

SYMPOSIUM

the european political science agenda: a multilevel analysis from a country perspective

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<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-016-0102-7>; published online 9 February 2017

Abstract

This presentation introduces the analytical framework applied in this symposium for the analysis of publishing trends of European political scientists. Our goal is to ascertain the degree to which the discipline in four contrasting countries (Ireland, Norway, Portugal and Spain) speaks to a wider European or international audience. Is political science insular in these countries, or is it internationalised? On which aspects are the publications similar at the domestic, European and international levels, and on which do they differ? What dynamics have affected publishing habits over time? Is it possible to observe a process of convergence or divergence across levels over time? To face these questions, we set up a cross-national research team composed of graduate students and professors from the four countries, and created a common dataset that collected information on articles published in the highest ranked national, European and international journals between 1999 and 2014. The findings suggest that political science research in these countries has been running in two separate worlds: the domestic and the foreign levels. Also, the analyses point to a divergence between north and south regarding the predominant fields, topics and the interest for Europe, and institutional concentration.

Keywords political science; Ireland; Norway; Portugal; Spain

As part of a necessary practice of self-examination, political scientists frequently analyse trends in professional publishing within the discipline across countries and time. Many of these studies have a focus on bibliometric ranking of journals or book publishers, usually based on citation counts (e.g., Hix, 2004) or subjective assessments by members of the discipline (e.g., Goodman *et al*, 1999). They take a variety of forms, from general introductions on the state-of-the-art, often found in the introductions to sub-disciplinary handbooks (e.g., Martin *et al*, 2014), to analyses of disciplinary trends based on interviews and process tracing (e.g., Munck and Snyder, 2007b), the measurement and ranking of journals and the concomitant production of departments (Altman, 2012; Hix, 2004), or assessments of the resources and roles of national political science associations (McGrath, 2008). Our discipline's journals have generally formed the backbone of most bibliometric exercises, and have facilitated assessments of political science at the national level and for specific countries through case studies (Bennet *et al*, 2004; Billordo, 2005; Cancela *et al*, 2014; Capano and Verzichelli, 2010; Pehl, 2012); comparisons of the 'health' of political science across different countries (Boncourt, 2007; Schneider *et al*, 2013; von Schoultz, 2015); or even international-level assessments (Munck and Snyder, 2007a) or intra-regional comparisons (Boncourt, 2008; Norris, 1997). With the advent of electronic databases that rank the scholarly impact of the discipline's journals, such as the Journal Citation Reports produced by Web of Science, or the Google Scholar Metric Database,¹ the discipline has become ever more cognisant of the need for and ability to conduct such exercises.

The present symposium seeks to contribute to this work by analysing the publishing trends in top ranked journals

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of political scientists from four contrasting European countries, Ireland, Norway, Portugal and Spain, across three different levels, that is, the domestic, European and international levels. We have collected data on the publications of all political scientists affiliated with an academic institution in any of the case-study countries. Our goal is to ascertain the degree to which political science in these four countries speaks to a wider European or international audience. We are motivated by the following questions: is political science insular in these countries, or is it internationalised? On which aspects are the publications similar at the various levels, and on which do they differ? What dynamics do we observe in publishing habits over time? Is it possible to observe a process of convergence or divergence of national, European and International journal publications? Answers to these questions, even for these four countries, can provide us with some insight into the development of the discipline as a whole.

But what can these countries tell us about the evolution of political science in Europe, and at the international level more generally? Well, these four countries are perhaps what we might consider as least likely cases for the internationalisation of their respective political science cohorts. All four are peripheral European countries with, bar Spain, relatively small populations of political scientists. For all but Ireland English is not the first language, nor the language of university instruction and more recently, three of these countries (Spain, Portugal and Ireland) have suffered deep structural

economic crises that have witnessed cuts in academic salaries, a moratorium on hiring in many political science departments and a complete retrenchment in funding for the social sciences. If these countries show some evidence of internationalisation in political science publications, then it probably suggests a wider homogenisation in publishing trends, journals and analytical approaches across the discipline and across very different contexts. This speaks directly to debates concerned with unique national-level political science traditions versus the wider diffusion and internationalisation of disciplinary trends and norms, both in terms of publishing, and departmental expectations with regards to publishing, and also with regards to the methods we use in our work.

