Nature in Politics. Wallas was largely ignored or rejected in Britain. But his methodological call was taken up in America by Charles Merriam, who inspired students and colleagues at the interwar University of Chicago to explore

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25 G. Wallas, Human Nature in Politics (London: Constable, 1908), chap V.
new methods.\textsuperscript{26} Under Merriam’s leadership the interwar Chicago department surpassed the previously dominant Columbia department in both the number of doctoral students produced and prestige in the discipline. Merriam trained, and then hired in-house, the methodologically and substantively innovative Harold Gosnell and Harold Lasswell, who in turn trained such leading figures of the future behavioral movement as V.O. Key Jr. and Gabriel Almond.

But the “Chicago School” forged by Merriam was the exception not the norm in the interwar discipline. While it surpassed Columbia, Chicago was itself surpassed by Harvard as the most prolific and prestigious producer of political science doctorates (Somit and Tanenhaus 1967: 102-08). Harvard won this position by the mid-1920s, and has held it ever since. The skepticism of Harvard’s Friedrich (1929) about incipient quantitative analyses was much more expressive of prevailing norms in the interwar discipline than the work done by the Chicago School.\textsuperscript{27} When we recall that the American discipline was, by the mid-1940s, already widely committed to new empirical topics, we should bear in mind that it was, at the same time, also common to look back on Merriam’s advocacy of quantification as, at best, a distraction which had had mercifully little impact.\textsuperscript{28}

The methodological state of play was notably different elsewhere in the interwar social sciences. Psychology and sociology housed vibrant neo-positivist traditions that pioneered the use of a rich array of quantitative methods. When the behavioralists introduced new techniques to political science in the 1950s and 1960s, they relied heavily on transfers from these other disciplines. The long-term future of quantitative techniques in American political science depended on training a new generation to understand and apply them. But in the meantime, there was an immediate need for exemplary studies to show that such techniques could produce engaging results in political research. Many of these exemplary studies were either produced by political scientists trained at the interwar “Chicago School”, as were V.O. Key Jr. and Gabriel Almond, or by scholars trained and sometimes housed in psychology or sociology, as respectively were Philip Converse and S. M. Lipset.

The diffusion of survey research into political science has long been taken as the paradigmatic example of behavioralism’s success. As early as 1961, Robert Dahl’s influential overview of the “behavioral approach” anointed the development of survey research—from The People’s Choice, which was a study of the 1940 election led by Columbia sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld, to The American Voter, which was produced by psychologically-oriented scholars at the University of Michigan’s Survey Research Center (SRC)—as the “oldest and best example of the modern scientific outlook at work.”\textsuperscript{29} Political scientists were, however, not just passive recipients of quantitative techniques from the other social sciences. Under V.O. Key Jr.’s leadership the CPB actively aided the development of surveys on political topics. After some of the scholars at

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{27} C. J. Friedrich, “Review of Quantitative Methods in Politics,” American Political Science Review 23 (1929), 1022-27.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Griffith, Research in Political Science, 213.
\end{itemize}
Michigan’s recently founded SRC—which was refining techniques of sampling, interviewing, and data analysis for survey-research more broadly—conducted a small nationwide survey during the 1948 election, the CPB stepped in to nurse the incipient agenda by securing money from the Carnegie Corporation for a full-scale survey during the 1952 election, and using it to fund the Michigan center carrying out the survey. When Carnegie (along with the Rockefeller Foundation) supported another national survey in 1956, the funding went directly to the SRC. The data from the 1956 survey, together with the center surveys since 1948, provided the basis for *The American Voter*.

*The American Voter* marks a milestone in the diffusion of survey research into the mainstream of American political science. The book acquired the status of a disciplinary classic. Two of its four authors—Warren Miller and Philip Converse—went on to become APSA presidents. The work of the Michigan center in forging national sample survey techniques also set the stage for extending such research beyond America. A pioneer here was Gabriel Almond, the chair of the SSRC Committee on Comparative Politics (CCP), which was founded in 1954. While teaching at Yale in the late 1940s Almond had been one of the first political scientists to exploit the potential of national surveys when he used some of the Michigan center’s earliest data in *The American People and Foreign Policy*. In the late 1950s, while at Princeton, Almond began working with Sidney Verba to organize sample surveys of citizen attitudes and socialization in five different nations, and these surveys then provided the basis for their 1963 *The Civic Culture*.

