



# Late but not least? Spanish political science's struggle for internationalisation in the twenty-first century

Manuela Ortega-Ruiz<sup>1</sup> · José Real-Dato<sup>2</sup> · Miguel Jerez Mir<sup>3</sup>

Accepted: 16 November 2020  
© European Consortium for Political Research 2021

## Abstract

Having experienced a late institutionalisation as an academic discipline in the 1990s, during this century the political science community in Spain has struggled to converge with other fully established counterparts in Western Europe. In this article, we analyse and evaluate how successful these efforts have been concerning internationalisation. The article sheds light on the factors that explain this development. Using data from PhD dissertations defended since 1990 and articles published on SSCI journals since 1985, we demonstrate that the institutional reforms affecting higher education in Spain during the early 2000s, and the austerity measures introduced in the first part of the 2010s to address the economic crisis, together with the evolution of the particular ecology of the discipline, introduced greater competition into the Spanish political science academic market. This, in turn, triggered internationalisation of political scientists in Spain, particularly among the younger cohorts.

**Keywords** Academic careers · Higher education reform · Internationalisation · Political science in Spain · Research incentives · Scientometrics

---

✉ Manuela Ortega-Ruiz  
moruiz@ujaen.es

José Real-Dato  
jreal@ual.es

Miguel Jerez Mir  
mjerez@ugr.es

<sup>1</sup> Facultad de Ciencias Sociales Y Jurídicas, Universidad de Jaén, Campus Las Lagunillas s/n, CP: 23071 Jaén, Spain

<sup>2</sup> University of Almería, Carretera de Sacramento s/n , 04120 Almería, Spain

<sup>3</sup> University of Granada, Facultad CCPP y Sociología, C/ Rector López Argüeta, s/n, C.P. 18071 Granada, Spain



## Introduction

Compared with other Western European countries, political science had a late institutionalisation in Spain. Handicapped by the traditional hegemony of public law in the study of political phenomena (basically identified with the state, its organisation and functioning) and the hostile environment that Franco's regime represented to the study of basic topics of political science such as those related to liberal democracy, the study of political science in Spain had to wait until the mid-1980s and the late 1990s, once the new democratic regime was consolidated, to gradually develop all the features that characterise a complete institutionalisation as an academic discipline (Jerez Mir 2010; Jerez and Luque 2016; Vallès 2020).

However, at the beginning of the 2000s political science in Spain was still mostly an inward looking, localist academic community. This was manifested not only in its composition (almost absence of foreign-born members), but also in terms of the limited international outreach of research produced by political scientists based at Spanish academic institutions, mainly witnessed by a reduced number of international publications. For example, in 2000, political scientists affiliated to Spanish institutions published only five articles on political science or public administration in peer-reviewed international journals indexed at the social science citation index (SSCI). Twenty years later, that figure had increased more than tenfold to 120 articles published between January and October 2020 alone. Purely in terms of published peer reviewed articles, it is therefore evident that the Spanish political science community has experienced a significant level of internationalisation over the last two decades.

In this article, we shed light on these changes, focusing on the evolution of political science in Spain during the last decades towards higher levels of internationalisation of research production. In addition, we want to offer a systematic analysis of how internal dynamics in the discipline relate to external institutional and environmental factors. In this respect, we focus mostly on how the interaction between the institutional reforms in higher education during the 2000s (particularly those affecting the conditions of academic reproduction) and the changes in the ecosystem of the discipline (mostly related to the contraction of available resources) may have conditioned the internal configuration of the discipline and the rules guiding its reproduction, which ultimately led to changes in the existing patterns of research and internationalisation. In short, our argument is that the changes that have taken place in the Spanish political science community since the 2000 are a consequence of the processes of adaptation of the discipline to the new academic conditions.

The article is structured as follows. After this introduction, we provide the background for our analysis. First, we review the situation of political science in Spain during its period of institutionalisation in the 1980s and 1990s. Then, we describe the institutional and contextual changes that have affected the trajectory of the discipline in the twenty-first century and how these changes might have impacted its internationalisation, particularly in terms of research activities. The



last sections of the article present evidence of such internationalisation, focusing on two types of research outputs (PhD dissertations and articles published in international peer-reviewed journals). In the light of these results, we end with a discussion about the international convergence of Spanish political science.

## **Background: the institutionalisation of political science in Spain**

The development of political science as an autonomous discipline in Spain since the 1940s (coinciding with Franco's dictatorship) brings similarities with that of other countries, such as Italy, where the study of politics fell under the scope of several fully consolidated disciplines, such as law, history and philosophy (Graziano 1991). In the case of Spain, political science mostly took place under the shadow of political law.

