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Anna Kronlund

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From political science to politicizing science? A study of the discipline's presence in the debates of the United States Congress, 1981–2021

Anna Kronlund 

Department of Philosophy, Contemporary History and Political Science, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

ABSTRACT

This article examines how politicians consider political science and political scientists in the United States and more specifically in the United States Congress. The main idea is to examine Congressional debates in the specific timeline starting from the 1980s with an explicit focus on the argumentation of members of Congress. The interest lies in examining how members include references to political science or political theory in the debates and to what extent scholars and their works are cited in the debates. The article contributes to the discussions of political science as a discipline in the United States. Furthermore, it examines how the relationship between political science and politics is not only understood but also defined in the political debates of the United States. The article aims to shed light on how politicians are invoking political science and scholars in plenary session debates in contrast to employing expert statements in committee hearings or in the process of drafting bills and other governmental policies.

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Introduction

The question of how the United States (US) Congress performs has close ties to political science as a discipline. It could be even argued that political science as a discipline¹ in the United States has its roots at least partly in the study of national institutions – their specific institutional characteristics, legal features, and their larger role or acts in the political system.² Further, politicians and scholars such as President Woodrow Wilson have had a profound effect on how the constitutional government, the separation of powers, and the role of the US Congress have been discussed. Much of the discussion on political science in scholarly works has focused on the

CONTACT Anna Kronlund  anna.kronlund@utu.fi  Department of Philosophy, Contemporary History and Political Science, University of Turku, FI-20014 Turun yliopisto, Finland

¹One of the benchmarks for political science as a discipline in the United States was when the American Political Science Association was established in 1903.

²S. Binder, 'Legislative Productivity and Gridlock', in F.E. Lee and E. Schickler (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 641–2.

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history of scientific discussions³ and the relationship between political science and politics.⁴ This article aims to provide a different, empirical, view by relying on Congressional debates to examine politicians' views on political science and how political scientists and their scholarly works are considered in these debates. By employing political speeches as research material, the article will offer a novel angle to studying the in-between of politics and science, which has interested scholars also previously.⁵

At a time when scientific advice and science itself have become an increasingly prominent part of political decision-making,⁶ it is relevant to examine how politicians take scholars, namely political scientists⁷ (and discipline), into account. The article will also narrate the discussions in which politicians tend to count on political science or related scholars. The content analysis relies on first tracking down the corpus of materials as explained in more detail in the research setting part and then by close reading examining the references, their contexts, and substance.

Political science as a discipline has been both appraised and criticized in political debates in the United States⁸ and it is interesting to see how it is referred to in the debates apart from the specific science funding perspective. Further, the discussion of what is considered 'political' and 'science' in the US political debates will be touched upon.⁹ The idea in this article is to use specific keywords of 'political science' and 'political theory' as well as certain prominent figures among political science scholars including 'classics' such as Woodrow Wilson and Harold Laswell with a list of more contemporary scholars to examine how political scientists and political science play a role in the US Congressional debates. This article focuses on what these can tell us about the relationship between political science, politicians, and politics in the United States, as well as on how the field is seen by non-academics.

The discussion related to science has sparked in the United States at regular intervals in recent years, for example, regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, but also earlier in the context of policy questions such as climate change research and how the Environmental Protection Agency could employ studies to guide regulation of pollution¹⁰ or health-related issues, such as stem cell research,¹¹ to mention a few. Overall, the attitude toward science has

³See, for example, J. Farr, J. Hacker & N. Kazez. 'The Policy Scientist of Democracy: The Discipline of Harold D. Lasswell', *American Political Science Review* 100, (2006), DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003055406062459>, pp. 579–87. Accessed via Proquest.

⁴M. Solovey, 'The Impossible Dream: Scientism as Strategy against Distrust of Social Science at the U.S. National Science Foundation, 1945–1980', *International Journal for History, Culture, and Modernity* 7, (2019), DOI: <http://doi.org/10.18352/hcm.554>, pp. 209–38.

⁵See, for example, S. Jasanoff, *States of Knowledge. The Co-production of Science and the Social Order* (London, 2004).

⁶See, for example, A. Moore, *Critical Elitism. Deliberation, Democracy, and the Problem of Expertise* (Cambridge, 2017).

⁷It should be noted that 'political scientist' here is understood broadly including, for example, international relations scholars.

⁸See, A. Kronlund, 'The Colonialism of Partisanship. Politics of National Interest and the National Science Foundation in the US Congressional Debate', in N. Kauppi and K. Palonen (eds), *Rhetoric and Bricolage in European Politics and Beyond: The Political Mind in Action* (Cham, 2022), pp. 117–43.

⁹For more about the discipline of political science in the United States and its history, see D. Easton, 'Political Science in the United States: Past and Present', *International Political Science Review* 6, (1985), pp. 133–52; D. Easton, 'Political Science in the United States: Past and Present', in J. Farr and R. Seidelman (eds), *Discipline and History. Political Science in the United States* (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp. 291–309; J.S. Dryzek, 'Revolutions Without Enemies: Key Transformations in Political Science', *American Political Science Review* 100, (2006), pp. 487–92. Accessed via Proquest.

¹⁰L. Friedman, 'E.P.A. to Review Attacks on Science', *The New York Times*, 24 March 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/24/climate/trump-science-epa.html>.

¹¹S. Locke, 'Stem cells were one of the biggest controversies of 2001. Where are they now?' *Vox*, 15 December, 2014. <https://www.vox.com/2014/12/15/7384457/stem-cell>.

become a more polarized question among the public, meaning that confidence in science has grown among Democrats but at the same time decreased among Republicans.¹² While this article does not directly discuss the relationship between science and politics or look at the related party politics, it provides insights for the discussions concerning expertise and political decision-making in the United States. The article will first briefly present the research setting and the main corpus of materials to give the reader a more detailed view of the connection between science, scholars, and politics. It will then move on to consider social sciences and more particularly political science debates in the United States after the Second World War to provide a view of how political science and politics are related and how these have been considered in the United States. Then the focus will be on the actual empirical analysis. The concluding remarks section will bring up different sections together and illustrate how the members of Congress referenced scholarly works and scholars and what kinds of insights these references provide for the interplay between science and politics.

