

# The Landscape of Comparative Politics: Which Regions and Countries Have Had High Profiles in Comparative Politics Journals?

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## ABSTRACT

This article uses descriptive statistics and social-network analysis to examine which regions and countries were selected in studies comparing-two countries that have been published in America's renowned academic journals in comparative politics (CP): *Comparative Political Studies* and *Journal of Comparative Politics*. Which regions and countries are favored (and disfavored) by these studies? Analysis shows that the US-based CP journals strongly favor research on the countries of Western Europe and North America. There may be several explanations for this, but the uneven distribution of research publications with respect to continents and countries may be a source of several biases that should be of concern in the CP field.

Which regions and countries have come to the foreground in comparative politics (CP) in the past quarter-century? This study examined which geographical areas and which countries have had a high profile in CP. All characters onstage are valuable, else they would not appear, but all do not hold center stage. Similarly, in the CP field, all geographical regions and countries should be studied, even though they may be smaller and less populous. In the two major journals in the field, however, it is likely that many geographical regions and countries are neglected. Thus, this article examines which geographical regions and countries have been studied for comparative case studies in the US-based CP journals *Comparative Political Studies* (CPS) and *Journal of Comparative Politics* (JCP) from 1990 to 2015.

## THE PROBLEM OF REGIONAL AND COUNTRY BIAS

Munck and Snyder (2007, 339) conducted research on authorship in the US-based CP journals. They found “the dearth of articles by foreign-based scholars” in main US-based academic journals including *Comparative Politics*, *CPS*, and *World Politics*. They argued that this seems to be against “openness” and “pluralism,” which are intrinsic and valued attributes of CP that is “a field that

aspires to study the world” (Munck and Snyder 2007, 339). In a sense, “this [dominant] U.S.-centric perspective” shows a gap between as-it-is and as-it-ought-to-be in CP.

This article argues that the scarcity of foreign-based scholars publishing in US-based CP journals also is likely to be reflected in regions and countries that CP scholars choose to study. In particular, they tend to focus on specific regions and countries for their comparative study. This is evidence of “the [presumable] parochialism of research in comparative politics,” which Munck and Snyder (2007, 341) strongly criticized. Further evidence of parochialism in CP would exist if the two renowned CP journals show a similar bias in the distribution of countries and regions of interest.

## METHODS

To determine if there is such a bias, this study analyzed a total of 118 “comparing-two-country” articles published in *JCP* and *CPS*. The articles span the years 1990 through 2015. For *JCP*, there are 57 articles, including 46 country-monads or single-country studies and 48 country-dyads or studies of country pairs. For *CPS*, there are 61 articles, including 55 country-monads and 47 country-dyads. Overall, including both journals, and considering the overlap of single countries and country pairs, there is a total of 72 monads and 80 dyads. Table 1 shows the number of monads and dyads appearing in *JCP* alone, *CPS* alone, and in both *JCP* and *CPS* from 1990 to 2015.

To analyze potential bias, I first reviewed the single-country studies, using graphics to examine the distribution of regions and countries within regions. I next looked at the two-country studies,

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determining whether the countries are from the same region and, if so, whether they are adjacent to one another. I conducted social-network analysis to provide a picture of the landscape of two-country studies.

**FINDINGS: MONAD ANALYSIS**

Regions are categorized according to the United Nations Regional Groups of Member States, as follows: African Group (AF), Asia-Pacific Group (AP), Eastern European Group (EAU), Latin

of countries within regional groups. It shows that studies in CP, regardless of region, have been heavily weighted in favor of certain countries.