The 1960s witnessed the transition of political science away from its legal base. A group of political law scholars (some of them having visited political science and sociology departments in foreign universities) started to approach political phenomena from a distinctive perspective, using imported methodological perspectives, ranging from neo-marxism to American-style empirical political science. In the diffusion of this latter approach, Juan J. Linz a Spaniard based in the USA played a major role (Jerez-Mir 2010: 290).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Spanish political science community expanded, finding new institutional spaces from which to develop its autonomy, such as journals, seminars, departmental units (Vallès 2020), social science institutes or even a first version of the professional association, the Spanish Association of Political Science, created in 1979. However, the dispersion of the community across several cátedras and departments of political law and theory of state and the lack of internationally reputed intellectual figures that could help to enhance the public visibility of the discipline, as Sartori or Bobbio did in Italy (Morlino, 1991), precluded an earlier institutionalisation of political science.

The first step towards the final institutionalisation would take place in 1984, when political science was officially recognised as an academic subject. The most important subsequent steps of this process were: a) the creation since 1986 of new faculties and official degrees specifically devoted to subject (see Table 1); b) the founding, in 1993, of the Spanish Political Science and Public Administration Association (AECPA); and, finally, in 1999, the launching by the AECPA the flagship journal of the profession, the *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, (RECP) (Jerez and Luque 2016).

By the end of the millennium, political science was a consolidated discipline in Spain. From having only one public university offering political science in 1985, by 2000 there were fourteen, with thousands of undergraduate students. The first political science degree in a private university was established in 1997, while at the same time political science units were created in other universities where the subject matter was taught in related fields, particularly Public Management.

Despite this progress, by 2000 there were still important unresolved issues affecting the discipline, partly as a consequence of its rapid expansion. One was the weak



**Table 1** Universities offering political science degrees in Spain by 2020. *Source:* Own elaboration using data from Jerez and Luque (2016) and Ministry of Universities (<https://www.ciencia.gob.es/portal/site/MICINN/menutem.7eeac5cd345b4f34f09df1001432ea0/?vgnextoid=0930d4449de8b610VgnVCM1000001404140aRCRD>)

University	Start	Current degrees and double degrees	University	Start	Current degrees and double degrees
Public universities					
Complutense de Madrid (UCM)	1944	Political sciences	Salamanca (USAL)	1997	Political sciences and public administration
		Political sciences/philosophy			Political sciences/law
		Law/Political Sciences			Information and documentation/political science and public administration
Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)	1986	Political science and public administration	Burgos (UBU)	1999	Political science and public administration
		Political science and public administration/sociology			Law/Political science and public administration
		Political science and public administration/law	Miguel Hernández Elche (UMH)	1999	Political Sciences and public administration
UNED	1987	Philosophy, politics and economics*	Carlos III de Madrid	2000	Political Sciences
		Political sciences and public administration			Political science and public administration/sociology
Granada (UGR)	1988	Political sciences and public administration			Law and political sciences
		Political sciences and public administration/law			International studies/political science
País Vasco (EHU)	1989	Political science and public administration			Philosophy, politics and economics*
Santiago de Compostela (USC)	1990	Political sciences and public administration	Murcia (UM)	2001	Political sciences, government and public administration



Table 1 (continued)

University	Start	Current degrees and double degrees	University	Start	Current degrees and double degrees
Barcelona (UB)	1994	Political science and public administration Law/political science and public administration	Pablo de Olavide (UPO)	2005	Political sciences and public administration Political sciences and public administration/law
Autónoma de Madrid (UAM)	1995	Political science and public administration Law/Political science and public administration Philosophy, politics and economics*	Valencia (UV)	2005	International studies/political sciences and public administration Sociology/Political sciences and public administration Political sciences and public administration
Pompeu Fabra (UPF)	1995	Political sciences and public administration Philosophy, politics and economics*			Law/Political sciences and public administration Sociology/Political sciences and public administration



Table 1 (continued)

University	Start	Current degrees and double degrees	University	Start	Current degrees and double degrees	
Rey Juan Carlos (URJC)	1996	Political science and public administration	Girona (UdG)	2009	Political sciences and public administration	
		International studies/political sciences and public administration				Law/Political sciences and public administration
		Political science and public administration/economics				
		Political science and public administration/journalism				
		Political sciences and public administration/law				
		Political sciences/philosophy				
		Political sciences/philosophy and economics				
		History/Political sciences				
		Law/Political sciences and public administration			2005	Law/political sciences
		Humanities/political science			2009	Political sciences and public administration
Private universities						
Internacional de Catalunya	1997	Law/Political sciences and public administration	San pablo-CEU Madrid			
		Humanities/political science	Intern. La Rioja			



