

Nothing succeeds like success: The past and future of European political science¹

Gerald Schneider

INTRODUCTION

Nine years ago, I organized a workshop under the heading: “Why is European political science so unproductive and what should be done about it” (Schneider 2007). One colleague was, to say the least, a bit outraged and remarked: “This is the most arrogant title of the entire conference,” which happened to be a convention of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) in Budapest. I would like to admit two things almost a decade later – firstly, yes, indeed, the denomination I had chosen for this academic event was slightly preposterous, but I exaggerated my assessment to make the point that European political science, especially its continental variant, is awfully conservative and not sufficiently internationalized. Secondly, and more importantly, there is growing evidence that I was at least partly wrong. European political science was already then catching up and is now in many subfields on a par with North America. You might object that my current evaluation is overly rosy. Indeed, a President of an academic organization risks becoming very unpopular among its members if he or she tells how badly they are all doing. Such a dark message is obviously not what I intend to communicate in this wonderful city with its distinguished tradition in science and philosophy.

I will on the contrary present some evidence that justifies my new optimism. My address will advance in four steps. Firstly, I will introduce some reasons why political science after World War II originated as an “American social science,” as Hoffmann (1977) controversially argued for international relations, one of our sub-disciplines. My discussion of our joint past will identify three root causes of the malaise that destroyed the nascent modern field before World War II and that have held European political science for a long time back after 1945: fascism, under-funding and disrespect for academic standards. I will present in a second step some evidence from the Social Science Citation Index that European political scientists have become increasingly productive and effective. As I will demonstrate, some countries have over-taken the U.S. and Canada on a per capita basis in research efficiency. Thirdly, I will show that not only the financial resources devoted to higher education matter. The macro-

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quantitative evidence I have assembled demonstrates that the organization of the educational system is equally important for the achievements of European political science. I will finally argue in the concluding section of my talk that an increasing orientation towards competitiveness and growing Europeanization of the job market bode well for our future.

In other words, I am confident that European political science will continue to be a success. Merton's (1968) "Matthew Effect", according to which nothing succeeds like success in academia, will leave its mark if we are able to strengthen our academic organizations and to reach out to key decision makers. Hence, building an even stronger European variant of political science requires that we convince institutions like the European Research Council that we are doing important research and that we carry on in submitting key articles to European flagship outlets such as EPSA's *Political Science Research and Methods*.

FORGOTTEN ROOTS AND THE PROBLEMS AFTER WORLD WAR II

Let me start my address by digging into the past and the destruction of what might have become European political science in the 1920s and early 1930s. Of course, European political science did not exist as a discipline in the early 20th century. I say this by duly noting that Aberystwyth University founded a department of international politics in 1919, Lund University inaugurated a political science department in 1877, and that Uppsala university chancellor Johan Skytte established the Skyttean professorship of Eloquence and Government in 1622.

The institutional foundation for political science across Europe and outside Wales and Sweden were nevertheless largely built after World War II. Yet, there were quite some scientists who did modern political science work in the precarious interwar years, but whose career were hindered or destroyed through fascism, if Hitler's henchmen did not kill them in the first place. The Nazis, in other words, have destroyed this nascent field we represent today in Edinburgh. Let me point out three colleagues who have done pioneering work and who, by any chance, would nowadays be part of a modern department of politics.

First, Felix Bernstein (1932): he was a professor of statistics at Göttingen, but had a keen interest in elections and how to analyze them. He published an early paper on ecological inference twenty years before Robinson (1950) and Goodman (1953) were able to place their classic studies in the *American Sociological Review*. Bernstein, whose article was rediscovered by Shively (1985) and Lohmöller and Falter (1986) in the 1980s, survived the Holocaust, but was forced into exile.²

A similar fate befell the Viennese social psychologist Marie Jahoda. Her co-authored study *Marienthal: the sociography of an unemployed community* (1933) was a land mark micro-level study of the effects of the Great Depression, and seems timelier than ever during the ostensibly unending Great Recession. Jahoda became a professor at NYU, Brunel, and Sussex universities after the War.

Finally, Lewis Fry Richardson. As it is well known, he made contributions to many fields, notably geography, mathematics and meteorology. His pioneering work on arms races and the

² Achen and Shively's (1995) study contains a translation of Bernstein's short article.

correlates of war (e.g. Richardson 1935, 1948) mainly gained recognition posthumously through the work of Anatol Rapoport (1957), who himself had returned to Europe in the 1930s to work as a piano player, but fortunately finding his way back to the United States and to academia later.³

Recent studies show that fascism had a systematic effect on the sciences and was in itself a reason for the growing strength of the United States in academia (Moser et al. n.d.; Waldinger 2010, 2012). The emigration of successful chemists for instance increased innovation in the U.S. by about one third after 1933 in fields where the émigrés were active (Moser et al. n.d.). The dismissal of highly productive scientists furthermore darkened the prospects for doctoral students both in terms of promotion and research quality. Waldinger (2010) shows that the firing of professors for racist or political reasons decreased the chance for young academics to see their dissertations published, casted a shadow on the prospect of postdocs to become full professors and also reduced their lifetime citations. The ethnic and political cleansing that the Nazis instigated at German universities soon after Hitler's seizure of power also affected the academic output of the top departments negatively (Waldinger 2012). We can be sure that similar trends were also manifest in the much smaller social sciences, including our own discipline.

