

THE LAST QUARTER OF
COMPARATIVE POLITICS: A
STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE
“WORLD POLITICS” JOURNAL

By

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Introduction

Since earlier days of the modern political sciences, comparative politics became an important field of scientific inquiry. Similar to other branches of social sciences, comparative politics experienced many “revolutions” such as behavioral revolution, post-behavioral revolution and critic revolution; and numerous shifts of paradigms. Successes and failures of this discipline is still a matter of discussion, however, it is easily acceptable that we had learned a lot of things by comparing polities.

In this short essay, the major aim is to make a forecasting about comparative politics by especially emphasizing on a journal, “World Politics, A Quarterly Journal of International Relations”. Such an analysis of the past of the discipline of comparative politics will enable us to make forecasting the future of the discipline, even that such an attempt may be considered as “prématuré”.

In the first part of the paper, a short review of the history of the journal and definitions of variables that is measured will be made. Later on, a statistical analysis of articles published in the journal will take place.

The Journal

“World Politics, A Quarterly Journal of International Relations” is a journal published by the Center of International Studies of Princeton University. At the beginning of 1970s, the editorial board of the journal was headed by Klaus Knorr and well known scholars from the realist school such as T.R: Gurr, Chalmers Johnson, Robert Koehane were members of this board. Later on Sidney Verba (1973) and Kenneth Waltz (1976) joint to this team James N. Rosenau, Albert O. Hirschman and Ronald Rogowski also became members of the editorial board for short periods of time.

In 1986, Henry Bienen replaced as the chairman and Susan Strange, John Gerard Ruggie became members of the editorial board. Another turning point was the participation of Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, a prominent figure of the game theory school to the board in 1989. At the meantime, Theda Skocpol and Jack Snyder were also joint to the board. In 1990, Stephan Haggard and Miles Kahler became member of the board. In 1992, John Waterbury replaced Henry Bienen as the chairman and Peter Hall participated to the board.

This shuffle of the editorial board indicates that the editorial board of the journal is composed of famous students of comparative politics such as Waterbury, Hall, Skocpol and Haggard and scholars who generally emphasizes on the “game theory” and its derivatives from the neorealist school of thought.

In order to make an analysis of the journal, a quantitative method has been preferred. Articles published in the Journal between 1971 and 1997 are classified according to a number of variables that will be operationalized below. This classifications have been processed by using SPSS for Windows software.

Variables:

In this part of the paper, variables used in the analysis will be defined and operationalized.

International relations / comparative politics: Since the journal is well known as a journal of “international relations”, such a categorization is inevitable. Articles analyzed are categorized as “ir” or “cp” depending on their areas of interests. Articles about foreign policy of a given country, foreign policy making, relations among nations, world or international system and other titles such as war, deterrence or cooperation among countries have been classified as “international relations” articles.

“Comparative politics” articles are composed of titles such as the statehood, political participation, ethnicity.

One country or multiple countries: Second variable employed in the analysis is one country –multiple country categorization. Is the focus of the article is one country or more than one country? This question led to employ another category for this variable: theory. Since some articles do not deal with country analysis, emphasize on theoretical puzzles, these articles are coded as “theory” articles. This category also included “unclassified” articles.

Similar or dissimilar systems: This variable bases on distinction of “similar” and “dissimilar systems” of comparative politics. Is the comparison made by the author based on similar or dissimilar systems? This question is answered by considering research question of the author. For example, France and Britain may be admitted as “similar systems” when research is about effects of development on political participation however, they are “dissimilar” in terms of relationship between interest groups and the state.

Quantitative or qualitative: It is generally accepted that after 1950s, quantitative methods including intermediary and advanced statistics, game theory and others. This variable is aimed to measure whether the article includes such quantitative techniques.

Type of quantitative technique: Depending to previous variable, articles are coded according to quantitative technique employed.

Subject: one of most difficult variables to construct is “the subject”. First of all, subjects of articles are recorded directly. Later on, these subjects are recoded according to their main points of emphasis. In this process, articles of international relations and comparative politics are evaluated separately.