*The American Voter* and *The Civic Culture* illustrate the seismic shift in American political science associated with the rise of quantitative techniques. The depth of this shift appears in the discipline’s flagship journal. Between 1950 and 1970 the percentage of articles in *APSR* that were based on surveys went from 0% to almost 50%. After this dramatic rise, survey research stabilized, making up on average about a third of the journal throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and on until today. The evolving content of the *APSR* also reminds us, however, that the behavioral revolution in techniques encompassed more than surveys. If we group all species of quantitative analysis together, we find a periodization of surge and stabilization in the *APSR* identical to that for specifically survey-based work. Since the 1970s about two-thirds of articles published in the journal have been quantitative studies.

What made up the rest of the quantitative turn in postwar American political science? At least three major types of social science work produce and/or analyze quantitative data: surveys, experiments, and secondary analyses of aggregate data culled from census, election, and other records created by governments and other organizations. Of these three, experiments were the last to gain traction in political science. While isolated earlier examples can be found, only in the 1980s did mainstream disciplinary skepticism about the viability of experiments begin to weaken in the face of exemplary studies. A tradition of experimental research has, since that time, been developing in American political science, but it remains the least prominent type of quantitative work.

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It was analyses of aggregate data that accompanied survey-based work as the second key strand of the behavioral revolution in techniques during the postwar decades. We earlier saw how V.O. Key Jr. aided the Michigan SRC in his role as CPB chairman, but what Key’s own scholarship exemplified was the potential of aggregate analysis. Indeed, Key’s 1949 *Southern Politics* and his 1950s articles on critical elections and secular realignment must stand beside survey works in any pantheon of classics that opened the study of American politics to quantitative techniques. Aggregate analysis also played a major role in the behavioral revolution in other sub-fields of the discipline. In comparative politics, the sociologist, and later APSA president, Seymour Martin Lipset relied on aggregate statistics when he conducted (with CCP funding) his influential cross-national study of the “social requisites of democracy.” Another pioneer was émigré political scientist Karl Deutsch, whose classic *APSR* article “Social Mobilization and Political Science,” explored how to combine indicators of various aspects of modernization into a general index for use in cross-national comparisons. Deutsch went on to win National Science Foundation support for the Yale Political Data Program, which gathered political, economic, and social information from diverse sources, then organized and coded this information to score as many countries as possible on a large number of variables. Other similarly ambitious projects included Polity and the Correlates of War. All three projects were launched in the early 1960s as attempts to make aggregate data with broad cross-national, temporal, and topical range easily available to scholars in a standard format. The building of such datasets has continued ever since. Today a wide variety of aggregate-level datasets, together with the individual-level data sets created by survey research, and advances in statistical tools and computer technology, provide political scientists with ever increasing opportunities to conduct quantitative analyses with an ease, speed, and complexity that would have astounded their predecessors.

In following the methodological transformation of postwar American political science, it is easy to get carried away. We should now step back to emphasize three points. First, the surge of quantitative analyses gave way to stabilization in the 1970s. Subsequent decades have seen a ratcheting up in the technical complexity of quantitative work, but the proportion of the American discipline doing such work has not increased. Indeed, if there were any subsequent shift (discernible in the *APSR* at least) it was a slight decline in the 1980s paralleled by a surge in the kind of formal models we will consider later when we turn to rational choice. Second, the tide of quantitative work stabilized at different levels in different sub-fields. If we look at the major American journals, we find that since the 1970s quantitative research has averaged about 85% of articles on American politics, 60% on comparative politics, and 40% on international relations. Thus, while the behavioral revolution pushed qualitative work to the periphery in

37 For a historically-informed overview of the output of the first decade or so of these projects, see P. Flora, “A New Stage of Political Arithmetic,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 18 (1974), 143-65.
38 Sigelman, “Coevolution,” 469-70.
studies of American politics, qualitative work retains a major role elsewhere in the discipline. Finally, behavioralism’s general preference for quantification left room for sometimes tense debates about the relative merits of aggregate (macro) and survey-based (micro) methods. The character and legacy of the behavioral revolution in techniques does not lie solely in either aggregate studies or surveys, but rather in the competition and cooperation between the two. Their combination remains the driving force of quantitative American political science.