In the years after World War II, modern political science could for a long time not take off. In this grey era following the black period of the sciences under fascism, political science was often relegated to the status of an ancillary discipline and thus subjugated to the trends in supposedly leading subjects such as history or law. The situation started to change in the 1960s when many political science departments were founded – sometimes as part of new universities, as it was the case at my home institution or the University of Essex. However, the expansion of higher education came at the price of decreasing funding. Plümper and Schneider (2007) have demonstrated this empirically for Germany, linking the shrinking expenses per student to increasing unemployment.

The expansion of higher education also increased in the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s the chance of postdocs to receive tenure at an early age. Many of these promotions took place at the same institutions where these lucky fellows had received their doctorates already. At the Free University of Berlin, these in-house hires were known as *Fahrstuhlprofessors* (elevator professors) as these colleagues were being upgraded quasi over-night from assistants to tenured folks.⁴ Obviously, these colleagues did often not have a decent publication record and it is no wonder that their students did most often not perform any better. Academic protectionism hence created an atmosphere of coziness, often binding colleagues with similar world views and a shared contempt for academic standards closely together. It is not

³ The posthumously published work appeared in Richardson (1960a, b).

⁴ The promotion took place automatically without a job advertisement or application letter, but was linked to a habilitation before the expiration of the five-year contract (E-Mail of Michael Bolle to the author, July 7, 2014). Unsurprisingly, the habilitation (2nd doctorate) itself came under attack as a yardstick for academic promotions. Keller (2000: 20, own translation) describes it as a “patriarchal initiation rite... which allows the professors to reproduce themselves according to their school, habitus, and gender”.

surprising against the backdrop that grade inflation is more pronounced in disciplines with a qualitative rather than a quantitative focus (Jewell et al. 2013: 1197).⁵

Relying in academic hiring and tenure decisions on other criteria than the excellence of the applicant in research and teaching can have disastrous consequences. Rothgeb (2014: 183) shows that U.S. heads of U.S. political science departments who admit that collegiality matters in their decision making are more likely to admit that “[a]t my college/university, tenure has shielded incompetent faculty from dismissal.” The tendency to protect academic under-performers grows with the inclination to rely more on absolute publication counts than on assessments that also take the journal quality into consideration. Washburn et al. (2006) offer similar evidence for the relationship between the individual output and the quality of an academic department. According to their evaluation of U.S. economics departments, the individual productivity is closely associated with the number of publishing colleagues.

The mistaken tolerance for laziness that many of us have encountered over the years across European academia can establish itself only if achievements are not sufficiently rewarded and if promotion is not exclusively based on scholarly merits. A Nobel laureate, the late Gary Becker (1957), has convincingly established that shielding a field or industry against competitors with another ethnic background, age or gender is only possible in imperfect markets.⁶ The quite dismal record of political science in gender equality is, in my view, largely due to the impact unproductive “old boys networks” had on our discipline. (Note that fortunately the EPSA leadership looks now much more balanced than some years ago). Unfortunately, I can only report figures about the gender gap in U.S. political science as no equivalent studies seem to exist for Europe. Hesli et al. (2012: 485) report “a significant advantage for men in the probability of becoming an associate professor, which usually includes tenure,” and Maliniak et al. (2012) add to this a considerable gender gap in citation in international relations, with men citing themselves and other representatives of their gender more frequently than women do with regard to their own work and the one of their female colleagues.

An institutional barrier to academic progress, at least in continental Europe, is the chair system. It allows colleagues to delegate much of their research to doctoral students which are still often treated as underlings, who have to completely rely in their career on the continuing support of their employers. As beneficial a division and delegation of labor might be in some cases, relying on assistants for conducting research makes you lazy and uncompetitive in the long run (Schneider 2011). An evaluation of the publication patterns before and after promotion in German business administration revealed along these lines that the median chair holder had gives up on publishing in journals indexed in the Social Science Citation index once he or she had received tenure (Röbken 2011).

⁵ Jewell et al. (2013:1198) examined these trends across departments of the University of North Texas. Its political science department exhibited an average trend in grade inflation.

⁶ I have to note that gender discrimination in hiring decisions is still widespread and can, sadly enough, often be attributed to a lack of gender solidarity. For a systematic analysis of the “queen bee syndrome” in academia, see for instance Ellemers et al. (2004).

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL SCIENCE

However, times are changing. The chair system is increasingly under pressure, even in as conservative a place as Bavaria which *de facto* abandoned it in 2013. Further funding agencies increasingly require at least some decent publications before splashing out money, and more and more universities have introduced U.S. style graduate schools. These reforms are root causes of the changes in productivity and efficiency of European political science which I am happy to report.