Findings

Chart 1. Percentages of IR and CP Articles

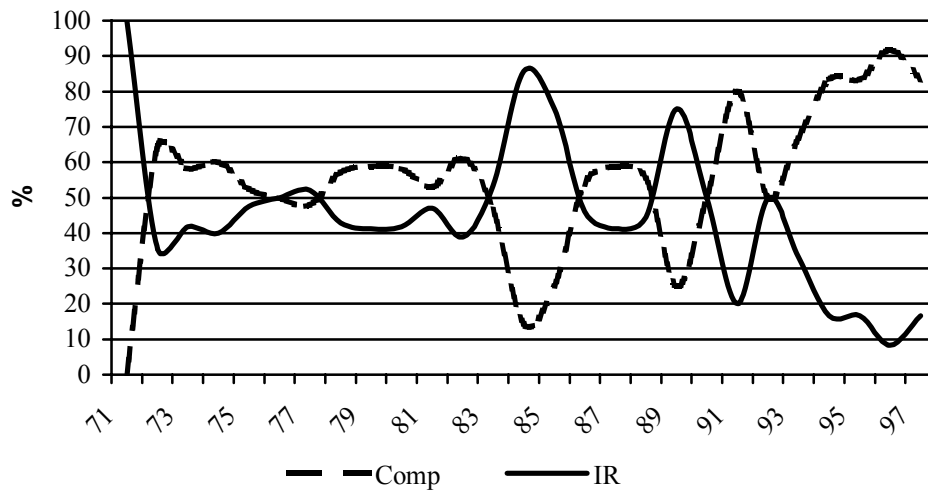


Chart 1 above presents changes in percentages of international relations and comparative politics over years. First important finding of this analysis is the increasing weight of comparative politics articles over years, especially after 1989. Until 1989, shares of these two categories reciprocally fluctuated however, there has been no major changes. Nevertheless, a trend is observable after 1986: share of international relations articles declines while share of comparative politics articles increases.

Table 1. Subjects of Comparative Politics Articles

Subject	N	%
Theory and other	17	7.8
The State	33	15.1
Ethnicity	10	4.6
Political Parties	23	10.5
Bureaucracy	14	6.4
Elites	5	2.3
Political Economy	25	11.4
Development	22	10.0
Transition	16	7.3
Interest Groups	23	10.5
Military, Authority	16	7.3
Human Rights	3	1.4
Government	12	5.5
Total	219	100.0

Table 1 above presents distribution of comparative politics articles according to their subjects. According to this table, the most emphasized subjects are “the state” (15.1 per cent), “political economy” (11.4 per cent) that includes subjects such as role of planning, economic reforms and structural adjustment policies; and political parties (10.5 per cent), “interest groups” (10.5 per cent) and political development (10 per cent). An analysis of these subjects according to three different time period is as follows:

Table 2. Subjects of Comparative Politics Articles Over Periods

	1971-1980	1981-1989	1989+
Theory and other	7.5	8.7	7.5
The State	16.1	19.6	11.3
Ethnicity	7.5		3.8
Political Parties	12.9	8.7	8.8
Bureaucracy	8.6	6.5	3.8
Elites	2.2	2.2	2.5
Political Economy	11.8	13.0	10.0
Development	11.8	15.2	5.0
Transition			20.0
Interest Groups	9.7	10.9	11.3
Military, Authority	7.5	10.9	5.0
Human Rights	1.1	2.2	1.3
Government	3.2	2.2	10.0
Total	93	46	80

Table 2 exhibits distribution of subjects of comparative politics articles according to three different time periods: 1971-1980, 1981-1988, 1989 and after. It is observable that “the state” has always been an important subject of study of the field of comparative politics, its share is always high for all of time periods. “Political parties” and “bureaucracy” are subjects that relatively lost their importances while “transition” and “government” are subjects whose importance increased over time. This shift of focus may be explained by external factors. First of all, emergence of “transition” as a matter of study is a post-cold war phenomena, thus its increased relevance is not surprising. In the same way, “government” that includes papers discussing efficiency of government or presidentialism, became an important area of scientific inquiry with the collapse of the Berlin wall and emergence of transitional democracies. A clear evidence of this relationship between external factors and distribution of subjects is higher percentages of “development” and “military, authority” categories during the second period (1981-1988) in which many developing countries experienced “bureaucratic authoritarian” rules.

