Italian Political Science

THE PROFESSIONAL REVIEW OF THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Co-Editors

Stefania Panebianco
Department of Political and Social Sciences
University of Catania, Italy
stefapnb@unict.it

Francesco Zucchini
Department of Social and Political Sciences
University of Milan, Italy
francesco.zucchini@unimi.it

Editorial Board

Italian Political Science - IPS is the professional review of the **Italian Political Science Association** (Società Italiana di Scienza Politica). **IPS** is an academic journal registered with **ISSN 2420-8434** and published, since 2013, by the University of Catania (Catania, Italy) and the University of Milan (Milan, Italy). All issues from 2007 to 2012 were edited and published by the University of Siena (Siena, Italy).

ips
italian political science
THE PROFESSIONAL REVIEW OF THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Issue 10, Volume 2
December 2015

FOCUS ON

Political Communication and Political Science

Book Reviews

Section coordinated by Carla Monteleone and Stefania Panebianco

Italian Political Science
ISSN: 2420-8434

Italian Political Science, VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2015

FOCUS ON:
Political Communication and Political Science

Stefania Panebianco
Francesco Zucchini
ITALIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE CO-EDITORS

Communication and politics are inherently related, yet the relationship between Political Communication and Political Science deserves more attention, and the debate whether research objects and methodologies are more or less the same or need to be differentiated is still alive. Franca Roncarolo and Francesco Amoretti have kindly volunteered to edit this IPS issue that is entirely dedicated to **the relationship between Political Communication and Political Science**. Five prominent Italian scholars and a British specialist participate in a fruitful debate.

In their introduction Roncarolo and Amoretti argue that Political Communication challenges the Political Science theoretically, methodologically and academically and that Italian Political Science is still struggling to meet this challenge. Ilvo Diamanti confesses that he cannot think modern politics without communication, communication cannot be considered as a dependent or intervening variable anymore. Gianfranco Pasquino somehow mitigates such ambition of communication to be an independent variable by maintaining that "it is in the political space provided by the institutions (and the Constitution) that one will be able better to understand whether and how much the media, even the new media, have contributed for specific political phenomena". While there are a lot of studies on the relationship between media and politics, those on the relationship between media and public policy are limited. Bobbio illustrates two exceptions, two strands of literature that tackle the coupling between media and policy. The peripheral status of media studies is not an Italian specialty. Finally, Negrine claims that unfortunately in UK "researchers who explore the overlap between media and politics tend, on the whole, to occupy a space outside of political studies, at least as defined within British institutions of learning".

Many thanks go to the editors, Franca Roncarolo and Francesco Amoretti, and all the contributors of IPS n. 2/2015 who raised crucial questions on Political Communication and its usefulness to better understand current politics. With new technologies and new forms of communication, Political Communication has become more sophisticated and Political Science more sensitive. This IPS issue seeks to raise this awareness.

Italian Political Science, VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2015

A welcome from Simona Piattoni, new SISP President

Simona Piattoni
PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN ASSOCIATION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE (SISP)
UNIVERSITY OF TRENTO

Dear SISP Members,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this second issue of IPS in 2015. As you know, I was elected President of the Società Italiana di Scienza Politica on September 11, 2015, by the members' assembly at the 29th annual SISP conference at the Università della Calabria in Arcavacata di Rende. In this position, it is a great honor for me to succeed scholars who have made fundamental contributions, not just to Italian Political Science but to Political Science worldwide. I am humbled to be part of such a distinguished company, an honor I am not sure I fully deserve. All I can do is to promise that I will do my best to help our association flourish and promote Political Science in Italy and abroad.

However, even before looking at the tasks ahead, I would like to pause for a moment and remember the last elected SISP President, Pietro Grilli di Cortona whose premature departure shook and saddened us all. His figure was movingly remembered at our 2015 conference and his scholarly legacy was honored on December 14 with the dedication of the Political Studies library at the Università Roma Tre. His passion for knowledge and, particularly, for books, was also acknowledged by the SISP Board, which decided to name after him the prize that our association awards to the best Political Science book written by a young scholar. This prize is now deservedly called "Premio Grilli di Cortona." My thoughts go also to those who helped me in this difficult transition, namely the pro tempore Acting President, Pierangelo Isernia, and the outgoing secretariat, Luca Germano, Nino Castaldo, and Nicoletta Di Sotto. To them, my warmest thanks for being such a dedicated and competent group of scholars and my best wishes to the younger among them for a rewarding career.

The challenges that lie ahead of our associations are known to most; in meeting them, I plan to continue in the footsteps of Pietro Grilli who valiantly fought to defend our discipline in the ever more competitive academic environment in which we operate. First, I would like to continue protecting our discipline—and our younger colleagues, whom we train in political science precisely to keep the discipline growing—from unwarranted incursions from related disciplines. No one wants to deny the vital links and even overlaps at the margin between Political Science and other social sciences—from Law to Sociology, History to Economics, and Anthropology to Literature. However, it is an entirely different story to allow that our discipline be taught and our academic positions be taken by scholars with no training in Political Science whatsoever. Second, I would like to continue Pietro's

gentle effort at internationalizing our discipline, helping particularly our younger members to understand that "internationalization" does not only mean necessarily writing in English but also engaging the scholarly debate that unfolds abroad, in Europe and beyond and that it means adopting argumentative standards which can be internationally validated and published in international journals. As SISP, we would, betray our mission if we were to discourage the projection of our younger cohorts onto the international scene—and for this to happen, their effort must be clearly rewarded. Third, I would like to make our annual conference ever more attractive for those members who have lost interest in it, thinking perhaps that the themes therein discussed are unduly narrow. It would be my personal dream to convince some of our colleagues who have not renewed their membership for many years to give their support – financial and otherwise – to the SISP and make sure that it increasingly becomes the house of all scholars who deeply care about Italian Political Science.

With gratitude to the Editors of IPS, who asked me to write these welcoming words, my best wishes to everyone for a fruitful 2016.

Italian Political Science, VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2015

Political Communication and Political Science: Looking for a Shared Research Agenda

Francesco Amoretti
UNIVERSITY OF SALERNO

Franca Roncarolo
UNIVERSITY OF TURIN

In a world characterized by the growing conflation of politics and communication, where democracies are experimenting with deep changes and facing challenging innovations, the interest in the field of Political Communication is growing globally. The implications for the paradigms and the scientific research agenda, as well as for the various disciplines, have been far-reaching. The increasing number of academic departments and schools around the world—specialized in this field of study and education, with a strong interdisciplinary feature—mirrors these transformations.

In just a few decades, all around the world, individuals and organizations, social movements and governments have been affected by the opportunities and issues presented by the media environment. The transformation began with the advent of television and rapidly continued with the development of broadcasting in the last decade of the 20th century, when advances in cable and satellite technology brought forth more choices for information and entertainment from around the world than ever before. In the era of communicative abundance that Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) called the "third era" of Political Communication, innovative global news channels such as Al-Jazeera built transnational audiences, while the widespread diffusion of the Internet and the emergence of the more interactive Web 2.0 definitively changed the ecology of communication. Many stories became world news because citizens were empowered by new social media such as Facebook and Twitter or because revelations shared on the Internet shed light on the dark side of power, as well showed, for example, in the cases of Assange (WikiLeaks) and Snowden (Datagate NSA).

The above-mentioned phenomena let us glimpse at how deep and ambivalent transformations feature our mediated democracies. Growing spaces for horizontal politics and the increasing democratization of many social practices coexist, in fact, with relevant processes of concentration (of power and ownership) while—not infrequently—the center of gravity of political and institutional systems shifts toward non-elective arenas.

A deep and comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics and complexities of politics in the global age requires theories, methodologies, and tools of analysis that take into account

Volume 10, Issue 2, p. 3-11.

the epistemological and conceptual challenges generated by technological innovations and, more generally, by the developments of media systems and communication flows. Therefore, it is necessary to gain a better grasp not only of the theories on politics and communication but also of the rooted systemic relationships on such theoretical and methodological perspectives.

The emergence of a hybrid system of Political Communication (Chadwick, 2013), in which old and new media are integrated, has brought change to political life and challenged Political Science by raising real questions for the foundations of the study of politics—as for all other social sciences. Just as sociologists and economists must look at online behavior, as political scientists we should take a fresh look at our discipline.

This special issue would like to offer a contribution in this direction. Its goal is twofold. First, it examines these emerging challenges that impose us to redefine the boundaries between the disciplines and requirements for knowledge. Second, it starts a debate within Italian Political Science and Sociology on themes and analytical perspectives with a great potential for cultural growth, as well as for strengthening the institutional development and consolidation.

More specifically, in this short introduction we intend to contribute to the discussion first by providing few considerations on the main challenges from a theoretical, methodological, and academic perspectives (Margetts, 2010), and second by pointing out how Italian Political Science has responded to these challenges.

1. What are the challenges for Political Science?

The key challenges for Political Science in the 21st century are varied, and the discipline might respond in different ways. It is neither necessary nor useful to furnish a list that would be necessarily incomplete. To put the question directly, we have to wonder how Political Science, as a discipline, has responded to the challenges posed by "real world" developments (Hay, 2010). Moreover, if we look at the "real world" developments, there is no doubt that one of the most important of these is related to information and communication systems. We can discuss the nature of such developments; however, no one can underestimate them or undervalue the implications with reference to three main dimensions.

Theoretical dimension

Thirty years ago, when Joshua Meyrowitz published *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (1985), the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of assessing the impact of new or any media in isolation from other variables became clear. The developments and widespread diffusion of the computer-mediated technologies of the Internet and social networks are often grafted on to older media formats to produce hybrid forms. As a result of these complexities, it is groundless to present any effort on a simple thesis—such as "Americanization" or "Mediatization" often accompanied by a strong normative position to explain the transformations of politics that we are living. However, we would need more academic and institutional efforts to link the discipline of Political Science and the Communication research.

A politics framed and influenced by media has profound consequences for the characteristics, organization, and goal of political processes, actors, and institutions. **Political Communication and the growing use of digital technologies challenge the conceptual**

frameworks of Political Science. It is doubtful that they affect the basic principles of democracy and the theoretical assumptions; however, they certainly radically reshape the structure of opportunities and constraints of political action and of institutional organizations. Although wireless connectivity, the creation of networks, and the viral diffusion of information have profoundly changed both the political processes—on the macro level—and the individual preferences—on the micro level—the questions and the key issues at the heart of the investigations remain the same as in the past.

Most recent trends in Political Communication Research have been dictated by the tectonic shifts in how politics is communicated and many of the big questions that we face as the society requires answers that transcend the boundaries of a single field or discipline. Dynamics of election campaigns and the mutations that have occurred to the traditional forms of policy debate are on the ground of more relevant changes: so, for example, in recent years, interdisciplinary research has also analyzed emerging issues such as climate change, economic crisis, and biotechnologies.

Extending the analysis and discussion beyond the usual perspective that has informed, but limited, the study of Political Communication over the years is a challenge for Political Science to better understand the democratic and non-democratic processes and institutions. When society's biggest questions are defined by the news media and acted upon by the public and decision-makers, it is not surprising that one of the most challenging fields in academe is Political Communication.

Methodological dimension

The challenges to Political Science generated by new theoretical issues and by the large amount of empirical data available will perform an innovative research agenda only if the discipline faces another challenge—this time, methodological.

The Internet has become a rich source of empirical data about political behavior, organizations, and institutions, offering the possibility to obtain data information in addition to those provided, for example, by opinion surveys. This means that Political Science cannot hope to preserve methodological integrity without developing new methods to understand the emerging political phenomena. Now that digital technologies have moved center-stage in government policy-making and activities, any analysis of governmental organizations needs to consider their information system. New ways of collecting information and data present a further challenge to Political Science, involving technical skills and expertise not only from other social science disciplines but also from computer sciences that have contributed the most to design and to study the structure of the Internet and World Wide Web.

However, the opportunities offered by those developments cannot overshadow the obstacles and risks. Some are related to the possibility of obtaining and using such data. First, the richest collections of such data are conducted by search engine companies. Second, even if such data is available, political activities form a somewhat small percentage of the overall life online, so it can be difficult to analyze the aggregated data. Finally, there is a growing disparity between national scientific communities to collect or obtain such data.

The future of Political Science will be increasingly determined by the institutional capacity building to produce new knowledge. In this perspective, the strategic aim will be developing and coordinating databases, promoting more cooperation between research

centers, and participating in international networks to obtain resources for strategic investments.