Figure 1A shows that the number of articles published by researchers based in Europe is growing. Hence, our field—measured here through counts of articles in journals included in the Social Science Citation index in political science, international relations, or public administration, respectively—is becoming more productive in absolute terms.⁷ This is certainly partly due to the increasing number of quality journals based in Europe, among them of course EPSA's *Political Science Research and Methods*, which is, however, also too young to be contributing to these trends. One might object that absolute productivity does not tell us much about the influence of the articles. According to this adage, the SSCI could be expanding by adding low-impact journals to its list in which mainly Europeans publish. As Figure 1B demonstrates, this does nevertheless not seem to be the case. Compared to its North American competitors, political scientists based in the old continent have also increased the efficiency of their publication strategies. The increasing average number of citations that articles from European scholars receive is an indication of this trend. The growing h-index of articles by Europe-based, summarized in Figure 1-C, finally evinces that Europe is also catching up in its ability to produce articles with an eventually high impact. Hence, European political science has not only increased its efficiency, but has also become more excellent. It should be added that this trend happens against a continuing domination of the United States and Canada in editing high impact journals. According to the 2012 ranking, only *Journal of Peace Research* was according to the five year impact factor among the top ten political science journals. A couple of other journals edited in Europe were trailing in the top twenty at least (*European Union Politics*, *British Journal of Political Science* and *Scandinavian Political Studies*).

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The online appendix demonstrates that these developments are quite consistent across different subfields such as electoral behavior or armed conflict. Finally, the emancipation of European political science has also reached the field of political methodology. While the substantive focus of methods-based research surely differs across the Atlantic, European scholars increasingly are conscious that methodological innovations are key for substantive progress.

We are thus witnessing a transformation of European political science. This development is, however, restricted to some countries. Figure 2 shows that there is a considerable difference in the productivity and efficiency across the continent. The Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries are topping the list of the science systems that produce above-the-average prolific

⁷ The online appendix provides details about the calculations.

and well cited scholars. While the United States does very well in absolute terms and relatively well in relative terms, other large countries such as Germany, Italy or Spain are underperforming. This dismal performance is at least in the German case a consequence of the still continued traditions to bury main findings, if they exist at all, in edited volumes or in non-English journals that are only read within a narrow internal market and which have accordingly a vanishing impact factor. In an evaluation on research in armed conflict, articles on this topic by Germany-based scholars received the smallest average number of citations across the 20 states included in the analysis.⁸ It is therefore not surprising that the h-index which measures instead of the average performance much more the ability of a national system of political science to produce high-impact articles, also differs greatly between the countries. It is not surprising that the small Scandinavian states have very high h-indices if one considers the size of their populations, while some large science systems have difficulties in coming up with influential research.⁹

DETERMINANTS OF SCIENTIFIC EFFECTIVENESS

This descriptive evidence is certainly encouraging. We do, however, not really know the factors that are contributing to the increasing productivity and efficiency of European researchers. Aghion et al. (2010: 46) show in a comparison of U.S. and European institutions of higher education that the productivity of universities hinges on both the autonomy they are granted and the competition they face: "... by giving more generous stakes for research competitions, governments can make universities use their funding better, use their autonomy better, and respond more productively to local competition." This suggests in their view the need to increase the mobility of students and faculty and "yardstick competition" programs such as the German excellence initiative or the British Research Excellence Framework.¹⁰

The academic environment in which we operate makes a difference and particularly affects our ability to do important research. Williams et al. (2013) show in a highly aggregated analysis that not only financial resources but also the quality of the environment increases the productivity of the national academic systems.¹¹ To see whether this also holds true for political science, I have calculated bivariate correlations between quality of the environment indicator and the average number of citations articles published between 2005 and 2009 have received so far. The correlation amounts to 0.33, and the relationship between the Hirsch index (2005 to 2008) and the environment is of a similar magnitude. Although the scarcity of system level data on the quality of higher education systems does not allow me to make

⁸ The evaluation refers to articles published between 1996 and 2006. Norway tops the ranking with 539 cites for 70 articles (mean 7.7), while German scholars published 163 indexed articles that generated 245 cites or an average of 1.5 per paper. For full details, see <http://esi-topics.com/armed-conflict/nations/d1c.html> (9/7/2014)

⁹ Note that the productive academic systems also are able to bring more the most prestigious research grants home. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the relationship between the number of ERC grants per capita and the average number of cites an article has received is 0.7.

¹⁰ Interestingly, involvement of German business administration scholars in the excellence initiative did not increase their productivity (Wollersheim et al. in press).

¹¹ The environment index consists of four components: proportion of female students (2009), proportion of female academic staff, quality of data and a "qualitative index of the policy and regulatory environment". The latter indicator, which is weighted with 70% for the index, is based on a survey across leading academic institutions. Further information on this ranking can be found at <http://www.universitas21.com/> (10/7/2014).

causal statements, it seems clear to me that sound policy making can make a difference and improve the lives of educators and students alike.