Table 4. Subjects of International Relations Articles

Subject	N	%
Theory and System	26	15.3
War	24	14.1
Domestic Politics and Foreign Policies	57	33.5
International Political Economy	9	5.3
International Sanctions	5	2.9
Arms	3	1.8
Deterrence	9	5.3
Diplomacy	6	3.5
Transnational Organizations	15	8.8
International Cooperation	16	9.4
Total	170	100.0

Distribution of international relations articles published in the World Politics Journal is presented above, in table 3. According to this table, the leading subject is “domestic

politics and foreign policies” with a percentage of 33.5 per cent. Other prominent subjects are “theory and system” (15.3 per cent) and war (14.1 per cent). Distribution of this titles according to time periods is as follows:

Table 5. Subjects of International Relations Articles
Over Time Periods

	1971-1980	1981-1989	1989+
Theory and System	17.6	9.4	18.8
War	15.3	11.3	15.6
Domestic Politics and Foreign Policies	28.2	41.5	34.4
International Political Economy	4.7	7.5	3.1
International Sanctions	3.5	1.9	3.1
Arms	3.5	0.0	0.0
Deterrence	4.7	0.0	15.6
Diplomacy	3.5	5.7	0.0
Transnational Organizations	12.9	7.5	0.0
International Cooperation	5.9	15.1	9.4
Total	85	53	32

According to table 5 that presents distribution of subject during three time periods indicates that the subject of “domestic politics and foreign policies” is the dominant theme of all of three time periods. “Arms”, “diplomacy” and “transnational organizations” are titles that lost their relative importance during years. Subjects of “international cooperation” and “deterrence” are two emerging titles of articles of two last periods. An interesting finding is the negative relationship between “international cooperation” and “war” and “deterrence”. This is also a clear evidence of relationship between external factors and the scientific inquiry.

Chart 2. Number of Countries Analyzed

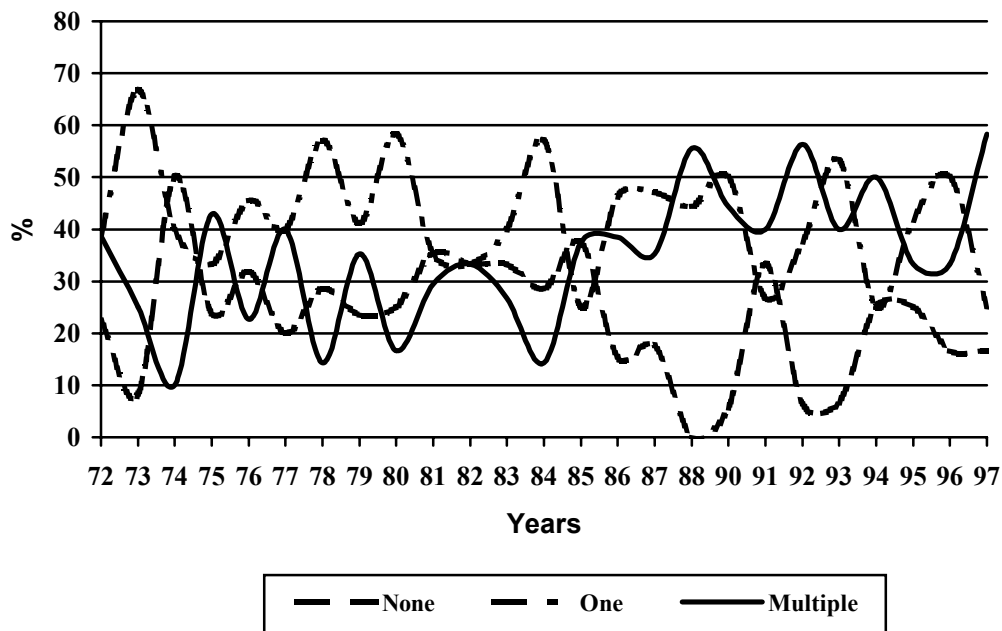


Chart 2 presents change in the number of countries analyzed in articles over years. First of all, we can say that number of articles emphasized on more than one countries increased over years, especially after 1986, meanwhile number of articles that do not emphasizes on countries declined. Number of articles that emphasize on only one countries did not expose a decline or increase over years and its percentage remained around 50 per cents.