Academic dimension

The way in which international Political Science answered the theoretical and methodological challenges generated by technological innovations and, more generally, by the developments of media systems and communication flows, reflected on academic and scientific institutions, departments and teaching activities. Moreover, the communication revolution is at the center of important research programs and initiatives. A few examples can be provided to show, internationally, how long the issues of Political Communication have been fully penetrated in the agenda of social science research and how deep the efforts continue to work in this direction:

- Based on a workshop sponsored by The National Science Foundation, Jane Fountain (John Kennedy School of Government, University of Harvard) directed a project called "*Information, Institutions, and Governance: Advancing a Basic Social Science Research Program for Digital Government*" (2003) to build international research capacity at the intersection of information technology, governance, and organization. A primary goal was the application and extension of the social and applied social sciences to strengthen digital government research.
- In 2015, the APSA Congress dedicated great attention to the influence of digital technologies on conventional modes of communication and representation around the world. Political scientists were invited to discuss how the development of digital technologies has transformed policy-making and evaluation; and, generally, how the abundance of data and digital tools are transforming states' power for surveillance and citizens' capacity to bypass traditional channels of Political Communication.
- In 2015, a conference was held in Croatia, organized by a committee formed by IPSA RC10 (Electronic Democracy), RC22 (Political Communication), and RC34 (Quality of Democracy). Very meaningfully, from our perspective, the call for papers read as follows:

  > The conference theme focuses on the intersection between the work of three strands of political science, all of which ask questions of vital importance for the well-being of democracy globally. These questions revolve around measures, standards, and analyses of the quality of democracy, the role of political communication in enhancing democracy, and the extent that information and communication technology offers potential for a richer, interactive, and co-created politics.

On the whole, we can say that at the international level—and above all in the US[1]—there has been a relevant effort devoted to making explicit links between three areas of

[1] In some European countries the situation looks different and it should be explored further from this point of view. When looking at Negrine's analysis, for example, one might ask why both Italian and English Political Sciences seem to have experienced a similar distrust in Political communication. A first hypothesis, which however should be verified, might find at least a partial explanation in the fact that both countries have experienced an intense and, to an extent, a sudden growth of political marketing (even though in two very different frames and for different reasons).

research that have rarely cooperated until now. The increasing number of academic departments and schools around the world—specialized in this field of study and education, with a strong *interdisciplinary* feature—mirrors these transformations. Instead of distinguishing and separating the Political Science into sub-fields, the challenge to the discipline is to review the theoretical, empirical, and methodological perspectives and approaches. The academic field of Political Communication is really a broad defined set of interdisciplinary efforts at the intersection of Communication Research, Political Science, Sociology, and a host of other disciplines. In recent years, this list of disciplines has grown. As explained by Holli Semetko and Margaret Scammell in their introduction to *The Sage Handbook of Political Communication* (2012), the expansion of the field is evidenced by the growth of publications in a wide array of journals around the word. Often, they add, innovative findings and researches can be found in reviews, such as *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, which are away from the mainstream outlets.

2. How Italian Political Science has responded to these developments

While a number of Italian scholars have made grand claims regarding the possibilities of the media communication having a deep effect on political life, we must admit that with some important exceptions our discipline has been reluctant on the subject of Political Communication. At the first glance, no one denies that the growing conflation of politics and communication characterized our world. No one denies that communication matters; but what is the impact on the scientific community and mainstream paradigms? Actually, it is very small. Certainly, if compared to 30 years ago, an increasing number of political scientists are involved in the study of Political Communication, as seen by the growing number of books and articles on the topic. Even more scholars are participating in international meetings. Despite this development, the overall impact on the discipline seems to be marginal in Italy. This statement can be sustained if we look at two significant areas of institutionalization of the discipline: the introductory textbooks on politics and the experience of the *Italian Political Science Review*.

The handbooks

A glance at the list of about 20 volumes published in recent years (2007–2014) on various aspects of politics—public policy, international relations, and public administration—illustrates the point. Two handbooks of Political Science out of eight have one chapter on "Political Communication" (Cotta, Della Porta, and Morlino, 2008 and Hague and Harrop, 2011), while another two have some paragraphs in the chapters on "Public opinion, participation, and communication" and on "Political participation" (Capano, Raniolo, Piattoni, and Verzichelli, 2014), or in the part on "What are political parties?" (Della Porta, 2008). The other handbooks make no mention of Political Communication at all. If we look at an Internet search, the scenario is even poorer: only a few pages are devoted to digital technologies!

Sub-fields of Political Science where you might expect to see research into communication-based change are also substantially silent. In particular, mainstream public policy (three handbooks published in 2008, 2010, and 2011) and international relations (two handbooks published in 2012 and 2013) ignored the subject. The two handbooks of Administration Science (published in 2007 and 2011) and the four books dedicated to public

administrations and to management of public institutions (published in 2008, 2009, 2011, and 2015) offer one chapter on Public Communication and two chapters on e-government. While hundreds of reports have been produced by international organizations and global consultancies, this research area is largely ignored by the academic mainstream.

The development of Political Communication and, in particular, the changes generated by the diffusion of digital technologies have opened up the market to practitioners. The role of pollsters is the best known but it is not the only one. Today, many political scientists solely work on issues related to Political Communication, but the discipline has not really taken up the challenge. As Helen Margetts (2010, 67) said, "within each sub-field of Political Science there has been a tendency towards ghettoization; the 'ghettos' have produced some useful work"—from monographs to handbooks—however, without entering the mainstream. This evidence is also confirmed by the analysis of the Italian Political Science Review.

Italian Political Science Review

The survey carried out on the articles hosted by the review in the last ten years (33 from 2004 to 2014) tells us that only ten contributions among the many published by the journal have been devoted to exploring topics in the field of Political Communication. The analysis corroborates what we have previously said: over the years, our discipline has remained mostly impermeable to the new issues and challenges raised by the communication revolution. The articles are indeed focused mostly on electoral campaigning strategies or on party strategies and programs.[2] Even more significant, no article is dedicated to digital policies and the Internet. Till date, in the Italian Political Science Review, only one article which dates back to 2003, authored by Calise and De Rosa, explored the issue of e-government plans and policies.

More than 20 years later, the General Italian Election of March 1994, which decreed Berlusconi's first victory, and after the diffusion of the Internet which has transformed Italian politics radically, the mainstream discipline has been changed slowly. The research agenda has been shaped by the development of Political Communication as a *subfield* of Political Science, as demonstrated above all by *ComPol*, the *Italian Political Communication Journal*, and by the growing number of scholars and practitioners who jointly contribute to the *Italian Political Communication Association* and to the *Standing Group* on Political Communication of SISP. However, the institutionalization of the Political Communication community has remained on the margins of the Political Science paradigms and methodologies. If RISP tells the history of the discipline, then we can say that the discipline has not examined the challenge.

3. Concluding remarks

Despite the fact that the importance of rethinking the social sciences from a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective was stressed 20 years ago (Wallerstein, 1996), and although this awareness is now supported by important international scientific organizations, such

[2] Except one, of a theoretical nature (Memoli and Splendore, 2014), three of the articles are focused on a general issue of the discipline (Campus, 2009; Borghetto and Carammia, 2010; Gasperoni, 2013), and two are devoted to political discourse (Conti and Manca, 2008; Conti and De Giorgi, 2011).

as ISSC and UNESCO (UNESCO, 2010, ISSC and UNESCO, 2013), an extreme fragmentation of knowledge has prevailed. New scientific domains consolidate themselves like a subfield of the mainstream discipline more than by challenging it at the borders. Perhaps the vanishing of the political theory from the Italian Political Science community, as outlined by Pasquino, Regalia and Valbruzzi in *Quarant'anni di scienza politica in Italia* (2013), helps us to understand why our discipline has focused more on some Political Communication issues than on others, preferring the empirically more manageable but theoretically less relevant ones (see also Campus and Mazzoleni, 2013). Moreover, 25 years ago, the report on the Italian Political Science coordinated by Leonardo Morlino (1989) had devoted a rich chapter to *Theory and Macro-politics*. What happened since then? Maybe John Brever's book, *The Public Value of the Social Science* (2013), can help us answer this question and critically understand the debate on the role of our disciplines that is occurring in Western countries. Indeed, he outlines that the power and influence of the social science have been undermined by their Balkanization. His crucial argument is that "at a time when the big issues facing the future of humankind are multifaceted and require post-disciplinary, the social science disciplines remain separated into their own silos" (48).

This tendency looks more relevant in some countries, perhaps those where other cultural and institutional changes work in the same direction. That might be the case in Italy, where the last reform of the university system (2010) and the introduction of the evaluation paradigm have favored a consolidation of the disciplinary boundaries of mainstream Political Science, weakening the opportunities for a still not-fully legitimized sub-field as Political Communication, especially in its qualitative declinations at an academic and cultural level. A starting analysis of the Political Communication courses offered by the Italian Universities highlights some consequences at the academic level and in the teaching, showing a general trend towards the drastic resizing of the discipline. Needless to say, this trend would be even clearer if we compare this new scenario with the pre-Gelmini scenario.

All this said, evidence still remains for the first stage. Even though the national policies in the University and evaluation field are very important variables, the bunker mentality of most disciplines is primarily the result of practices by the subjects themselves. It is "practitioners who practise disciplinarity" (Brever, 2013, 49). **This means that each of us—as a scientific community—is responsible for what happens**.

A first step was made towards a more focused and integrated approach to the relationship between Political Science and Political Communication with the International Conference on "Media, politics, and democracy: A challenging topic for Social Sciences" (Rome, May 21–22, 2015) organized by the *Standing Group* on Political Communication of the *Italian Association of Political Science* (SISP) and LUISS Guido Carli Free International University for Social Studies.[3] Several national and international scholars (Matthew Hibberd, Darren Lilleker, Thierry Vedel and Jan Zielonka among the others) contributed to the debate by offering deep analysis and seminal suggestions.

This special issue of IPS is aimed at moving one more step forward, with the help of four eminent scholars. Our fear is that the current trends will induce the Political Science community to a farsighted response to the challenges. We strongly believe, in the words of

[3] We would like to especially thank our colleagues Leonardo Morlino and Michele Sorice for making the meeting possible.

Helen Margetts (2010, 67), that *the time is ripe for theoretical development, methodological innovation and new empirical investigation to enter the mainstream.*

For sure, *failure to innovate is not an option* (Semetko and Scammell 2012, 4).

Bibliography

Blumler, J., and Kavanagh, D. (1999), The Third Age of Political Communication: Influences and Features, in Political Communication, n. 3.

Borghetto, E., and Carammia, M. (2010), L'analisi comparata delle agende politiche: il Comparative Agendas Project, in RISP, n. 2.

Brever, J. D. (2013), The Public Value of the Social Sciences. An Interpretative Essay, London, Bloomsbury.

Calise, M., and De Rosa, R. (2003), Il governo elettronico: visioni, primi risultati e un'agenda di ricerca, in Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica, n. 2.

Campus, D. (2009), Comunicazione, cittadinanza e democrazia, in RISP, 3, Focus.

Campus, D., and Mazzoleni, G. (2013), Comunicazione Politica, in Gianfranco Pasquino, Marta Regalia, and Marco Valbruzzi (eds), Quarant'anni di scienza politica in Italia. Bologna, il Mulino.

Capano, G., Raniolo, F., Piattoni, S., and Verzichelli, L. (2014), Manuale di Scienza Politica, il Mulino.

Chadwick, A. (2013), The Hybrid Media System. Politics and Power, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Conti, N., and De Giorgi, E. (2011), L'Euroscetticismo a parole: Lega Nord e Rifondazione comunista tra retorica e comportamento istituzionale, in RISP., n. 2.

Conti, N., and Manca, A. R. (2008), L'Europa nel discorso politico degli stati membri: un'analisi degli euromanifesti, in RISP, n. 2.

Cotta, M., Della Porta, D., and Morlino, L. (2008), Scienza Politica, il Mulino.

Della Porta, D. (2008), Introduzione alla Scienza Politica, il Mulino.

Fountain, Jane E. (2003), Information, Institutions and Governance: Advancing a Basic Social Science Research Program for Digital Government, KSG Working Papers Series No. RWP03-004. Available at SSRN

Gasperoni, G. (2013), A Review of Current Issues and Challenges in Political Opinion Polling, in RISP, n. 2, Focus.

Hague, R., and Harrop, M. (2011), Manuale di Scienza Politica, Milano, McGraw-Hill Education.

Hay, C. (2010), Introduction: Political Science in an Age of Acknowledged Interdependence, in Colin Hay (ed.), New Directions in Political Science. Responding to the Challenges of an Interdependent World, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Margetts, H. (2010), The Internet in Political Science, in Hay Colin (ed.). New Directions in Political Science. Responding to the Challenges of An Interdependent World. Palgrave.

Memoli, V., and Splendore, S. (2014), Media use and confidence in institutions: a comparative analysis of Hallin and Mancini's three models, in RISP, n. 2.

Meyrowitz, J. (1985), No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior, New York, Oxford University Press.

Morlino, L. (ed.) (1989), Guida alla Scienza Politica, Torino, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.