Note additionally that universities and their departments can deal with this environment policy makers set at the national or regional level in different ways. Cormack, Propper and Smith (in press) show the considerable variation in university and departmental management across British higher education. They particularly confirm that the autonomy in hiring and rewarding productive scholars increase the productivity of departments, while hierarchical incentives (setting of targets, monitoring) mattered less. As continental universities have a lot less financial autonomy, the mobility of researchers is reduced. This makes the initial hiring decisions much more important. I note, however, also through increasing requests to write letters the emergence of a European labor market for political science. I am sure that our field would experience another boost in competitiveness if all universities would renounce the practice to hire their own doctoral students for post-docs or even for permanent positions.

Obviously, also the educational background of the individual scholar is important. Hesli and Lee (2011) show that the rank of a Ph.D. program affects the productivity of U.S. political scientists positively. This suggests in the absence of a similar study in Europe that the introduction of doctoral programs across the old continent will most likely pay off. However, we are well advised in to base our hiring decisions not too much the prestige of doctoral school as tardiness in completing the doctorate strongly decreases the productivity of scholars.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude in three points: Firstly, we are doing much better than I have thought. I believe that the shift towards a more competitive European political science that we are currently witnessing is largely due to better organization and better journals. Most importantly perhaps, we have improved our teaching, and this seems to pay off. Secondly, we should nevertheless not fall into the trap of EPSA groupthink and believe that the tiresome journey towards a more productive European political science is over. We do not yet have a sufficiently large number of top research outlets, and labor mobility of European academics is still limited. Some countries including the one in which I live and work are still underperforming. Some other countries with a huge potential that is not yet fully exploited have recognized that we need to accept English as the *lingua franca* of our field. Last year, the *Società Italiana di Scienza Politica* decided to transform the distinguished *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* into an all English-journal.¹² I hope that the other high-level national outlets such as *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* or *Revue française de science politique* which haven't yet embraced the fruits (and pain) of globalization follow in the footsteps of the Italian reformers.¹³ Third, we cannot only count in our endeavors, however, on efficient organizations like EPSA and ambitious journals like PSRM. We also need to convince funding agencies like the European Research Council that we are doing important research. I

¹² As the Bonn emeritus Erich Weede has once said, those who publish in non-English journals have to hide something! This suspicion is in my opinion at least true for those who almost exclusively publish in minor journals with a low impact factor, irrespective of the periodical's language.

¹³ I add with satisfaction that other journals of national political science associations including the Dutch *Acta Politica* have moved in this direction quite some time ago.

see it as my obligation to speak to this increasingly important institution and some other key organizations in the coming months together with some colleagues from EPSA. I am proud to lead this group and of serving for another year as the 2nd President of this organization.