Research setting

To track down the relevant figures in the debates a group of scholars was searched for from the Congressional Record (see the list in the appendix). The first and second groups of scholars included those who have studied Congress and written about it (including, inter alia, Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann) and prominent public figures who often comment on US politics (for example, E.J. Dionne).¹³ The third group consisted of ‘classical political thinkers’ (including Hannah Arendt, Hans Morgenthau, and Leo Strauss). The fourth group included scholars who were added to the analysis after the author discovered the references made in the Congressional debates (for example, political theorist Russell Kirk). The timeframe of the search, from 1981 until 2021, had an effect on the search results regarding the references.¹⁴ The first remarks for ‘political science’ appear on 7 January 1874 as searched via Congress.gov (Record available online since 1873 via Congress.gov as of 3 July 2023).¹⁵ The highest number of ‘political science’ references (403) can be found during the 91st Congress (1969–1970).¹⁶

While this is by no means an exhaustive list of scholars, it includes a wide range of variety in terms of timeline and backgrounds of the scholars.¹⁷ Miller et al. have researched the ‘Hall of Fame’ of political scientists in which the criteria of fame correlated with the number of publications in the *American Political Science Review*. Works of reference literature, such as Utter and Lockhart’s *American Political Scientists. A Dictionary*

¹²See the General Social Survey, *uchicago news*, 28 January 2022, <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/trust-science-becoming-more-polarized-survey-finds>.

¹³Affiliations are announced as they were at the time of writing this article. See more details about the search terms at the end of this article. The timeframe for the analysis was from the beginning of 1981 until 7 August 2021.

¹⁴The timeframe was kept limited to examine more closely the argumentation rather than only tracking down the number of references to each of the scholars or fields in the debates. While the timeline is ‘superficial’, it includes four decades and brings a more historical view and is also useful with this type of analysis when the idea is not to go systematically through all the references but to find examples of different types of uses.

¹⁵Representative Benjamin Franklin Butler (R-MA): ‘Mr. Speaker, I recognize fully, the importance of the bill now before the House, as well as to the legislation of the country as to the great interests of political science, and the spread of just ideas of the equality of men in all nations of the earth.’ (US House of Representatives, 7 January 1874, 455)

¹⁶A search for ‘political science’ and Congressional Record, altogether 7, 737 results since the 43rd Congress (1873–74) as of July 3, 2023.

¹⁷A.H. Miller, C. Tien & A.A. Peebler, ‘The American Political Science Review Hall of Fame: Assessments and Implications for an Evolving Discipline’. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 1, (2019), pp. 73–83.

(2002) was also consulted in selecting the search terms. However, the intention of this article is not to systematically list all the relevant figures or to create any 'rankings' but rather to give a snapshot of examples of references in the Congressional debates, which explains the sample of scholars to be examined in this article.¹⁸

Interestingly, for example, many references to E.J. Dionne's writings indicate how the members of Congress closely follow the journalists and opinion writers. For example, Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) noticed during the discussions on the Child Custody Protection Act in 2006 how he tries to read the newspapers thoroughly on a daily basis: 'I am one who reads the editorials. I read people such as E.J. Dionne, who represents important, progressive writers. But I am a fan of Robert Novak. That may surprise someone, but I read Robert Novak's column whenever it appears.'¹⁹ Reid's reference to columnist Novak is explained by the fact that he was representing a more conservative view in his political commentaries. Apart from his journalistic writings, Dionne was also referred to in the Congressional debates because of his *Why Americans Hate Politics* published in 1991 as in Senator Edward M. Kennedy's remarks about polarizing issues such as the Defense of Marriage Act.²⁰

Prominent figures such as Woodrow Wilson and Henry Kissinger gather multiple references because of their visible role and status in politics. References to their scholarly works are thus harder to pick out. There were some exceptions, however, that the author came across in connection with the 'political science' search. For example, during the discussion of the House Committee proceedings for the 103rd Congress, Representative Al Swift (D-WA) recalled how before the presidency Woodrow Wilson was a professor in political science. In his scholarly work, he 'wrote that the House in session was the House on display. The House in Committee was the House at work.'²¹ The reference is to Wilson's book *Congressional Government. A Study in American Politics*, which was originally published in 1885.²² In general, members of Congress made references in the debates just by mentioning the scholar's name (and their argument) but sometimes also mentioning their specific research or publication, as discussed above. Newt Gingrich, the Republican representative from Georgia at the time, brought some books with him during the House discussion of the unemployment problems in 1991. The books that Gingrich carried with him were the already mentioned Dionne's book in addition to *Minority Party*, by political reporter Peter Brown; *The Other Path*, by economist Hernando DeSoto; *The Growth Experiment*, by economist Lawrence B. Lindsey; *The Way the World Works*, by economist and Ronald Reagan's advisor Jude Wanniski; and *New York Unbound*, by political science professor Peter D. Salins. According to Gingrich, he brought these books with him on the floor because they aptly sampled literature giving the message of a 'free enterprise society'²³ thus highlighting the value of scholarly works in guiding policy thinking.

¹⁸G.H. Utter & C. Lockhart, *American Political Scientists. A Dictionary* (2nd edition) (New York, 2002).

¹⁹US Senate, 3 August 2006, S8673.

²⁰US Senate, 10 September 1996, S10108.

²¹US House of Representatives, 20 March 1993, 6780.

²²The quote was not in the quotation marks in the Congressional Record but is here to indicate that it is a direct quote from Representative Swift. The original quote from Wilson is 'Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work.' (As in Wilson 1885, 79 accessed via Archive.org)

²³US House of Representatives, 23 October 1991, 28279.

The Congressional Record often includes additional materials, or references to these, such as newspaper editorials, journal articles, and letters sent to the members of Congress, or other expert statements that the members of Congress include in the debate to emphasize support or perhaps clarify their argumentation. For example, Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) as a part of his remarks on filling the Supreme Court vacancies²⁴ referred to a letter sent by scholars to President Barack Obama.²⁵ The group ('signers of the letter') mentioned by Durbin included historians (Robert Dallek, Doris Kearns Goodwin, David M. Kennedy), political scientists (Mann and Ornstein), and a legal scholar (Geoff Stone). These kinds of references were, however, excluded from the analysis of this article. Similarly, other types of mentions or references to scholars including honouring prominent scholars, institutions, or anniversaries included in the Record were excluded from the analysis.

Overall mentions related to 'political science,' 'political theory'²⁶ and political scientists are referred to in the Congressional debates in two ways, which are particularly useful for this article's perspective: first, concerning the substance of legislation or policy and supporting their argument, and second, stressing their argument regarding how institutions, namely Congress, are expected to work, its rules and practices, partisanship, party politics and so on. The analysis of this article will mainly focus on these two different aspects following the sources. The references thus coincide with the different views of how political science as a discipline has been regarded in the United States.²⁷

By further focusing on how the members of Congress employ the concept of political science (and theory) it is possible to draw on how diversely these concepts are understood and strategically used as a part of their argumentation. For example, the term 'political' in connection to science is often used in debates as an adjective to describe something as dubious, controversial, or not objective and scientific. Senator John McCain's (R-AZ) argument during the discussion on the Energy Policy Act of 2005 aptly illustrates the point: 'Historically, we have been able to exempt science as a political tool. But it now sounds like some have taken it upon themselves to turn climate change science into political science. That is unacceptable.'²⁸

Members of Congress have a habit of using the conception of 'political science' when discussing topics that attract polarized views, including environmental regulations and protection. In this context, 'political' is used as an adjective to indicate some kind of ideological standpoint as separate from an 'objective' and 'sound science'. The remarks do not thus concern 'political science' but 'political' science. During the discussion of PFAS chemicals and their regulation in 2020, Representative John Shimkus (R-IL) stressed this aspect when noticing it was the first time in United States history that members of

²⁴US Senate, 9 March 2016, S1383.