Table 1 (continued)

University	Start	Current degrees and double degrees	University	Start	Current degrees and double degrees
Cardenal Herrera-CEU (Valencia)	2000	Political sciences and public administration	Deusto (Bilbao)	2018	Philosophy, politics and economics;**
		Political science/business management			Philosophy, politics and economics/inter-national trade skills
Abat Oliba CEU Barcelona	2003	Political science/journalism	IE University (Segovia)	2018	Philosophy, politics, law and economics
		Political sciences			Philosophy, politics, law and economics/data and business
Pontificia Comillas (Madrid)	2005	Law/Political Science	Francisco de Vitoria (Madrid)	2018	Philosophy, Politics and Economics
		Law/Political Sciences and Public Administration			Journalism/Philosophy, Politics and Economics
		law/philosophy, politics and economics	Navarra	2018	Philosophy, politics and economics
		Philosophy, politics and economics;**	Ramon Llull	2018	Philosophy, politics and economics;**
		Philosophy/philosophy, politics and economics			

Note: By 2020, political science units (*áreas*) can also be found in the following public universities and research centres: A) Universities: Alcalá de Henares (UAH), Alicante (UA), Almería (UAL), A Coruña (UDC), Castilla-La Mancha (UCLM), Jaén (UJA), La Laguna (ULL), Málaga (UMA), Navarra (UPN), Universidad 'Rovira i Virgili' (URV) and Vigo (UVIGO). B) Research centres (not considering those depending on specific universities): Higher Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) and Barcelona Institute of International Studies (IBEI). \*Joint degree (Autònoma de Barcelona, Autònoma Madrid, Carlos III de Madrid, Pompeu Fabra); \*\*Joint degree (Pontificia Comillas, Deusto and Ramon Llull)



incentive structure for research. The creation of new degrees and the growing number of undergraduate students (from 6631 in the academic year 1989–90 to 12,436 in 1996–97 [Jerez Mir 1999: 271]) increased the need for new teaching staff. The secular practice of university's favouring promotion from within (consolidated by the law of university reform [LRU] in 1984) (Sanz-Menéndez, Cruz-Castro and Alva 2013), pushed departments to fill positions with graduate students or staff already working at the hiring institution.

In this context, research merits and competition were only relatively important. Most young recruits usually had a limited research experience, while doctoral research training was mainly informal<sup>1</sup> and dependent on the relationship, will and capacities of the supervisor and the trainee.

Hence, tenure (a civil servant position) was awarded usually two or three years after obtaining a PhD (sometimes even less), with minimum research requirements. Usually, it sufficed to publish a book based on the PhD dissertation and, eventually, a couple of research articles, of which one could be published in a local outlet. Thereafter, research productivity incentives were weak, mostly depending on the individual's inner motivations. Besides, the possibility of academic career advancement was limited to getting a full professorship, usually in the same department, since the LRU and practices of promotion from within made mobility extremely difficult. Finally, the voluntary character of research performance assessments (Cruz-Castro and Sanz-Menéndez 2007) made it possible that an individual kept her job without showing any research activity.

This scenario reinforced another problem of the discipline in Spain, namely its limited internationalisation. Working conditions and employment practices made the Spanish university hardly attractive for foreign researchers, who were a rare exception in political science departments. Besides, though many new political scientists had some international experience as visiting researchers at foreign centres or participants in international conferences, very few had international publications, in particularly in international peer-reviewed journals. As Table 2 shows, between 1991 and 2000 only thirty-one articles were published by political scientists affiliated with Spanish institutions in journals included in the SSCI. Most research outputs were published in Spanish in one of several social science (mostly sociology) non-indexed local outlets (Jerez Mir 1999: 282).

The explanation for the limited internationalisation of Spanish political science in its first years of life relied not only in the cultural bias towards research on national politics, or the structural weakness of the Spanish education system in the teaching of foreign languages, but also on the existing incentive structure. In a nutshell, if an individual could have a successful academic career without having any international publication, why bother?

<sup>1</sup> An outstanding exception was the programme of the Centre for Advanced Social Research (CEACS) of the Juan March Foundation (Mény, 2010).