First, in the case of WEU representing 42% of published articles, four countries (i.e., United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany) accounted for 70% of articles about this region. Second, in the case of LAC representing 21% of all published articles, five countries (i.e., Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Chile) accounted for 66% of articles about this region. Third, in the case

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American and Caribbean Group (LAC), and Western European and Others Group (WEU).<sup>2</sup> As shown in figure 1, 42% of published articles in *JCP* and *CPS* during the period of study focused on WEU, which includes the North American and Oceanic countries of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Conversely, AF and EAU each counted for only 8%. WEU clearly is the focus of a large plurality of studies.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of countries by separate regions. The unequal distribution is paralleled by the unequal distribution

of AF representing 8% of all published articles, five countries (i.e., South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Côte d'Ivoire) accounted for 75% of articles about this region. Fourth, in the case of AP representing 21% of all published articles during the same period, five nations (i.e., Korea, Taiwan, India, Japan, and China) accounted for 66% of articles about this region. Fifth, in the case of EAU, with only 8% of all published articles, four countries (i.e., Russia, Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine) accounted for 83% of EAU-related articles. As shown in figures 1 and 2, publications in these two leading journals focused disproportionately on certain regions and countries within particular regions, suggesting both regional and country biases.

**FINDINGS: DYAD ANALYSIS**

Many CP scholars—by choice (e.g., nationality, graduate training, country or research interests) and for practical concerns (e.g., language skills, research funds, and time)—are specialists in either the politics of a single country or, at best, a few countries. Are these constraints reflected in the focus of published research and therefore a source of bias in CP? When two coun-

tries are compared, are the countries from the same or different regions? Table 2 shows the distribution of country-dyads across regions. A country-dyad can include countries from the same or different regions. It is apparent that country-dyads most often include countries from the same region—indeed, these pairs comprised more than two thirds of the country-dyad studies (88/118= 74.6%). WEU-WEU dyads garnered a 37.3% (44/118=37.3%) share of all two-country CP articles. They also had a 50% (44/88=50%) share of articles dealing with symmetric dyads. In contrast, AF-AF and EAU-EAU dyads received much less attention: each garnered a 6 percent (6/118=5%) share.

When two countries from the same region are compared, are they adjacent to one another? It is possible that CP scholars favor the most similar system design that a half-century ago was recommended by Przeworski and Teune (1970). Countries from the same region that are adjacent to one another are more likely to share