ISSC and UNESCO (2013), World Social Science Report 2013, Changing Global Environments, OECD Publishing and UNESCO Publishing, Paris.

Pasquino, G., Regalia, M., and Valbruzzi, M. (eds.) (2013), Quarant'anni di scienza politica in Italia, Bologna, il Mulino.

Semetko, H., and Scammell, M. (2012), Handbook of Political Communication. London, Sage.

UNESCO (2010), World Social Science Report. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

Wallerstein, I. (ed.) (1996), Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Italian Political Science, VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2015

Politics and Communication Together, a New Perspective on Democracy

Ilvo Diamanti
CARLO BO UNIVERSITY, URBINO

The nature of the relationship between communication and politics raises problems in working in the fields of research and scientific thought. I, myself, find it difficult to pinpoint exactly where they diverge, but it is not an issue I choose to address when analysing political events and phenomena, especially objects and subjects of a "contemporary" nature. One example is Berlusconi and his twenty-year spell as a protagonist. Another is Matteo Renzi and his relationship with the electorate and his political party.

I really would have no idea how to address these questions by way of Politology as distinct from Communication, or vice versa. I am, of course, aware of the scientific importance of "defining", of drawing the confines, the limitations of a word and the related concept. The de-finitude of the content and the container is an obvious requirement for the scientific community for gathering and discussing knowledge in a process of co-division or sharing. Since names stand for things, and things exist and change, appearing and disappearing because we give them a name, or we change it. I, therefore, understand, as a researcher, that a field of science and knowledge has to have boundaries to exist. This is why there has always been the need for a "fundamental" distinction between Political Science and Political Sociology. The very basis of every study on Politics is the politics itself.

Political Science is the study of the decision making process and of the decision makers who act within the institutions. This is top-down Politics that affects society and individuals, and influences people in their decisions and points of view.

Political Sociology on the other hand studies grass-roots Politics. Political participation, social movements and pressure groups. This, however, is a distinction that has become unreliable over time because of the difficulty in drawing hard and fast boundaries between institutions and society. Institutions, the places where decisions are made have become decentralised and at the same time have expanded. Localized and globalized, thus obliging the Political Scientist to dialogue with the Social Scientist, or, rather be master of both trades to understand and explain events. The confines, the de-finition or de-finitude of the political actors' fields of political action are fluid and contiguous. In addition, "consensus" as a premise to a decision is not wholly dependent on what happens and what is decided on high – indeed, ever less so. Quite the contrary it takes shape and consistency from social and micro-social mediation, relationships, actions and actors who meet in their "everyday lives". Decisions are implemented when they become part of the "shared

 ISSN 2420-8434.
Volume 10, Issue 2, p. 12-16.

reality" when they draw inspiration from – and have come to terms with – the common sense. Hence and not by chance "consensus" means shared sense.

As I express these considerations I realise that I, too, am at risk of talking about the "common sense" in a scientific context, instead of using a different language capable of defining the field I am dealing with and the issues I have to tackle. I have, however, become accustomed to dealing with cross-discipline contamination and language, appreciating and analyzing their persistence and continuity in my approach to politics which up to now has been from a prevalently territorial standpoint. This led me to experiment with different approaches and a variety of disciplines – history, economics and sociology – because the territory exemplifies and brings all these factors together. How else could such continuities of electoral response in certain defined areas of post WW2 Italy be explained independently of the changes in the party systems as well as in the economy and society? How, indeed, despite the decline of *cleavages* (and walls) that criss-cross our country, and Europe too? What could possibly explain the persistence of this territorially-based behavioural response devoid of any attempt to seek out factors that contribute to shaping and orienting society, such as the economy, culture, not to mention history and traditions, in addition, obviously to actions, actors and initiatives launched by institutions and seats of government.

This is why I am unable to make out and discern Political Science and Political Communication, and have been so for a number of years. In other words, I am unable to pursue my studies in politics, its actors and actions, its events and changes, being able to clearly discern the fields of Political Science, Political Sociology and Political Communication. To be even more precise, I find it hard to isolate the "independent variable" in the relationship that links politics, society and communication, and therein lies the problem as Giovanni Sartori warned those who would distinguish between the areas of Political Science and Political Sociology. This is especially true today of communication, which as Pierre Bourdieu put it is a "field" both common/shared and also contended by Political Science and Sociology. And why not Political Psychology and Political Anthropology? I would be hard put, today, to identify boundaries and there is a great temptation to simplify and say that Communication is Politics and vice-versa Politics is Communication, which certain, perhaps even many, fellow-scholars would define as trivialisation, a risk I would be willing to take.

Furthermore, in every main political research context (namely "co-divided/shared texts") on Politics, Communication plays a major role, either as a dependent or independent variable, simply because it defies de-finitude.

One example is sufficient to illustrate the case in point because it is fundamental to Politics and Political studies, namely Democracy, especially one in the throes of rapid, radical change. Not only are we in Italy and elsewhere undergoing a critical phase amidst a variety of different types and models of representative democracy and a variety of different types and models of political parties, not to mention a variety of different types and models of communication and public opinion. A difficult phase spawned and accelerated by the transformations that have affected the model of representative democracy, its requisites and elements, that was predominant for many years. I refer, in the words of Bernard Manin, to "La démocratie du public" ("audience democracy") which supplanted the twenty-year-long supremacy of "(mass) party democracy". In his seminal book "Prin-

cipes du gouvernement représentatif" (1995), political parties become progressively personalized to the point of being machines at the service of the leaders, mostly "one" person: the leader. **Ideology and identity fade in favour of confidence (in the person).** Organization and participation at territorial level are progressively eroded in favour of communication, television first. Political leaders and parties cultivate their image, hone their language and resort to political marketing. They make use of polls, opinion makers and communication gurus. The electorate becomes "the audience", the viewers, and the vote becomes (more) fluid.

This model took root in Italy later than in other western democracies and when it did, it was discovered to be unique because of Silvio Berlusconi's decision to enter politics. Media entrepreneur and publicity mogul with business interests that extend beyond Italy, his presence had far-reaching consequences on democracy, not only because of the conflict of interests he embodied or the role he took on of both cleavage and paradigm to all the other Italian political actors. Ally or adversary, each in their own way made use of the resources at their disposal in imitating his personalization, his use of the media and political marketing. It was inevitable that the area of the political spectrum with the strongest ties to the tradition of "party democracy", namely the centre-left, was sluggish in catching up despite seeking to engage Berlusconi on his own terms. It followed that in an arena in which parties are highly personalised, or "personal" the centre-left always drifted towards the apparently "impersonal" and thus uncompetitive. Until, that is, 2014 when Matteo Renzi arrived on the scene and very quickly earned himself the title of "post Berlusconian" leader and sometimes even "Berlusconian".

In recent years, however, "audience democracy" has been swift in changing, even in its most sacred beliefs. What used to be the domain of politics is now an arena where a progression of parties devoid of society and, therefore, leaders devoid of parties strut and fret their hour upon the stage directly interacting with the public on television. The credit of confidence between society and politics has run dry, helped on the way by the hardships caused by the economic crisis. Political marketing and Communication have therefore shifted their emphasis away from confidence to no confidence in others, be they leaders, parties or politicians...

This has fuelled the wave of populism that today is making itself felt, a tidal wave of people's distrust eroding the ground beneath the feet of our political leaders as they, in turn, make use of the media to stir up popular (or "public") indignation towards the other leaders and so ultimately towards themselves in a lose-lose negative endgame that is imperilling the entire framework of representative democracy.

For as broad and summary as this interpretation may be of the changes that have already taken place in our representative democracy, it is, I feel, adequate to validate my theory, namely the impossibility – or in any case the uselessness – of adopting an approach to Politics that fails to contemplate communication as an interpretative key equal in importance to the Politological and/or Sociological ones, also, or rather especially, in seeking to identify the independent variable of these transformations. It is difficult not to see how "audience democracy" has been radically altered by the transformation in the system of communication, first and foremost the peremptory advent of Internet, and, thence, the rapid and extensive spread of the social media as channels of political communication and participation.

Indeed, the availability of Internet has brought a highly favourable immediacy to movements that support causes outside Europe where its impact has been perceived as revolutionary (such as North Africa and the Middle East).

The "new media", in Italy (and elsewhere), have made it possible for localised and peripheral social realities to link up outwith the "vertical" supervision of political subjects and traditional media. In so doing, they have empowered a great many people to become directly involved. Indeed, Internet has laid the foundations for an alternative model of political participation. In the meantime, it has also laid the basis for an alternative form of democracy by way of "direct democracy". This is the reason for its adoption by Italian comic Beppe Grillo and his Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) as a distinguishing factor between him and the political establishment of parties and parliament, the actors and institutions of representative democracy.

It should be said, however, that participation by way of the social media has not caused the downfall of the traditional media or of TV in particular. **The reason for this is that while a growing sector of the population makes use of Internet, there is still a great many who do not – almost half of the population and a quarter of the electorate who rely on television as their only source of news.** Who sets out to "win" an election or win over political consensus must use TV.

And so, between the Internet and TV, between old and new media, a close, ambivalent relationship has developed – a hybrid type of political communication that cuts across the confines of television, newspapers, Internet, Social media, and between the new and the old, mixing and exploiting them to a specific end that was explained very well by both Andrew Chadwick in terms of political communication and before him Nestor Canclini from an anthropological perspective. At the same time, talk is made of a "hybrid democracy". It is subjecting "audience democracy" to radical change while retaining significant elements of it, albeit substantially reshaped (by and large for the worse).

To begin with, political parties turned into anti-party parties or non-parties. Anti-leaders like Beppe Grillo emerged to take the place of the leader. Matteo Renzi was the "head scrapper". They act and react by means of both social and media initiatives. They are "political entrepreneurs" expert in distrust rather than trust, all in the name of a radical change that affects political parties in both ways, from the inside and from the outside.

This work is a rapid, loosely constructed presentation of changes in democracy, its principles and its actors following the patterns and reference points that I myself make use of not only in my university courses but also in my contributions/academic publications, in my research activities and in my conference speeches. For all its imperfections, I chose this method because it is the one I find best enables me to clarify the idea I have expressed from the very outset, namely the impossibility for me at least to perceive political communication as a dependent variable, a minor element subordinated to politics and to democracy, whether or not representative. It is simply not possible from my standpoint and in accordance with my approach.

It is a demand impossible to fulfil. How would one proceed to analyze the advent of Silvio Berlusconi, the break-in of Beppe Grillo and "his" M5S, and rise of Matteo Renzi?

I would even be willing to try reversing the process just as I do in class. In other words, by re-reading and interpreting the way party models and democracy have changed, as a function of the shift in models and technology of communication. Here, though, suffice it to highlight just how impossible it would be to reduce communication to a dependent or even an intervening variable in political action and the political system.

Italian Political Science, VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2015

Political Science and Political Communication: Straddling

Gianfranco Pasquino
UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA

The question is: are political scientists and scholars in the field of political communication, especially in Italy, making good and reciprocal use of the knowledge they produce? So far, generally speaking, the answer has to be negative. But what counts in my opinion is how one gets to this answer, because in the process several good points can be made and several suggestions for future positive encounters can emerge. All this, however, may be more effectively argued starting from few sparse reflections on selected past events.

Short premise

Unnoticed by many (then and even now) the first recognition of the importance of political communication in the realm of politics and political science was very indirectly made by Otto Kirchheimer in a very influential and highly controversial paper written in 1965 and published posthumously in 1966. All the changes that were leading from class and confessional parties to catch-all parties had been made possible by the transformation in the environment due to the appearance of television and this new type of communication. The "expressive function" of political parties (p. 189) could no longer remain in their hands and the "strengthening of top leadership groups" (p. 190) inevitably meant that they were to control, if not monopolize, the political communication of their parties. Admittedly, I am somewhat stretching Kirchheimer's interpretation. I do so for two reasons: first, in order to counteract the large flow of studies that followed to whom Kirchheimer could not react and, second, because the great majority of those studies aimed at analyzing and assessing how much left-wing and, less so, denominational parties had retained of their class and confessional representation.

It has taken some time before the analysis of political parties as actors in the communication process reappeared. Not so much in passing, in Italy, as I have already recalled (Pasquino 1983, now 1985) because it is an extremely interesting example, it was Giorgio Galli who perceptively discovered the importance of political communication through television. **In the early 1960s the appearances at Tribuna Politica of a distinguished, well-dressed, articulated politician, leader of the Communist Party was what Americans today would call a game changer.** In a way those television appearances significantly contributed to a less negative view of the PCI. But, of course, at the time there was no student of political science and/or political communication immediately to assess the phenomenon. To put everything in perspective, one must recall that in the USA two giants had opened the field of research in political communication: political scientist Harold

Lasswell with his studies on political propaganda and political sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld with his studies on electoral communication and behavior. A landmark book (Deutsch 1963) imaginatively connecting the activity of governing with the ability to communicate had been published few years before Kirchheimer's article. American political science was participating in the construction and enhancement of the field of political communication, even exploring its contribution to political development (Pye 1963), but those studies were and remained for some time forerunners with few followers.