**Table 2** Internationalisation and methodological changes in Spanish political science. *Source:* Own elaboration using data from: Teseo database (<https://www.educacion.gob.es/teseo>); Web of Science database (<http://wos.icytes>)

Year period	Articles in SSCI journals									
	N	% European or International mention	% in English	% using comparative approach (**)	% focused exclusively on Spain	N	% focusing on Spain	% co-authored articles in collaboration with foreign institutions	% co-authored articles in collaboration with Spanish authors in foreign institutions	N (co-authored)
1985–1990						3	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
1991–1995	60 (*)		0.0%	6.7%	43.3%	11	9.1%	33.3%	0.0%	6
1996–2000	98		0.0%	17.3%	45.9%	20	30.0%	22.2%	0.0%	9
2001–2005	175		1.7%	17.1%	39.4%	26	23.1%	41.7%	0.0%	12
2006–2010	215	2.3%	5.6%	20.5%	39.5%	133	40.6%	43.9%	3.5%	57
2011–2015	338	11.2%	10.9%	25.4%	29.9%	283	38.2%	56.1%	15.2%	171
2016–2020	366	9.8%	13.4%	24.0%	28.1%	410	36.8%	52.8%	14.4%	284
Total	1252					886				541

The data only include those articles published in SSCI journals where at least one of the authors is based at a Spanish research institution; For 2020, the data cover until 31 October. (\*) Includes the PhD dissertations defended in 1990 (N=4); (\*\*) Comparison between countries or area studies



## Changes in the environment of Spanish political science in the 2000s

In the 2000s, the discipline continued its expansion, though at a slower pace. As of today, it is possible to study political science in 18 public universities (out of 50) and 11 private ones (out of 37). Likewise, there are departments or—more frequently—areas of political science in another eleven public universities (Table 1).

This increase in the offer of political science degrees has been mainly a consequence of the reform in the 2000s<sup>2</sup> adapting the Spanish university system to the European higher education area (Cruz-Castro and Sanz-Menéndez 2015). As in other countries (Cancela, Coelho and Ruivo 2014), the greater autonomy granted to universities by the new institutional framework allowed universities to tailor their own programmes in political science. Though most universities opted to maintain the classical approach (political science and public administration), others introduced some variations (political science and government), including double degrees with law, economics or international relations.

However, the rise in the academic offer during this century has not entailed a parallel increase in the demand for political science studies at the undergraduate level. Therefore, from 13,099 students enrolled in political science studies in the academic year 1999–2000, the number had decreased to 11,627 by 2010–11. This downward trend continued through with 10,205 political science students enrolled in 2018–19. By contrast, the number of master-level students has tripled since 2009, from a baseline of approximately 1400 postgraduates to more than 4300 in 2017–18.<sup>3</sup> This remarkable increase, which also happened in other Southern European countries like Portugal or Greece, is an indicator of stability of the discipline in the country (Iłon-szki and Roux 2019).

Despite the higher degree of autonomy fostered by the process of adaptation to the EHEA (Witte 2009) to offer innovative undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, the self-government of Spanish universities is still quite limited by regional and national regulations conditioning institutional and financial autonomy (EUA, 2017). For instance, the creation of new programmes and its periodic renovation must be authorised by the national administration, while regional governments establish the tuition fees for all academic levels, establish caps for students to be admitted in each Bachelor programme, or determine staff salaries.

Recruitment of new staff is also externally conditioned by national and regional authorities. Any new position must be previously authorised by the region. Besides, the LOU introduced in 2001 an *ex ante* quality control system on universities' academic recruitment processes, aimed at limiting practices of purely promoting staff from within. For tenured, civil servant positions, the LOU established a process of

<sup>2</sup> The reform of the university system started with the passing of the Organic Law 6/2001 of Universities (LOU), but it gained a decisive thrust in 2007 with the reform of the LOU and the Royal Decree 1393/2007, that established the organisation current higher education system.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Universities ([http://estadisticas.mecd.gob.es/EducaDynPx/educabase/index.htm?type=pcaxis&path=/Universitaria/Alumnado/Nueva\\_Estructura/Serie/GradoCiclo/&file=pcaxis](http://estadisticas.mecd.gob.es/EducaDynPx/educabase/index.htm?type=pcaxis&path=/Universitaria/Alumnado/Nueva_Estructura/Serie/GradoCiclo/&file=pcaxis)). Last available data: 2018–19 (undergraduates) and 2017–18 (graduate students).



national authorisation (*habilitación*) in the form of centralised public competitions in order to access senior civil servant positions (associate and full professor). For the rest of junior, non-civil servant positions, an accreditation process was established based on the examination of the candidates' curricula. Accreditation was initially managed by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), though later regional agencies with similar functions could issue accreditations for their territory. In 2007, the national authorisation system for senior university staff was abolished and replaced by a national accreditation process similar to that applied to non-civil servants and centralised by the ANECA.