Quantitative techniques have not all fared equally well in Britain. At one extreme, experiments have never gotten much support outside policy analysis, and even there had only a minor and transient presence. At the other, survey research became an integral part of British political science. Of course, surveys in Britain long predated American behavioralism. At the end of the nineteenth century, Charles Booth, Henry Mayhew, and Seebohm Rowntree conducted surveys of urban poverty. Moreover, one of Booth’s assistants was Beatrice Webb, the leading Fabian socialist, and in the early twentieth century socialist and radical groups, including the New Fabian Research Bureau, conducted surveys into a vast array of social issues, inaugurating a style of activist research that was itself a major influence on the beginning of survey work among American progressives.

Within the institutional space of British political science, however, survey research has largely meant election studies. The Nuffield election studies were started in 1945 by R. B. MacCallum and Alison Readman, and continue to this day, with a Nuffield study appearing on each general election. The Nuffield studies generally include a brief history of the previous parliament, accounts of the campaigns, analysis of the backgrounds of candidates, and reproductions of opinion polls, together with a statistical appendix. The evolution of election studies in Britain shows a clear debt to American behavioralism. Before long David Butler came to dominate the Nuffield studies, and his approach owed much to his collaboration with Donald Stokes – an American scholar who worked at the University of Michigan from 1958 to 1974 and was for a long time also an associate member of Nuffield College, Oxford. In this way, British electoral studies developed as a fusion of the distinctly British approach of MacCallum and the Michigan school. Butler and others adopted the Michigan school’s concern with rigorous assessments of the relative weight of various causal factors based on statistical analysis. But large chunks of the Nuffield studies also continued to be written in a kind of high-table, insider style, with a suggestion of privileged information as the basis for informed accounts of the strategies and personalities involved in the campaigns.

A more aggressive form of behavioralism reached Britain in the 1960s and 1970s when Richard Rose and Jean Blondel respectively brought it to the Universities of Strathclyde and Essex. Rose

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was American, and Blondel was French, but both got their doctorates from the University of
Oxford. Their brand of behavioralism inspired three important developments in the use of
quantitative techniques in British political science. First, Essex and to a lesser extent Strathclyde
began to rival, and arguably surpass, Nuffield and Oxford more generally as centers for such
research: it is significant, for example, that the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
established its data archive in Essex. Second, the use of surveys and statistical analysis spread—as it had in America—beyond election studies, to cover political culture, socialization, and then yet other areas such as race and politics. Third, British political scientists became increasingly engaged with the creation and use of cross-national studies and initiatives. The data archive at Essex is a major source of data sets leading to comparative work by scholars such as Kenneth Newton and Elinor Scarbrough. More generally, Blondel was a important figure in the creation of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), and the ECPR began running a ten week summer school on statistical analysis at Essex in the late 1960s. These institutional developments followed rather rapidly upon precursors in America, where the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research was founded in 1962 and began a summer methods school at the University of Michigan in 1963.

Today UK political science includes a large institutional and intellectual space for quantitative analyses. Institutionally, the Specialist Group on Elections, Parties, and Public Opinion (EPOP) is the largest one in the Political Studies Association (PSA), while the ESRC requires all Ph.D. candidates to do a methods course as part of their MA if they are to be eligible for a scholarship. Intellectually, a recent benchmarking exercise conducted by the ESRC and PSA found electoral studies to be a particular strength of British political science. Nonetheless, the benchmarking exercise found that the strength of electoral studies went along, at least in comparison with America, with a weakness in methods including not only the kind of formal modeling we discuss later but also statistical techniques and basic research design.

Positivist Theory

To grasp the character of behavioralism in America, and its ramifications for the comparative character of political science in Britain, we must consider not only topics and techniques but also new theories. The behavioralists transformative vision of a more systematic discipline gave as central a role to theoretical innovation as it did to new techniques. If the impact of behavioral theories is now less widely recognized than the quantitative techniques also associated with the movement, their impact on American political science was no less revolutionary.

