

The background features a large, stylized 'V' on the left and a large '9' on the right, both in a vibrant green color. The 'V' is composed of thick, blocky strokes, while the '9' is a rounded, modern font. The overall design is clean and modern, with a dark green background.

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## Politics of Political Science in Poland: The Ongoing Reform of Higher Education

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### Abstract

The 21<sup>st</sup> century can be called a “century of reforms” in the Polish system of higher education and science. Each successive ruling party was looking for an opportunity to revise the way the Polish Academia was organized. Those reforms were aimed at changing the system of evaluation of higher education institutions (and the associated system of granting public subsidies thereto). But also they were targeting the list of scientific disciplines recognized and subsidized by the government. That was possible thanks to the fact that each piece of legislation on funding the Polish system of higher education was imparting power on the Minister of Higher Education to issue an executive act. Such discretionary decisions allow for influencing the way institutional science is organized in Poland. It is also a reason why in Poland “scientific lobbying” has arisen and various research coteries have been trying to promote their subfields to the rank of “discipline” by influencing the Ministry.

This paper is an attempt at summing up the 21<sup>st</sup>-century debate over the shape and legal foundations of the institutional dimension of the realm of political science. It is also an attempt to provide evidence that in Poland it is not theory that is influencing the decisions of recognizing new disciplines that are arising from the field of political science, but rather the political (and lobbying) practice

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as well as discretionary decisions of the Ministry are shaping the development of theory.

**Keywords**

political science, international relations, political theory, discipline, IR theory, Polish higher education, higher education politics

## Introduction

The 21<sup>st</sup> century can be called a “century of reforms” in the Polish system of higher education and science. Each successive ruling party was looking for an opportunity to revise the way the Polish Academia was organized. Those reforms were aimed at changing the system of evaluation of higher education institutions (and the associated system of granting public subsidies thereto). But also they were targeting the list of scientific disciplines recognized and subsidized by the government. That was possible thanks to the fact that each piece of legislation on funding the Polish system of higher education was imparting power on the Minister of Higher Education to issue an executive act. Such discretionary decisions allow for influencing the way institutional science is organized in Poland. It is also a reason why in Poland “scientific lobbying” has arisen and various research coterie have been trying to promote their subfields to the rank of “discipline” by influencing the Ministry.

This paper is an attempt at summing up the 21<sup>st</sup>-century debate over the shape and legal foundations of the institutional dimension of the realm of political science. It is also an attempt to provide evidence that in Poland it is not theory that is influencing the decisions of recognizing new disciplines that are arising from the field of political science, but rather the political (and lobbying) practice as well as discretionary decisions of the Ministry are shaping the development of theory. To meet those two purposes of this paper, in the first part, a historical analysis and review of relevant articles on the state of the discipline (or disciplines) covering the field of political science will be performed. In the second part, a set of case studies will provide evidence of the “reverse” process of shaping the theoretical foundations of social science disciplines. Those considerations will provide insight into the case of “public policies” which were lobbied by a small coterie influencing the 2013 reform of the higher education system and the case of “international relations” which were first lobbied and then theorized by the lobbying coterie.

## Political science and Polish theory of politics

The Polish theory of political science has developed in three stages. The first one was the interwar period of integration and consolidation. Its drivers were academics and experts who were arranging private institutions devoted to the development of political science and its theory. Most notable institutions were set up in Warsaw, Krakow, and Lviv.

The Warsaw School of Political Science was established in 1915<sup>1</sup> and by the 1930' became the biggest private higher institution in Poland.<sup>2</sup> This school is also presented in Polish historiography as a central institution for the development of political science in the interwar period. It was also the first and only private higher education institution that was awarded full academic rights before WW2, even though it was just in 1939. Other important institutions worth mentioning were: the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University of Warsaw, the School of Political Science at the Jagiellonian University, and the School of Political Science in Lviv.<sup>3</sup> The latter was established as early as 1905. Most of the pre-independence and interwar period establishments were somehow connected with faculties of law and legal studies institutions. So were the most notable political scientists of that time: Edmund Jan Reyman, Antoni Peretiatkowicz, and Adam Heydel, to name just a few. Most of them are even today considered mostly as lawyers or even economists, e.g. Heydel. But their work set foundations for non-Marxist Polish political science of that time.

