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## Editorial

## Symposium on “The nationalization of electoral politics: Frontiers of research”

## Introduction

The study of the nationalization of electoral politics has a long history. Yet only in the past decade has broad interest in the topic surged and has its centrality for a number of neighboring research areas been recognized. Not only have advances in this research area contributed to the fields of party system, electoral systems, electoral behavior, and territorial politics, but attention to this area has also invigorated efforts directed toward data collection useful to a variety of other fields in political science.<sup>1</sup> This momentum led us to organize an international conference and this follow-up symposium.<sup>2</sup> As research on nationalization of electoral politics thrives and continues to grow, the articles included in the symposium exemplify the innovation and high potential of this exciting research area.

Research on nationalization has become nuanced and complex. Cutting-edge contributions have covered new regions like post-communist and developing countries (Bochsler, 2006, 2010a, Hicken, 2009; Tiemann, 2012), including Asia (Chhibber et al., 2014; Croissant and Schächter, 2008; McElwain, 2012; Nikolenyi, 2009) and Africa (Wahman, 2015), while other researchers continue their focus on Europe, and North and South America (Alemán and Kellam, 2008; Lupu, 2015; Morgenstern et al., 2012). Because of the expansion to new cases, large-*n* analyses include now presidential elections beside parliamentary ones (Castañeda-Angarita, 2013; Hicken and Stoll, 2011; Russo et al., 2013).

Furthermore, although earlier research almost exclusively treated it as a dependent variable, nationalization is now being studied both as independent and dependent variable in multivariate research designs. In particular, models have addressed nationalization's relationships to decentralization (Harbers, 2010; Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2011; Lago-Peñas et al., 2014; Simón, 2013), municipal politics (Kjaer and Elklit, 2010), ethnic fragmentation (Bochsler, 2011; Lublin, 2014; Tronconi, 2006), and institutional and economic factors (Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2016; Morgenstern et al., 2009; Simón and Guinjoan, 2014).

Nationalization theories and indicators are now being applied also to supranational and multi-level party systems (Camia and Caramani, 2012; Caramani, 2006, 2011, 2012, 2015; Harbers, 2010; Lago and Montero, 2009; Mustillo and Mustillo, 2012; Schakel, 2013a,b), and also is being merged with geographical information systems to enable richer analyses. Some have made links between nationalization and the quality of representation (Caramani, 2015; Rodden and Wibbels, 2011; Thames and Palani, 2013).

Researchers have shown additional links between nationalization and other elements of electoral behavior and party systems. These include individual voting determinants, economic voting and the performance of cabinets, coordination within cabinets and legislatures, turnout, ballot composition, cross-district coordination, and vote switching (Calvo and Leiras, 2012; Caramani, 2015; Crisp et al., 2012; Lyons and Linek, 2010; Maggini and Emanuele, 2015; Potter, 2013; Simón, 2015). This literature has developed increasingly sophisticated indicators capturing the variety of dimensions of nationalization (Bochsler, 2010b; Golosov, 2016; Kasuya and Moenius, 2008; Lago and Montero, 2014; Morgenstern and Potthoff, 2005; Morgenstern et al., 2014).

Finally, a growing area of application for nationalization as a concept and as a measure of party and party system attributes is in public policy studies. Contributions have been made analyzing the impact on, for instance, foreign direct investment, and social spending and health care distribution (Crisp et al., 2013; Hicken et al., 2016; Jurado, 2014; Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2009; Simmons et al., 2011).

A measure of the importance of nationalization research is shown in Fig. 1.<sup>3</sup> The number of articles and books published on the topic has grown over time to be a steady presence in research on parties, candidates, elections, and voters.

The symposium features some of the best new research building on these numerous advances. The goal of the symposium is to take stock of the progress and to identify the most promising avenues of research for the future. The articles in the symposium take concrete steps in those directions based on original empirical analysis. All articles address key, often novel, theoretical questions with new approaches and data.

<sup>1</sup> The *Constituency-Level Data Archive* (CLEA) (Kollman et al., 2016) is a documented database for electoral results at district level for 142 countries and 1720 elections in the most recent release. Other efforts include Caramani (2000) and Lublin's *Election Passport* (2015) (both now incorporated in CLEA), as well as Brancati's *Global Elections Database* (2015).

<sup>2</sup> The conference on “The Nationalization of Electoral Politics: Frontiers of Research” was organized at the University of Zurich on September 17–18, 2015 bringing together most of the leading scholars in the field.

<sup>3</sup> The figure is based on a new bibliography on the nationalization of electoral politics providing complete information on the type of study, the area, countries and time period covered by the analysis, the type of election and level of territorial aggregation, the measures, and the theoretical approach. Codebook and data can be accessed as online material through the CLEA homepage.