Neither European nor Italian political science in its infancy could, of course, take part in those innovative intellectual processes. In Italy, the task could not be undertaken by Norberto Bobbio, a political philosopher, nor by Giovanni Sartori, whose main themes were democracy, political parties, and institutions. Thus, the subsequent generation of Italian scholars worked much on the topics defined by their esteemed teachers while the third generation has added the study of public policies. Only in the past ten years or so some Italian political scientists have been willing and capable of making significant contributions to the field and its growing literature. On its part, political communication in all its various forms (see Mazzoleni 2015 and Campus 2004) has acquired a greater role in explaining many, though by no means all, contemporary political phenomena. What still seems to be lacking is the ability, perhaps, even the willingness to straddle the two fields.

Parties, institutions, leaders.

In the next few pages I make some remarks on how and why "straddling", though a challenging exercise, will improve the explanation of major political phenomena. I will do so by taking into consideration some of the most recent analyses and evaluating how much the instruments of political communication have contributed to the framing and satisfactorily analyzing the topic and, if not, how much could and should still be done.

I will focus my synthetic remarks, all worthy of more extensive treatment, on parties, institutions, and leaders. For better and (not or) worse, these three actors continue to dominate the political scene. Parties have changed significantly, but they have not disappeared in any political system. They still retain and demonstrate a tremendous amount of organizational and strategic adaptability. Institutions provide the framework within which parties compete and leaders emerge. Technically, the institutions are the rules of the game. When they change, the game changes and the actors will have to adjust. Institutional and constitutional reforms are not an Italian discovery. They have been made in many political systems usually with less fanfare and more substance than in Italy. Finally, political and institutional leaders are responsible for the structuring and functioning both of the parties and the institutions. **It is no exaggeration to suggest that the way the three actors work, change, have success or are defeated is significantly affected by the way they communicate and, so to speak, are communicated.**

The most important transformation of some, by no means all, contemporary political parties has been characterized as the emergence, not necessarily the consolidation, of personal/personalist parties. The phenomenon, more widespread and more visible in post-1994 Italy, has been intelligently highlighted and analyzed by Mauro Calise (2000 and 2006). The transformations of Italian parties identified by Calise have since then affected profoundly all of them in a way that seems ubiquitous and irreversible: a triumph (the term used by Pasquino 2015a). Focusing exclusively on the function of political com-

munication, Mancini (2015, p. 138) comes to the conclusion that contemporary, perhaps not only Italian, parties have become "frail and flexible", "redundant for a large part of traditional expressive functions and in part also for the organizational ones". Nevertheless, he recognizes that parties perform other important activities that no other organization could undertake.

Mancini's subtitle is both suggestive and misleading. "The end of the grand narratives" has to be taken as the inevitable consequence of the disappearance of mass parties in Italy. Elsewhere (Pasquino 2015b), I have focused on the disappearance of political cultures in Italy, those cultures that shaped practically all Italian parties and survived with them until the 1992-1994 collapse. It was the parties' inability to redefine and bring up to date their narratives that decisively influenced their decline. But it is misleading to believe that the end of the great narratives was the cause of the end of mass parties. It is the other way around. Moreover, since Mancini himself has significantly contributed to the literature on the beginning of Berlusconi's "minor" narrative (on his overall trajectory see the excellent set of articles in Amoretti 2014), it is appropriate to emphasize that the post-1994 period has witnessed the appearance of narratives tied, no more to political parties, but to political leaders. In a way, Berlusconi's sad decline is also due to his inability to revamp what he called *Una storia italiana*. In the opposite camp, the spectacular absence of a viable narrative is one, not the least important, of the elements contributing to the demise of the Olive Tree coalition (1996-1998). Finally, while one may not like Matteo Renzi's storytelling, brilliantly and critically analyzed by Sofia Ventura (2015), it is impossible to deny so far its effectiveness in convincing the voters and in influencing the majority of media operators. But how much of Renzi's success is the product of his ability to narrate and how much is due to political and institutional factors?

Elsewhere, especially in parliamentary democracies, there are very few cases of important and significantly successful narratives. In fact, Tony Blair's New Labour is probably the only case to be taken in consideration when attempting any comparison with Renzi's. Of course, a lesson not to be forgotten by political communication scholars, presidential republics are totally different institutional and political contexts. But even in the USA not all the victorious Presidents have provided an original narrative that can be considered the decisive element for their electoral success. The key word here is "context". It would be difficult to explain (and even to envisage) Berlusconi's irruption into the Italian political "theatre" without the opportunities offered by the new electoral law. In all likelihood, Renzi would be running for a second term as mayor of Florence, if Bersani had not generously conceded to him, first, the opportunity to challenge the Party Secretary in the primaries meant to designate the candidate to the office of head of government and, second, even a run-off between the two best-placed candidates. The two steps allowed Renzi's supporters to obtain a lot of visibility, to organize their campaign and to strengthen their networks.

My contention is that, unless one has acquired in-depth knowledge of the context in which significant political events take place, it will be somewhat inappropriate and in some cases wrong to believe that those events are due to factors related to political communication. It is in the political space provided by the institutions (and the Constitution) that one will be able better to understand whether and how much the media, even the new media, have contributed ("caused" is almost never the correct verb to use), for instance to the de-

cline of political parties, to their transformation into personal parties, to the launching of socio-political narratives, to the ascendancy of storytelling. To a well-rounded explanation, political science may offer additional important contributions from a methodological perspective. The best way political scientists have to evaluate the robustness of their explanations, generalizations, and theories is by resorting to the comparative method.

Making a long, though extremely interesting and instructive, story short, the research questions are very simple: have personal parties appeared elsewhere, is the personalization of politics characterizing other democratic political systems, how many political leaders and in which political systems have shaped narratives and have resorted to intense activity of storytelling?

The available material on the personalization of politics (Karvonen 2009, p. 106) does not find any "general trend". "There are many indications that persons have become more prominent in both electoral and executive politics in several [not all and not even the majority] countries". However, "parliamentary politics is still much more about parties than it is about individual politicians". Strikingly, Karvonen adds that parliamentary politics "will probably remain so for decades to come". **If, on the contrary, Italian politics seems to be or to become more personalized than the politics of the large majority of contemporary parliamentary democracies, then both political scientists and political communication scholars ought to provide a convincing explanation.** It will not suffice to state that Italy is an exception. All exceptions have to be understood and explained in the light of existing generalizations and theories with the purpose of redefining both. Quite clearly, this exercise cannot be satisfactorily performed by political scientists not interested in political communication nor by political communication scholars who do not know enough political science.

The relationships between personalization and presidentialization are complex and multiple. Both processes have their specificities (that I cannot explore here). Still, the conclusions by Poguntke and Webb (2005) to their edited volume are somewhat striking. I suspect that the authors felt compelled to look for and find all possible features of presidentialization. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that Cameron, Hollande, Merkel, Obama, Rajoy, to take four quite distinct, but all important, cases would feel comfortable if "accused" of having presidentialized their party politics or their executive power. The book edited by Poguntke and Webb was published in 2005 and the leaders I have referred to have all acquired and wielded executive power after 2005. It is possible to agree with the editors' statement that "presidentialization is more than a mere catchword used by journalists and political analysts alike to capture the leadership style of specific ('strong') leaders" (2005, p. 352) and, at the same time, to stress that, contrary to their generalization, presidentialization has proved not to be an irresistible trend. Some may wonder at the conceptual clarity of the chapter by Fabbrini on the USA entitled "The Semi-Sovereign American Prince". Others may want to have a second closer look at the Table valiantly drafted by the two editors with reference to the Executive face and the Party face of presidentialization (pp. 338-339) only to discover that for what concerns Italy the process of presidentialization has been highly positive on all indicators: shift of intra-executive power to benefit of the leader; increasing autonomy of executive leader vis-à-vis party; shift in intra-party power to benefit of leader; increasing autonomy of party leader from intra-party power holders. Were this the case, the entire Italian debate on how to strengthen the

head of government would have to be considered just a game Italian politicians (and some political scientists) play, if not a joke. A limited attention is given to the differences in the structures of electoral and political competition and in the institutional frameworks. And, unfortunately, no mention is made of the likely increase of the visibility of executive and party leaders and of their ability to control and shape the flow of political communication.

Tentative conclusions, not a summary

What is most certain is that contemporary politics is and will be profoundly affected by changes in the field of communication. In a way politics has always been about the ability to communicate (and persuade), but, of course, also about the capability to organize and to decide. The constraints and the opportunities offered by the old, new and very new means of political communication have had and continue to have an impact on parties, institutions, and leaders. The combination of the knowledge mustered by political science and by political communication studies appears to be a condition sine qua non for a satisfactory and comprehensive understanding of the most important political phenomena. Though, fortunately for all those who study politics, many transformations occur that make politics always lively and exciting; **much will be lost by those who underestimate the joint contributions of political science and political communication**. Even more so in Italy.

Bibliography

Amoretti, F. (2014) (ed.). The HyperReality of Italian Democracy. The Berlusconi Years: 1994-2014. ComPol Comunicazione Politica. XV (3).

Calise, M. (2000). Il partito personale. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Calise, M. (2006). La Terza Repubblica. Partiti contro presidenti. Roma-Bari: Laterza

Campus, D. (2004). Comunicazione politica in N. Bobbio, N. Matteucci, G. Pasquino (a cura di), Dizionario di Politica (pp. 134-137). Torino: UTET

Deutsch, K.W. (1963). The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Karvonen, L. (2009). The personalization of politics. A study of parliamentary democracies. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Kirchheimer, O. (1966). The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems, in J. LaPalombara e M. Weiner (ed.) Political Parties and Political Development (pp. 177-200). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mancini, P. (2015). Il post partito. La fine delle grandi narrazioni. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Mazzoleni, G. (2015) (a cura di). The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Pasquino, G. (1983). Mass media, partiti di massa e trasformazioni della politica. Il Mulino, XXXII (luglio-agosto), 559-579, ora in La complessità della politica (87-109). Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Pasquino, G. (2015a) Italy: the Triumph of Personalist Parties, in G. Pasquino e M. Valbruzzi, A Changing Republic. Politics and Democracy in Italy (pp. 159-175). Novi Ligure: Epoké.

Pasquino, G. (2015b) (a cura di). La scomparsa delle culture politiche in Italia. Paradoxa, IX, Ottobre-Dicembre.

Poguntke, T. e Webb, P. (a cura di) (2005). The Presidentialization of Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pye, L. W. (1963) (a cura di) Communications and Political Development. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ventura, S. (2015) Renzi & Co. Il racconto dell'era nuova. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino.

Italian Political Science, VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2015

Between Frames and Arguments: What I Learned from Research on Communication and Public Policy

Luigi Bobbio
UNIVERSITY OF TURIN

I, along with other colleagues, have just concluded a three-year research project on "media and public policy"[1] that was carried out through the constant interaction between two research teams: one specialized in policy analysis and the other in communication studies. Both teams were interested in studying how the media deals with public policy; however, each team was almost completely ignorant of the other's field: my group did not know much about the concepts and methodologies related to communication studies; whereas, the other team only had a vague idea of a policy analyst's toolbox.

Thus, I am in a good position to assess the relationship between these two academic fields, not in a speculative way but rather from a practical point of view. I will explain here what I discovered and learned during this fascinating, although sometimes difficult, research experience.

The first thing we discovered is that communication studies and public policy studies tend to neglect each other. In policy studies, the role of the media is rarely considered. The large body of research on policy-making or implementation tends to focus on political, bureaucratic and societal actors, policy networks, advocacy coalitions, or epistemic communities; however, such researches seldom give a key place to media. I think that three factors can explain this. First, as John Kingdon states, "one reason for the media's less-then-anticipated effect on the policy agenda is the press's tendency to cover a story prominently for a short period of time and then turn to the next story" (Kingdon 1995, 58–59), while the policy-making processes take months or years. Second, the media coverage is limited to a handful of very attractive policy matters; most issues, even important, do not "deserve" a single line in the press unless they can be attached to disruptive events or conflicts. Therefore, most policy analysts do not need to consider media since the object of their study is not dealt with by media. Third, policy analysts often suspect that media are more "*haut-parleurs*" than "*promoteurs*" (Neveu 2015, 88); or as a Congress committee staffer interviewed by Kingdon put it, "[t]he media has some importance, but it's slight.