Up into the 1940s there was little contention about what theory was or should be. Political scientists on both sides of the Atlantic understood “theory” principally to mean scholarship in the historical ideas and institutions tradition that had crystallized during the late nineteenth century. Theorists characteristically spent more time studying, teaching, and writing about texts from

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earlier times, than attempting to produce novel theories. The ideas to institutions tradition arose out of earlier forms of moral philosophy, theory of the state, and constitutional history. From moral philosophy, it inherited the idea of training young elites to take their place in the world by teaching them a canon of great texts. From the theory of the state, it inherited a concern with classifications of types of government and institutions. From constitutional history, it inherited a concern to study law, authority, and institutions through the study of legal documents. Together these currents gave shape to a tradition of studies on the history of political thought infused with a sense of close connections between changes in ideas and in institutions.

The gravitation of American political science toward empirical studies of contemporary politics in the first half of the twentieth century did not presume or promulgate hostility to the ideas and institutions tradition. The prevailing view of science as fact gathering and objective reporting gave no reason to question the standing of historical research. While fewer and fewer American political scientists outside the theory field did such work, they did not see their theory colleagues as obstacles to a scientific discipline. Indeed, political theory complimented the rest of political science. Political theory gave students, first, a historical survey of political ideas framed in relation to the evolution of institutions, and, second, an introduction to the concepts used by contemporary scholars. These two pedagogical goals blended into one another since political scientists at the time tended to understand their own concepts as a reflexive outgrowth of ideas that developed alongside the historical evolution of institutions. Moreover, while tendencies to specialization were growing in the American discipline, the generalist ideas and institutions scholar, as exemplified by Ernest Barker in Britain, still found parallels in America. Harvard’s Carl Friedrich, like Barker, produced comparative historical institutional studies, histories of ideas, translations of canonical texts, and many other works.⁴⁸ There was, in sum, little sign of the theoretical departures and cleavages to come within the American discipline.

Debates about the nature of theory arose in America not as an empiricist rejection of theorizing but out of the complaint of the 1940s that American political science had an impoverished theoretical imagination. Behavioralists and the émigré Leo Strauss, in a curious alliance between future antagonists, took up this complaint and laid the blame on the historicism of the ideas and institutions tradition.⁴⁹ But where Strauss criticized “historicism” as part of his thoroughgoing challenge to all varieties of modern thought, behavioralism’s criticism reflected a faith in novelty infused with an instrumentalist concept of theory akin to that of logical positivism. When the CPB heralded the “development of theory” as one of its core concerns,⁵⁰ what it specifically had in mind was, as SSRC President Pendleton Herring put it in his 1953 APSA presidential address: “theory as a conceptual scheme for the analysis and ordering of empirical data on political behavior.”⁵¹ The positivist aspiration of such theory was to systematically synthesize existing findings and to strategically highlight empirical questions that needed to be addressed to advance

further theoretical refinement. The behavioralists vision of a systematic political science thus revolved around a cumulative interplay between theoretical innovation and empirical research.

The promotion of positivist theory was not the American discipline’s first or only call for new theoretical work. But it stands out for its radical reimagining of what theory should be, or at least what it should not be. Even if behavioralism’s positivists provided only sketchy accounts of criteria by which to judge the instrumental scientific payoff of different theories, they were clear about what they did not consider relevant. They had little sympathy for criteria that reflected the lingering philosophical idealism of the ideas and institutions tradition, such as a theory’s relation to past ideas or everyday concepts and practices. They believed that new and abstract theoretical vocabularies were essential if political science was to become a cumulative science. Similarly, behavioralists broke with the reformist pragmatism that had been widespread in American political science during the first half of the century. Their vision of a systematic discipline firmly separated the scientific merit of a theory from its ability to promote normatively favored beliefs and outcomes. They aspired, rather, to build a new positivist type of theory that would be empirically-oriented and ethically neutral.

