



Empowering Citizens, Engaging the Public

Political Science for the 21st Century

Rainer Eisfeld



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Rainer Eisfeld
Fachbereich 1
Osnabrück University
Osnabrück, Germany

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BOOKS BY RAINER EISFELD

English

Political Science and Regime Change in 20th Century Germany (1996,
with Michael Th. Greven and Hans K. Rupp)
Pluralism. Developments in the Theory and Practice of Democracy
(2006, ed.)
Political Science in Central-East Europe (2010, ed. with Leslie A. Pal)
Radical Approaches to Political Science (2012)
Political Science: Reflecting on Concepts, Demystifying Legends (2016)

German

Pluralismus zwischen Liberalismus und Sozialismus (1972; Italian ed.
1976, Croatian ed. 1992)
Sozialistischer Pluralismus in Europa (1984)
Gegen Barbarei (1989, ed. with Ingo Müller)
Ausgebürgert und doch angebräunt (1991, rev. ed. 2013)
Wild Bill Hickok. Westernmythos und Wirklichkeit (1994)
Mondsüchtig (1996 [hc], 2000 [pb]; new ed. 2012; Czech ed. 1997)
Als Teenager träumten. Die magischen 50er Jahre (1999)
Marsfieber (2003, with Wolfgang Jeschke)
Streitbare Politikwissenschaft (2006)
Mitgemacht (2015, ed.)

THE VISION

“Ultimately, IPSA supports the role of political science in empowering men and women to participate more effectively in political life, whether within or beyond the states in which they live.”

International Political Science Association (IPSA): Mission Statement (2011)

“We are firmly convinced that it was the spirit of appreciating the rich potential of political science to provide ways to better attain

- peace,
- economic opportunity,
- human rights,
- participatory democracy, and, ultimately,
- individual fulfilment

that led to our task force being appointed... We hope that our report pushes political science and political scientists to realize this potential.”

American Political Science Association (APSA): Report of the Task Force on Political Science in the Twenty-First Century (2011)

CHAPTER DETAILS

Part I Commitments

1. Improving the Human Condition

The Tenets of Twenty-First-Century Political Science

Increasingly expected to help resolve citizens' difficulties, the discipline—perceived as fragmented and method-driven—faces the challenge of becoming more relevant, more comprehensible, and (where necessary) more critical of governments, political and business elites

2. What Is the Current Human Condition?

Today's human condition is marked by an unprecedented capacity to intervene for the good or for the bad of the species

3. Coming to Grips with Change

The Subject Matter of Twenty-First-Century Political Science

Political science should evolve into a topic-driven discipline focusing on causes, patterns, and the participatory implementation of political, economic, and cultural change, whose speed and extent are triggering insecurity and aggression against democratic institutions

4. Serving Citizens

The Twenty-First-Century Political Scientist as Public Intellectual

From past acerbic controversies among academics, it may safely be concluded that a more thoroughgoing public engagement by scholars will not automatically create a benign debating climate. Rather, a political culture for such engagement will have to be assiduously evolved

5. The Civics of Friendly Persuasion

Alerting Citizens to Political Science and Its Public Engagement

Civic education needs to be based on curricula about citizenship, not about government. It should focus on learning democratic ways of life, including ways of coping with change

6. A Determination to Blow the Whistle

Political Science Stepping in to Avert Mendocracy

The Brexit and Trump campaigns have demonstrated that we may be on the way to mendocracy, or liars' rule. Political science should underwrite the exposure of patently false, illegal, or unethical claims and operations, by which politicians, parties, and governments may be attempting to deceive citizens and to thwart or subvert their constitutional responsibilities

Part II Issue Areas

7. Affirming Ethno-Cultural Diversity, Avoiding Tribalized Segmentation

Twenty-First-Century Political Science and the Politics of Recognition

Due to civil wars, to social plight and economic globalization, refugee and labor migration continue to be on the increase. Both for the recipient societies' minorities and for their hitherto culturally privileged majorities (the latter confronted with the challenge of accepting increasing heterogeneity), recourse to ethnicity has served as a source of social identification. Demonstrating an awareness of linkages between economic and cultural inequality and power, political science needs to advance narratives which promote mutual "recognition" and tolerance, rather than separation and conflict