²⁵A group of historians and scholars sent a letter to President Obama about the Supreme Court vacancy occasioned by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia.

²⁶It is common to have subfields including American government and politics, comparative politics, electoral behavior and public opinion, federalism, and intergovernmental relations, formal or positive theory, international relations and international organization, legislative politics, methodology, political economy, political parties, and interest groups, political psychology and socialization, political thought and philosophy, presidential or executive politics, public administration, public law and judicial politics, public policy, urban and ethnic politics, women and politics, feminist theory. (The list is included in Utter & Lockhart, *American Political Scientists*) However, this article uses a general conception of political theory and political science.

²⁷See, for example, Binder, 'Legislative Productivity and Gridlock'; Farr et al., 'The Policy Scientist of Democracy'.

²⁸US Senate, 22 June 2005, S7021.

Congress were ‘labelling a chemical formulation as toxic politically using political science, not science’.²⁹ These examples also suggest that simply picking up the reference or distant reading is not enough for the analysis, but a closer reading of the debates is needed to clarify the purpose of the reference to either ‘political science’ or ‘political’ science.

Much like McCain in his argument cited above, Jeff Duncan (R-SC) spoke about ‘simple science’ during his remarks in the House of Representatives in 2005. He mentioned how the experienced tragedy of hurricanes should not be adopted ‘to advance or promote political theories’ in addition to mentioning, ‘the overly simple political science of global warming is just not accurate here’.³⁰

Other references to ‘political science’ in the debates that could be mentioned are claims such as ‘It does not require a PhD in political science’ or ‘You do not have to be a political science student in order to understand’. Members of Congress were also keen to ‘educate’ their colleagues regarding political science. During the debate on the concurrent resolution on the budget for the fiscal year 2002, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) announced to the speaker that the remaining three minutes he had left, he wanted to give both to his colleagues and to those who were following the debate a political science 101 introductory course on how you can evaluate what politicians say and what they mean.³¹ Furthermore, there are other rhetorical connotations given both political science and political theory that will be looked at more closely later in this article.

The link between politics and political science has been defined in the Congressional debates in many ways. During her extension of remarks in 1983, Representative Geraldine A. Ferraro (D-NY) referred to a meaning formulated by the American Political Science Association (APSA) in terms of allowing a young professional to participate in the Congressional Fellowship Programme and thus in the political process. She further stressed how the participants ‘had a chance to see how practical politics and political theory work hand in hand to create our Nation’s legislative system’. For Ferraro, the programme was important in raising the participants’ awareness, especially ‘in an era when public discourse tends to foster distrust and lack of confidence in our governmental institutions’.³² Other remarks regarding APSA also noticed the fellowship programme in maintaining the strong connections between academia and Congress.³³ The argument on behalf of connecting political institutions with politics and political science as an academic exercise has thus remained part of the discussions, following Harold Lasswell’s thought ‘Political science as policy science, par excellence’ from 1956.³⁴

Political science and the politics of science

The defining feature of political science in the United States has been the ‘turn to scientism’ in terms of behavioralism.³⁵ At the same time, however, critics have seen the field or scholars as not scientific enough, an indication of the understanding of science as

²⁹US House of Representatives, 10 January 2020, H156.

³⁰US House of Representatives, 28 September 2005, H8932.

³¹US Senate, 9 May 2001, S4568.

³²US House of Representatives, 28 July 1983, 21522.

³³That is, Ron Wyden (D-OR), 22 July 2003, S9706. References to ‘political science’ in the Congressional debates indeed included giving floor privilege to the political scientists working at the offices of the Senators to follow the debate on the floor.

³⁴Quoted in Farr et al., ‘The Policy Scientist of Democracy’, p. 580.

³⁵Dryzek, ‘Revolutions without enemies’, p. 487. See also J. R. Bond ‘The Scientification of the Study of Politics: Some Observations on the Behavioral Evolution in Political Science’, *The Journal of Politics* 69, (2007). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-250.2007.00597.x>, pp. 897–907.

bound with natural science and its methods. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, a Democrat from Rhode Island, has had a habit of speaking about climate change on the Senate floor at regular intervals. He often refers to scientists or universities researching climate change and its effects. As a part of such remarks, Senator Whitehouse made some critical comments on President Donald J. Trump's cabinet, in particular regarding the leadership of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at the time of the presidential transition in 2016. The Senator specifically addressed the position of Mr. Ebell, the director of Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute. According to Whitehouse: 'Ebell criticizes scientists for working outside their degreed fields, but it turns out he isn't even a scientist himself. After college, he studied political theory at the London School of Economics and history at Cambridge.'³⁶ According to Senator Whitehouse, Ebell, who was nominated to lead the EPA during the transition, is not in a position to criticize other scientists, since he is not a scientist himself, but has studied political theory and history instead.

While social sciences in general faced a struggle in the post-Second World War scientific context in the United States, the role of political science has been considered specifically problematic. The first National Science Foundation (NSF) grant for a political scientist was given only in 1961, although the Foundation was established already in 1950. At the time, no organizational unit at the NSF supported political science, and the grants were given on an ad hoc basis. In comparison with other social sciences, political science was 'more centrally concerned with questions of public policy and partisan controversy,' according to the NSF's Social Science divisional committee in its 1963 report.³⁷

At the time Evron Kirkpatrick, then chairing the American Political Science Association, started to challenge the imbalance of political science relative to social sciences. In a response to Kirkpatrick, Henry Riecken, then the head of the NSF's social science programme, asserted that much of the research done by political scientists was 'applied, normative or policy-oriented' and it did not meet NSF scientific norms and could therefore not pass 'the normal test of scientific investigation (objectivity, verifiability, and generality)'. In the end, political scientists were granted an opportunity to be supported through the NSF's pre- and postdoctoral fellowships in 1965. A year later, the NSF established a political science programme with its own advisory committee.³⁸ The discussion of what kind of political science research met the scientific criteria, however, continued for the years to come and to what extent political science should be funded through the NSF's funding.

In the context of Congress granting NSF funding, the amount of funding directed particularly to political science has raised discussions at regular intervals. Several Republicans both in the Senate and in the House of Representatives have suggested defunding political science and social sciences in the past. One of these efforts has been successful; an amendment to the omnibus bill was enacted in 2013 which limited political science funding only to projects 'promoting national security or the economics of the United States'. The amendment was introduced then the Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), but the amendment didn't make into the final bill. It was not without any effect, however,

³⁶US Senate, 29 November 2016, S6539.