Positivist theory took different forms in different sub-fields of political science. In the study of American politics, the most famous theoretical product of behavioralism was a new type of pluralism, best illustrated by Robert Dahl’s classic A Preface to Democratic Theory (1956), and more broadly associated with the Yale department (Merelman 2003), which in the 1960s came to rival Harvard for preeminence in the discipline (Somit and Tanenhaus 1967: 162-67). But it was in the subfield of comparative politics that positivist theoretical aspirations were most ambitious. This subfield underwent a dramatic expansion in size, scope, prestige, and funding as America became a superpower engaged in the Cold War, competing for the allegiance of the new nations that emerged from decolonization in Africa and Asia. When Friedrich and Finer had crafted new analytic frameworks for comparative study back in the interwar decades, they had grounded their categories in the historical experiences of Europe and America, and saw these categories as having a consequently restricted scope of application. In contrast, when the SSRC’s CCP brought young scholars together in the 1950s in a bid to remake the subfield, their positivist theoretical aspiration was to take abstraction to a whole new level by forging a general conceptual scheme that could bring comparative studies of all countries within a single framework. This quest for a general theory was pitched at the macro-societal level and drew together functionalism with systems theory. It found its fullest expression in the work of the CCP’s chairman Almond.52 Although the sociological theorist Talcott Parsons was an influence here,53 other influences, such as David Easton in the American discipline, and earlier works by British social anthropologists, meant that comparative political scientists adopted the “political system,” rather than Parsons’ “social system,” as their core concept.54 Similarly, when Almond and other CCP-affiliated scholars later set out to craft a general theoretical scheme for analyzing changes in political systems, they made “political development” their key concept, rather than the more sociologically-reductionist “modernization.”55

The universalizing theoretical aspiration of the CCP was not without critics. Leading figures of the elder generation voiced early concerns. Harvard’s Friedrich in particular responded to an early CCP report by arguing that comparative politics should concentrate on problems that were historically specific to certain countries at certain points in time, and that the field would lose contact with such problems if it pursued “excessive abstraction.”⁵⁶ Similarly, some members of the younger generation found their initial excitement about general theory give way to disenchantment. A good example is Samuel Beer, Harvard’s leading scholar of British politics. In late 1950s Beer extolled a “structural-functional” theory of the “political system” as the polestar guiding the way to a general comparative political science.⁵⁷ But in the early 1960s he changed his mind and began to take aim at the “dogma of universality” and the “utopia of a universal theory.”⁵⁸

Beer’s shift was part of a broader upswing, particularly prominent at Harvard, of discontent with the most positivist theoretical elements of behavioralism. This discontent inspired a return to a modernist empiricism, established earlier at Harvard by Lowell and Friedrich, which promoted empirical study and analytical comparisons, while expecting (or assuming) that generalizations and theory would be contextually limited in their reach. The possibility of reviving modernist empiricism in a form, more open to quantification, but still suspicious of general theory was charted in the 1958 APSA presidential address of V.O. Key Jr., who had been at Harvard since 1951. While Key extolled “systematic analysis,” in line with his Chicago training and prominent role in the behavioral movement, he also distanced himself from the positivist ideal of discovering general laws and abstract theories that transcended the ebb and flow of historically delimited phenomena. He argued that whatever beguiling “psychic satisfactions” the pursuit of “grand hypotheses” might offer, they failed to come to terms with the “incorrigibility” of political data, and he urged political scientists instead to seek “modest general propositions” and to remember that the “verified general proposition of one era may not hold at a later time.”⁵⁹ This call for theoretical modesty put Key in line with the modernist empiricism of his older colleague Friedrich, which his younger colleague Beer would soon thereafter similarly swear allegiance to.

The revival of modernist empiricism as a discontented reaction to positivist theoretical ambitions was far from a wholesale rejection of behavioralism. The new cleavage that emerged around this issue should be seen against the backdrop of behavioralism’s broad success in propagating its vision of political science. Thus, even when the revived modernist empiricists challenged more positivist concepts of theory, they accepted the vision of a systematic science advancing through the cumulative interplay of empirical research and theory, with theory instrumentally framed as a tool of scientific advance to be judged by non-normative criteria. Behavioralism made this vision part of the self-understanding of American political science and even today this vision delimits the boundary of the discipline’s mainstream.