Table 6. Number of Countries Analyzed, over Time Periods

	Comparative Politics			International Relations		
	1971-1980	1981-1988	1989+	1971-1980	1981-1988	1989+
None	19.6	15.2	12.5	35.8	34.0	24.0
One Country	42.3	52.3	43.8	43.2	28.3	28.1
Multiple Countries	38.1	30.4	43.8	21.0	37.7	46.9
Total	97	46	80	81	53	32

Table 6 above presents changes in distribution of number of countries analyzed in articles during three time periods for both of international relations and comparative politics fields. According to this table, share of articles emphasized on more than one countries steadily increased while share of articles that do not emphasize on countries declined over time, for both of two different fields. Nevertheless, share of “multiple countries” more rapidly increased in the field of international relations, especially for the last period.

Chart 3. Similar vs Dissimilar Systems

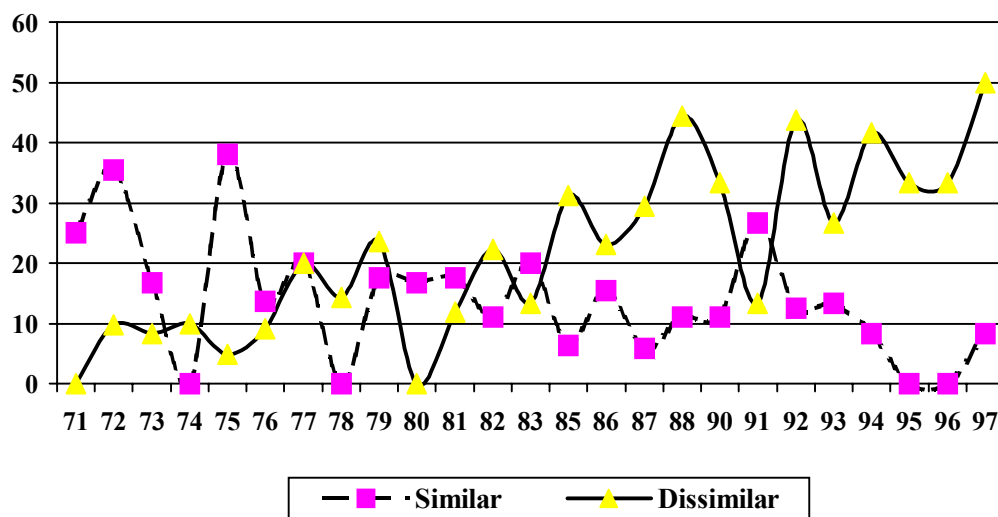


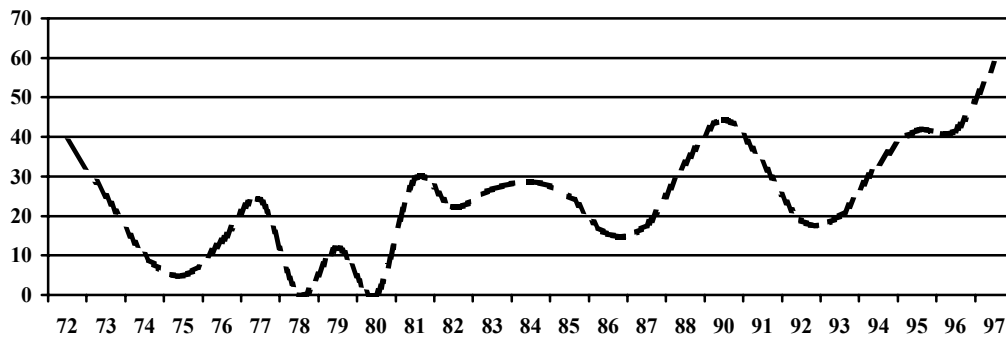
Chart 3 that presents overtime change of percentages of articles used similar and dissimilar systems clearly indicates that the weight of dissimilar systems significantly increased over time, especially after 1980. Distribution of similar and dissimilar systems according to time periods and fields of international relations and comparative politics is presented in the following table.