³⁷Solovey, 'The impossible dream,' p. 222–3.

³⁸Solovey, 'The impossible dream,' p. 224.

as it hampered the ability of the National Science Foundation to fund political science projects at the time. During the Senate debate on the bill, Senator Coburn noted how important the role of the NSF is in supporting ‘scientific endeavours’. But he added how the NSF also ‘spends a considerable amount of money doing such things as funding research in political science’.³⁹ Senator further clarified his amendment by saying ‘(the) amendment ... prohibit(s) the National Science Foundation from wasting Federal resources on political science projects and redirects that to other areas within NSF that are going to give the American people a much greater return on their investment.’⁴⁰

According to Coburn, his proposal was not against political science because it was unimportant (or not scientific) but because of the spending and budget crisis the focus should have been on greater priorities that provided ‘further advancement of this country’. Senator especially emphasized the economic framework: ‘We are borrowing \$40 million a second, and we are going to fund these kinds of political studies that have no benefit except to the politicians and the political science professors because they are the ones who will read them. The average American doesn’t care.’⁴¹ Interestingly, Coburn seems to argue that political science studies could benefit politicians but not his constituency so therefore they are ‘luxury’ that the US cannot afford. The amendment was approved after a bipartisan modification. Another example of these types of targeted funding efforts appeared, for example, during the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (2015). One of the amendments to the bill aimed to reduce the National Science Foundation’s funding, and in particular funding of its Directorate for Social, Behavioural and Economic Sciences (SBE) by keeping it at the 2014 level, against the request of President Barack Obama.⁴²

Members of Congress tend to refer to political science in the contexts of party politics or differing views. For example, when commenting on social security and whether it should be privately or publicly organized, Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) reminded his colleagues in 2000: ‘For those of you who have not been in your political science class recently, the Government owning the means of production comes right out of the books of Karl Marx. We do not need the Government of the United States owning corporations.’⁴³

The members gave also other specific meanings to political science when speaking about it in parts of their argumentation. One way of doing that was to point to the irrelevance of political science when addressing certain political or administrative questions, like in the following argument by Dan Miller (R-FL) during a discussion of concern about the failed Census in 2000: ‘We believe that the President is trying to use more political science than empirical science in developing this plan.’⁴⁴ Representative Rodney P. Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) provided another view when speaking regarding the appropriations and the Environmental Protection Agency’s Superfund aimed at providing an emergency response for contaminated sites in 1997. The Representative urged ‘there is

³⁹US Senate, 20 March 2013, S1978.

⁴⁰US Senate, 20 March 2013, S1978.

⁴¹US Senate, 20 March 2013, S1978.

⁴²H.Amdt. 734 amending H.R.4660 FY 2015 aimed to reduce funding for social, behavioral, and economic sciences (SBE) by 15, 4 million and redirect the ‘saved’ funds to physical science and engineering.

⁴³US Senate, 13 June 2000, S4979.

⁴⁴US House of Representatives, 12 May 1998, H3025.

a desperate need for Superfund reform and change. First, the programme needs to be reauthorized. Secondly, it needs to promote actual cleanups based on sound science, not the rhetoric of political science.⁴⁵ Again, ‘political’ science is used somewhat skeptically as a part of the argumentation to question or oppose a policy or governmental activity.

There were, however, also references to ‘political science’ as a discipline. During the discussion on campaign reform in 1997, Senator John Glenn (D-OH) wondered about the quality of the candidates running for office at the same time wishing that they would get the ‘best and the brightest’ instead of having more people ‘deciding to take a whack at running for Congress’. He further suggested that someone could actually do ‘a poli-sci, political science doctoral thesis’ to analyze that.⁴⁶ Glenn’s argument refers to the traditional vision of political science as a field of studying US political institutions but also indicates the idea that political science could produce relevant information for Congress.

Political theory as a dysphemism and a synonym for economics

While political science as a discipline gathered diverse views in the Congressional debates, many references to ‘political theory’ were made in particular in connection to economics or more specifically taxation. Indicating that the speakers were not speaking so much about political theory as a discipline but as a synonym for a theory or model. For example, Dan Glickman (D-KS) illustrated this during the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY 1991 by saying: ‘It has been said that political theory is simply the rationalization of economic self-interest. Our intelligence agencies can and should be a powerful information base to protect our economic self-interest.’⁴⁷

In a similar vein, Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) referred to political theory in terms of an economic model during the discussion of the Supreme Court decision *U.S. v. Morrison* in 2000 when he argued how, ‘[i]n the pre-New Deal era, that broader political theory was laissez-faire economics; now it is the new federalism. In both instances, the Court has been eager to substitute its own judgment for that of the political branches democratically elected by the people to do their business.’⁴⁸

During his remarks entitled ‘No time for partisanship in foreign affairs’ in 1998, Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) alluded to political theory, however, in the context of international relations:

While I do not agree with any declaratory provisions of the resolution that imply the war powers resolution is a binding law, I do agree that we must find a way out of any potential impasse in foreign affairs between the executive and legislative branches. It would be the height of folly for us to stand here debating legal technicalities and political theory while, in Lebanon, the marines are getting shot at. What we need at this moment of crisis in Lebanon is support for a bipartisan foreign policy, not a constitutional confrontation between the Congress and the President.⁴⁹

⁴⁵US House of Representatives, 15 July 1997, H5259.

⁴⁶US Senate, 1 October 1997, S10284.

⁴⁷US House of Representatives, 17 October 1990, 30170.

⁴⁸US Senate, 16 May 2000, S3970.

⁴⁹US Senate, 20 September 1983, 24843.

Senator Goldwater's remarks do not rule out political theory, but at the same time, the Senator is implying that it has no bearing on the current foreign policy situation. The argument refers to the separation of powers and the often-contested war-making powers between Congress and the president.⁵⁰ Goldwater's argument does not suggest that there would not be time to discuss these powers in the future but the time was not right in the middle of an emergency.

Similarly, Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) when arguing against sending more troops to Iraq in 2007 noticed how 'speaking about Iraq is not an abstract political science issue'. But it has effects on 'real people in the real world'. She continued how 'today it comes out of the political science classrooms and into the Halls of Congress.'⁵¹ The Senator explicitly pointed out the difference between the academic world and political decision-making. Her remarks thus indicate an understanding of political science different from the traditional understanding of political science contributing also to the world of policymaking in the United States.