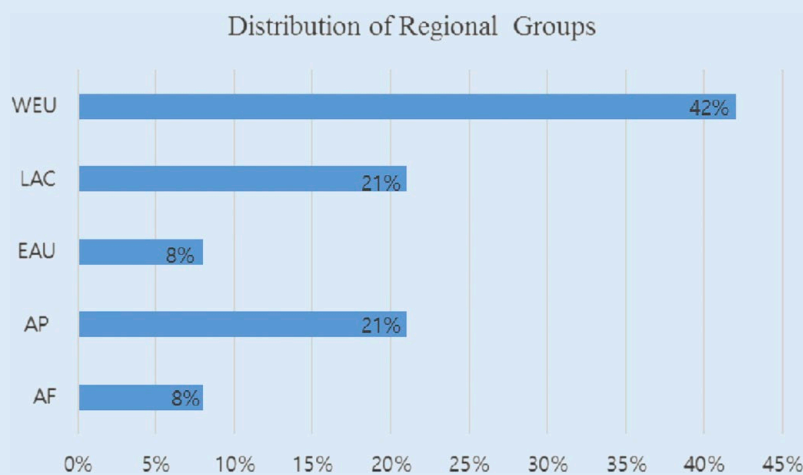
Table 1

**Monad and Dyad Countries Appearing in *JCP* and *CPS*, 1990-2015**

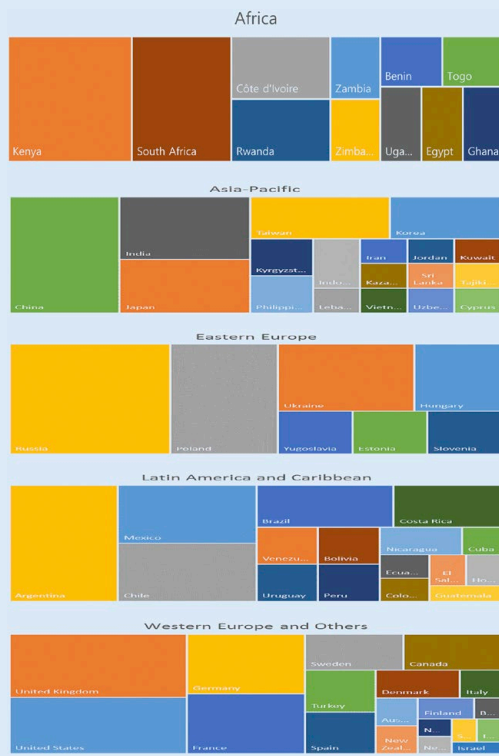
	JCP	CPS	Both JCP & CPS (overlapped) <sup>2</sup>	Total
Monad	46	55	29	72
Dyad	48	47	15	80

Figure 1

**Distribution of Regional Groups as the Focus of Published Papers**



**Figure 2**  
**Distribution of Countries by Regions as the Focus of Published Papers**



similar characteristics, allowing for the control of extraneous factors, making comparison easier.

There also may be practical reasons (e.g., easier access and limited research resources) for comparing adjacent countries. Table 2 shows how often specific country pairs have been published in two-country CP studies. As shown, the same continental neighbors—including fr-uk (7); cn-in (6); ca-us (5); ar-cl (4);

ar-br (3); jp-us (3); ru-ua (3); se-uk (3); and uk-us (3)—appear more frequently as the objects of CP study.

In summary, monadic studies involving countries from the WEU region and country-dyad studies involving two countries from this region (see figure 3) are the most frequently published studies. At the monad level, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, France, Argentina, and China appear most frequently. At the dyad level, France-United Kingdom, China-India, Canada-United States, Argentina-Chile, and Germany-United States are the preferred research subjects. In particular, the United Kingdom appeared as the most preferred country and France-United Kingdom as the most preferred country pair in *JCP* and *CPS*. Plainly, there is an uneven distribution of countries and country pairs in CP studies, as well as an uneven distribution of countries within regional groups. Based on social-network analysis, figure 4 depicts this uneven distribution of two-country CP studies. The related data are shown in table 3.

### IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the extent to which different regions and countries appeared as the focus of articles published in the two major CP journals: *JCP* and *CPS*. It addressed the question of which countries and regions are favored (and disfavored) by studies published in these US-based journals. It found that for both journals, there is similarity in the distribution of countries and regions of interest. Specific regions and specific countries within regions are favored. Finally, specific pairs of countries are favored in studies of the same region. This is evidence of parochialism and bias in the representation of both regions and countries in CP.

Several questions, however, remain unanswered and are beyond the scope of this study. What might account for these findings? There are several plausible explanations that are not mutually exclusive. The bias in representation of regions and countries may be due in part to the distribution of CP scholars, with more specialists residing in the United States and Western Europe. Perhaps there is more vigorous competition by these US and Western European specialists to publish in the top CP journals, resulting in more and higher-quality submissions. It may

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Paired Countries Appearing in Two-Country Comparative Studies<sup>3</sup>**