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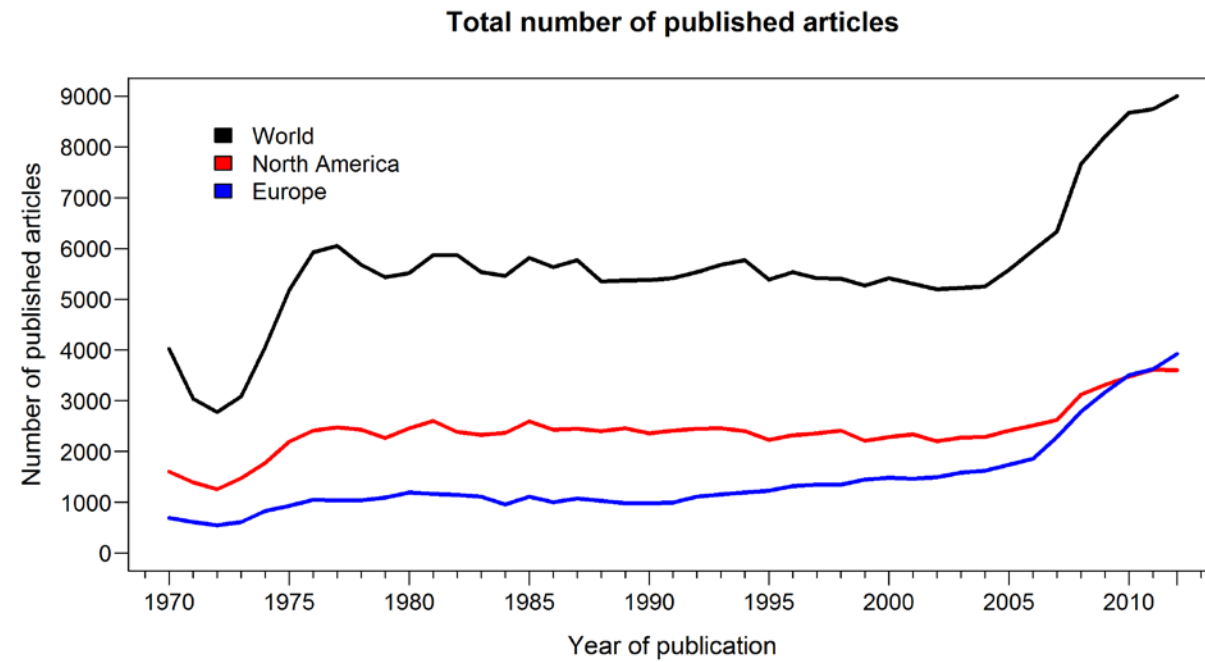
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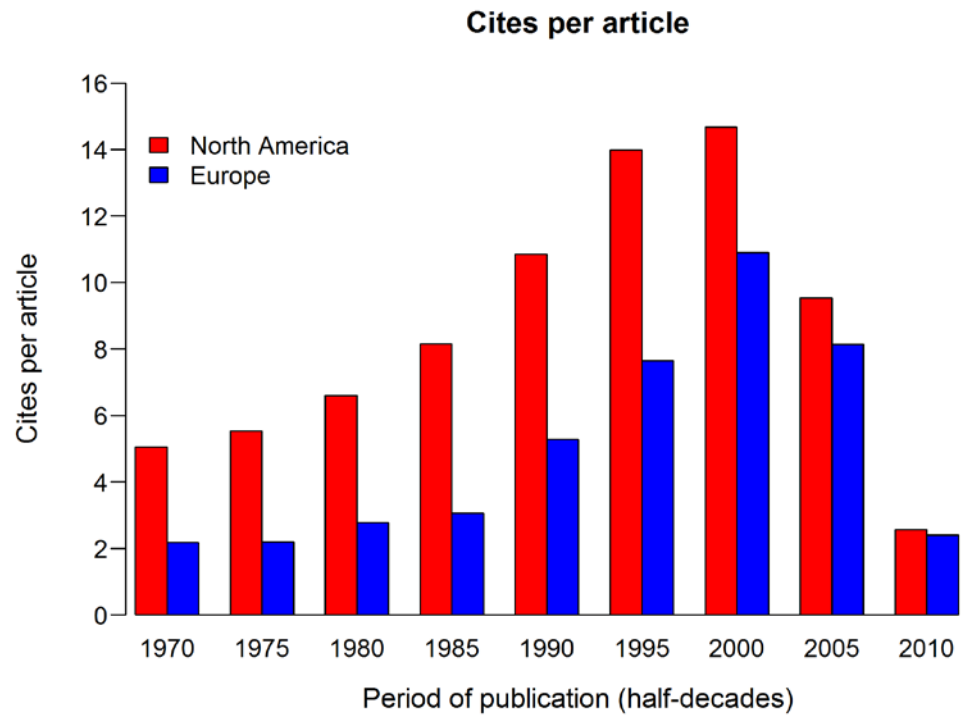
TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1: Productivity and efficiency of European and North American Political Science