[1] The research was funded by the Compagnia di San Paolo in coordination with the University of Turin and was conducted by a team headed by Franca Roncarolo and comprising Marinella Belluati, Tiziana Caponio, Enrico Gargiulo, Micol Maggiolini, Fedra Negri, Gianfranco Pomatto, Stefania Ravazzi, Antonella Seddone, and myself (see Pomatto *et al.* 2013, Bobbio *et al.* 2015, Bobbio and Roncarolo 2015)

Either media people are reporting what we're already doing, or they are reporting something that we're already aware of" (Kingdon 1995, 59).

Moreover, **if policy analysts tend to neglect media, communication scholars also tend to neglect policies.** Their attention is almost fully captured by how media deal with the world of politics: leaders, electoral campaigns, political alignments and realignments, and partisan conflicts. In fact, our second discovery—that we made early in the process—concerns the unexpected (at least by us) scarceness of the communication literature devoted to policies. While there are a lot of studies on the relationship between media and politics, those on the relationship between media and public policy are limited. One of the few studies on this topic begins, quite rightly, with the complaint that, "the existing literature on the relationship between the media and public policy is patchy and provides a rather incoherent picture" (Koch-Baumgartner and Voltmer 2010, 2).

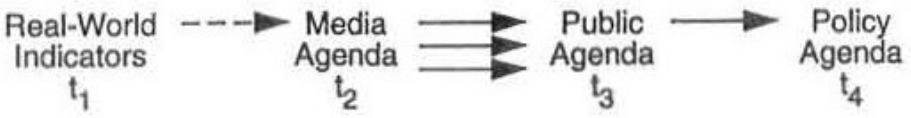
During the research process, my colleague Franca Roncarolo pointed out that both academic traditions have a common ground: they are somehow focused on how problems get to the stage that they are at and how they are defined or constructed. In fact, in more or less the same time period, both traditions started to analyze such processes through the use of the same terms: "agenda-setting" and "framing"; however, they did it separately. When policy analysts started talking about agenda-setting they seldom referred to the role of the media (Cobb and Elder 1972; Downs 1972; Kingdon 1995) that was instead given weight by communication studies (McCombs and Shaw 1972). Moreover, the same applies to the framing of public problems that the policy scholars saw as a process of social construction (Rein and Schön 1993) and communication scholars as a process essentially generated by and through the media (Tuchman 1978; Graber 1984). Of course, there have been some policy analysts—like Baumgartner and Jones (1993)—who included the analysis of the media while studying the process of agenda-setting and likewise some sociologists of communication—like Neveu (2015)—who followed the trajectory of public problems from society, to the media and to public policies; however, they are clearly exceptions.

I think policy analysis would benefit from diffusing such exceptions. Communication on public problems and public policies is ubiquitous. It is true that the media do not care about many problems and policy decisions; however, if we also consider the (often interactive) communication through the Internet, it is apparent that the array of policy news and commentary is rapidly growing. **Nonetheless, how can we integrate communication and public policy?** During our research, we discovered that two separate strands of literature exists (both very small indeed) that tackle the coupling between media and policy in different ways.

The first strand consists in assessing the influence that the media exert on public policy. In this case, the study of the media is addressed at understanding whether they may be considered among the actors of policy-making and to what extent. The influence of media is supposed to be exerted mainly through two mechanisms: on the one hand, the media agenda is deemed to condition the policy agenda, as in Figure 1 (drawn from Dearing and Rogers 1996); on the other hand, the frames through which the media communicate public problems may be likely to affect the way public policies are shaped. The results of this strand of research appear to be ambivalent. While some authors argue that media play an important role "beyond any doubt" in the policy process, not only in the initial phase (agenda-setting and problem definition) but also in the later stages of

the policy cycle (Soroka *et al.* 2012: 211), others underline that the studies on media influence reveal "a puzzling mixture of cases where the media had a strong impact on the process and/or outcome of policy and ones where they didn't play any role" (Koch-Baumgartner and Voltmer 2010: 4).

Figure 1. The expected time order of real-world indicators, the media agenda, public agenda, and policy agenda, with the degree of evidence for each of these expected relationships.



However, the influence of media on public policies is not the only aspect that can be considered. When we address the topic of the relationship between media and policy, we can ask another question (somewhat preliminary and perhaps more important): whether and to what extent media are able to inform the public on the reasons why policies are adopted, disputes that surround them, causal hypotheses on which they are grounded, and the effects that they produce. In this case, the problem is to understand whether media contribute to the public debate on governmental choices and, hence, whether they help the public to form a reasoned opinion on issues that are often encompassed by complexity and uncertainty. A recent strand of communication research that—while not specifically devoted to public policy—seems particularly suitable in this regard is the growing literature on the "mediated deliberation" (Ettema 2007, Wessler 2008, Augoustinos *et al.* 2010, Maia 2012), that is, those studies that analyze the contribution of the media to the construction or facilitation of public deliberation.

Where the influence of media on the policies is concerned, in the first line of research what researchers look for are the *frames* that are used in the media to give emphasis to the issues, draw the public's attention, and stir up emotions. When the research concerns the media's contribution to public deliberation, the study rather addresses the *arguments* that the media present in support of or in opposition to the policy proposals, on their soundness, and on their completeness. Till date, the two mechanisms have been evoked by two different research traditions, focusing in turn on the simplifying role of the media or on that of providing forums for public debate. In fact, the media tends to do both: they simplify; however, they also sometimes deal with complexity; they not only solicit instinctive reactions but also offer reasoned arguments; they try to hit the public, but sometimes do not forget to inform them with richer explanations. Frames and arguments are opposite devices, but in some ways they are also complementary. People need to be attracted by some flashy appeal and to be able to weigh the soundness of the arguments put forward by the opposing policy actors.

What policy analysis should gain from communication studies is a double analysis of both the frames and the arguments that are embedded in mass communication. The former highlights the likely way by which the media may influence policy-making; the latter shows the deliberative function performed by the media within the public sphere. In our research, we chose to study both and we think that this has led to some important conclusions (see Bobbio and Roncarolo 2015).

Bibliography

Augoustinos, M., Crabb, S., and Shepherd, R. (2010), Genetically Modified Food in the News: Media Representations of the GM Debate in the UK, *Public Understanding of Science*, 19, pp. 98–114.

Baumgartner, F. R. and Jones, B. D. (1993), *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Bobbio, L. and Roncarolo, F. (eds.) (2015), *I media e le politiche. Come i giornali raccontano le scelte pubbliche che riguardano la vita dei cittadini*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Bobbio, L., Pomatto, G., and Seddone, A. (2015), Quando la politica soffoca le politiche. Una ricerca su media e politiche pubbliche, *Stato e mercato*, n. 105, pp. 510–536.

Cobb, R. and Elder, C.D. (1972), *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamic of Agenda-Building*, Boston, Allin & Bacon.

Dearing, J.W. and Rogers, E.M. (1996), *Agenda Setting*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Downs, A. (1972), «Up and Down with Ecology. The "Issue-attention Cycle"», *The Public Interest*, 28 (2), pp. 38–50.

Ettema, J.S. (2007), Journalism as Reason-Giving: Deliberative Democracy, Institutional Accountability, and the News Media's Mission, *Political Communication*, 24 (2), pp. 143–60.

Graber, D. (1984), *Processing the News*, Longman, New York.

Kingdon, J. W. (1995), *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, New York, HarperCollins.

Koch-Baumgarten, S. and Voltmer, K. (eds) (2010), *Public Policy and the Mass Media: The Interplay of Mass Communication and Political Decision Making*, New York, Routdledge.

McCombs, M. and Shaw, D.L. (1972), The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36 (2), pp. 176–187.

Maia, R.C.M. (2012), *Deliberation, the Media, and Political Talk*, New York, Hampton Press.

Neveu, E. (2015), *Sociologie politique des problèmes publics*, Paris, Armand Collin.

Pomatto, G., Maggiolini, M., and Seddone, A. (2013), Politiche pubbliche e deliberazione sui quotidiani italiani, *Rivista Italiana di Politiche Pubbliche*, 3, pp. 365–394.

Rein, M. and Schön, D. (1993), Reframing Policy Discourse, *in* F. Fischer and J. Forester (eds), *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, Durham, Duke University Press, pp.145–166.

Soroka, S., Farnsworth, S., Lawlor, A., and Young, L. (2012), Mass Media and Policymaking, *in* Araral, E., Fritzen S., Howlett, M., Ramesh, M., Wu, X. (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy*, New York, Routledge, pp. 204–214.

Tuchman, G. (1978), *Making News: a Study in the Construction of Reality*, The Free Press, New York.

Wessler, H. (2008), Investigating Deliberativeness Comparatively, *Political Communication*, 25 (1), pp. 1–22.

Italian Political Science, VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2015

Reflections on the relationship between Political Science and Political Communication in the UK Academy

Ralph Negrine
UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

Nearly one hundred years ago, Walter Lippmann observed that 'political science was taught in our colleges as if newspapers did not exist. ... In that science a study of the press and the sources of popular information found no place.' (1997:202-203) Since then, much has been done to rectify this situation but these efforts – as I shall argue – have been less encouraging than one might have anticipated. Even fifty years ago, in the 1960s and during a period of university expansion, the subject of communication (or political communication) was still seen as not quite belonging to the study of the political. Writing in 1994, Colin Seymour-Ure, one of the earliest researchers on the subject of politics and media in Britain, observed that although it had grown into, more or less, 'an established field within political science', it remained, 'now as before, ... a peripheral field. It has grown with the discipline as a whole, yet in essence, if not in its details and emphases, its relation to the parent discipline has not changed.' (1994:59)

Whatever growth and development there was in the field – then as now – took place in the field of sociology and elsewhere. While there are exceptions, it remains the case that researchers who explore the overlap between media and politics tend, on the whole, to occupy a space outside of political studies, at least as defined within British institutions of learning.

One way to illustrate this is by looking at the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF). The REF is a costly and disruptive exercise in which all institutions of higher education have to submit to every six or so years. It is an attempt to assess (and judge) the quality of research being undertaken by all academics in the UK and each active researcher has to submit up to four published pieces for assessment by a panel of experts. The Politics and International Relations Unit of Assessment[1] (REF Unit 21) had submissions from 56 units of assessment, i.e. most research intensive universities in the UK, and it lists published pieces from a total of about 1300 staff carrying out research in politics and international relations who, between them, submitted nearly 4400 pieces of research (mostly books and articles) for assessment.

Even without a full and detailed analysis of all these outputs one can become aware of broad patterns and these are quite instructive. Submissions to journals – and these account for about two thirds of all publications submitted – are very rarely to those journals

[1] A Unit of Assessment can be a department or a selection of staff within a department.

most commonly associated with the subject of politics and communication. The *International Journal of Press/Politics* features only once, *Political Communication* three times, the *European Journal of Communication* once. In submissions from the top five ranked universities in this unit – University of Essex, London School of Economic (LSE), Sheffield, Oxford and University College London (UCL) – we find only about a dozen or so journal articles out of a total of over nearly 750 that could be said to relate in some way to the study of politics and communication. None of these were published in the three journals listed above.

By contrast, in Unit of Assessment 36 (REF Unit 36), which includes departments of communications, media and journalism[2] one can find many more outputs – both books and journal articles – that one could, broadly speaking, think of as covering the field of political communication. To extend the above comparison: the *International Journal of Press/ Politics* featured five times, the *European Journal of Communication* ten times, *Political Communication* twice. More significantly, the field of journalism – which includes analyses of news, politics and the news-making process – is very well served in this Unit's submissions (with 80 submissions) but not at all in the Politics and International Relations one.

Several observations need to be made regarding this data, aside from the fairly crude nature of the analysis. First, although many reasons determine journal selection, it is clear that in thinking about where to place articles, researchers have chosen journals that most closely match their research interests and the audiences they wish to address. Second, the data also reflects the fact that few of the 1300 or so academics in Politics and International Relations have developed to a *sufficient depth* the teaching area of political communication or of politics and communication that would then give them the foundations to carry out research and to publish in the field: two of the top three universities – Essex and Sheffield – do not run modules in politics and media within their departments of government and/ or politics. As with the LSE, work in this field is carried out in cognate departments – Communication and Media at the LSE, Journalism Studies at Sheffield. In point of fact, the study of political communication has also struggled to establish itself as a distinct area of study at degree level. While there are many degrees in communications, media and journalism, there is only one (at the University of Swansea) in political communication at undergraduate level. At postgraduate level, degrees in political communication are easily outnumbered by degrees in communications and media (and political studies).

This should not be taken to mean that academics in political studies departments do not teach or research in the field of media and politics, only that it does not appear to be a significant part of their research profile. This is possibly compounded by the tricky problem of how best to explore communication/communication practices within the world of politics. **If the focus is on communication practices and on these as being very central to the conduct and practice of politics, almost everything else moves out of focus.** Conversely, if the focus is on, say, policy and institutions, it is then communication practices that move out of focus. The same would be true of the study of prime ministerial power, elections, news production, elite relations and public opinion. How to think about 'the

[2] A strict comparison with UoA 21 is not possible as UoA 36 was a joint panel that also included Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management. A total of about 1200 staff were entered and some 3500 outputs assessed.

relation of communication to politics' (Seymour-Ure, 1994:59) continues to challenge many in the field and the absence of coherent unifying accounts is apparent.