At the same time, these four countries differ with respect to some key variables that might affect the likelihood of professional internationalisation. They have very different contexts and historical trajectories, which traditionally have dominated the study of politics in these countries. For instance, in Portugal and Spain democratisation barely took place in the 1970s, delaying the organisation of the discipline as an autonomous academic field. The Northern Irish conflict has been the predominant focus of political science in Ireland over the years, as democratisation and the legacy of democratic transition have dominated political science in Spain and Portugal, and these topics will differ in terms of the appeal they might have for international audiences. English is the language of the academy in Ireland, which might facilitate the insertion of its political scientists in the Anglophone-dominated international political science arena. Led by researchers such as Stein Rokkan, Norwegian political science had early international ties, and later with its large oil wealth, Norway has been able to offer very generous and wide-ranging funding and

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support for political scientists, particularly for activities that foster internationalisation. And government policy has also differed across these contexts. For example, before the European economic crisis, Portugal had a large programme aimed at hiring international academics to bolster and hasten the internationalisation of its academy. All of these factors will affect the publishing trends across these four countries in different ways.

To examine these dynamics, we set up a cross-national research team composed of graduate students and professors from our four countries, and created a common dataset that collected information on articles published in the highest ranked national, European and international journals between 1999 and 2014, for all political scientists, in each of the respective countries. This dataset follows a codebook that integrates and builds on codifications present in the previous studies (see below).

DATA COLLECTION

Our objects of interest are the political science articles of scholars affiliated to institutions within each of our country cases, between 1999 and 2014. We sample from Ireland, Norway, Portugal and

Spain. As we previously discussed, they differ in academic traditions, democratic trajectory, size, language and liaison with the European Union, which really allows us to understand, and (speculatively) leverage, comparisons of some of the trends we can observe. The research team is composed of four groups of political science graduate students coordinated by one professor from each of the selected countries. Based on a proposal prepared by the professors, the whole research process proceeded through a collective process of discussion, involving the specification of the research questions and operational criteria, data collection and data analysis, all of which were primarily carried out by the students.

The data collection process followed the next steps. First, we defined the source journals for searching and selecting the articles. To select and distinguish the relevant journals at the three levels, we considered the journals' impact factor, thematic coverage, language and the presence of the word 'Europe' or 'European' in the title of the journals. To identify the impact factor, we prioritised the use of the Thomson Reuters rank.² Specifically we used the five-year impact factor for the 2013 JCR Social Science Edition, which measures the impact factor in the time-frame 2009–2014, and extrapolated it for the whole period of analysis.

In order to cover a wide thematic range, we decided to observe generalist journals. The Thomson Reuters categories of 'political science' or 'international relations' for classifying journals are pertinent for this purpose. The first category applies to publications concerned with political studies, military studies, the electoral and legislative processes, political theory, history of political science, comparative studies of political systems, and the intersection of politics with other areas of science and social science. The 'international relations' category applies to journals concerned with

foreign policy, comparative world politics, world commerce and trade, international legal issues, peace studies and conflict resolution, military alliances, and strategic studies. We assume that any journal written in English and with a good qualification within an international index constitutes an attractive journal for scholars of any country.³ Then, we considered as *international* all those journals included in at least one of two thematic categories (political science or international), written in English that did not include the words 'European', 'Europe' or similar identifying criteria in their titles, and occupied the 1st quartile of the Thomson Reuters rank. Twenty-two journals were identified. Given the extremely small number of articles identified at this level for the Portuguese case (19), the search was extended to the journals ranked within the second quartile, which means we sampled 44 journals at the international level for the Portuguese case. We consider as *European* all those journals included in at least one of two thematic categories (political science or international), which were written in English and had the words 'European', 'Europe' or similar in their titles, and occupied any of the four quartiles of the Thomson Reuters rank. Seven journals were identified (*European Union Politics; European Journal of Political Research; European Journal of International Relations; Comparative European Politics; European Political Science; Asian Europe Journal; and European Political Science Review*). We consider as *national* all journals published in the studied country, not written in English and ranked at any of the four quartiles—or written in English but not ranked at the top quartile or with the words European or Europe in their titles. In the case where no national journals were indexed at the Thomson Reuters rank, we relied on the identification of the journals based on other rankings or in consultation with local experts.