The theory and perspectives of the interwar period political science were described in the Encyclopedia of Political Science. A never fully finished, four volume work. This enormous work was a group effort of many early political scientists of that time. It was edited by Edmund Jan Reyman and Władysław Grabski, and published by the Warsaw School of Political Science. The perspectives and analysis provided in this publication can be perceived – retrospectively – as done under the institutional research program.<sup>4</sup>

The second stage of development of political science and its theory began after World War II. The fall of Poland into the Soviet sphere of influence changed the way political science was approached in the country. Firstly, the Warsaw School of Political Science was seized by the communists and shortly after the war reorganized into a school for the communist party members. It was the end of the independence of political science as a discipline. Soon, regime faculties and schools of political science were established at most public universities, such as the University of Warsaw or Jagiellonian University. This new period of development was an era of Marxist theory. All work was

1. B. Włodarski, *W stronę modernizmu – z dziejów warszawskiej Szkoły Nauk Politycznych 1915-1939*, "Politeja", 2015, No. 8 (39), pp. 387–413.

2. J. Koredczuk, *Zarządzanie prywatnymi szkołami wyższymi w Polsce w okresie międzywojennym*, in: *Zarządzanie Szkołą Wyższą*, eds. J. Blicharz, A. Chrisidu-Budnik, A. Sus, E-Wydawnictwo. Prawnicza i Ekonomiczna Biblioteka Cyfrowa. Wydział Prawa, Administracji i Ekonomii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego 2014, pp. 13–20.

3. A. Zięba, *Szkoła Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, <http://ptnp.nauka.krakow.pl/historia>, (access 10.04.2023).

4. J. Szczepański, *Wstęp do nauki o polityce*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Nauki o Polityce 2018, p. 189; *Theories and methods in Political Science*, eds. D. Marsh, G. Stoker, Palgrave Macmillan 2010.

done under the Marxist paradigm. It was the only accepted and official pattern of communist political science. But even though it was an official and only accepted one scholars were able to provide a good insight into liberalism, democracy, and other so-called Western issues. It was done only after an invocation to Marx and glorification of the Marxist approach. In that sense, an analysis of Western ideas was usually done only to provide criticism. Even though it was usually not connected directly to the main course of study and had rather ceremonial purposes.

The most notable researchers of that time involved in political science, professors: Seidel, Baszkiewicz, Ryszka, Gebethner – all were lawyers. Some, e.g. Zemmerling, were historians. That affected the development of political theory. Firstly, it was a Marxist one; secondly, it was still connected with the traditional institutional approach. Secondly, since many of the notable political scientists had been trained as historians or lawyers writing about history, the descriptive mode of writing was dominant. The most notable theoretical and methodological work of that time was “Introduction to the Political Science: Methodological Remarks” by Franciszek Ryszka.<sup>5</sup> This work introduced some Western approaches – mostly French, but in great part was a lecture on the state of the art of the fully developed, late Polish, Marxist political science.

The last, third period of development was connected with the time of transformation and liberalization of Polish politics. Along the new political spectrum in Poland,<sup>6</sup> new theories were introduced – mostly imported from the West. The former Marxist faculties at public universities were refurbished. But generally speaking, most of the old professors remained in the chairs – with those most notable, such as Baszkiewicz, Ryszka, or Gebethner. They were also supported by not so long ago promoted doctors (Klementewicz, Karwat, Wojtaszczyk, Sadurski). Some of those academics promoted in the 1980’ and early 1990’ were still providing expertise under the Marxist paradigm. But the most important issue was that most of the works done in the early transformation time were descriptive. It was mostly due to the lack of development and usage of methodology and theory during the communist times.

This lack of quality of research (shared among some social sciences) was one of the main reasons for the future reforms of the process of evaluation of Polish universities. It was also a reason for publishing work that was to evaluate state of the art and indicate misconduct in Polish political science.<sup>7</sup>

5. F. Ryszka, *Wstęp do nauki o polityce. Uwagi metodologiczne*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1980.

6. J. Szczepański, *Ideowe podstawy polskiego spectrum politycznego*, Aspra 2019; J. Szczepański, P. Kalina, *The Road to Autocratization? Redefining Democracy in Poland*, “Studia Europejskie - Studies in European Affairs”, 2019, No. 3, pp. 121-132.