A fragmented field

The low profile – its 'peripheral' state – within political studies has not stemmed the flow of research and publications in political communication although that work, it would be fair to say, has developed as a patchwork of cognate interests. Studies of political communication at elections times often dominate but there is also a significant body of work on the relationship between political actors and media, alongside studies of news production, media systems, democratization, popular culture, policy and history. It is an extensive list but it is also a list that reflects growth of interest around specific moments, issues and public figures. In this sense, research and publications are often responses to events: the era of New Labour (roughly 1990s to 2008) generated a considerable amount of work on spin, news manipulation, professionalism and political marketing, as researchers became fascinated with the machinations of PM Tony Blair and his Director of Communications, Alistair Campbell.

Whilst some of these practices predated the New Labour era – Thatcher's Bernard Ingham was himself a shrewd media operator (Harris, 1990) – New Labour's professionalism and control of media established, once and for all, the importance of such activities, particularly if the media were against you. As Labour's new and current leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has discovered, being a decent chap is not enough to ward off media attacks and many have advised him of the need for professional help. Tom Clark, writing in the Guardian, observed that 'a shrewd comms professional could have charted a way through each of (these ongoing) rows ..., and also avoided lesser mistakes...' (2015) and one was duly appointed. In times of (political) trouble – which in British politics tends to mean any time when you are not a Conservative party politician with a large number of sympathetic newspapers behind you! – a spin doctor is essential.

Interest in political communication during election contests has also often been boosted by those extra ingredients of magic that make one election different from the previous one. Sometimes this ingredient has been personality led – Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Nigel Farage – but more intriguing have been the tactics employed to win. Blair's fascination with American campaigning spawned many studies and interest in professionalization, media and campaigning (the 'war room') and this has ebbed and flowed over the last three elections. The Conservative party victory in the 2015 will, no doubt, generate voluminous research into, on the one hand, how their election 'guru' the Australian Lynton Crosby used the media and polling to turn round the party's fortunes and, on the other, how the polls got it so wrong. Unlike the US, though, Britain has yet to experience the full force of 'computational politics' (Tufecki, 2014) in electoral practices and it remains to be seen how long it is before these latest uses of social media and algorithms fully infect its politics.

The above examples confirm the reactive nature of much work in this area. So it is not surprising then that interest has now, in part, shifted towards the Internet/social media and their impact on politics and political communication. Or, perhaps more accurately, how the study of political communication has been transformed as a consequence of the internet.

Whether it is a study of how Tweeting politicians or the use of Twitter during the general election, the interest is, in a sense, the same: new technologies and their incorporation into existing forms and patterns of communications are giving rise to something else.

Although what that is remains unclear making sense of the new and different is proving a challenge: Do older models still have some purchase on contemporary life? Was the age of 'mass media' a fleeting moment and is it now no longer representative of current forms of production and consumption? How do we re-focus older concerns onto newer ones or do we have to abandon the old and start anew? Is this the fourth Age of communication, perhaps?[3] or more accurately the emergence of the 'hybrid media system' and its focus on 'the interrelationships between older and newer media logics'? (Chadwick, 2013:5).

Less prominent but no less significant is work on the audience/ the public. Much research has been elite focused and much less attention has been public/ audience focused. Consequently, we know less about how content is consumed and acted upon than we ought to. How does the contemporary public connect with the (old) world of politics and media? Is that connection significantly different from the one established three or four decades ago? What does this mean for the study of media and politics?

When the internet becomes normalized

In a recent paper on 'the internet and politics', Henry Farrell argued that 'as the Internet becomes politically normalized, it will be ever less appropriate to study it in isolation but ever more important to think clearly, and carefully, about its relationship to politics.' (2012:47) This is reminiscent of Seymour-Ure's comments about the media and politics (quoted above) and it is to be hoped that, this time round, **the study of politics will be better able to rise to the challenge than it was when the 'older' media were normalized.** It is perhaps time that the relationship of political communication to its 'parent discipline' was thoroughly reviewed and that it 'peripheral' status was upgraded.

Bibliography

Blumler, J.G. and Kavanagh, D. (1999) "The Third Age of Political Communication: Influences and Features". Political Communication. 16(3), 209-230.

Chadwick, A. (2013) The Hybrid Media System, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Clark, T (2015) Four reasons Jeremy Corbyn needs a spin doctor, available online at this address: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/15/eremy-corbyn-needs-spin-doctor-media-four-reasons.

Farrell, H., (2012) The Consequences of the Internet for Politics, Annual Review of Political Science, Vol. 15: 35-52.

Harris, R. (1990) Good and Faithful Servant: The Unauthorized Biography of Bernard Ingham, Faber & Faber: London.

[3] Jay Blumler and Dennis Kavanagh (1999) had written variously on the three ages of political communication. When the first version of the paper was published in 1999, the internet was young. It represented the Third Age. Are we beyond that now?

Lippmann, W. (1997) Public Opinion, Free Press: New York.

REF UoA 21, available online at this address:
http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/results/AverageProfile_21_Politics_and_International_Studies.pdf.

REF UoA 36, available online at this address:
http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/results/AverageProfile_36_Communication_Cultural_and_Media_Studies_Library_and_Information_Management.pdf

REF, homepage, available online at this address:
https://italianpoliticalscience.com/2016/02/19/10_2_05/www.ref.zac.uk

Seymour-Ure, C. (1994) Mass Communications and Political Science, in Hamelink, C. and Linne, O. Mass Communication Research. On Problems and Policies. The Art of Asking the Right Questions. Ablex: New Jersey, pp. 59-71.

Tufecki, Z. (2014) Engineering the Public: Big Data, Surveillance and Computational Politics, First Monday, 19(7).

Italian Political Science, VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2015

Book Reviews

Section edited by Carla Monteleone and Stefania Panebianco

ELENA BARACANI, *L'Unione europea e la prevenzione dei conflitti. Un'analisi comparata di tre casi di studio: Cipro, Kosovo e Palestina* (Bologna, Italy: il Mulino, 2014). 272 pp., €22,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788815254610

The end of the bipolar order and the effects of global interdependence provided new prospects for transnational actors and, at the same time, made the international system more vulnerable to new security challenges. The issue of the prevention of internal conflicts, being of high relevance for international stability, has become an interesting subject of investigation for International Relations scholars. Accordingly, greater attention has been reserved for the culture of prevention during the 1990s, mainly in line with the tradition of conflict resolution studies interested in identifying the causes of violent conflicts and directed to recognizing policies and management tools to apply before the escalation of the conflicts and the outbreak of violence. Conflict *per se* was not undesirable; however, what should have been prevented was violence as a means of resolution of disputes (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, 1999, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Cambridge: Polity; Lund, 1996, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington, D.C.: Institute of Peace Press; Ryan, 1999, Preventive Diplomacy, Conflict Prevention, and Ethnic Conflict, *in* Carment David and James Patrick (eds.), *Peace in the Midst of Wars. Preventing and Managing International Conflicts*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press).

The changed international landscape was followed by changes within the regulatory patterns of the international order and this led to inevitable changes in the organizational structure of international politics. Particularly in Europe, the emergence of conflicts in the Western Balkans and the enormous difficulties in responding effectively and promptly to instability and insecurity created by them, induced the European regional institutions to equip themselves with new regulatory and operational mechanisms to better prepare Europe for future crises. Particularly, following the establishment of the Lisbon Treaty, scholars' attention has been directed towards the European Union's (EU's) consolidation of tools and institutions as an international actor and also as actor of conflict prevention. In particular, the new trend is directed toward analyzing the new system and tools of external governance of the EU in opposing the root causes of conflicts not only throughout the world

but more specifically in the EU's neighborhood. In fact, the recent turmoil in the EU's neighborhood moved the problems of crisis management on a high priority on the EU foreign policy agenda.

Drawing from this recent—but already consolidated—research tradition, Elena Baracani's book *L'Unione Europea e la prevenzione dei conflitti* re-launches this topic and assesses it with empirical endeavor, analyzing three case studies in detail: Cyprus, Kosovo, and Palestine. The book follows the recent empirical research that studies EU foreign policy, with special attention to its external activities in the resolution of conflicts, ESDP operations, and coordination activities with other international actors. However, Baracani uses a broad perspective and includes a wide-ranging empirical definition of conflict prevention to comprise all the main foreign policy tools adopted by the EU to manage the different dynamics of a conflict, including those that are only indirectly used to prevent conflicts. Bearing the above platform in mind, the author's intention is—more precisely—to encompass not only all activities and policies that structurally and operatively prevent conflicts but also those that aim to stabilize post-conflict environments.

Adopting a single framework for the three case studies, the author comparatively analyzes the underlying forces at work in prevention activities by the EU. The starting point of the research examines the historical and social background of the three ethnic conflicts and is carried out by pointing to the four changing aspects (evolution dynamics): the origin of the conflict; the outbreak of violence and the eventual escalation and de-escalation steps; the internationalization of the conflict; and the Europeanization. Another goal is the study and classification of the main foreign policy tools adopted by the EU to intervene before the escalation of the conflicts, during the conflicts and after them. The author aims to assess the mechanisms and the conditions that enabled the EU to exert its leverage and evaluate how these tools have affected, or not, the dynamics of behavior of the conflicting parties.

The book is systematically organized into two parts comprising three chapters each. The first part of the book is theoretically grounded and introduces the notions of conflict and prevention, of the EU foreign policy and of their activities of prevention. The second part is empirically based and presents the three case studies in detail with one chapter on each study. The variability in the definitions of conflict, the problems in its classifications, and an overview of the main conflict databases projects are parts of the first chapter, which also deals with the challenges toward the conflict resolution's scholarship brought together by the transformation in the contemporary international system. A special focus is reserved for ethnic conflicts and to the theories and explanations on the origin of ethnic conflicts. The *essentialism* explanations are mainly drawn—originally—from Connor (1994, *Ethnonationalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press) and, more recently, from Petersen's (2002, *Understanding ethnic violence: Fear, hatred, and resentment in twentieth-century Eastern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) theories. The latter sees the ethnic hatred as a product of human nature and the bitterness resulting from the status change of the Second World War. For Connor, the ethnic linkages were stronger and deeper as compared to the new national linkages created through the formation of the new states, due to the de-colonization

process. The *instrumentalism* explanation instead saw a mask that was suitable to hide other economic and political interests in the notion of ethnicity. According to *institutionalism*, the multi-ethnic societies either live in peace or are caught in violent behaviors as a result of how political institutions are planned and implemented. *Neo-realism* uses the analogy of the conflicts between states applied to the clashes among ethnic groups within states: either the violent conflict is a consequence of the existence of ethnic groups; or, conversely, ethnic groups originate from a violent conflict. The solution foreseen is the creation of homogeneous territories comprising a single ethnic group and the transfer of the minorities in the main patria. Finally, the ethnic conflict by the *constructivism* is explained by the possible "master narrative" that may be exploited by the political elite and linked to the presence in each society of a proper "master cleavage," which is structured according to the history of the territory.

Notwithstanding this special focus, an extensive and circumstantial account is devoted to the EU as an international actor through a historical background on the evolution and nature of the EU foreign policy, which is presented in the second chapter. Moreover, in this case, the author adopts a huge conceptual perspective with an all-inclusive definition of the EU foreign policy, which is neither identified by the single foreign policies of the EU state members nor by the solely Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), while it is considered from a multilevel governance perspective. In particular, the attention is directed toward the transformations introduced in the EU policy-making by the Lisbon Treaty and how these have affected EU international politics. The theoretical explanations on the origin and nature of European international actions are briefly based on international relations' traditional paradigms of realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

The third chapter completes the conceptual accounts of the first part of the book, strengthening the knowledge of the theme of conflict prevention with an encompassing account of the EU documents (treaties, Commission communications, and programs and tools) that deals with the activities of prevention, whose evolution is organized into three phases: Phase 1 encompasses the launch of European Political Cooperation (EPC) to the Maastricht Treaty; Phase 2 covers the time from the Maastricht Treaty to the Lisbon Treaty; and Phase 3 deals with all the transformations from the launch of the Lisbon Treaty to the present time.