1-A: Number of published articles



1-B: Cites per article



1-C: Hirsch index for articles published in a given year

The h-index by continent

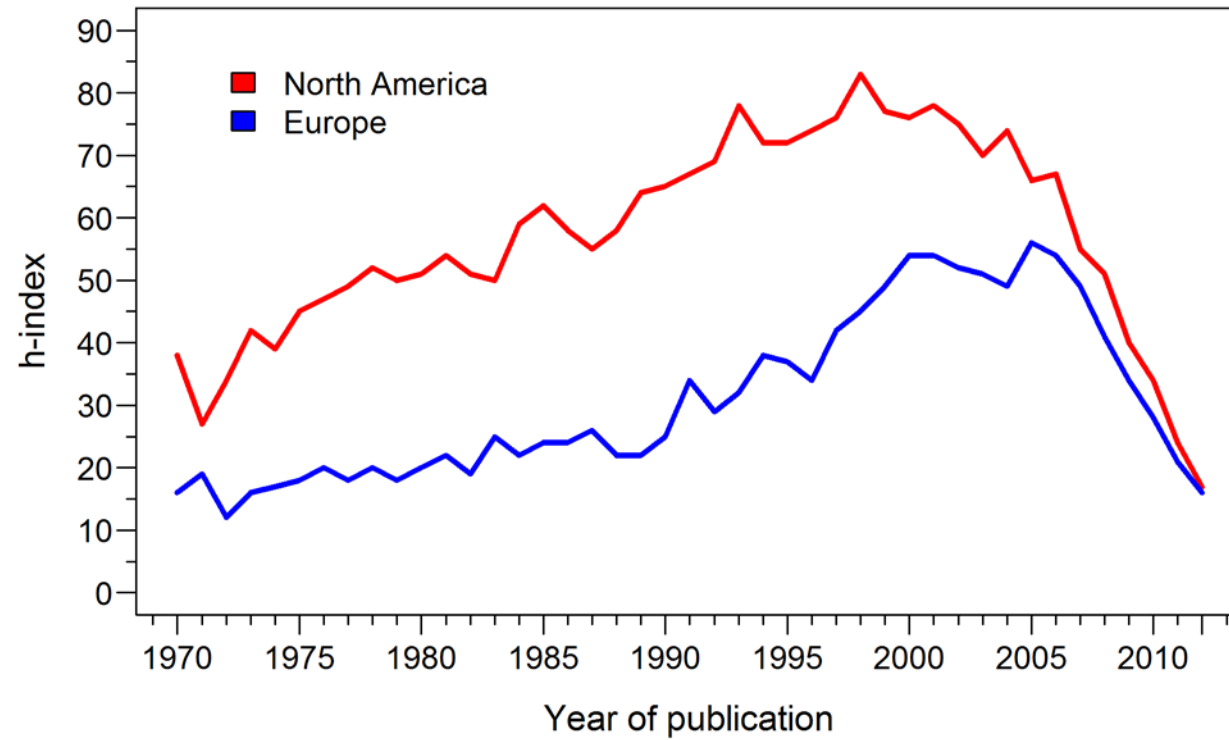
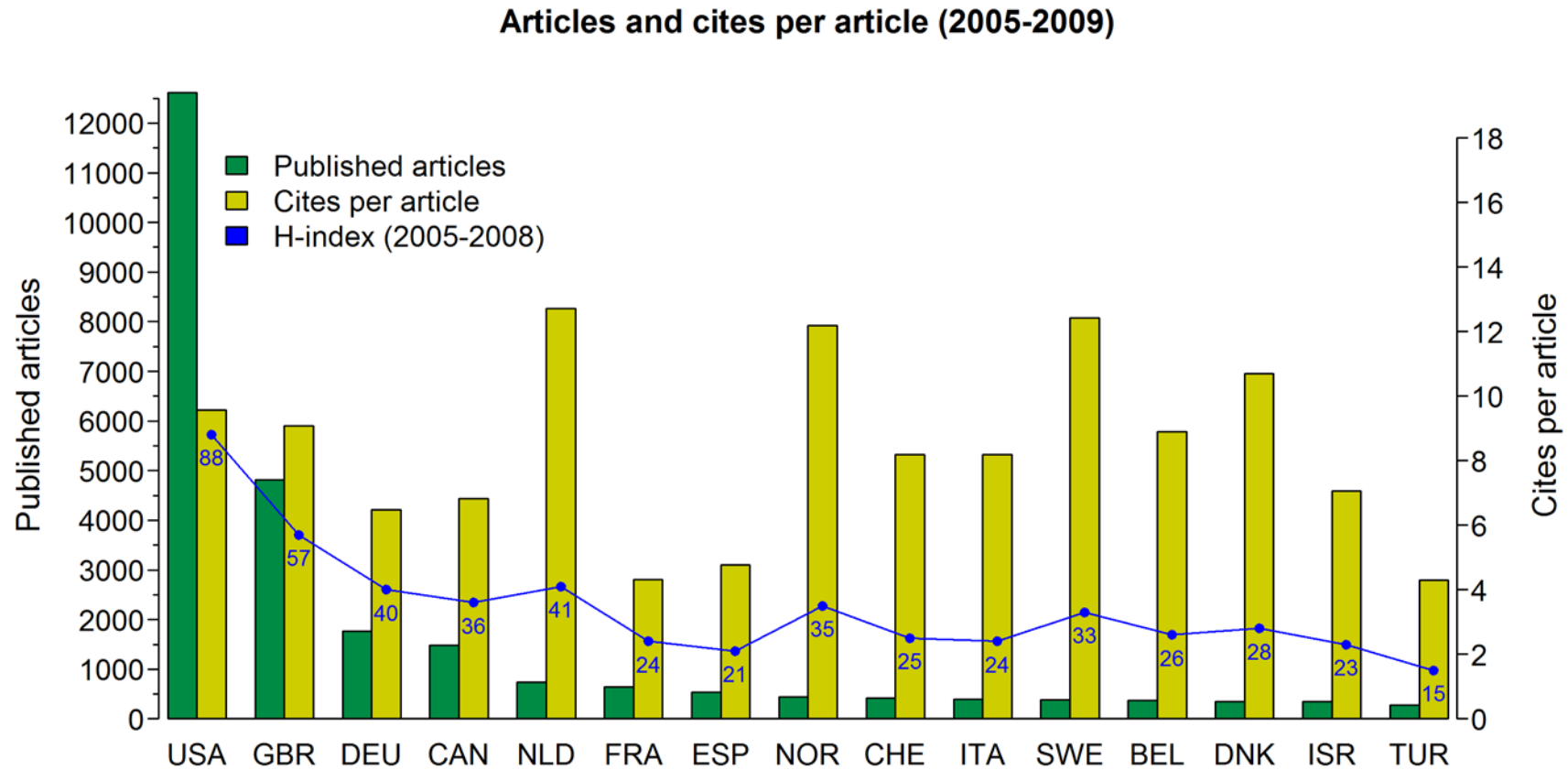


Figure 2: Number of articles published between 2005 and 2009, the citations they received and the H-index per country



Note: The h-index only refers to four years because of limitations of the Web of Knowledge in dealing with a large number of countries.