Dyad (number of published articles) 80 dyads, 118 articles	<i>JCP</i> (number of published articles) 48 dyads, 57 articles	<i>CPS</i> (number of published articles) 47 dyads, 61 articles
<b>7 fr-uk</b>	<b>fr-uk (3)</b>	<b>fr-uk (4)</b>
<b>6 cn-in</b>	<b>cn-in (3)</b>	<b>cn-in (3)</b>
<b>5 ca-us</b>	<b>ca-us (1)</b>	<b>ca-us (4)</b>
<b>4 ar-cl; de-us</b>	<b>ar-cl (2); de-us (1)</b>	<b>ar-cl (2); de-us (3)</b>
<b>3 ar-br; jp-us; ru-ua; se-uk; uk-us</b>	<b>ar-br (2); jp-us (1); ru-ua (2); se-uk (1); uk-us (2)</b>	<b>ar-br (1); jp-us (2); ru-ua (1); se-uk (2); uk-us (1)</b>
<b>2 au-nz; cl-mx; cn-tw; de-uk; fr-de; kr-tw; mx-ve; pl-ru</b>	<b>cl-mx (1); cn-tw (2); de-uk (1); fr-de (1); kr-tw (1); mx-ve (1); pl-ru (1)</b>	<b>at-us; au-nz (2); cl-mx (1); de-fr (1); de-uk (1); kr-tw (1); mx-ve (1); pl-ru (1)</b>
<b>1 ar-mx; ar-pl; ar-tr; ar-uy; at-us; be-dk; bj-tg; bo-ec; bo-id; br-es; br-mx; ca-za; ci-gh; ch-jp; ci-ke; cl-es; cl-uy; cn-hu; cn-ru; cn-vn; co-pe; de-pl; de-se; dk-se; es-br; fr-es; fr-se; fr-us; hu-cu; ir-tr; it-es; jo-kw; jp-tw; ke-rw; ke-za; ke-zw; kg-kg; kr-zm; lb-uk; rw-ug; uk-za</b>	<b>ar-pl; ar-tr; bj-tg; bo-ec; ci-ke; cl-es; cl-uy; cn-hu; cn-ru; cn-vn; co-pe; de-pl; de-se; dk-se; es-br; fr-es; fr-se; fr-us; hu-cu; ir-tr; it-es; jo-kw; jp-tw; ke-rw; ke-za; ke-zw; kg-kg; kr-zm; lb-uk; rw-ug; uk-za</b>	<b>ar-mx; ar-uy; be-dk; bo-id; br-mx; ca-za; ch-jp; ci-gh; cl-za; cr-ni; cy-es; de-in; de-tr; dk-nl; dk-no; ee-si; eg-tr; fi-ie; fi-il; hn-gt; id-ph; it-uk; jp-kr; ke-mx; lk-yu; pe-ph; sv-za; tj-uz; tr-uk</b>