Moving to the second part of the book, which presents the description of the three conflicts through the five abovementioned dynamic evolutions, these last three chapters focus on the empirical findings of the Europeanization of the case studies and, in particular, assesses the tools adopted and norms promoted by EU institutions. The mechanisms and the conditions that have enabled or prevented the EU from exerting its leverage are ascertained for each case. The Cyprus conflict is envisaged as a manifestation of "linkage politics" as its evolution follows three levels: the local level of the Turkish and Greek communities, the regional level with the involvement of Greece and Turkey, and the international level with the involvement of the main powers and international organizations such as the UN, NATO, and the EU. This linkage is due to the fact that each level affects the other. Concerning Kosovo, the main empirical findings of the analysis show the difficulties faced

by the EU in finding tools and policies of structural and operational prevention and in identifying an agreement concerning the recognition of Kosovo by Serbia. The Palestine conflict shows the ability of the EU to internationalize the issue and financially support the country's institution building and to promote a multilateral cooperation with other Arab countries. However, diplomatically, the EU's role in conflict management has always been subordinated to the US.

To conclude, Elena Baracani's book represents a significant contribution for those interested in ethnic conflicts as well as the external affairs of the EU. Methodologically, the book is aptly organized and coherently adopts a comparative approach, focusing on the relationships between the two variables (EU prevention activities as the independent variable and governments' and political groups' behaviors as the dependent variable) for all the three case studies. The book's main interesting and distinguishing argument is the paradox of favoring the evolution and transformation of the disputes into frozen conflicts as an outcome of the Europeanization process. Accordingly, if the EU becomes not only the main reference point but—as in the case of Cyprus through the membership—a part of the conflict, and dismisses its role as the external third party, the conflict dynamics will easily evolve in a frozen condition.

Rosa Rossi, *University of Catania*

* * *

MICHELA CECCORULLI, *Framing irregular migration in security terms: the Libya case* (Florence, Italy: Florence University Press, 2014). 114 pp., €12,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788866556404

Migration is not a new phenomenon; it is a global issue that has existed for centuries even though migration flows change over time and adapt to contingent complex dynamics. Yet, in the last few decades, migration by sea across the Mediterranean has very much attracted scholarly attention, mostly due to the increasing number of migrants dying while crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

What had started as an unstructured phenomenon, favoured by geographical proximity, quickly turned into a long and exhausting journey controlled by groups of organized crime trafficking people from sub-Saharan countries across North Africa directed towards Europe. Mediterranean migration has, then, become a global issue, connecting Europe with sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Northern Africa, involving state and non-state actors, and causing effects well beyond the Mediterranean region.

In her book *Framing irregular migration in security terms: the Libya case*, Ceccorulli provides a timely analysis of irregular migration through the Mediterranean transit route, and particularly via Libya, which has become 'a springboard for irregular migration to Europe' (p. 15). It should be noticed, though, that alongside 'irregular' migrants, there are several asylum seekers. Mainly departing from the Libyan coasts, migrants take advantage of the weak Libyan state and of the geo-

graphical proximity with Italy to enter Europe after an extenuating and dangerous journey.

Italy has, then, become one of the main entry points to Europe for migrants coming from through the Mediterranean routes. Due to its geographical position directly in the middle of the Mediterranean, to its lengthy coasts and its proximity to Northern African countries (Tunisia and Libya in particular), Italy is currently one of the most exposed EU countries – together with Greece, and arrival figures have significantly mounted over the years. However, Italy is primarily a transit country for thousands of migrants wishing to reach other EU member states, Scandinavian countries in particular.

Ceccorulli enters into the theoretical policy debate on migration by providing an instructive and informative analysis. She adopts the traditional security-migration nexus to explain the construction of migration as a security issue and focuses on the Libyan case which provides fruitful insights on migration flows within the Mediterranean. She investigates processes set up to address migration flows from Libya to Italy by focusing particularly on Italian management of irregular migration since 'Italy has played as a forerunner in cooperation with the country' (p. 15).

By showing good knowledge of the security literature, this book investigates both securitization and de-securitization dynamics. Chapter one focuses on the non-conventional, non-military, security challenges that have emerged in particular with the end of the Cold War. These include 'unwanted' movements of people, according to the 'Copenhagen School' that in the 1990s regarded irregular crossing of borders as a new security concern. Chapter two assumes that security governance, which implies coordination among various actors, is a valid strategy (if not the only one) to effectively address cross-border challenges. Chapter three sets the contest for Libyan-Italian-EU relations, with a specific highlight on Euro-Mediterranean relations. Chapter four illustrates the cooperation with Libya to fight against irregular migration in the years 1998-2010, as a result of the country's progressive reacceptance within the international community that was robustly promoted by Italian foreign policy. Chapters five and six analyse the security framing processes, i.e. 'a set of processes through which a topic is framed in security terms', making use of discourse analysis and acknowledging the advancements made by the 'Paris School' that insists on security processes. Chapter seven is very critical regarding the governance of migration, denouncing both Italian and EU incapacity to adopt effective measures to face the migration challenge. In 2004 the Italian government was fiercely criticized by international organizations for its supposed collective readmissions (p. 71), while '[a]t the European level, the lack of solidarity among Member States was the bluntest example of the security interpretation attached to the phenomenon together with the absence of a truly common European approach to asylum' (p. 17). The continuous tensions between EU border controls and cooperation on internal issues, on the one hand, and member states' diverging interests versus common strategies, on the other, permeates the entire book which denounces the critical aspects of the Dublin Convention and EU weaknesses in migration management. Finally, chapter eight investigates migration flows after the 'Arab Spring' and chapter nine attempts to outline and understand the proportion of the

multifaceted migration crisis, which encompasses security, political, economic, social and demographic aspects.

By addressing one of the most lively debates in Italy in the 2010s, the book investigates ideas and policy initiatives leading to the repatriation agreements as one of the possible ways to save lives, as it was commonly stated: 'saving the lives of migrants by preventing them from leaving for Italy' (p. 57). Hosting camps, asylum seeking and readmission provisions are all crucial issues addressed by the author.

Migration features change quickly because migration flows adapt to specific systemic conditions, e.g. the stability/instability of North African political regimes, rigid/light police border control, old/new organized crime networks, etc and migration data change rapidly. Also the figures provided in the book have changed in the last few years (most data and information provided in chapter four refer to the 2010s) and are destined to change again in the near future. However, the main arguments of the book remain solid.

What is less convincing, though, is the structure of the book structure which is made up of nine short chapters, plus introduction and conclusion, that have a sort of quick hint approach and loose in some points a systematic and comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon.

It is a pity that the research could not cover the most recent events. The research project behind the book was planned before the Arab Spring, and the first draft dates back prior to that. As Ceccorulli correctly acknowledges, further research is still needed to test the validity of the security approach, because migration has acquired the proportions of a humanitarian crisis, downscaling the security terms of migration. In particular '[e]vents in north Africa and the Middle East have demonstrated how ineffective a 'security' approach to the problem is' ..... 'tragic events occurred in the Mediterranean are there to invite, again, a re-thinking of the approach towards irregular migration' (p. 82).

The Italian and European reactions to the 2013 shipwrecks off the Lampedusan coasts and, more recently, to the April 2015 shipwrecks that caused nearly a thousand deaths in just one month indicate that a new approach to deal with migration flows is needed. The proportions of the migration crisis require more concrete strategies to effectively manage (and not just simply to contain or divert) the migratory flows. The focus on illegal migration cannot be too narrowly concentrated on security any longer. A new perspective has maybe been opened by the Search and Rescue operations launched by the Italian initiative Mare Nostrum in 2013 and by the EU operation Triton in 2014, then followed by Eunavfor Med.

The current political debate on humanitarianism suggests that the time is ripe to adopt a broader approach to address the various dimensions of the migration crisis. This can only be done if one takes into account the reasons (political and socio-economic) of the migratory flows and their impact on hosting countries. Intolerance and mounting xenophobia, on the one hand, and terrorist attacks, on the other, indicate that the existing assimilation models in European countries are not working and violent radical movements are emerging both in Europe and overseas. New models are needed indeed.

Stefania Panebianco, *University of Catania*

* * *

ALESSANDRO COLOMBO, *Tempi decisivi: Natura e retorica delle crisi internazionali* (Milan, Italy: Feltrinelli, 2014). 272 pp., €24,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788807105081

International relations have studied in depth how and why international crises affect international politics and actors' foreign policy. Much of this literature flourished during the 1960s and 1970s as a scientific reaction to some of the most disruptive and tense Cold War dynamics, such as the Suez crisis, the Berlin crisis, and the Cuban crisis. To explain the causes and possible consequences of those situations and the like, crises have been theorized as interactions between two or more states that are likely to trigger military hostilities and wars; and, in turn, possibly challenge the structure of the international system. During such crises, actors' dramatically change their decision-making procedures, which come to be pressured by the perception of new threats and the urgency under which the latter have to be tackled.

Tempi decisivi: Natura e retorica delle crisi internazionali touches on all of these issues. It deals with the occurrence, nature, and possible outcomes of contemporary crises such as the attack on the Twin Towers or the global economic recession. It also deals with the effects that contemporary crises have on actors' foreign policy and, in particular, on the policies of the US—the most influential state at the global level. However, Alessandro Colombo's concern is not limited to these issues: the book thoroughly focuses on the rhetorical dimension of the phenomenon, thereby casting light on the keywords, ideas, norms, and principles that crises call into play; crises are looked at inasmuch as they reveal what is usually taken for granted—the distinctive features of the political order that they put at risk or tear into pieces. Alessandro Colombo's book is about international crises as much as it is about the international order. In this regard, the book aims at drawing conclusions that go well beyond the standard International Relations' explanation of conflict escalation and stability. The core concern of the book is not only about the effects that crises have in changing the disputed patterns and rules according to which power and scarce resources are distributed in the international system. It is also—and above all—about a deeper and longer-term object of analysis: the effects that crises have on what structures political relations and the actors themselves.

To understand how the relationship between international crises and the international order features in the contemporary system, Alessandro Colombo needs to first study and debate the various ways in which the two are interrelated and also the changes in the nature of the former that affects the changes in the latter. At the end of the day, these topics deserve the greatest attention in the book.

The first chapter debates the time dimension of the crises. First, it comments on the disrupting consequences that crises have on the political order, by threatening the regular patterns of political interactions but, above all, the usual expectations and rules of behavior that conflict management practices are based on. Second, it comments on the state of emergency that decision-making procedures take because of the urgency of the new threats to be answered. Third, it emphasizes that these

features take different forms depending on the crises' time span: if and how crises are long-term processes of change, they are not resolved through urgent decisions; while the state of emergency turns out to be a rule rather than an exception to the rules of the political order.

The second chapter debates the space dimension of crises. In fact, crises can erase and change the boundary between the political order within the space of sovereign actors and the political order outside them; moreover, crises' consequences can have varying geographical extensions. However, in Alessandro Colombo's view, what is more relevant is that crises magnify the nature of the relationship between the internal and external orders, which greatly influences the impact of the crises. The book analytically distinguishes and comments on the several ways by which crisis at the domestic level can move to the international level and vice versa. In this regard, the book strongly emphasizes that international orders built on power asymmetries are particularly sensitive to crises because the possible crisis of the leading state is very likely to trigger both the crisis of the international order it has built and the internal crises in the secondary states that take part in it.

The third and fourth chapters focus on the features of political structures that crises veil and unveil. Crises are unforeseeable threatening situations that differently affect actors' vulnerability and reveal how actors' identities are fragmented by different fundamental interests and what kind of fundamental power and decision-making asymmetries the political order is based on. Thus, on the one hand, crises unveil the political core of a society: they cast light on who is to decide (in time of crisis). However, on the other hand, crises veil the political dimension of public choices. The rhetoric of crises either tends to downplay or neutralize the situation: it either tends to deny the necessity for fundamental political changes or to turn the crisis into a technical issue that cannot be effectively managed through political competition and choice.

The last chapter uses the above points to analyze crises in the contemporary international system. It emphasizes how and why the contemporary strategic setting makes it very difficult to control crises; and, the failures that the US strategy faced to build a post-bipolar international order. However, Alessandro Colombo's main point is not that post-89 crises have been more frequent and/or more disruptive than pre-89 crises. It is that contemporary crises as specific events relate to a fundamental and long-term process of change: the features of contemporary crises are revealing the overall crisis of the modern international order. Thus, the many historical instances of crises that greatly enrich the book are not only cases in a comparative analysis but fragments of the same long-term process: the evolution of the Eurocentric and state-centric international political order.

Marco Clementi, *University of Pavia*

* * *

SILVIO COTELLESSA, *La pluralità addomesticata. Politiche pubbliche e conflitti politici* (Bologna, Italy: il Mulino, 2014). 176 pp., €16,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788815252937

The concept of pluralism can be defined in different ways. The author surveys a wide and varied literature to show that the "soft" version would prevail through the domestication of the most explicitly adversarial features of pluralism. This result is in line with the evolution of our democracies; which have become, in the words of Charles Lindblom, market-oriented polyarchies. This review was carried out by paying particular attention to the issue of public policies, which have changed and expanded their meaning over time, as a result of the disappearing borders between public and private dimensions, and between internal and foreign politics.