Political theory was also mentioned to undermine some issues, giving the impression that the topic discussed was just theory as opposed to practice and reality. For example, during the discussion on continuing the Appropriation Act in 2013, Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) discussed rights: 'One of our bedrock American principles is that we must protect our rights through performance of our duties. That is not some abstract political theory. This is a definition of who we are and how we must govern ourselves.'⁵² Senator Jim Wellstone (D-MN) also noted the gap between theory and practice during the discussion of a conference report on the International Revenues Service Restructuring and Reform Act. He noticed how he has taught political science classes for students, and now feels that he should refund their tuition fees for lectures on Congress. According to Wellstone, he was 'so off in terms of a lot of the decision making'. He specifically pointed out how he had neglected the conference committees as the third House of the Congress, because of their power as he had now experienced it in Congress.⁵³ In Wellstone's argument, the assumption is that students of political science should indeed be interested in the work of actual political decision-making institutions.

Bennet's remarks mentioned earlier reflected the debate on whether there is a connection between political theory and politics. As discussed in the first part of this article, political science was originally developed to study national institutions. However, the discipline has evolved from its early days, and nowadays politicians may find it controversial should the political scientists have something to say about actual politics in contrast to Senator Klobuchar's view discussed above. Senator Coburn, who suggested cutting the NSF's funding for political science, illustrated this by saying: 'What we have heard already on the blogs is that National Science Foundation political science research contributes to our understanding of democracy. I think we have pretty well figured what democracy is.'⁵⁴ Senator Coburn also commented on the issue a few years later in 2013 in connection with another appropriation act and ways in which

⁵⁰See A. Kronlund, *US Congress' Powers Under Debate: Separation of Powers and Parliamentary Politics in Times of War and Crisis* (Nomos, 2022).

⁵¹US Senate, 12 January 2007, S494.

⁵²US Senate, 8 October 2013, S7306.

⁵³US Senate, 8 July 1998, S7649-50.

⁵⁴US Senate, 13 October 2009, S10342.

the National Science Fund is funding research on ‘campaigns and elections, citizen support, and emerging and established democracies, bargaining processes, electoral choice, democratization, political change in regimes, transitions.’ According to Coburn, these are not insignificant but during the ‘budget and spending crisis’ the US was facing, the focus should be elsewhere, in efforts advancing US national interests,⁵⁵ which is consistent with Republican talking points regarding science and politics. The ‘national interests’ mainly refer to economic well-being rather than to improving the US political system or institutions.⁵⁶

Representative Dan Lipinski (D-IL) in his extension of remarks had, however, a different idea as to the relevance of political science. Lipinski mentioned that he holds a Ph.D. in political science and had been a political science professor before joining Congress.⁵⁷ According to Lipinski, the opponents’ usual assumption that political science would have no impact beneficial to the United States is not true.⁵⁸

In some remarks, however, political theory was understood as a way of understanding politics. Jack Brooks (D-TX) argued during the debate on the Implementation of Competition in Contracting Act in 1985 as follows:

By issuing its directive to the executive branch agencies to ignore the law, the administration directly challenged a basic principle of America’s constitutional form of government – the supremacy of legislatively created law. That principle has had a long development in Western civilization. With the ascent of Lockean political theory over the medieval notion of the divine right of kings, the English adopted their bill of rights in 1688. Its first article states ‘that the pretended power of suspending of laws, or the execution of laws by regall authority without consent of Parliament is illegal’.⁵⁹

Representative Brooks was particularly worried about the executive’s power to suspend the law. A link to the ideas of the Founding Fathers as well as to the Constitutional setting was made in several remarks concerning political theory. Alan Wheat (D-MS), when speaking about ‘A Living Constitution’ in 1988, noticed how ‘our Constitution is drawn from a rich history of political theory. The framers were well-versed in the writings of famous political philosophers, and many were to become famous political philosophers themselves. John Adams, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin each drew upon a great body of experience to assist in the crafting of our Constitution.’⁶⁰

Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) also discussed the constitutional separation of powers, and referred to political theory to back up his argument:

The judiciary’s authority to say what the law is points to the second major difference between the courts on the one hand and the political branches on the other. While the function of the judiciary is an exercise in reasoned judgment, the functions of the executive and legislative branches are exercises of power. There are many ways in which the Constitution and the political theory underlying it limit the exercise of that power. The Constitution

⁵⁵US Senate, 20 March 2013, S1978.

⁵⁶See Kronlund, ‘The Colonialism of Partisanship’.

⁵⁷According to the data gathered by the Congressional Research Service in the 117th Congress (2021–22), altogether 22 Representatives and four Senators had a doctoral (PhD, DPhil, EdD, or D. Min) degree. See J. E. Manning, Membership of the 117th Congress: A Profile’, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46705>.

⁵⁸US House of Representatives, 25 March 2013, E374.

⁵⁹US House of Representatives, 4 June 1985, 10289.

⁶⁰US House of Representatives, 27 January 1988, 310.

protects minority rights, and it conditions the exercise of legislative or executive power on winning elections, and that, in turn, means winning the trust of the American people – of the voters throughout the country.⁶¹

In these arguments, however, political theory is understood as (historical) political thought indicating the ideas of the founding era of the United States and referring to the overall constitutional setting.

Scholars as ‘authorities’

Members of Congress often included a reference to a researcher or scholar or their work in their remarks to provide authority and legitimize their arguments. For example, Senator Edward M. Kennedy quoted Harold Lasswell in his remarks on minimum wage in 2001: ‘It is really pretty simple to figure out. When I was a political science professor, was it Harold Lasswell’s definition that politics is all about who gets what, when, why? That is what this question is about: Who gets what, when, and why?’⁶²

Other examples can be also found when the scholars were quoted as authorities. During the debate on the Cut, Cap and Balance Act of 2011, Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) made a reference to Norman Ornstein’s views on a balanced budget: ‘Here is what Norman Ornstein, a distinguished scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, said about this: Few ideas are more seductive on the surface and more destructive in reality than a balanced budget amendment [to the constitution]. Here is why: Nearly all our states have balanced budget requirements.’⁶³

Both Ornstein and Mann were cited many times in the Congressional discussions because of their scholarly work focusing on the US Congress: ‘In 2008 Norman Ornstein, who is a congressional scholar, wrote about the broken Senate—our broken Senate—how we couldn’t function. We can go back even beyond that. In 1985, my first year, Senator Thomas Eagleton, my neighbour to the south, said that the Senate is now in a state of incipient anarchy.’ This argument was made by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) in 2013, while commenting the filibuster rule change, meaning that a simple majority is enough to approve the nomination.⁶⁴

Similarly, Senator Steny Hoyer (D-MD) referred to Mann and Ornstein’s work in his remarks ‘We fiddle while fiscal fires burn.’ ‘I’ve served in 16 Congresses. This is the least productive Congress in which I’ve served. Now, that view is shared by two scholars, Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, who wrote in a book and wrote in an op-ed: We’ve been studying Washington politics in Congress for more than 40 years and never have we seen them—meaning the Congress of the United States—as dysfunctional’, Senator said. He also referred to Mann and Ornstein’s view about the gridlock and the rival party, namely the GOP.⁶⁵

Senator Reid (D-NV) started his remarks with a reference to George Orwell’s novel ‘1984’ but then continued with a reference to Mann and Ornstein during his remarks on the Senate procedure of the discussion on the Bring Jobs Home Act in 2012:

⁶¹US Senate, 14 March 2017, S1787.