7. R. Skarżyński, *Podstawowy dylemat politologii: dyscyplina nauki czy potoczna wiedza o społeczeństwie. O tradycji uniwersytetu i demarkacji wiedzy*, Temida 2012.



## 21<sup>st</sup>-century reforms of the discipline

The reforms of higher education and science sectors in Poland in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are permanent. Starting with the early 2000's, every single government has been trying to change the way the Polish academia was organized. Counting only "big" reforms we can speak of the reforms of 2012 (so-called Kudrycka's reform),<sup>8</sup> 2014 (reform of the curricula),<sup>9</sup> 2018 (so called Gowin's reform or the Constitution for Science),<sup>10</sup> 2022 (technical reform).<sup>11</sup>

Most of the reforms were addressing the issues of the organization of the studies and the way public universities would be financed, though occasionally also the way the institutional science and the list of disciplines that were recognized by the state. In Poland, scientific and artistic disciplines are (from the legal point of view) established and listed under the Minister's executive order. He can only add and/or cross out any of the items on that list. For the academia, this list is important for two reasons: first, only recognized disciplines can be evaluated and financially supported through governmental subsidies; second, Ph.D. candidates can pursue their doctorates exclusively in established disciplines. That last remark is also true for the habilitation (second stage doctorate or science doctorate – which is an acknowledgment of a scholar's readiness for being a Ph.D. supervisor).

The reforms of 2014 and 2018 have been extensively analysed in the Polish academic community. Several papers – especially in the field of social sciences and then mostly linked to political science, public policy, security studies, or administrative studies have been published. In that sense, there is no reason to review all of them, but for the further course of this paper it is important to address case studies derived from those papers.<sup>12</sup> First, the academics-lobbyists have been able to introduce "public policy" to the ministerial list. That has given rise to a series of debates whether there was a relationship between public policy and political science. It was a valid question as in Poland public policy was presented not as a study of government and its actions but as a way of emancipated studies on welfare state. The second attempt has been done just recently and caused formal emergence of International Studies (IR) as a separate discipline.

8. Obwieszczenie Marszałka Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 26 marca 2012 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia jednolitego tekstu ustawy - Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym, Dz.U. 2012 poz. 572, [Notice of the Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 26 March 2012 on the publication of the consolidated text of the Act on Higher Education, Journal of Laws 2012, item 572].

9. Ustawa z dnia 11 lipca 2014 r. o zmianie ustawy - Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym oraz niektórych innych ustaw, Dz.U. 2014 poz. 1198, [Act of 11 July 2014 amending the Act on Higher Education and certain other acts, Journal of Laws 2014, item 1198].

10. Ustawa z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. - Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, Dz.U. 2018 poz. 1668, [Act on Higher Education and Science of 20 July 2018, Journal of Laws 2018, item 1668].

11. Ustawa z dnia 12 maja 2022 r. o zmianie ustawy - Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce oraz niektórych innych ustaw, Dz.U. 2022 poz. 1117, [Act of 12 May 2022 amending the Act on Higher Education and Science and certain other acts, Journal of Laws 2022, item 1117].

12. J. Szczepański, *Nauka o polityce w świetle Ustawy 2.0 i aktów wykonawczych*, "Przegląd Europejski", 2020, No. 1, pp. 9–19; J. Szczepański, *Dyscyplina nauk o polityce. Status teoretyczny i prawny*, "Społeczeństwo i Polityka.

## Inconsistency between theory and regulations

The current classification of fields and disciplines of science and disciplines of the arts<sup>13</sup> are as follows:

### 1. Humanities:

- 1) archaeology,
- 2) ethnology and cultural anthropology,
- 3) philosophy,
- 4) history,
- 5) linguistics,
- 6) literary studies,
- 7) culture and religion studies,
- 8) arts studies,
- 9) Polish studies.