The success of behavioralism redefined relations between the subfield of political theory and the rest of political science. While the new instrumentalist conception of theory made rapid gains in American political science in the 1950s and 1960s, nearly all those who promoted and practiced it worked outside the subfield of political theory, with its traditional focus on the history of western political thought. The most prominent new vision of theory within the subfield itself came from Strauss whose attack on both historicism and positivism revitalized the moralizing study of canonical philosophical texts. In contrast, while behavioralists stressed the importance of theory, their conception of what theory should (and should not) be in a scientific discipline led them increasingly to contrast the kind of theory they sought against “normative theory”—an amorphous category encompassing all forms of theorizing that they saw as irrelevant or hostile. The compartmentalizing of normative concerns within the theory subfield made it particularly prone to influence from the increasingly charged political debates of the 1960s. As the American left turned upon itself over the Vietnam War, left-leaning theorists engaged (or enthralled) by these events came increasingly into conflict with behavioralist colleagues. When, by the late 1960s, leaders of the political theory subfield, such as Berkeley’s Sheldon Wolin, embraced the notion that they did indeed pursue a “vocation” fundamentally different from that favored elsewhere in the discipline (Wolin 1969), the incipient division between camps was complete. Political theory had once been the nearest thing to a common core in the American discipline. Now it was reconstituted as the locus of hostility—whether conservative, radical, or some confused blend of them—to the scientific aspirations of the discipline’s mainstream.

The situation was very different on the other side of the Atlantic. Behavioral theory, especially in its most aggressively positivist forms, barely appeared in Britain. To the contrary, even when British political scientists adopted techniques such as survey research or cross-national aggregate analysis, they generally remain tied to the elder modernist empiricism that inspired the work of MacCullum and later Butler. There were arguably a few political scientists who believed in something akin to the positivist agenda outlined by Americans such as Easton—perhaps Rose, perhaps Blondel. But they concentrated on empirical work, writing little about theory, and when they did write about it, they often made concessions to the modernist empiricism dominant in the British discipline. Such concessions are apparent, for example, throughout the work of Blondel. On the one hand, he defined his approach to comparative government as a “general and analytical” investigation of the “conditions which lead to the development of types of political systems,” a type of investigation that elsewhere he suggested required quantification to distinguish it from mere journalism. On the other hand, however, Blondel also qualified his positivist ambitions, suggesting that politics was messy and unscientific, that general or universal theories were thus too ambitious, and so concluding that mid-range theories and partial systems comparisons are the best way of tackling political science. In accepting empirical topics, quantitative techniques, and paying lip-service to theory while insisting on mid-range studies, Blondel can look rather like some of the so-called new institutionalists in more recent American political science. No wonder so many British political scientists later responded to this new

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61 Blondel, *Discipline of Politics*. It is arguable that this vacillation in Blondel is historical. There is certainly a retreat from high claims for positive theory apparent in successive editions of his *Comparative Government*. 
institutionalism by suggesting it was what they had been doing all along—the commonality is modernist empiricism after a dose of behavioralism.\textsuperscript{62}

Ironically, then, the main impact of positivist theory on British political scientists was that they began to define themselves against it. The biggest clichés about British political science define it in contrast to American positivism. This contrast enabled British scholars to forget modernist empiricist inheritances they shared with American political scientists from Friedrich to Key and Beer. It enabled them to forget the extent to which their search for formal explanations based on classifications or correlations among types of institutions embodied a modernist revolt against developmental historicist approaches to the study of politics. British political scientists were able instead to define themselves as, purportedly unlike American positivists, peculiarly sensitive to history, context, and agency. As Vernon Bogdanor wrote, typically unaware of the historical context of the contrast he was making, “if there is a central tendency to the discipline as it has developed in Britain in the twentieth century, it lies in aversion to positivism.”\textsuperscript{63} Such a pose does not distinguish British political science—it instead aligns the mainstream of the British discipline with one wing of the mainstream of the American discipline, which is internally characterized by the contained contention between its positivist and modernist empiricist wings.

Rational Choice Theory

In the postwar decades American political scientists explored a dizzying array of theoretical vocabularies and frameworks. Group theory, systems theory, structural-functional theory, the theory of action, and decision theory all entered political science from other disciplines during the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{64} The most telling division among these theories was, as Brian Barry suggested, that between “sociological” and “economic” ones.\textsuperscript{65} The behavioral movement drew primary attention to sociological theories pitched at the macro-level of systems. But by the 1970s a major reversal in fortunes was underway. American political science exhibited two divergent reactions against sociological theorizing. First, as we saw earlier, some scholars turned to a modified modernist empiricism, diagnosing an illness of excessive positivist abstraction and prescribing a regime of more modest theorizing. This revival of modernist empiricism, with its mid-range institutionalist orientation, paralleled the dominant reaction of British political science to behavioralism. In contrast, the second reaction against sociological theorizing was missing in Britain, and largely remains so to this day; it is the rise of economic theorizing, specifically rational choice theory.