8. Low Income, Inferior Education

Twenty-First-Century Political Science and Inequality of Political Resources

Unequal social resources, primarily income, wealth, and education, will unavoidably translate into unequal political resources with regard to participatory engagement and control over political agenda-setting, already now pushing democracy toward plutocracy. Reducing such disparities is of prime importance to ensure the accessibility, accountability, and—in the final instance—legitimacy of supposedly "representative" government. Political scientists should join leading economists such as Krugman, Piketty, and Stiglitz in urging tax reform and other policy changes

9. Robust Regulatory Policies for Capitalism

Twenty-First-Century Political Science's Political Economy

Deregulatory state intervention and determined governmental underperformance with regard to public services have (a) been eating into the capacity of legislatures to allocate resources and (b) have deepened, if not triggered, persistent financial crises. The entrenched neo-liberal discourse has made governments and market players alike rival each other in reorganizing states as quasi-enterprise associations bent on cutting outlays. Citizens' loyalty to the state and grassroots commitment to the democratic process are thus being weakened. The pro-market trend needs to be reversed, and a reinvigorated political economy must visibly intervene in the political debate

10. Global Warming, Power Structures, and Living Conditions

Climate Politics and Twenty-First-Century Political Science

The activities of veto players among economic and political elites constraining climate policy changes in, for example, the United States, China, Russia, or India have overshadowed a more fundamental problem which is that the improvement of living conditions for hundreds of millions of poor implies, at present, an increase in CO₂ emissions. Any effective emission reduction will depend on decoupling population growth and income rise from increasing pollution.

11. Radicalization, Terrorism, Subversion of Civil Liberties

Conundrums of Twenty-First-Century Political Science

A twenty-first-century political science that focuses on peaceful conflict settlement may be facing a number of domestic and international security dilemmas. These dilemmas might not least be cast in terms of the need to develop concepts of "soft" policing and de-radicalization strategies against millennialist violence, rather than relying solely on repressive measures which threaten fundamental democratic values, without actually offering prospects of success

Part III Partisanship

12. Twenty-First-Century Political Science: Politicization of a Discipline?

A Normative Science of Democracy with Empirical Rigor

At a moment in history when the accountability of democratic governments is literally bleeding away, when the hybridization of democratic regimes in Central-East Europe is on the rise and democracies in Western Europe and North America are compromised by the erosion of democratic rules and values, political science as a science of democracy becomes inevitably partisan. It should acknowledge such partisanship, explaining aims and implications.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book will argue that the final justification for evolving political science into a discipline where problems would take priority over methods, and public relevance over sophisticated specialization, is provided by the need to face up to major issue areas of continuing democratic erosion. The work presents the first book-length study covering in detail the implications and consequences of that transformation. In the following pages, the reader may expect some determined conclusions from nearly two decades of APSA, IPSA, and PSA discussion on actual political science's disconnect with the larger public and on the discipline's doubtful relevance. But for that debate, the book could not have been conceived.

I will return to the point in a moment. But first, there is a priority list of deeply felt personal debts to repay.

The entire book would not be the same without my Canadian friend and colleague Leslie Pal, whose perceptive interventions provided a wealth of inspiration and perspective. Les and I have been collaborating for a decade: In 2008, we commenced work on a co-edited volume *Political Science in Central-East Europe: Diversity and Convergence*, which appeared in 2010 and won the distinction of being recommended as an IPSA Executive Committee selection. For the past two years, Les read and commented on every chapter, asking penetrating questions that forced me to clarify or rethink my positions. (This is not meant to imply that Les bears any responsibility for the final product.)