Table 3

## Social Network Analysis: Landscape of Two-Country Comparative Studies

Vertex	Country Name	Regional Group	Degree	Betweenness Centrality*	Closeness Centrality	Eigenvector Centrality	Clustering Coefficient
uk	United Kingdom	WEU	8	270.0	0.009	0.104	0.200
de	Germany	WEU	7	231.7	0.008	0.097	0.300
us	United States	WEU	6	212.4	0.008	0.076	0.200
ar	Argentina	LAC	6	171.7	0.007	0.033	0.100
za	South Africa	AF	5	217.1	0.008	0.039	0.000
cn	China	AP	5	155.9	0.006	0.010	0.000
tr	Turkey	WEU	5	126.9	0.007	0.057	0.100
mx	Mexico	LAC	5	120.9	0.006	0.021	0.100
es	Spain	WEU	5	94.7	0.007	0.037	0.000
cr	Costa Rica	LAC	5	92.3	0.007	0.025	0.000
fr	France	WEU	5	91.6	0.008	0.083	0.500
ke	Kenya	AF	4	178.5	0.006	0.015	0.000
se	Sweden	WEU	4	164.0	0.007	0.066	0.500
jp	Japan	AP	4	140.1	0.006	0.021	0.167
dk	Denmark	WEU	4	129.0	0.006	0.017	0.000
pl	Poland	EAU	3	129.3	0.007	0.030	0.000
ru	Russia	EAU	3	95.2	0.006	0.009	0.000
kr	Korea	AP	3	44.0	0.005	0.007	0.333
tw	Taiwan	AP	3	35.7	0.006	0.008	0.333
br	Brazil	LAC	3	20.1	0.007	0.020	0.333
in	India	AP	2	90.8	0.007	0.023	0.000
ci	Côte d'Ivoire	LAC	2	44.0	0.005	0.003	0.000
hu	Hungary	EAU	2	44.0	0.005	0.002	0.000
rw	Rwanda	AF	2	44.0	0.005	0.003	0.000
ca	Canada	WEU	2	32.7	0.007	0.025	0.000
uy	Uruguay	LAC	2	10.3	0.006	0.013	0.000
id	Indonesia	AP	2	6.0	0.111	0.000	0.000
ph	Philippines	AP	2	6.0	0.111	0.000	0.000
it	Italy	WEU	2	4.2	0.007	0.031	0.000
bo	Bolivia	LAC	2	4.0	0.091	0.000	0.000
pe	Peru	LAC	2	4.0	0.091	0.000	0.000
fi	Finland	WEU	2	1.0	0.500	0.000	0.000
kg	Kyrgyzstan	AP	2	1.0	0.500	0.000	0.000
at	Austria	WEU	1	0.0	0.006	0.017	0.000
au	Australia	WEU	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
be	Belgium	WEU	1	0.0	0.005	0.004	0.000
bj	Benin	AF	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
ch	Switzerland	WEU	1	0.0	0.005	0.005	0.000
cl	Chile	LAC	1	0.0	0.005	0.007	0.000
co	Colombia	LAC	1	0.0	0.067	0.000	0.000
cy	Cyprus	AP	1	0.0	0.005	0.008	0.000
cu	Cuba	LAC	1	0.0	0.004	0.001	0.000
ec	Ecuador	LAC	1	0.0	0.067	0.000	0.000
ee	Estonia	EAU	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000

(continued)



Table 3 (Continued)

Vertex	Country Name	Regional Group	Degree	Betweenness Centrality*	Closeness Centrality	Eigenvector Centrality	Clustering Coefficient
eg	Egypt	AF	1	0.0	0.006	0.012	0.000
gh	Ghana	AF	1	0.0	0.004	0.001	0.000
gt	Guatemala	LAC	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
hn	Honduras	LAC	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
ie	Ireland	WEU	1	0.0	0.333	0.000	0.000
il	Israel	WEU	1	0.0	0.333	0.000	0.000
ir	Iran	AP	1	0.0	0.006	0.012	0.000
jo	Jordan	AP	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
kw	Kuwait	AP	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
kz	Kazakhstan	AP	1	0.0	0.333	0.000	0.000
lb	Lebanon	AP	1	0.0	0.006	0.023	0.000
lk	Sri Lanka	AP	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
ni	Nicaragua	LAC	1	0.0	0.005	0.006	0.000
nl	Netherlands	WEU	1	0.0	0.005	0.004	0.000
no	Norway	WEU	1	0.0	0.005	0.004	0.000
nz	New Zealand	WEU	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
si	Slovenia	EAU	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
sv	El Salvador	LAC	1	0.0	0.006	0.009	0.000
tg	Togo	AF	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
tj	Tajikistan	AP	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
ua	Ukraine	EAU	1	0.0	0.005	0.002	0.000
ug	Uganda	AF	1	0.0	0.004	0.001	0.000
uz	Uzbekistan	AP	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
ve	Venezuela	LAC	1	0.0	0.005	0.005	0.000
vn	Viet Nam	AP	1	0.0	0.005	0.002	0.000
yu	Yugoslavia	EAU	1	0.0	1.000	0.000	0.000
zm	Zambia	AF	1	0.0	0.004	0.001	0.000
zw	Zimbabwe	AF	1	0.0	0.333	0.000	0.000

\*Rounded to one decimal place

efforts are spent finding answers to questions that, although still interesting, are less important. If the explanation is due to regional specialists sending manuscripts to regional journals, however, this may reflect a beneficial division of labor in CP.