Rational choice theory first developed during the 1950s and 1960s but—with the exception of William Riker and the Rochester department he led—it had little impact upon political science during the heyday of the behavioral movement.\textsuperscript{66} The broader reception of rational choice theory

\textsuperscript{63} V. Bogdanor, “Comparative Politics”, in Hayward, Barry, and Brown, eds., \textit{The British Study of Politics}, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{64} For a sense of the extent (and limits) of the range of the agenda see the contributions collected by Easton in D. Easton ed., \textit{Varieties of Political Theory} (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966).
in American political science had to wait for a growing disappointment with the sociological theorizing of the behavioral era. As sociological theories lost favor, so rational choice theory arose to offer both an appealing account of why they had failed and a proposed way forward. While rational choice was similar enough in its instrumental conception of theory to inherit the mantle of science from the behavioralists, the substance of its theory was different enough for it to escape the sense of theoretical failure around behavioralism, and thus to point to a new road to the scientific paradise.

Two key differences set rational choice theory apart. First, it grounded itself on positive axioms stated in a formal language that made it possible to use techniques of deductive logic to prove conclusions that followed from those axioms. While sociological theorists such as Parsons had extolled deductive reasoning, they had not made their arguments “positive” or “formal” in the sense that rational choice theorists would give to these terms and, as a result, their reasoning could be criticized as loose and indeterminate. The second difference setting rational choice apart was its basis in explicit micro-level assumptions about individuals. Rational choice theorists complained that the macro-level claims of sociological theories were divorced from an account of individual choices and their often unintended collective consequences.

Rational choice, with its rigorous deductive logic and formal modeling techniques, proved especially attractive within what had become the most technically complex subfield of political science, the study of American politics. The use of formal models here dates back to the 1960s. However, modeling really took off after the late 1970s when the concept of structure-induced equilibrium facilitated the inclusion of institutional arrangements in models, and later when Barry Weingast and others further expanded the repertoire of modeling concepts and techniques by drawing on the new economics of organization associated with economists such as Oliver Williamson. By the mid-1980s articles using formal techniques came to constitute about a fifth of the APSR, a level they have maintained ever since. Early critics of the rise of rational choice often suggested that formal modeling was limited in applicability to the study of contemporary American institutions. But this charge always ignored the fact that a significant portion of the APSR’s modeling articles were in the subfield of international relations, and it became even more implausible by the end of the 1980s as Weingast and others began collaborating with the leading economic historian Douglass C. North to begin working on historical topics.

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We should, however, not identify rational choice too closely with formal modeling. Modeling has no intrinsic tie to an economic perspective in which the axioms are specifically about rational choices of individuals. In principle all kinds of theoretical perspectives could state axioms in a formal language and apply deductive logic to them. What is more, one major strand of rational choice theory developed independently of the technical appeal of formal modeling. In the 1970s some of the younger scholars of comparative politics, who believed that sociological theorizing failed to fit what they were saw in their countries of study, found a compelling alternative in the account of individual choices and their collective consequences that had been advanced by the economist Mancur Olson. The pioneering works here were Samuel Popkin’s *The Rational Peasant* and Robert Bates’s *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* and *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa*. Popkin and Bates’s “collective-choice school of political economy” used an Olsonian conception of the “collective action” problems of large groups in a largely informal manner to interpret and explain outcomes in their respective areas of field research—Vietnam and Africa.

The rise of rational choice theory in contemporary American political science can thus be traced back both to technically sophisticated formal modelers of institutions and the field-work based Olsonian scholars of comparative politics. Indeed, the shape of rational choice today owes much to the exchange and cooperation between these groups that developed in the 1980s. Rational choice scholars of comparative politics were quick to make common ground with the formal modelers studying American politics and even to describe these commonalities as a shared rational choice approach to institutions. Rational choice institutionalism thus has a good claim to be the first and foremost of the multiple “new institutionalisms” that have contended within the American discipline since the late 1980s. Yet this rational choice institutionalism, like rational choice theory more generally, has found little echo in Britain. In Britain, the earlier skepticism toward behavioralism and its scientific pretensions has largely been extended to rational choice. As a result, when British political scientists have looked across the Atlantic, they have generally identified with two other varieties of “new institutionalism”—the historical and sociological institutionalisms—which are infused with modernist empiricism.