Online appendix:

This online appendix contains some additional illustrations plus information on the Web of Knowledge search conducted to obtain the figures.

Search on Web of Knowledge:

At "apps.webofknowledge.com" ->Search: "All Databases" go to Search:"Web of Science core collection", followed by moving from "Basic Search" to "advanced search". Search instead for "All document types" only for "Article" and type the following into the search field.

WC=(public administration or political science or international relations) and TS=("search term1" OR "Searchterm2") and CU=("country 1" OR "country 2")

Note that we generated the search term by relying on the list of section of the American Political Science Association and EPSA.

North America: CU=("USA" OR "CANADA")

Europe: CU=(ENGLAND OR GERMANY OR FED REP GER OR FRANCE OR NETHERLANDS OR SCOTLAND OR NORWAY OR ISRAEL OR SWITZERLAND OR ITALY OR BELGIUM OR SWEDEN OR SPAIN OR AUSTRIA OR CZECHOSLOVAKIA OR DENMARK OR WALES OR CZECH REPUBLIC OR IRELAND OR TURKEY OR FINLAND OR NORTH IRELAND OR HUNGARY OR WEST GERMANY OR POLAND OR GREECE OR ROMANIA OR PORTUGAL OR SLOVENIA OR ESTONIA OR SLOVAKIA OR BUNDES REPUBLIK OR YUGOSLAVIA OR BULGARIA OR ICELAND OR LUXEMBOURG OR CESKOSLOVANSKO OR LITHUANIA OR CYPRUS OR MALTA OR ETHIOPIA OR CROATIA OR GER DEM REP OR LATVIA OR SERBIA OR BOSNIA HERCEG OR MACEDONIA OR NORGE OR OSTERREICH OR EAST GERMANY OR BELGIQUE OR SAN MARINO OR MONTENEGRO OR BRD OR LIECHTENSTEIN)

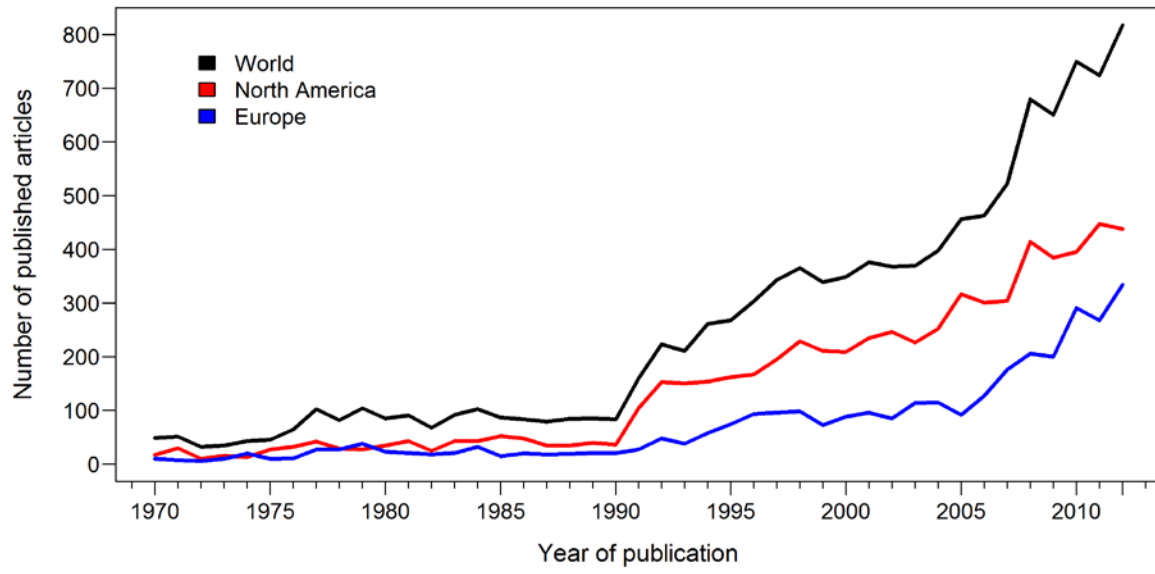
Electoral behaviour: TS=("Electoral Behaviour" OR "Electoral Behavior" OR Election* OR "Voting Behaviour" OR "voting behavior")

Armed conflict: TS=("Armed Conflict" OR "Armed Conflicts" OR "Interstate Conflict" OR "Interstate Conflicts" OR terroris* OR "Intrastate Conflict" OR "Intrastate Conflicts" OR War OR Genocid* OR "Conflict Process" OR "Conflict Processes" OR "International Security" OR "Arms Control" or "Conflict Resolution" or "Conflict Management" or rebel* or insurgen*)