Questions that are important to specialists in the politics of the United States and Western Europe, for example, are not likely to be important to specialists in the politics of other countries and regions. If the reason is that data are more readily available or easier to gather from some countries and regions, there is reason to think about why this is so and, if possible, to find solutions, such as increased funding for cross-national survey research (e.g., World Values Surveys) and large-scale CP data-collection efforts.

### CONCLUSION

This study examined the extent to which different regions and countries appeared as the focus of the major US-based CP journals from 1990 to 2015. The major finding is the disproportionate representation of particular regions and countries. Some regions and countries have been over-valued and over-researched; others

have been under-valued and under-researched. A conjecture is that the uneven distribution of concern reflects in part a lingering colonialist attitude. For some CP scholars, there are countries and regions that weigh more heavily in the calculus of what is and is not important.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### NOTES

1. See [www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml](http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml).
2. For countries appearing only in *JCP*: 17 countries including bj(Benin), co(Colombia), cu(Cuba), ec(Ecuador), hu(Hungary), ir(Iran), jo(Jordan), kg(Kyrgyzstan), kw(Kuwait), kz(Kazakhstan), lb(Lebanon), rw(Rwanda), tg(Togo), ug(Uganda), vn(Viet Nam), zm(Zambia), and zw(Zimbabwe). For countries appearing only in *CPS*: 26 countries including at(Austria),

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au(Australia), be(Belgium), ch(Switzerland), cr(Costa Rica), cy(Cyprus), ee(Estonia), eg(Egypt), fi(Finland), gh(Ghana), gt(Guatemala), hn(Honduras), id(Indonesia), ie(Ireland), il(Israel), lk(Sri Lanka), ni(Nicaragua), nl(Netherlands), no(Norway), nz(New Zealand), ph(Philippines), si(Slovenia), sv(El Salvador), tj(Tajikistan), uz(Uzbekistan), and yu(Yugoslavia). For countries appearing in both journals: 29 countries including ar(Argentina), bo(Bolivia), br(Brazil), ca(Canada), ci(Côte d'Ivoire), cl(Chile), cn(China), de(Germany), dk(Denmark), es(Spain), fr(France), in(India), it(Italy), jp(Japan), ke(Kenya), kr(Korea), mx(Mexico), pe(Peru), pl(Poland), ru(Russia), se(Sweden), tr(Turkey), tw(Taiwan), ua(Ukraine), uk(United Kingdom), us(United States), uy(Uruguay), ve(Venezuela), and za(South Africa).

3. uk(United Kingdom); de(Germany); us(United States); ar(Argentina); za(South Africa); cn(China); tr(Turkey); mx(Mexico); es(Spain); cr(Costa Rica); fr(France); ke(Kenya); se(Sweden); jp(Japan); dk(Denmark); pl(Poland); ru(Russia); kr(Korea); tw(Taiwan); br(Brazil); in(India); ci(Côte d'Ivoire); hu(Hungary); rw(Rwanda); ca(Canada); uy(Uruguay); id(Indonesia); ph(Philippines); it(Italy); bo(Bolivia); pe(Peru); fi(Finland); kg(Kyrgyzstan);

at(Austria); au(Australia); be(Belgium); bj(Benin); ch(Switzerland); cl(Chile); co(Colombia); cy(Cyprus); cu(Cuba); ec(Ecuador); ee(Estonia); eg(Egypt); gh(Ghana); gt(Guatemala); hn(Honduras); ie(Ireland); il(Israel); ir(Iran); jo(Jordan); kw(Kuwait); kz(Kazakhstan); lb(Lebanon); lk(Sri Lanka); ni(Nicaragua); nl(Netherlands); no(Norway); nz(New Zealand); si(Slovenia); sv(El Salvador); tg(Togo); tj(Tajikistan); ua(Ukraine); ug(Uganda); uz(Uzbekistan); ve(Venezuela); vn(Viet Nam); yu(Yugoslavia); zm(Zambia); and zw(Zimbabwe).

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