⁶²US Senate, 14 May 2001, S4882.

⁶³US Senate, 22 July 2011, S4744.

⁶⁴US Senate, 21 November 2013, S8419.

⁶⁵US House of Representatives, 12 September 2012, H5867-68.

‘The Republican leader is living in a fantasy world if he believes what he said, and I assume he does. That is why two scholars, Mann and Ornstein, a couple months ago wrote a book.’⁶⁶ The members of Congress have also recognized other scholars who have studied the US Congress. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) when discussing the proposal to change the Senate’s filibustering rules mentioned one of these studies: ‘According to a study by UCLA Professor Barbara Sinclair, in the 1960s, just 8 percent of major bills were subject to a filibuster. In the last Congress, 70 percent of major bills were targeted.’⁶⁷ The remarks refer to the experienced dysfunction of Congress and how the filibuster rule was ‘strategically’ used in order to have control of the agenda.

While the previous examples contained references to scholars in a rather concrete way, there are also other examples in which the classics are brought into the discussion to share some overall ideas. For example, many of Hannah Arendt references were made in connection to her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and were linked with remarks on political ideologies, suffering, and terrorism. References to her work on the Eichmann trial also occurred. As part of his remarks during the discussion on the Personal Responsibility, Work Opportunity and Medicaid Reorganization Act in 1996, Senator Patrick D. Moynihan (D-NY) also referred to Arendt’s work: ‘Mr. President, as I rise today, I find myself thinking of the passage with which Hannah Arendt begins her classic work, “The Origins of Totalitarianism.” She speaks of the disasters of the First World War, and then the Second World War, and now the prospects of a third, final encounter between the two remaining world powers. She says, “This moment of anticipation is like the calm that settles after all hopes have died.”’⁶⁸

Interestingly, Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has at least twice used the same quote from Arendt both during the Department Appropriation Act discussions in 2007 and again in 2008: ‘As we think about all of this, I would like to recall the words of a philosopher. Hannah Arendt once observed that nations are driven by the endless flywheel of violence, believing that one last, one final gesture will bring peace. But each time they sow the seeds for more violence.’⁶⁹ Both of these remarks were made in relation to the Iraq War and President George W. Bush’s actions. There are some other examples of repeated quotes. Senator John P. East (R-NC) referred to the same quote by Leo Strauss three times: ‘We fiddle while Rome burns. We are excused by two facts. One, we do not know we fiddle; and, two, we do not know that Rome burns.’⁷⁰ It seems that he wanted to explicate the consequences of political actions but in the context of the Appropriation Act related to the Department of Defense in this specific quote.

Representative Ron Paul (R-TX) further quoted Leo Strauss’s writings in his remarks about limited government when commenting on the connection between the ‘modern-day Neo-conservative movement, Irving Kristol, Leo Strauss and Machiavelli.’ Paul brought up specifically Strauss’s book *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. His remarks were focused on politicians who are ‘philosophically or politically connected to the neocon

⁶⁶US Senate, 18 July 2012, S5096.

⁶⁷US Senate, 11 February 2010, S571–74.

⁶⁸US Senate, 18 July 1996, S8074.

⁶⁹US House of Representatives, 24 May 2007, H5904; 19 June 2007, H5671.

⁷⁰US Senate, 28 March 1984, 6848; 18 June 1984, 16937; 8 August 1984, 22733.

philosophy'.⁷¹ Paul's overall aim was to illustrate the impact of Strauss's thinking on politicians.

Scholars were sometimes also referred to describe the political preferences of members of Congress. Russell Kirk was often seen as a 'conservative academic'. Representative Frank Wolf's remarks (R-VA)⁷² included Kirk's idea by claiming how 'Kirk urged conservatives to follow Burke's example and to be prudent. According to Kirk, 'to be 'prudent' means to be judicious, cautious, sagacious. Plato, and later Burke, instruct us that in the statesman, prudence is the first of the virtues. A prudent statesman is one who looks before he leaps; who takes long views; who knows that politics is the art of the possible.'⁷³

Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) provided another example of explaining what 'politics' actually was according to the members of Congress. During his remarks on the internet tax moratorium in 2008, he referred to Samuel P. Huntington and his writings: 'Much of our politics is about conflicts between principles with which all of us agree.' He continued by giving an example: 'If we were debating immigration, we might say "equal opportunity"' on the one hand, "rule of law" on the other. We all agree with both principles, but they conflict so we have an argument.'⁷⁴ Alexander's reference, specifically to Huntington who was mainly known for his foreign policy commentaries and the idea of 'clash of civilizations', is rather interesting during a debate on domestic politics, namely taxation, indicating that a scholar's general ideas may be relevant regardless of their specific area of expertise. Huntington also had close ties to the administration, when he, for example, acted as coordinator of security planning for the National Security Council during the Jimmy Carter presidency.

When examining the debates more closely, the author could recognize some ideas or catchwords that the politicians seemed to be aware of, one of them being Kirk's idea of politics being 'the art of the possible' (said to be originated by Otto von Bismarck in form 'Politics is the art of the possible, the science of the relative'),⁷⁵ which was also quoted in Mike Pence's (R-IN) speech during the discussion of fiscal direction in 2011.⁷⁶ Kirk's other ideas were also brought into the discussions. Joe Scarborough (R-FL) referred to Kirk's writings in his remarks: 'regardless of a country's steel output a society that forgets its values is vanquished.' This took place during the discussion of the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998, but also on at least two other occasions, including in his remarks on how Congress must not ignore abuse by China.⁷⁷ It should be pointed out, however, that many of the adopted and 'well-known' quotes are untraceable to their sources.

Representative Mark E. Souder (R-IN) also noticed in his extension of remarks how scholars such as Russell Kirk have influenced politics. Souder specifically mentioned

⁷¹US House of Representatives, 10 July 2003, H6595-60.

⁷²Statement of Conscience, US House of Representatives, 4 October 2011, H6509.

⁷³Statement of Conscience, US House of Representatives, 4 October 2011, H6509.

⁷⁴Samuel Huntington, the Harvard professor, once wrote – he was President of the American Political Science Association – that most of our politics is about conflicts between principles or among principles with which almost all of us agree.' US Senate, 25 January 2008, S315.

⁷⁵German origin: "Politik ist die Lehre vom Möglichen; ist keine Wissenschaft, wohl aber eine kunft." (H.R. von Poschinger, *Fürst Bismarck: neue Tischgespräche und Interviews, Band 1* (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1895)

⁷⁶US House of Representatives, 27 July 2011, H5589.