### 2. Engineering and technology:

- 1) architecture and urban planning,
- 2) automation, electronics, electrical engineering, and space technologies,
- 3) information and communication technology,
- 4) safety engineering,

Pismo edukacyjne”, 2013, No. 2 (35), pp. 131–148; P. Załęski, *Subdyscypliny empiryczne w naukach o polityce*, “Społeczeństwo i Polityka. Pismo edukacyjne”, 2012, No. 3 (32), pp. 161–178; W. Jakubowski, Ł. Zamęcki, *Status teoretyczny nauk o polityce publicznej*, “Społeczeństwo i Polityka. Pismo edukacyjne”, 2012, No. 3, pp. 149–160; J. Woźnicki, *Nowa dyscyplina – “nauki o polityce publicznej” usytuowana w dziedzinie nauk społecznych*, “Nauka”, 2012, No. 1, pp. 133–151; R. Szarfenberg, *Nauki o i dla polityki publicznej: podejście teoretyczno-metodologiczne*, <http://rszarf.ips.uw.edu.pl/pdf/npp1.1.pdf>, (access 20.04.2023).

13. Rozporządzenia Ministra Edukacji i Nauki z dnia 11 października 2022 r. w sprawie dziedzin nauki i dyscyplin naukowych oraz dyscyplin artystycznych, Dz.U. 2022 poz. 2202, [Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science of 11 October 2022 on fields of science, scientific and artistic disciplines, Journal of Laws of 2022, item 2202].

- 5) biomedical engineering,
- 6) chemical engineering,
- 7) civil engineering, geodesy, and transport,
- 8) materials engineering,
- 9) mechanical engineering,
- 10) environmental engineering, mining, and energy,
- 11) heritage protection and conservation of monuments.

3. Medical and health sciences:

- 1) medical biology,
- 2) pharmacology and pharmacy,
- 3) medical sciences,
- 4) physical culture science,
- 5) health sciences.

4 Family studies:

- 1) family studies.

5. Agricultural sciences:

- 1) forestry,

- 2) agriculture and horticulture,
  - 3) food and nutrition technology,
  - 4) animal science and fisheries.
6. Social sciences:
- 1) economics and finance,
  - 2) socio-economic geography and spatial management,
  - 3) security studies,
  - 4) social communication and media studies,
  - 5) political and administrative sciences,
  - 6) management and quality studies,
  - 7) law,
  - 8) sociology,
  - 9) educational sciences,
  - 10) canon law,
  - 11) psychology,
  - 12) international relations.
7. Natural sciences:

- 1) astronomy,
- 2) biotechnology,
- 3) computer and information sciences,
- 4) mathematics,
- 5) biological sciences,
- 6) chemical sciences,
- 7) physical sciences.

**T**he current state of legal regulations distinguishes at least three disciplines that were usually connected with political science: political science and administration, security studies, and international relations. Those emerged from the former state of the regulation that addressed such disciplines as political science, public policies, security studies, and administration (as a part of a broader family of legal studies).

## Regulations shaping theory

**A**s it has been mentioned above, a direct link between changes in theory, institutional science and regulations may be traced rather easily. The first case study shows how the introduction of public policy affected Polish political science faculties and the discipline as a whole.

**I**n 2014, a group of academic lobbyists provided expertise and arranged a set of popular publications to promote the idea of public policy in Poland. This idea was supported by the claim that public policy was an established discipline in the Anglosphere and was also present in United Nations documents. This claim was recognized by the Ministry and a new discipline was written into the executive act. Following that political decision several articles – mainly by the academics involved in the creation of the new discipline – were published (see reference above). The political science institution was also reorganized as the new discipline affected the way the researchers were to conduct their studies. It was visible especially at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Studies of the

University of Warsaw. There, some political scientists researching social policies were actively endorsing the new disciplines and the need to promote new doctorates in public policies. In 2016, the Polish Society of Public Policy was also established to coordinate the development of the discipline and the theory. But at the same time, a question about the subject of the study and theoretical independence rose.<sup>14</sup> Ryszard Szarfenberg suggested that this pursuit of the development of the new and in the Polish conditions artificial discipline was a dead end for the development of social policy studies. Indeed it was. Public policy in the Polish edition was just a copy of a name, a label that was attached to a subfield of political science. It had now theoretical support. At the same time, the brief period of the formal existence of public policies left an ineradicable trace in the Polish academia. First of all, some Ph.D. candidates were promoted in that discipline; secondly, a new society to promote a non-existing discipline was organized; and lastly a new panel in the National Center for Science was organized. The panel is solely devoted to granting proposals within the field of public policies. That one last thing was probably the greatest gain of the supporters of the discipline, which was partially promoted as a practical side of politics, rather than a theoretical one like traditional political science. All in all, the lobbied and short-lasting public policy was the first attempt to reorganize political science and the first one that was followed by the development of a theoretical justification. These ex post actions were to be repeated in the upcoming amendments.