After the selection of the journals, we proceeded to identify all of the articles published by scholars affiliated to institutions within the four countries for the period 1999–2014. Therefore, our unit of analysis is the articles of authors with academic affiliation to institutions based in any of the four countries (no matter the nationality of the author/s). All articles, with at least one affiliated author from any of the four countries were sampled. Review articles, research notes and editorials were excluded. To collect the data for the international and European journals, we used Wiley Online Library and the relevant search engines associated with the chosen journals. Using an 'advanced search' tool in Wiley Online Library, we first searched all articles for relevant author affiliations—e.g., '[country name]'. To make sure no articles were overlooked or missed, we also did a second, broader search using '[country name]' (i.e., Ireland, Norway, Portugal or Spain) simply as key word in the entire text. Articles were then inspected manually to determine whether it had a respective country affiliation or not. Articles at national journals were all manually identified. We sampled a total of 1621 articles for our four countries across the national, European and International level. Table 1 summarises this data.

There are some remarkable similarities across the four cases. The vast majority of articles in each country are published in national-level journals, ranging from 61 per cent of all publications in the Irish case, to 85 per cent in the Spanish case. There is also some notable similarity when it comes to the rate of publications at the international level between Ireland and Norway, (20 and 21 per cent, respectively), and between Portugal and Spain (13 and 14 per cent, respectively). The northern European countries contrast the South in our sample, and stand out as the cases with the higher degree of international publications. (Portugal increases its participation

up to 24 per cent of publications in international journals only when the sample of journals is extended to cover also the 2nd quartile) The European level exhibits a larger overall variance. Ireland with 18 per cent of its publications at the European level is more integrated into European political science networks than the other three countries, which range from 9 per cent of publications in Norway, to lows of 4 per cent in Portugal and only 1 per cent in Spain.⁴ Overall, perhaps a little unsurprisingly, Ireland, as a small English-speaking country at the edge of Europe with a highly globalised economy, has the highest overall level of publications appearing outside of the national political science arena. Nevertheless, looking both at the number of publications and the share of publications in European journals, we can again identify a division between our Northern countries and Southern countries. In fact, Ireland and Norway stand for 91 per cent of all our sampled publications at the European level.

CODING OF THE DATA

Articles were coded with a common codebook. In order to be consistent with the literature, this codebook was developed on the basis of previous studies, mainly Munck and Snyder (2007b), but also Schneider et al. (2013), Norris (1997), Boncourt (2008) and Pehl (2012). First, we coded articles by their *subfield*. Unlike Boncourt (2008) and Pehl (2012), our codebook allows for an open codification by subfield (i.e., Comparative Politics, International Relations, Public Policy, Political Theory, etc.). Where possible, we selected the dominant subfield, otherwise we also coded more than one subfield per article. We followed the same approach with relation to *method*. Second, we coded the *topic* of the article using the categorisation applied by Schneider et al. (2013), based in turn on

Table 1: Articles identified per country and level

Countries	Journals			Total
	National [2] ^b	European [7]	International [22]	
Ireland	243 (61 per cent)	71 (18 per cent)	85 (21 per cent)	399
Norway	396 (70 per cent)	53 (9 per cent)	114 (20 per cent)	563
Portugal	133 (73 per cent)	6 (4 per cent)	19 (13 per cent)	158
Spain	404 (85 per cent)	7 (1 per cent)	66 (14 per cent)	477
Total	1176 (73 per cent)	137 (8 per cent)	308 (19 per cent)	1597

^a Considering 1st and 2nd quartile.

^b Considering three journals.

Easton (1965). Some new categories were introduced in order to make this codification (originally prepared for 'comparative politics') applicable to political science more broadly.⁵ Third, we also coded the research designs we observed along the following lines: (a) the *number of cases studied*, ranging from 'one', to 'small *N*' (2–6), 'medium *N*' (7–34) and 'large *N*' (more than 35); (b) whether the *method* was 'qualitative', 'quantitative descriptive', 'quantitative inferential' or 'mix qualitative-quantitative'; (c) the *time horizon* of the study, with categories ranging from 1 to more than 50 years; (d) and finally, whether the *geographic scope* of the study was at the subnational, national or European level, or whether it concerned the rest of the world (excluding Europe), or alternatively, the rest of the world (including Europe). Finally, regarding the author/s of each article we collected information on: (a) the *number of authors* (i.e., presence of co-authors); (b) their *institutional affiliation*; c) and their *sex*.