Table 7. Similar vs. Dissimilar Systems, over Time Periods

	Comparative Politics			International Relations		
	1971-1980	1981-1988	1989+	1971-1980	1981-1988	1989+
None	59.8	67.4	56.3	76.5	62.3	53.1
Similar	30.9	13.0	15.0	9.9	7.5	
Dissimilar	9.3	19.6	28.8	13.6	30.2	46.9
Total	97	46	80	81	53	32

According to table 7, share of articles that employ similar systems decreased for both of comparative politics and international relations fields. Meanwhile, dissimilar systems gained an important share for both of these two fields. In the field of international relations, dissimilar systems have been largely employed as a result of increased use of quantitative techniques that will be discussed in following parts of the paper.

Chart 4. below clearly shows that the use of quantitative techniques significantly increased over time, especially after 1990s. Table 8, in which use of quantitative techniques over time periods for fields of comparative politics and international relations indicate that the field of international relations both employs more quantitative techniques and showed a more rapid increase, especially after 1989. This rapid increase, simultaneous with heavier use of dissimilar comparison describes the current state of art in the study of international relations.

Chart 4. Use of Quantitative Techniques (%)**Table 8. Use of Quantitative Methods over Time Periods**

	Comparative Politics			International Relations		
	1971-1980	1981-1988	1989+	1971-1980	1981-1988	1989+
Qualitative	82.5	80.4	70.0	77.8	75.5	50.0
Quantitative	17.5	19.6	30.0	22.2	24.5	50.0
Total	97	46	80	81	53	32

In the following table 9. distribution of different quantitative techniques over time and for both of fields of comparative politics and international relations takes place.

Table 9. Quantitative Methods over Time Periods

	Comparative Politics			International Relations		
	1971-1980	1981-1988	1989+	1971-1980	1981-1988	1989+
Game Theory	31.3	10.0	33.3	38.9	64.7	68.8
Multivariate	12.5		4.2	38.9	5.9	
Crosstabs	12.5	10.0				
Means	31.3	20.0	12.5	16.7	17.6	6.3
Regression	12.5	50.0	29.2	5.6	11.8	6.3
Advanced Techniques			20.9			18.8
Total	16	10	24	18	17	16

The most important finding of table 9, is the increasing use of game theory based quantitative techniques over time. Especially in the field of international relations, use of quantitative techniques heavily shifted to game theory based techniques from

multivariate techniques such as factor analysis, multidimensional spacing and discriminant analysis. Moreover, use of simple statistics such as means lost its importance while advanced statistical techniques such as probit, logit and maximum likelihood became important. In the field of comparative politics, a similar trend is observable. Basic statistical techniques including crosstabs, means and multivariate analysis became rare. However, unlike the field of international relations, game theory did not gain a significant momentum. Instead of it, advanced statistical techniques became prominent techniques of the study of comparative politics.

Conclusion

It is so far argued that the major aim of this short paper is to make a prediction about the future of the study of comparative politics by emphasizing specifically on a journal, “World Politics, A Quarterly Journal of International Relations”.

The quantitative analysis of articles published in the journal exposed some important findings that may be listed as follows:

- 1) share of comparative politics articles in total number of articles published steadily increased between 1971 and 1997.
- 2) In the field of comparative politics, “the State”, “interest groups” and “political economy” were leading subjects. After 1990, “transition” and “government” joint to these dominant subjects. In the field of international politics, “war” and “domestic politics and foreign policy” became dominant themes during this 26 years. “Deterrence” and “international cooperation” are newly emerged popular titles.
- 3) Both of two fields, multiple country focused articles became popular during last two decades.

- 4) Similarly, number of articles that employ “comparing dissimilar systems” methods increased over time.
- 5) Use of quantitative techniques increased over time and basic statistical techniques such as crosstabs and means are replaced by more complicated techniques such as regression, logit and probit. Game theory became a dominant method for both of fields, however it is more widespread in the field of international relations.

According to these findings, it is possible to argue in a speculative manner that the study of politics of the next millennium will be based on comparative studies, by using the most dissimilar systems method and employing more sophisticated quantitative techniques and the game theory.