**Conclusion**

Political science emerged and developed out of a wide range of transnational exchanges in which ideas were less straightforwardly adopted than continually overpowered, dominated, adjusted, and reinterpreted, with their former meanings and purposes being obscured or obliterated. Any simple narrative of Americanization domesticates the contingency and contests involved in this.

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74 The exchanges that have occurred here are explored in M. Bevir, “Institutionalism and the Third Way,” in Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson, eds., *Modern Political Science*. 
process. American political science itself has been characterized by warring factions who are inspired by different ideas but who often forget the history of those ideas even as they forge them anew in the heat of a different battle. At least as importantly, ideas have not simply flowed from America to Britain and Europe. Rather, intellectual inspiration and support have travelled back and forth across the Atlantic, with alliances being forged, or merely claimed, on both sides of the ocean, often as ways of boosting weaponry or morale in a local conflict. More often than not, the alliances have been ones of partial convenience. At times, they have even been based on mutual incomprehension. The history of political science, as of so much else, is messy – far too messy to be captured by the narrative of Americanization.

The general lesson of the messiness of history may serve as a counter to the danger of a purely internal disciplinary history that fails to recognize not only the impact of social factors on intellectual life but also the impact of social science on public affairs. The Americanization narrative is, after all, one that appears in much of European society, from simple jibes about McDonalds to more complex worries about the changing nature of politics and especially political campaigning. To conclude, therefore, we want briefly to suggest how our argument may extend from political science to cover the impact of techniques derived from the social sciences on public life.

In Britain, political scientists and journalists alike regularly discuss – and generally bewail – the Americanization of politics, especially the spread of media and electoral strategies based on polling, focus groups, and related techniques. They describe – and generally denounce – the rise of a presidential style of politics in which the party leader and image become more important than public policies. 75

Superficially the Americanization narrative can seem compelling. Opinion polling took off earlier in America, quickly becoming an established part of the political landscape. Whereas in America opinion polls have been used extensively since the 1930s, they did not become a feature of political life in Britain until the 1950s or even 1960s, and whereas World War Two found the American government using the Office of Strategic Services to run its own polls, the UK Parliament blocked tentative moves to bring polling under the Wartime Social Survey. 76 It is possible, moreover, to highlight American influences on the introduction of polling in Britain. For example, the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) arose as an offshoot of the American Institute of Public Opinion which was founded by George Gallup in 1935.

On closer inspection, however, the Americanization narrative obscures more than it illuminates. For a start, the rise of surveys and polls is not a story native to American political science but an international story based on all kinds of trans-Atlantic and other flows. Surveys of populations date back to European mercantilism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 77 One well known example followed the Great Plague of 1665. John Graunt then made a systematic analysis

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of birth and death records thereby recording the faster rate of recovery in London than the rest of Britain. As we saw earlier, the humanitarian concerns of the late nineteenth century led Booth, Mayhew, and others to conduct door to door and other surveys of urban life and poverty. Of course, these surveys were conceived as akin to total censuses. Yet, the idea of sampling can also be traced among British and European scholars. So, in 1912 Arthur Bowley, a statistician and economist, undertook a survey of urban labourers in Reading, to the west of London. The limited funds available to him precluded the kind of censuses undertaken by Booth and others. Thus he turned instead to use representative techniques developed by statisticians across Europe in the late nineteenth century.

Another problem with the Americanization narrative is that even after the founding of the BIPO, polling in Britain long continued to be influenced by a progressive ethos and to exhibit sympathy for qualitative methods that provided richer insight into the lived experience that lay behind mere numbers. The Mass Observation movement produced numerous surveys of public opinion, including by-election polls for the Labour Party and other polls for the Ministry of Information, and it made extensive use of qualitative methods as well as quantitative ones. Indeed, Mass Observation was conceived as a type of human anthropology in which researchers kept diaries and even listening in on others’ conversations.

Clearly American political scientists have indeed generated a number of technologies that have transformed the conduct of politics. Equally clearly they have done so against the backdrop of a complex array of international and interdisciplinary exchanges, and different cultures have picked up and deployed different sets of technologies to very different degrees.

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