WHAT IS TO COME?

We have structured the contributions of this symposium in a comparable manner. Each country article is organised in four sections. The first section provides a general characterisation of the discipline

at the domestic level, discussing the evolution of the political science academy (institutions, courses, students), the configuration of relevant associations and scientific journals, and the traditional traits and trajectory of political science publication. The second section details the selection of national journals, comments on country specificities of the data collection procedures and presents descriptive statistics. The third section develops the analysis of data. Specifically, we examine the longitudinal trend of publications at the national, European and international levels considering two dimensions, namely the contents and the authors of the articles. Through the study of the first dimension we intend to answer 'what was published?' through an analysis of fields and topics, methods of analysis, number of cases studied, and geographical region and span of time considered. With the second dimension we try and answer the question 'who has published?', based on institutional affiliation, sex and coauthorship. The last section presents the conclusions.

Our analysis suggests that political science research in these four countries has been running in two separate worlds, the domestic and the foreign levels, with seemingly few inter-connections. Their respective publications present contrasts (mainly regarding methods, topics and research teams), which remained quite

consistent for the whole period. That is, we find few clear patterns of transformation at any level over time. Equally, the number and proportion of publications at each level have also remained rather constant over time. Nevertheless, during the last years of our observation there have been some incipient signs of greater internationalisation, basically related to a growth of the number of articles at international journals and/or to the features associated to this domain (particularly quantitative methods and cooperative authorship). Future research will be needed to investigate whether these recent signs of internationalisation will transform the publication patterns in the four countries.

In turn, the analyses point to a divergence between north and south regarding the degree of internationalisation, the predominant fields, topics and the interest for Europe. Specifically, Irish and Norwegian political science were dominated by comparative politics and international relations, and focused on topics related to the outputs of the political system at foreign-level publications (e.g., political economy and supranationalism). Finally, authors in these two countries produced a higher proportion of their publication in European and International journals indicating a higher degree of internationalisation of political science in these two countries. On the other hand, the production of Portugal

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and Spain was largely dominated by the comparative politics, focused on the political systems at all levels (e.g., elections and policy making), publications in European journals were marginal, and also markedly lower in international journals than our two northern countries. Finally, most of the Portuguese and Spanish production was concentrated in a few institutions.

The study of this symposium centres on a very specific but a widespread covet output (articles in top ranked journals) using a specific but worldwide tool (Thompson Reuters rank). This is then a common critical aspect that transversally affects the discipline. We hope the findings provided here contribute to a more comprehensive study of the discipline around the world, the direction that political science is taking at different levels, and the interplay between domestic and international arenas for publications.

Notes

- 1 Google Scholar Metrics ranks journals in real time based on citations counts: https://scholar.google.co.uk/citations?view_op=top_venues&hl=en.
- 2 See http://wokinfo.com/products_tools/analytical/jcr/.
- 3 Some journals were created after 1999, even though we have considered their articles, only if felt in our criteria. In other cases, journals that did not present the affiliation institution in the articles were not considered in the analysis. Therefore, we assumed them as 'missing'.
- 4 The teams sampled more than twice as many journals at the International level than at the European level. It is therefore not surprising that we have identified more than twice as many articles published in international than European journals.

5 There are 25 topics. Inputs: 1 Nationalism, 2 Religion, 3 Citizen Attitudes and political culture, 4 Social movements and civil society, 5 Interest groups, 6 Globalisation. Political System: 7 Varieties of political regimes, 8 Elections, voting and electoral rules, 9 Political parties, 10 Democratic institutions, 11 Federalism and decentralisation, 12 Judiciary, 13 Bureaucracy, 14 Military, police, including secret services, 15 Policy making in general, 16 Political Communication. Outputs: 17 State formation and state collapse, 18 War, 19 Revolutions, 20 Civil wars and violence Ethnicity and ethnic conflict, 21 Democratisation and democratic breakdowns, 22 Clientelism, 23 Economic policy and reform, 24 Economic development, 25 Supranational integration and processes. In the Portuguese case, particularly, the topic Peace was integrated to this list, as the 26th topic.

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