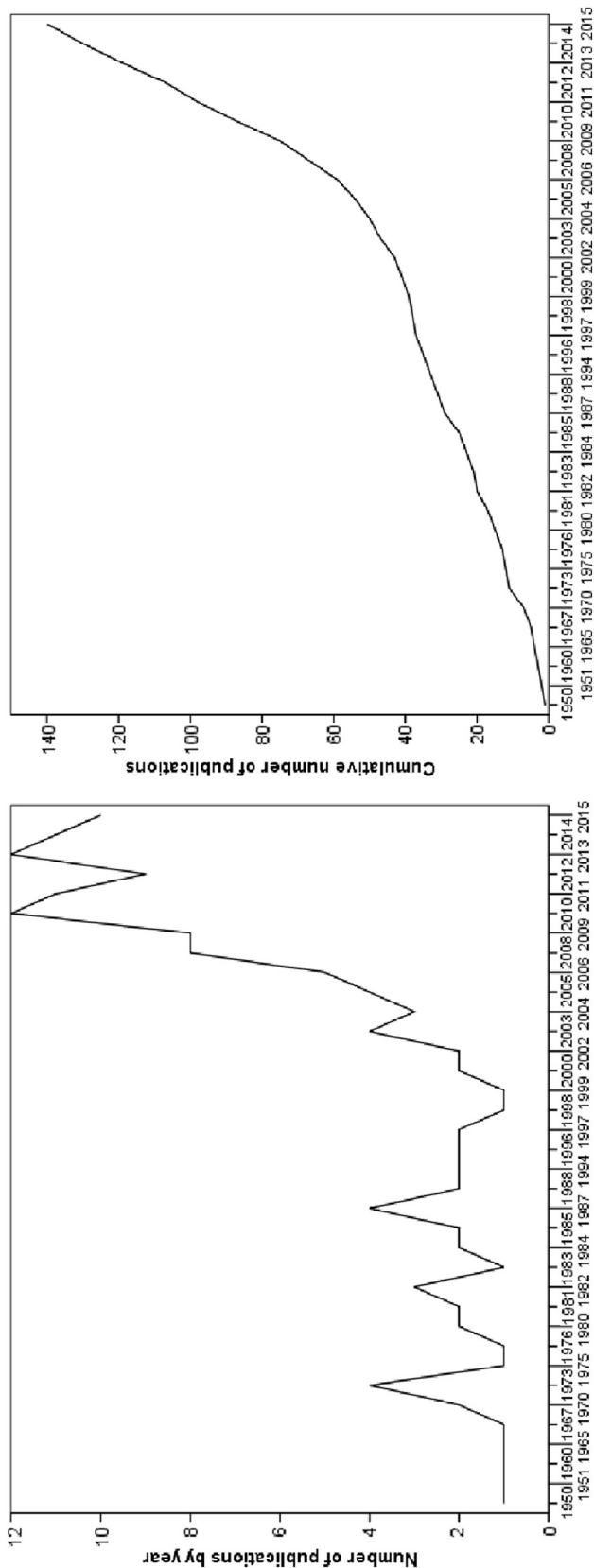


Fig. 1. Publications on nationalization (1950–2015).

As can be seen from the graphs, only a handful of publications on nationalization can be counted before the early 2000s when the first wave of comparative publications appeared (Jones and Mainwaring, 2003; Caramani, 2004; Chhibber and Kollman, 2004; Morgenstern and Swindle, 2005). Research on nationalization began in the 1950s with quantitative analysis of American election data, and then took shape in the 1960s. Pioneering work has been produced by classics such as Schattschneider's *The Semisovereign People* on U.S. elections (1960) and Stokes (1965, 1967), followed by the systematic conceptual treatment of main dimensions of nationalization by Claggett et al. (1984).<sup>4</sup>

Building on Claggett et al. (1984), we can distinguish four dimensions. One is the degree to which electoral outcomes reflect, or are caused by, national forces as opposed to sub-national or local forces. "Outcomes" here can mean several things such as the distribution or swing of votes, the allocation of seats across parties, candidate or party entries in elections, or voter turnout. A second, more specific dimension is what Morgenstern et al. (2009) call *dynamic* nationalization. This is the degree to which electoral shifts – measured as swings in popular vote proportions of parties over time – show common variance across geographic regions in the country. A third dimension is *static* nationalization, which analyzes the geographic distribution of votes or seats for parties in a given election. This dimension reflects the degree to which parties are (horizontally) homogenous and link or aggregate vote totals across constituencies and other politically meaningful geographic areas to create nationally competitive partisan blocs. Finally, a fourth dimension is the degree to which regional or local party systems correspond (vertically) to the national one.

One of the most crucial empirical findings of nationalization theory is the role of competition in processes of cross-district aggregation and homogenization of party systems over time (Caramani, 2003). This competition perspective follows the more formal work on cross-district coordination and linkage in pioneering work such as Cox's *Making Votes Count* (1997). It relates closely to Sartori's (1986) argument that the reductive effect of electoral systems at the national level takes place only if parties are nationalized (as influenced by socio-economic cleavages in creating territorial differences or institutional elements such as decentralization and the power of the executive). A substantial portion of the research on nationalization has therefore centered on questions related to Duverger's Law (1951) and the causes of the number of parties competing at the local and national levels (Bochsler, 2010c; Cox, 1997; Gaines, 1997; Chhibber and Kollman, 1998).

Among the articles in this symposium, the pieces by Hicken and Stoll, de Miguel, and Lublin exemplify this area of study. Hicken and Stoll find robust links between the power of the largest parties in legislatures and nationalization. Considerable powers in legislatures tend to create conditions for high levels of party system nationalization. They also find, however, that presidential elections, except when legislative and executive elections are proximate in time and there are few presidential candidates, can lead to less party nationalization in legislative elections.

Lublin studies election data from developing countries to learn the determinants of static nationalization in those environments. His most striking finding is that certain electoral system variables, especially proportional voting systems, lead to more nationalization in comparison with plurality and majoritarian electoral system. In line with Duverger, under proportional representation the low barriers to entry for parties means that minor parties compete almost everywhere in the country. De Miguel, meanwhile, analyzes

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of the evolution of the early literature see Caramani (2004: 32–43 and 2015: 35–40).

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