⁷⁷US House of Representatives, 23 June 1998, H4965; 10 October 1998, H10446.

Kirk's book *The Conservative Mind* which he considered not only 'historic', but also as book 'that has profoundly affected many of us in this chamber.' Souder further noted how this book as well as Kirk's seminars served as a part of the philosophical foundations for such significant moments in the course of American political history as the 1964 Goldwater's presidential campaign, the Reagan Revolution of 1980, and most recently, the Republican Revolution of 1994.⁷⁸

In addition to certain 'catchphrases,' there were also some quotations from well-known scholarly works. One of these was Francis Fukuyama's thesis about 'the end of history'. For example, David Dreier (R-CA) brought up during the discussion on the National Defense Authorization Act in 2012 how he was reminded of the events taking place in Georgia during the Summer 2008 Olympics. He saw the continuance of different threats: 'It is a very dangerous world. Tragically, Plato said: Only the dead have seen the end of war. And I remember that as we saw the demise of the Soviet Union, the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, many of us did believe as Francis Fukuyama famously wrote about the end of history, believing that political pluralism, the rule of law, and self-determination and democratic institutions would thrive all over the world.'⁷⁹

Not all of the references were made in connection with contemporary thinkers. One group of thinkers excluded from the focus of the search for this article, namely the Founding Fathers' ideas are perhaps the most shared ones in the debates. Robert Byrd (D-WV), for instance, claimed in his remarks in 2000 that the US is not a democracy but a republic during the discussion on the Constitutional amendment regarding the rights of crime victims. He further mentioned that if his fellow senators do not believe his argument they should go and see what Madison wrote in the Federalist Papers no. 10 or 14. During his remarks, Byrd referred other classical thinkers including Bolingbroke, Addison, Pope, Hobbes, Blackstone, and Sir Edward Coke. He also mentioned how John Locke is said to have symbolized the dominant political tradition in America before and at the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Further on, Byrd included ideas from David Hume, James Harrington, and Montesquieu in the discussion. He even went back further to discuss the political system in ancient Rome. He concluded his remarks by noting how one of the main parts of the 'great discussion of political theory today' and the proper relationship between the federal and local government is pleading the 10th amendment where some powers are reserved for the government and others to the people.⁸⁰

Members of Congress also had a habit of including more than one scholar's view in their remarks. Senator Larry Lee Pressler (R-SD) when speaking about 'the value of smaller states in US national interest calculations' in 1986 started with more classical thinkers in political theory, but ended up with more contemporary classical thinkers in international relations. It is appropriate to quote his view at length:

Mr. President, as far back as the Warring States Period – 403–221 B.C. – the Chinese political/military theorist, Sun Tzu, identified the importance of small states in the political power calculus of larger states. His work stressed the utility to a large state of limiting the

⁷⁸US House of Representatives, 24 October 2003, E2127.

⁷⁹US House of Representatives, 23 December 2012, H7371.

⁸⁰US Senate, 26 April 2000, S2913–14.

ambitions of competing large states through the formation of alliances and the employment of other diplomatic devices with smaller states. Another fourth century Chinese treatise, 'Intrigues of the Warring States,' further developed this thought. Machiavelli later echoed this analysis in his advice to the prince. More recently, Prof. Hans J. Morgenthau, the leading theorist of international politics of this century, examined the elements of power in his celebrated work, 'Politics Among Nations.' Although Morgenthau had little to say about small nation states, his discussion of balance of power includes this idea: A weak nation may well possess an asset which is of such great value for its strong ally as to be irreplaceable. [Politics Among Nations, 6th ed., p. 205.]⁸¹

The quote is a rather exceptional one because it includes an academic reference to Morgenthau's work.

Considerably few references were made to Robert A. Dahl or Nelson W. Polsby and their work in the examined timeframe despite their prominent status as established scholars.⁸² In his extension of remarks about the Employee Free Choice Act in 2007, Representative George Radanovich (R-CA), however, mentioned Dahl's work regarding voting and ballots: 'As Yale's Robert Dahl concluded: In the late nineteenth century, the secret ballot began to replace a show of hands ... [S]ecrecy [in voting] has become the general standard, a country in which it is widely violated would be judged as lacking free and fair elections.'⁸³ In addition to particular scholars, members of Congress tend to refer to the 'overall' studies as well. For example, Representative Anthony Brown (D-MD) commented during the discussion on people's access to the ballot boxes how 'a 2011 study in the American Political Science Review said changing a location of a polling place can significantly lower voter turnout.'⁸⁴ Also, Senator Moynihan referred in friendly terms to Nelson Polsby's work during the discussion on the Line Item Veto Act in 1997: 'Nelson Polsby, who happens to be a friend of many years, is Professor of Government at the University of California, Berkeley, and his many books include, most importantly in my view, his book "Congress and the Presidency." And he writes here on the line-item veto.' Moynihan also provided a direct quote from Polsby to share his point of view regarding the line-item veto.⁸⁵

References to other scholars and studies were made also in connection with US politics. In her remarks on the Electoral College in 2016, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) commented voter turnout (58 per cent) in the United States as 'ridiculous'. She further noticed how according to political science experts too many Americans still experience that their vote does not count. Boxer specifically referred to Emeritus professor in political science William Crotty's (Northeastern University) remarks on how the Electoral College 'has never worked well. The fact is that it is a terrible system that has no place in an age where democracy is ascendant. It continues to exist from sheer inertia and the protection of entrenched power. It has little to do with democracy.'⁸⁶ Regarding the substantial part of the references, the remarks concerned not only Congressional procedures but also politics within Congress. Senator Alexander, when commenting on health care legislation, referred to James Q. Wilson and his writings

⁸¹US Senate, 6 February 1986, 1824.

⁸²There were some variances in results depending on whether the search string was 'Robert Dahl' or 'Robert A. Dahl'. For the consistency of searches, the full names of the scholars were used.

⁸³US House of Representatives, 12 March 2007, E522.

⁸⁴US House of Representatives, 7 March 2019, H2544.

⁸⁵US Senate, 24 October 1997, S11178.

⁸⁶US Senate, 29 November 2016, S6532.

about ‘the law of unintended consequences’ and that it should not be considered as an excuse for doing nothing. But rather it should encourage relying on experimentalism, in other words, testing ideas first before trying to have a broader impact. The Senator further suggested that ‘if you will examine the Congressional Record, you will find that Republican Senators have been following Mr. Wilson’s advice, proposing a step-by-step approach to confronting our Nation’s challenges 173 different times during 2009. May I say that again? During 2009, Republican Senators, 173 different times on the floor of the Senate, have proposed a step-by-step approach toward health care and others of our Nation’s challenges.’⁸⁷ The Senator’s remarks were opposed to the health-care reform proposed by the Barack Obama administration.