Leslie's unwavering confidence that I would pull the project off encouraged me to persist whenever the going got rough—and it often did. I value his continuing support the more in view of his own multiple

obligations—and, I should add, of his own disposition to a more dispassionate manner of arguing.

Several ideas of this book may be traced back to a brief article entitled: “How Political Science Might Regain Relevance and Obtain an Audience: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century”, published in the June 2011 issue of *European Political Science*. That piece (a mere six pages—rather tightly argued, I’m afraid) had been written as part of a debate on the discipline’s relevance, initiated in 2008/2009 by former IPSA Secretary General John Trent at two IPSA congresses in Montréal and Santiago de Chile (“Is political science out of step with the world?”). I feel deeply indebted to John for continuing to stimulate my thinking by the evidence and the arguments which he presented.

Andrea Lenschow generously pointed me to a 2016 article in the journal *Global Environmental Politics*, which summarized major research trends regarding climate change politics. Along with Andrea’s own work, that article helped me greatly in paving my access to the complexities of the issue. Serving as the department’s dean for a number of years, Andrea was also instrumental in arranging for the institutional resources which the University of Osnabrück has continued to provide since my retirement. I remain most grateful for the unstinting support which she accorded my academic pursuits.

The study received its final touches from inputs by Marian Sawer, Dianne Pinderhughes, Matthew Flinders, and Leslie Pal during a roundtable debate of the book’s arguments at the 2018 Brisbane World Political Science Congress. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to each of them. Marian, who with characteristic grace convened and chaired the roundtable, has enriched our discipline in a number of prominent offices, such as President of the Australasian Political Studies Association, IPSA Vice President, long-time co-editor of the *International Political Science Review*, Program Co-Chair (with Dianne) of the 2016 Poznań World Congress of Political Science. Dianne, during her historic APSA Presidency—she was the first African-American woman to serve in that capacity—commissioned a Task Force on “Political Science in the Twenty-First Century”, from whose vision I quoted at the outset of this book. Matt, a former Chair of the United Kingdom’s Political Studies Association, is also Founding Director of the Sir Bernard Crick Center for the Public Understanding of Politics, whose name says it all: Seeking to narrow the gap between academe and society, the Center aims at encouraging engaged citizenship on every level. About Les, nothing more needs to be written here, except that his focus

on public policy and public management in turbulent times provided a perfect vantage point from which to assess the present book's approach.

Over a decade ago, by 2006, APSR editor Lee Sigelman, whose untimely death saddened the discipline three years later, saw the discipline's compartmentalization tied to the emergence of "niches", where highly specialized scholars conduct "highly particularized" research, eventually writing for "highly specialized audiences" rather than for a few specialists, but also for "many non-specialists". That same year, IPSA launched a "linkage" policy with regard to its research committees, intended to mitigate the problematic consequences of excessive specialization. Serving on the IPSA Executive Committee as Research Committee Representative from 2006 to 2012, I became involved in that effort. IPSA's 2008 Montréal conference "Political Science in the World: New Theoretical and Regional Perspectives", co-chaired by Dirk Berg-Schlosser and myself, systematically brought together delegates from research committees (27 in number) and national political science associations (23 of them) for the first time in IPSA's history. It was here that John Trent first presented his findings on the challenges calling for, as John termed it, "rejuvenating" the discipline.

Before being elected to the office of Research Committee Representative, I had chaired the Research Committee on Socio-Political Pluralism for the preceding six years. Pluralism was and remains a topic closely linked to a number of key public issues—such as disparities in political resources, deregulatory state intervention, deficiencies in public education, the roll-back of organized labor, and xenophobic backlashes against immigrant minorities. Throughout the following pages, this book will urge political scientists to address those and several additional "large" questions ahead of other problems. These pages will also emphasize required redirections of the discipline's present training, research, financing, and teaching priorities.