The second case can be pinned to between 2018 and 2022. It was connected with the introduction of the new comprehensive legislation on the higher education and research sector in Poland – the so-called Constitution for Science. It was followed by several executive acts, one of which was a list of officially recognized disciplines and its amendment of 2022. The first unsuccessful lobbying action carried out by public policy researchers was to introduce the discipline of political science, public policies, and administration. This attempt – even though introduced in an early executive act proposal – was rejected by political scientists as a whole. The Ministry proposed to introduce a new discipline of political science and administration. That was a direct reference to the Anglosphere idea of political science and public policy (understood as the study of government which in Poland was always part of administration). This proposal was encountered with mixed reviews. Administration in Poland had always been part of legal studies. On the other hand, due to additional career opportunities most of the students were opting for law rather than administration. That meant administration was not even offered as a doctoral course in more than three universities in Poland. All that meant administration was merged with law as it was a virtually abandoned discipline and the field was explored by lawyers doing administrative law or political scientists doing governmental studies.

14. R. Szarfenberg, *Nauki o polityce publicznej - szansa na rozwój czy ślepa uliczka badań polityki społecznej?*, "Polityka Społeczna", 2017, No. 5-6, pp. 27-31.

As the emergence of political science and administration and the detachment of administration from legal studies was perceived as rather technical and the Ministry provided a guidance on how to proceed with this change on the institutional level. In that way, administrative researchers doing administrative law were recognized as lawyers and all others as political scientists. In that sense, no new theory was developed, and no further institutional changes were introduced. Most of the political science faculties and the teams already doing research in the field of administration/governmental studies continued as beforehand. The second part of that case was more problematic. In the Polish theoretical tradition, international relations were usually recognized as a transnational dimension of political science. Groups advocating independence of IR indicated that the research subject of political science and international relations was different as the former is doing with power in the sense of authority (Pol. *władza*), and the latter with power in the sense of might (Pol. *potęga*). This distinction has only a semantic dimension and makes sense in Polish (which can be easily seen in the previous sentence).

Nonetheless, the new discipline was successfully lobbied in 2022. It was a second attempt; the first one took place in the 2010s and was accompanied by an attempt to emancipate European studies. Had it been successful, this early attempt would have left the field of political science divided into four disciplines: political science, public policies, international relations, and European studies. The reform of 2022 was just like the reform of 2014 and was followed by a series of research publications<sup>15</sup> and seminars that were to promote the new discipline.<sup>16</sup> The main institutional animator of that movement was the Polish Society of International Studies. Its executive members, e.g. Edward Halizak or Marek Pietraś, were in direct contact with the Ministry to support the idea of development.

In that sense, the entire procedure described and analysed in the first case study was repeated. The new discipline brought about an opportunity to promote Ph.D. candidates in it; to find financial support; to establish new institutions within the academia. That last part is still under question as managers of science are now used to frequent changes in the register of disciplines and are not so willing to organize new institutes or faculties at their universities.

## Conclusions

Polish social sciences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are a field of a game for lobbyists, most of whom are also researchers. It is a play of entering new disciplines into the official ministerial register – as the appearance in it can be a door to new financing opportunities and better academic position – as it will

15. J. Czaputowicz, *Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2022.

16. Right after the publication, a seminar *Teorie dyscypliny naukowej Stosunki Międzynarodowe* (University of Warsaw 2022) was organized, during which main supporters of the new discipline could promote the idea of a separate theory of IR.

allow you to promote doctorates in your niche. It is also a play to exercise what was called by Pierre Bourdieu “symbolic violence”. Having one’s own discipline recognized by law means power.

**T**he selected case studies show that the emergence of new disciplines is usually a work of small coteries. It is also problematic as the ongoing reform is likely to wipe out those new, sometimes ephemeral disciplines from the register. The analysed case studies show also that institutional science is more and more skeptical as regards recognition of new disciplines. The price to pay is too high when it comes to establishing new faculties and institutes that may be – after a subsequent reform – doubling the already existing ones.

**T**he theory and science policy in Poland are interconnected. Even though theorists are usually acting retroactively, the great number of attempts the lobbyists are taking – just like in the case of international relations, allows theory to (even partially) proceed with new legislation.

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