

Impact Outlook

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A collaborative approach to Political Science

Professor Guy Lachapelle, Secretary General of the International Political Science Association (IPSA), talks about his vision of sharing ideas and finding solutions collectively for the future of Political Science research

The IPSA was founded in 1949. Can you talk a little about some of the changes the organisation has seen in that time and what you think the future holds for the Association?

IPSA was founded in Paris by four Political Science associations (US, Canada, France and India) under the auspices of UNESCO in 1949. The association is devoted to the advancement of Political Science through the collaboration of scholars in different parts of the world. IPSA is a member of the International Social Science Council (ISSC), has a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and with UNESCO. In 1952, IPSA had only 52 individual members. Today, we have 55 national associations and 3,500 individual members. As an international association, we constantly try to grow our membership to all parts of the World, especially in Africa, South America and Asia.

IPSA organised 24 successful World Congresses of Political Science across the world including the historic World Congress in Moscow, Russia in 1979. IPSA also organises various international events including: "IPSA-ECPR Joint Conference: Whatever Happened to North-South?" in Sao Paul in 2011; and "IPSA International Conference: Political Science in the Digital Age" in Hannover, Germany in 2017.

The IPSA Secretariat was relocated time to time when a newly elected Secretary General took over the job. That is why the IPSA Secretariat was relocated to several cities including Ottawa, Oslo and Dublin. During my tenure, IPSA established a more permanent Secretariat in Montréal in 2006. We recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of the establishment of its permanent Secretariat in Montreal with our two main partners, Concordia University and Montreal International. Since 2000, we professionalised and expanded the staff which went from two to nine employees at present.

What are the main aims and current priorities of the IPSA?

The special mandate of IPSA is to support the development of Political Science in all parts of the world, building academic networks linking East and West, North and South. IPSA's aim is to create an inclusive and global Political Science community in which all can participate. As indicated in the IPSA President Ilter Turan's Statement of Objectives, IPSA currently focuses on the five following areas: inclusiveness; achieving higher professional standards; making our services available not only to the scholarly community but to society at large; ensuring the principles of academic freedom; and efficient management.

The main activity of the IPSA Secretariat is to organise the IPSA World Congresses of Political Science, held every second year. The IPSA World Congress is the preeminent international gathering of political scientists working in academia, research and consulting who present their research over four days and over 500 panels. In July 2018, the 25th IPSA World Congress will take place in Brisbane, Australia. The historic city of Lisbon (Portugal) will host the 26th IPSA World Congress in 2020.

In addition to the World Congress, IPSA publications, including the lead journal *International Political Science Review*, the *International Political Science Abstracts*, *World Political Science*, *Participation*, and the IPSA Portal, seek to meet the needs of political scientists in different parts of the world. IPSA has recently launched IPSAMOOOC (Massive Open Online Course) which is the pilot set of Political Science MOOCs, the new format of online higher education, developed by IPSA in a joint venture with Federica.EU.

IPSA has also 49 Research Committees which are made up of scholars committed to the studying of major themes in Political Science. Their main objective is to develop research in Political Science and particular initiatives based on international co-operation.

Professor Guy Lachapelle has worked since 1984 in the Department of Political Science at Concordia University. He has been in the role of Secretary General of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) since 2000. He is also a member of the board of the Research Institute on Self-Determination of Peoples and National Independence (IRAI) and the Fondation René-Lévesque. Over the years, he published several books. His main research interests are public policy, referendum and political parties, public opinion theory, and Québec-Canada and US politics.

As part of its global mission to support and promote Political Science, IPSA holds summer schools in research methods across the globe including Tunis, Singapore, Mexico, St.Petersburg and São Paulo.

Additionally, IPSA is committed to be more present on social media and constantly updates its website and information technologies for reaching out to younger generations. We have over 115,000 followers on Facebook and 10,000 on Twitter.

How are political scientists responding to some of the most pressing challenges facing society today – topics such as migration and climate change?

We have within the IPSA structure 49 research committees working on different national and international issues. Issues such as poverty, migration, climate change, good governance, fair elections and ethical behavior are amongst the topics that several of our members are engaged in, not only in their research but also as public citizens. The themes of our world congresses reflect these concerns and we always welcome actors and stakeholders who want to share their views on how these problems can be resolved.

How can researchers from across the world be encouraged to collaborate when undertaking Political Science research?

Modern and emerging societies are facing several problems that are quite similar. Climate change, for example, affects many regions of the world. Sharing views, ideas and finding solutions together is at the heart of our research in Political Science. To do this, more international projects have been funded with the ambitious goal to compare nations and regions. In particular, the World Value Survey (WVS) which looks upon issues related and affecting all parts of the world.

What are the particular challenges facing early career scholars such as Ph.D. students and postdocs? How does IPSA work to address these?

For me graduate scholars are still facing the question of developing sound methodology, to improve their evaluation methods of public

policies, and to join an international team working in the same area. Also, from a practical viewpoint, it is still difficult for graduate students to find jobs in the academic world. The IPSA facilitates a number of Summer Schools and the main goal is to offer scholars from the Global South an opportunity to meet with top scholars who are experts in specific methodologies or in specialised research fields. It is important to establish a dialogue with our colleagues from a different part of the world to be able to understand how certain notions or concepts, such as democratic values, means to them.

What relationships does the IPSA have with other scientific associations and why are these relationships valuable?

IPSA has always developed close contact with national/regional associations - our collective members – to help and support researchers in their career and also to help associations to improve their capability to develop specific research programs. Over the last 20 years, IPSA has grown from 32 to 55 collective members. It simply reflects the will and commitment of our EC members to continue reaching out globally as a truly international organisation.

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