Because such steps are certain to involve a conflict-ridden, time-consuming process, I wish to stress that every political scientist may make a start here and now, breaking new ground in her or his university, department, or study group. To illustrate that this can be both feasible and rewarding, and that support for such an endeavor may materialize from unexpected quarters, I may perhaps be excused for referring to my own professional experience which has shaped my perception of what the discipline might do.

In the 1974 *American Political Science Review*, Henry W. Ehrmann (1908–1994) emphasized “the breadth of historical approach and the concreteness of analysis” of my first book (in fact, my doctoral thesis) on pluralism as a potentially critical theory. Two years later, the study was, by reason of its scope, deemed suitable for an Italian translation. And Polish political scientist Stanislaw Ehrlich (1907–1997) invited me to his research committee session at the 1979 Moscow World Political Science Congress, an exercise in peaceful coexistence.

Stanislaw had founded the IPSA Study Group on Socio-Political Pluralism in 1976; two years later, it had been recognized as a Research Committee. Today, he may be more remembered for supervising in 1976 the doctoral thesis of one Jarosław Kaczyński, present chair of Poland’s so-called Law and Justice Party. At the time, Stanislaw stood out by his deep-felt commitment to bridge the East-West divide within the political science community. I recall him with fondness and continuing gratitude for introducing me to the ranks of IPSA: a respected scholar, a devoted colleague, a dear friend.

The experience was repeated after the Portuguese dictatorship had been deposed by the “revolution of carnations” on the very day (April 25, 1974) my university—one of the new “red-brick” affairs built at the time across Western Germany—opened its gates to students. I took that as an omen for indicating the field to which I should turn next. Switching from reflecting on a political concept, such as pluralism, to exploring another country’s social, political, and economic cleavages would be quite a change. Still, such a project would again involve historically grounded analyses, and it might lead to a major case study about the linkage of domestic politics and foreign pressures under Cold War conditions.

My resulting work brought me into contact with British historian Kenneth Maxwell (1941–), who had arrived in the United States a decade earlier. After publishing two seminal *New York Review of Books* articles in 1974/1975—“Portugal: A Neat Revolution” and, even more distinctive, “Portugal Under Pressure”—he rapidly had come to be considered a leading expert on Portuguese matters. He graciously invited me when, in the mid-1980s, he organized a number of workshops and conferences both at Columbia University and the Woodrow Wilson Center (Washington) on Portugal’s current conditions and future prospects.

Bringing together leading Portuguese and American academic and political figures, and resulting in a couple of collected volumes, the frank debates during these meetings offered me unique insights and opportunities

for improving my own assessments. Ken would later in his career emphasize Brazilian over Portuguese affairs (the Kenneth Maxwell Thesis Prize in Brazilian Studies at Harvard University's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies is named after him), and I would also turn elsewhere. But I owe a lasting debt of gratitude to Ken, no less than to Stanislaw, for first providing me with access to the kind of informed transnational dialogue from which projects in the social sciences may immensely benefit in overcoming the confines of parochial perspectives.

Warm thanks are finally due to two anonymous reviewers and to my editor at Palgrave Macmillan, Vishal Daryanmel, for their pertinent and inspiring comments and suggestions.

PROLOGUE

“It is improbable”, Herbert George Wells—commenting on the probability of social and political tendencies—predicted at the beginning of the twentieth century, “that ever again will any flushed undignified man with a vast voice, a muscular face in incessant operation, collar crumpled, hair disordered, and arms in wild activity,... talking copiously... from railway platforms, talking from hotel balconies, talking on tubs, barrels, scaffoldings, pulpits... rise to be the most powerful person in any democratic state in the world” (Wells 1901: 140).

Such hopes have been shattered both between the two great wars and once again after 1945. Not balconies and pulpits, but television and more recently social media have helped the emergence of demagogues resorting to plebiscitarian methods. Even though lacking any experience in politics and government, they have successfully appealed to voters—as noted a century after Wells by Juan Linz, expert on authoritarian systems of government—on the basis of either ample financial resources or “popularity gained outside of politics” (Linz 2007: 144). The statement instantly evokes images of a recent election in one of the world’s major countries.