Some of the members also referred to their own experiences as political scientists before joining Congress. For example, Senator Wellstone said during the discussion on the Balanced Budget Act to the Constitution in 1995 how he is going ‘to wear’ his ‘political science hat’.⁸⁸ Peter Hoekstra (R-MI) also commented how for a person who has studied political science, the ‘biggest disappointment’ when watching the House in its work is the ‘lack of deliberative, open process here on the floor’.⁸⁹ Senator Bennett also emphasized that his argument regarding the Balanced Budget Act to the Constitution involved political science: ‘From a pure political science point of view, I can make a brilliant case against the balanced budget amendment. I can give you all of the reasons why a balanced budget amendment is not sound politics. Unfortunately, the real world sometimes intrudes upon the world of the political scientist and causes us to do things that are perhaps not as philosophically pure as we might like.’⁹⁰ In addition to actual references to scholarly works and how these were employed, it is also essential to pay attention how members of Congress considered scholars’ academic disciplines and backgrounds. For example, regarding Russell Kirk, his influence on the modern conservative movement was emphasized and recognized. In the debates, Hans Morgenthau was considered as a scholar of international relations or international politics, but also as a representative of the ‘realist’ school. Further, Francis Fukuyama was described both as a ‘political economist’ and ‘political theorist’. Regarding Samuel P. Huntington, it was particularly mentioned he had served as a president of APSA. References were also more issue-based. For example, references to Henry Kissinger were not surprisingly mainly related to international affairs, including China.

Concluding remarks

As discussed in this article, members of Congress habitually include references to both political science and in particular scholars or their work as a part of their remarks. However, the purpose of these references does not seem to be to merely back up their arguments, but rather to make a point to support or oppose policies and actions proposed by opponents. In other words, they are adopted in terms of politicking. In many of the examined references ‘political science’ was also employed in a meaning other than that of an academic discipline, namely politicizing science. This could be seen as a continuation

⁸⁷US Senate, 21 January 2010, S62.

⁸⁸US Senate, 23 February 1995, S3009.

⁸⁹US House of Representatives, 3 May 1994, H9133.

⁹⁰US Senate, 31 January 1995, S1843.

of the discussions about the relationship between politics and political science that have existed since the beginning of the discipline's history in the United States. The members of Congress also formulated their views of what politics is by quoting scholars and their works and by arguing that political science research can be beneficial in decision-making.

Similar to political science, political theory received different interpretations in the discussions. On the one hand, it referred to economic models or understanding. On the other hand, it pointed towards the Founding Era debates, the constitutional setting, and the separation of powers. The overall discourse was also to designate something as a 'theory' and therefore not useful in 'reality' or in the 'real world' indicating the challenges the members of Congress were facing. The references made did not establish any clear pattern, nor were they particularly related to any specific topic. Rather the references to scholarly works seemed to appear in connection with a variety of topics and questions. At the same time, it seems that the references were not always that strategically made, imposing further questions of how politicians are aware of the researchers and their work and how politicians or their speech-writing personnel reach out for the information. Although the debate has been considered a key element of legislatures such as the US Congress, it has been increasingly replaced by sets of isolated remarks. Against this backdrop, it is relevant to consider whether the speeches are directed more to the constituents at home rather than to the fellow members of Congress.

References to political science or scholars can be seen, however, as a rhetorical strategy adopted by politicians in their argumentation. While not intentionally analyzing this perspective, some of the references to particular scholars or studies made seemed to appear in the argumentation towards colleagues and to legitimize one's argument. Whereas mentions of political science and even more of 'political' science had a more populist tone.

The idea of how references to political science scholars and the discipline could be looked at from both the institutional and substantial perspectives as laid out in this article was complemented by different types of references including attempts to employ scholarly work to politicize an issue on the agenda as well as to accuse one's opponents of acting politically. To some extent, this illustrates that references to scholarly works and scholars were strategically made. However, while the list of scholars included in the analysis as well as a very narrow conception of political science/theory have necessarily impacted the results, it seems that the members of Congress are not that keen to employ scholarly works or their authors in the debates. By using more computational methods it would be interesting to see whether there is a change in the longer period, to which particular policy questions the discussion of scholarly works and scholars are linked, and to what extent Congress seems to refer to scholarly works overall (in broader terms than examined in this article). One example regarding this could be the occasion of Congress's purchase and publication of the Papers of James Madison, Senator Asher Robbins (RI) remarked in the Senate that 'I consider this work of Mr. Madison, now proposed to be given to the world under the patronage of this Government, as the most valuable one to mankind that has appeared since the days when Bacon gave to the world his *Novum Organon*. That produced that revolution in analytics, which has occasioned the immense superiority of the moderns over the ancients in the knowledge of Nature, and in the improvement of the condition of human life – the fruit of that knowledge' (18 February 1837, 193).⁹¹ This kind of analysis would also

⁹¹The author would like to thank the reviewer for pointing out this specific example of Senator Robbins.

elaborate more historical use of ‘political science’ language in Congress and tell us more about the authorities and cited scholars, in this case, Francis Bacon, and how the scholars and ideas travelled across the countries and disciplines.

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Notes on contributor

Anna Kronlund, Dr., Docent in Political Science (University of Jyväskylä), is an university lecturer in political science at the University of Turku, Finland. Dr Kronlund’s research interests include US politics, especially US Congress, political debates, and concepts. More recently, she has been leading a research project that studies United Nations’ legitimacy and transnational challenges. Her monograph *US Congress’ Powers Under Debate: Separation of Powers and Parliamentary Politics in Times of War and Crisis* was published by Nomos in 2022.

ORCID

Anna Kronlund  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1093-5278>

Appendix 1

Examples of the searches from 1981 until August 7, 2021 (all references in the Congressional Record included)

Search categories in Congressional Record

Disciplines:

‘Political science’ (3701)*

‘Political theory’ (205)

Scholars:

Classics:

‘Woodrow Wilson’ (2210)

‘Henry Kissinger’ (1232)

‘Hannah Arendt’ (56)

‘Russell Kirk’ (34)

‘Hans Morgenthau’ (10)

‘Nelson W. Polsby’ (12)

‘Leo Strauss’ (8)

‘Harold Lasswell’ (5)

‘Robert A. Dahl’ (2)

Contemporaries and prominent commentaries:

‘E.J. Dionne’ (76)

‘Norman J. Ornstein’ (66)

‘Thomas E. Mann’ (36)

‘Samuel P. Huntington’ (34)

‘Francis Fukuyama’ (25)

*The number is explained by a large number of honorary remarks, tributes, etc. addressing a person who has i.e. studied political science or been a professor.

The search was made with quotation marks, ‘political science’ from the Congressional Record. The debates were searched via Congress.gov database.