To begin with, the author reconstructs the disciplinary origins of studies on public policy. He finds them in the German notion of *policey*, which indicated the good practices of domestic policy provided by the absolutist states of the eighteenth century that have been inherited, to some extent, by the public policies of the contemporary democracies. In the second chapter, the author reviews the debate on pluralism developed since the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1960s in the US Political Science community. He shows that, through an intense exchange inside a divided community of scholars, the approach was progressively cleansed of its "excess of conflict," arriving at an amenable version of pluralism that parallels quite well with the completion of the process of the "nationalization of American politics." The author develops his reasoning—in this as in other chapters—with a marked taste for quotation, but strangely enough, he forgets to mention David Truman, who was the most influential theorist of the "domesticated" version of pluralism in the fifties.

The third chapter shifts the reader's attention to the theoretical assumptions that, in the contemporary democracies, formed the cultural background for the acceptance—more or less critical, but in fact justificatory—of the adaptation of state policies with market logics. The successful expression of this adaptation/subordination can be found in the process of integration of European policy-making. This has been accomplished with the de-politicization of the role of national institutions and justified by the ideological assumption of the absence of alternatives. Thus, the (supposed) de-politicization of policy-making has opened the way for the celebration of the liberatory appearance of the market logic that would put in place a mechanism of "competition without power." However, the author warns us that, recalling a well-known line of critical literature, the primacy of market logic can affect the basic principles of democratic representation and accountability, as well as prejudice equality among citizens. The European Union is an international organization that better represents the phenomenon of de-politicization of politics because it tends to establish itself as an administrative regime that relegates foreign policy (i.e., *high politics*, according to a traditional distinction) at the edge of her decision-making system and concentrates her activity on administrative measures (*low politics*) that expunge the more contentious issues from policies.

The European Union also offers a tangible example of the obsolescence of the relation between the dimensions of inside and outside, because the traditional state–territorial divisions are overwhelmed by new "mobile borders" that have created an "European archipelago" based on the separation between the main corridors of globalization and "territorial sacs" that are excluded from the processes of integration (Chapter 4). At the same time, these changes will help to fuel impatience with a system of government that focuses its activities on administrative action, which is the main modus operandi for the depoliticization of the increasingly uncertain boundaries between what is internal and what is external; between what is included and what is excluded in today's market-oriented polyarchies.

Cotellessa's book offers a reflection on current and interesting issues examined through the filter of first-rate theoretical literature. However, the text is hard to read, it is overloaded with digressions, while chapters appear only to be weakly related to each other. Moreover, the book lacks conclusions that the author could have used to openly take a position on the consequences that the trend in the prevalence of low policy can have on the stability and political legitimacy of our democracies. Does this trend prefigure the permanent affirmation of bureaucratic political systems because of their pretended "neutrality"? Or is the legitimacy to govern by administrative policies inherently precarious, because it is dependent on a market economy increasingly dominated by the unpredictable and uncontrollable logic of financial capitalism?

Liborio Mattina, *University of Trieste*

* * *

FRANCESCO OLMASTRONI, *Framing War. Public Opinion and Decision-Making in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2015). 272 pp., £90,00 (hardback), ISBN: 9780415724661

The book focuses on the relation between political elites, the mass media, and public. Its main goal is premised on examining whether governmental responsiveness occurs in foreign policy, both at framing and implementation levels. Specifically, this book analyzes the process of framing in the case of the war in Iraq in relation to three democracies—France, Italy, and the US from April 2002 to March 2007. According to the author's arguments, the analysis of the context of the Iraqi war may have some important advantages in addressing the topic of the book. First, it allows for comparisons in different national contexts in which decisions-makers held different positions about the war. Second, it contributes to a poorly explored area of analysis, despite the availability of large amounts of data. Third, it allows a diachronic analysis.

The book is organized into six chapters: 1) *A Cyclical Model of Framing*; 2) *"Going Public" for Framing in Different Political and Media Systems*; 3) *Methodology*; 4) *The Three Actors and the War of Frames in the United States*; 5) *The Three Actors and the War of Frames in France and Italy*; 6) *Conclusion*.

The first chapter concerns the theoretical framework of the research presented in this book. The chapter starts by describing different definitions of *frames* and a literature-based perspective of the evolution of this concept. Most importantly, the author highlights the opposition between a "top-down" view of the relationship between political elites and the public, versus a cyclical model of framing. In the latter case, different actors—such as the public, political elites, and media—affect each other's contribution to the final representation of a political issue. Within this cycle, a "framing contest" occurs, with governments tending to create dominant framing positions to gain public support of their policies. However, different frames may oppose both the views and decisions of governments. Theoretically, the "framing contest" shapes both *specific support* on policies and governments' responsiveness.

The second chapter focuses on two key contextual aspects, thereby, adding more complexity to the cyclical model of framing. The first aspect concerns the phenomenon of "going public" (as presented by Kernell), which describes the evolution of framing from *institutionalized pluralism* to *individualized pluralism*. Accordingly, political leaders tend to "involve" the public and mass media in bargaining processes to affirm their leadership role. As the author points out, this phenomenon affected both the US and presidential/governmental leaders in the two European countries being analyzed. At the same time, "going public" may have different forms in different "media systems." The second contextual aspect of framing concerns the relation between the media and government, as well as the types of media systems. The author proposes that the types of media systems and the media–government relationship affect the resulting cycle of framing in different phases of the war.

Chapter three describes the main methodological aspects of the book. This chapter first focuses on the measurement of public attitudes about the Iraqi war. In the second paragraph, the author describes the variables used in measuring different dimensions of the media's framing. Finally, he describes the measurement of elite framing and policy choices.

Chapters four and five present the empirical analyses of the United States, France, and Italy, respectively. Within the US itself, the Iraqi war attracted large spells of attention. The American public shows high levels of *saliency* for the whole period under investigation. Framing by the American elite was dominant in the early phases of the war. Later, critical views appeared and contested the dominant presidential framing. When the critical views gained momentum, the Bush administration changed its framing position.

The same issue produced different results in France and Italy, where the war raised public concern only during the critical moments. Elite attention follows a similar path, with peaks of references to the crisis and long periods of silence about the issue. The same pattern prevailed with regard to media attention. It followed basically elite raising peaks during crucial moments (with high correlation indexes), such as during the early phases of the war, specific attacks, and international operations. Public reactions to the elites' framings, however, show different results in France and Italy. In France for instance, "the public agreed with the central argument of the president's discourse" (pg. 195). In contrast, the Italian government's

framing incurred the wrath of growing criticism. As opposed to the US, the Berlusconi government adopted a position of "simulated responsiveness" (pg. 196). Only when elections drew nearer, did the government propose a reduction of troops, consequently reducing the growing levels of opposition asking for withdrawal of Italian troops from the war.

Chapter six draws the conclusions of the study. First, the author highlights that true governmental responsiveness only occurs in the event when the governmental frame and policy strategy change under the pressure of public opposition. As a result, the flow of influence becomes reciprocal; with the elites influencing people's views and the latter affecting the elites' strategies. In the case of the Iraqi war, this flow has proved to be influenced by contextual factors such as the "liberal" (US) or "polarized" (Italy) nature of the media, as well as the various phases of the war. Both Italy and the US demonstrated a change in governmental frames and policies but with different dynamics. Bush changed the frame and his strategy only in the last period of the war, under the pressure of a growing opposition. Otherwise, the "polarized" Italian system showed opposition from the early phases of the war and a countertrend policy only in the last period, just before Berlusconi's electoral defeat. Both contexts have been affected by closeness to the election time, especially since the electorate supporting those governments showed criticism about the strategies in Iraq.

Altogether, the study presented in this book provides a solid methodological and theoretical analysis of the relation between the government, citizens, and media in the case of the Iraqi war. This book also presents the merit to analyze responsiveness in the context of foreign policy: an area of the phenomenon still under investigation.

Danilo Di Mauro, *University of Catania*

* * *

MARCO VALIGI (ED.), *Il Caspio. Sicurezza, conflitti e risorse energetiche* (Bari-Roma, Italy: Laterza, 2014). 214 pp., €20,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788858114643

Is a "new" Cold War in progress? This is a question on which an intense debate is being developed in the political and academic fields, in the light of the many areas of friction growing between the interests of Western countries, led by the United States on the one hand, and Russia on the other. The use of some past categories, however, may prevent a real understanding of the ongoing dynamics of the many areas of the growing friction. The Moscow attempt to revise the international political order, which emerged between 1989 and 1991, neither had global ambition nor could have the restoration of the bipolar system as a final outcome. This challenge primarily takes place in the Post-Soviet Space, due to the Moscow's fear that its "near abroad" would be overwhelmed by that of "shared abroad" or "Western abroad."

This is not the main research question of *Il Caspio. Sicurezza, conflitti e risorse energetiche*, edited by Marco Valigi. It is within this wider debate, however, that this volume could be placed, arousing the interest of scholars whose surveys are not limited to the Post-Soviet Space. Furthermore, it enhances the debate with the hypothesis of a more complex geopolitical chessboard in the area, involving Iran's regional ambitions of greatness and the Chinese race for the Caspian hydrocarbon reserves.

Indeed, an explanatory effort shapes the entire work. The main and explicit aim of *Il Caspio* is to pinpoint and interpret the origins and the evolution of the main power dynamics in an area that had already been the preferred subject of analysis of the classical geopolitics theories, which identified it as the "heartland" of the political world affairs. The effectiveness of this attempt—as outlined by the editor in his opening chapter—is connected to the first pillar of the study, namely the attention for the role played by geographical factors in modeling power relations. A well-established tradition—whose starting point were the works of Halford Mackinder, Ludwig Dehio, and Carl Schmitt, including the contemporary studies of Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Alessandro Colombo—confirms the subject matter choice of the volume. According to this framework, the influence of geography is not confined to defining the two dimensions of hard power, the political-strategic and the economic-strategic, but contributes also in molding the geopolitically-steeped definition of soft power operating as a source of legitimacy, or as a tool of steering political forces.

From the attention conferred on the relation between geography and politics, springs one of the elements of the volume's originality. Indeed, also in the light of the political developments that occurred in the twenty-first century, stands out the will to overcome the consolidated regional and sub-regional subdivisions, advancing the idea of the necessity to consider the Caspian-Caucasian area as an autonomous regional security complex. Due to the role of "connector" played by the inner sea, this area appears more as a new geopolitical space with the function of crossroads amidst at least two regions—the Post-Soviet Space and the Greater Middle East. The Caspian-Caucasian area's extension develops both in the longitudinal and latitudinal direction, unifying several territories: the Caucasus, a portion of Central Asia, Russia, and Iran. The current balance of power is not the result of an equation determined exclusively by the interests of the States bordering—or next to—the inner sea, but, as highlighted in the book, also due to the exogenous variable of the American offshore superpower. At the same time, the balance of power is distinguished by political formulas, alliances and actors—with the exception of the United States—not present in more than two regional security complexes.

The second pillar of the volume concerns the concept of security, which represents the starting point of all the chapters. As in the more recent tradition of security studies, this perspective, while finding a crucial issue in the use of force, also embraces other dimensions. To develop a multi-dimensional concept of security in a better way, Marco Valigi shaped a multi-institutional group of research scholars from universities, think tanks, and international oil companies, with various—but complementary—scientific experts in political science, international law, and polit-

ical economy. In this perspective, along with the political and military features, *Il Caspio* illustrates the extent to which the legal regime of the Caspian Sea and the energy issues take on a special meaning for the geopolitical dynamics of this security complex.

As evidence in the various chapters suggests, the Caspian area indeed presents several features which, according to a well-grounded literature, could constitute a source of multiplication for the possibilities of regional disorder. *Il Caspio* especially highlights some conditions which interrogate the security of the individual states, increasing the chances that the region could become a theatre of confrontation among the great powers. In particular, the geographical proximity of Russia and Iran to the area is already triggering the competition with the United States and its allies for the primacy over the Caspian region (Stephen Blank and Ernur Sultanov). Moreover, the current study examines the presence of some unconsolidated regimes and *de facto* States lacking international recognition, as a consequence of ethnic and cultural cleavages crosscutting the boundaries of several countries and durable frozen conflicts related to disputed sovereignty and of the cyclical outbreaks of violence (R. Craig Nation). In addition, the progressive consolidation of some energy-based economies is examined in the presence of the incomplete processes of marketization and States ravaged by international sanctions (Indra Overland, Maria Sangermano and Matteo Verda). Lastly, it observes the legal disputes between States for the sovereignty over the Caspian Sea, and the arms race linked to it (Cristiana Carletti and Azad Garibov).

From a combination of the geopolitical perimeter, the theoretical pillars, and the intended target of the work, finally comes an unintentional, but not less important, aim of the volume; which is its significant contribution to the recently formed research area in Italy on the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Gabriele Natalizia, *Link Campus University, Rome*

*