Political science cannot hope to immunize citizens against folly nor, for that matter, against anger or even hate. But it can attempt considerably more than it is doing at present to spread historically informed analytical thinking and careful, normatively inspired reasoning among the public. And it needs to sound the alarm, challenging mendocracy—liars’ rule—toward which once venerable democracies, as evidenced by the Brexit and Trump campaigns, are presently sliding.

There are, in addition to the issue just mentioned, sufficient additional reasons for such an endeavor which will be discussed below. Prominent enough among them to be singled out here, and taken up again later, rank

- the existence of cartels for manufacturing ignorance,
- the expanding production of fear,
- and—exacerbated by both—the psychologically unsettling impact of change.

“In case after case”, as historians of science Naomi Oreskes (Harvard University) and Erik Conway (NASA/JPL) reported on a continuing pattern, a handful of scientists have joined forces with private corporations and think tanks funded by those industries to challenge scientific evidence, using their authority “to discredit any science they didn’t like”. As judged by Oreskes and Conway, these individuals had “no particular experience” in the issues under debate, but they did have influence, and they knew how to obtain media coverage for their views. The two scholars labeled them the “merchants of doubt” (Oreskes and Conway 2010: 6, 8, 9, 248, 262). Both also showed that the issue, rather than questions of science, was actually economic interests and politics—the role, and the extent, of government regulation.

When such campaigns occur, political science should go public to try and set the record straight.

By constant repetition and use in public discourse, fear has become a dominant perspective, a way “of looking at life” in our time, media sociologist David L. Altheide (Arizona State University) at the twenty-first century’s outset summed up the result of his inquiries into the role of mass media for social control. Fear may come to color citizens’ views on specific political issues. Thus the expanding production of fear, affecting “our culture and public order”, has obvious political ramifications (Altheide 2015 [12002]: 3/4, 16/17, 23/24, 26).

Altheide also noted that fear provides ostensible explanations and solutions in a world perceived by many as “constantly changing and out-of-control”. Again, political scientists’ public interventions are urgently needed to foster more rational approaches. *In fact, helping citizens to come to grips with change—political, economic, not least cultural change—will be identified in the following pages as the core of a topic-driven twenty-first-century political science.*

British writer James Graham Ballard has, perhaps more compellingly than some social or political scientists, argued how being affected by the dramatic changes that have been occurring may motivate those who can afford such options to retreat behind gated communities, to business parks, to executive housing equipped with closed circuit television cameras, and may drive others to strike out at their increasingly “strange” environments with a violence that can include “kill[ing] someone just to feel alive” (Ballard 2004: 3, 4, 5).

If such narratives about what is presently occurring in our societies involving power, modernity, and science should make us uneasy when reading them, the sensation is only too justified. In the end, it may provide the most potent foundation for the tenacity, if not doggedness, which large numbers of political scientists will have to muster, should they indeed decide to engage the public in a determined, even bold attempt at empowering citizens. And yet, they—like others involved in comparable pursuits—might keep in mind the ray of hope to which Leonard Cohen pointed when he sang about perseverance in 1992 (“The Anthem”):

“There is a crack in everything.
That’s how the light comes in.”

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	Anti-ballistic Missile
ANU	Australian National University
APSA	American Political Science Association
AUFTA	Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CETA	Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (Canada/European Union)
ECPR	European Consortium for Political Research
EEA	Eastern Economic Association (USA)
EU	European Union
FAS	Federation of American Scientists
FATCA	Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters (UK)
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
ICSID	International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes
IPSA	International Political Science Association
ISDS	Investor-State Dispute Settlement
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
NAAEC	North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation
NAALC	North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NAS	National Academy of Sciences
NSA	National Security Agency (USA)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PEGIDA	Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (Germany)

PSA	Political Studies Association (United Kingdom)
SUNY	State University of New York
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (United States/ European Union)
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

PART I

Commitments