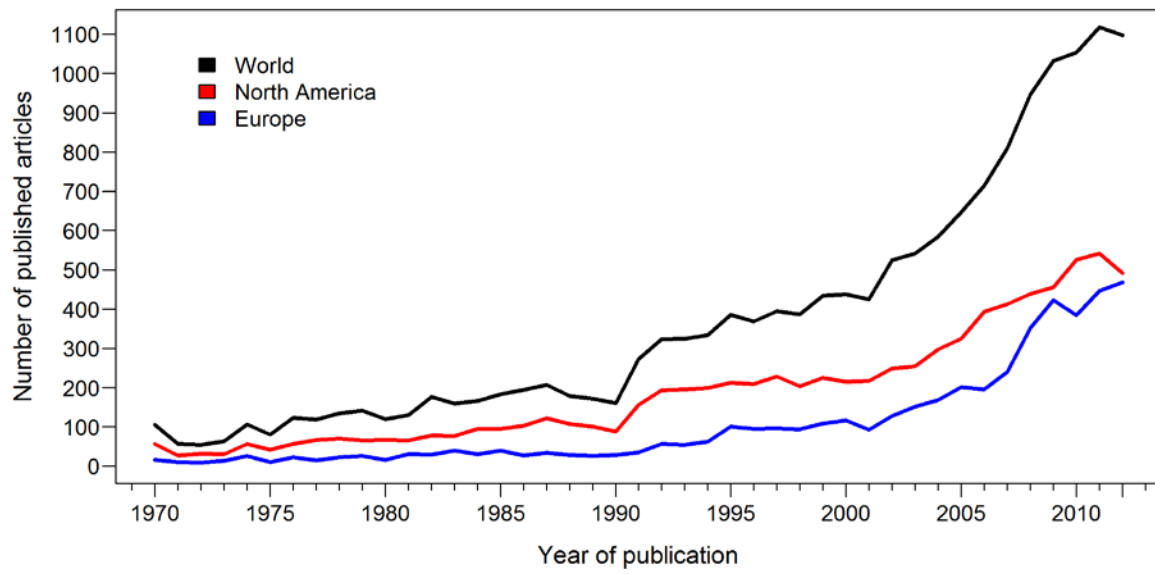
Methods: TS=(method* OR Quantitative OR Econometric\$ OR Statistic\$ OR "Large n" OR "Large-n" OR Experiment* OR markov OR bayes* OR binomal OR "time series" OR "cross section*" OR panel OR regress* OR variable OR data* OR probabilit* OR likelihood OR simulat*)

Note that some searches had to be limited for one year as the option to create citation reports requires fewer than 10000 responses.

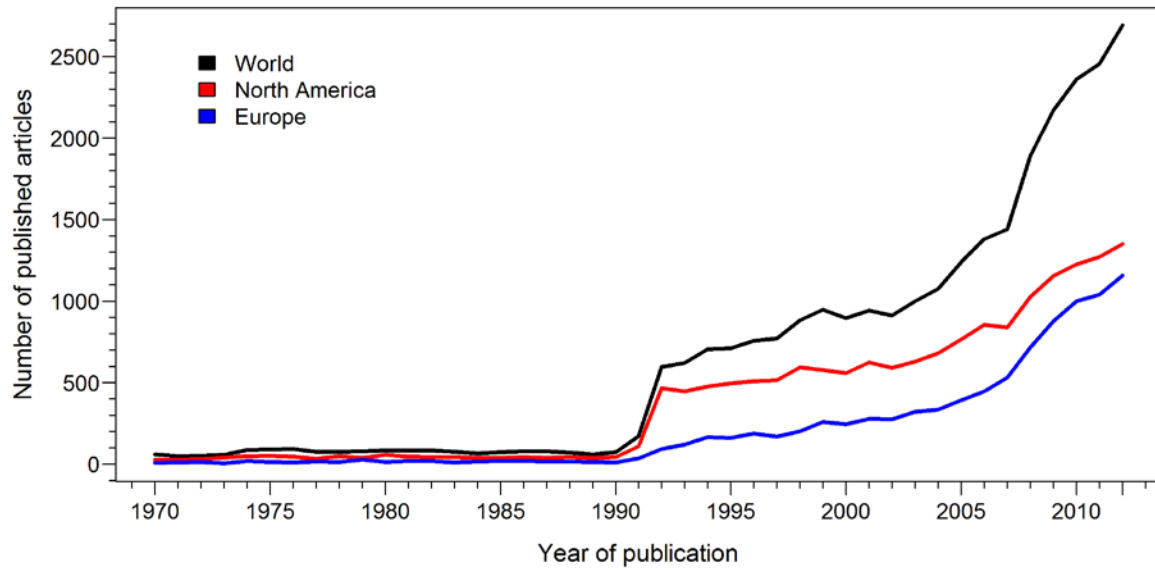
Published articles (electoral behaviour)



Published articles (armed conflict)



Number of published articles (methods)



Cites per article (electoral behaviour)