The new recruitment system established by the LOU and its 2007 reform did not eliminate the practice of simply promoting internal staff members, as universities control the process of recruitment after accreditation. However, it probably has contributed to an increase in the average research performance of the academic staff in Spanish universities, given the special emphasis accreditation procedures put on the candidates' research merits. Thus, since the 2007 reform, the assessment of research activities in non-civil servant accreditation procedures has represented 60 percent of the final evaluation score (ANECA 2007a). In the case of civil servant positions, the respective weight was 50 per cent for associate professors and 55 percent in the case of full professors (ANECA 2008a, 2012a). In 2017, this system of weights was substituted by an even more exigent checklist of requirements (ANECA 2017a, 2019a).

Other environmental changes have also contributed to increase the pressures for improving research productivity of political scientists in Spain. As mentioned above, during the last twenty years the number of students enrolled in political science post-graduate programmes has greatly increased, something that has been reflected in a higher production of PhD graduates (see Table 2). The higher supply programmes but also the availability of national and regional funds for research training have contributed to this situation, particularly in the second half of the 2000s.

However, such increase in the number of early-stage researchers was not accompanied by a parallel growth in the number of research and academic positions. Since recruitment of new academic staff in most Spanish universities responds to changes in teaching needs at the undergraduate level, the stagnation in the growth of students during the 2000s (despite the increase in the number of public and private universities with degrees in political science) meant that the growth in the number of new positions could not accommodate the growing production of individuals with a PhD who could aspire to develop an academic career. For instance, between 2006 and October 2020, the biggest university in Spain, the Complutense of Madrid (UCM), produced 300 political science PhDs. However, in this period, the university only offered 19 positions as assistant professor (*ayudante doctor*), formally the first position in the career ladder after obtaining PhD and 16 as lecturer (*contratado doctor*), also a non-civil servant position.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, since 2010, austerity measures affecting higher education (particularly the Royal Decree 14/2012) practically froze the recruitment of new academic

---

<sup>4</sup> Data obtained from the Official Bulletin of the UCM (<https://boc.ucm.es/index.php>, accessed 13/12/2020).



staff and the advancement to tenured position of non-tenured personnel until 2015. Between 2010 and 2013, the number of researchers in the higher education sector dropped in Spain by 9.1 per cent, while it increased in the EU by 7.1 per cent. Moreover, other Southern European countries highly affected by the crisis, like Portugal or Italy, saw the number of researchers in higher education grow in those years (8.5 and 2.7 per cent, respectively).<sup>5</sup> Government spending in research and development followed a similar downward path in Spain (OECD 2020), which limited the availability of positions funded by research projects. In sum, the environmental changes occurred since the 2000s have significantly increased competition in the Spanish academic system.

Changes have also had institutional manifestations. The time-served practice of just promoting staff from within that in turns limits exposure to external competitive benchmarks, have been greatly limited. This is particularly so at the entry level, where closed competitions (those without external candidates) have become a rare thing.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, local candidates are also pressured to build competitive curricula.

On the other hand, universities and research centres have also experienced pressures to adapt to a more competitive environment. Concerning research performance, though funding from competitive projects (national, regional, or EU funded) or research contracts is still a minor part of higher education total funding (about 12 per cent in 2017) (Hernández Armenteros and Pérez García 2019), regional governments have progressively introduced funding systems for higher education institutions based on performance agreements that incorporate evaluation of research outputs.

One of the responses to this growing competitive environment affecting the Spanish academic and research system has been the internationalisation of academic and research activities.

## Internationalisation as a response to environmental changes

Internationalisation has become a key strategic aspect in national and regional R and D and I policies (see, for instance MINECO [2016]) as well as at an institutional level (Grasset 2013). It is not only linked to the enhancement of the system's scientific performance in terms of human resources, quantity, quality and relevance of research outputs but also as a response to resource scarcity in the last years, particularly via EU funds. Therefore, the returns of the participation of Spanish research institutions in the framework programmes (FP) increased from 6.7 percent in the FP5 (1998–2002), to 8.3 per cent in the FP7 (2007–2013) and 10.1 per cent in the H2020 (2014–2020) (CDTI 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Data from Eurostat (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tsc00003/default/table?lang=en>, accessed 13 December 2020).

<sup>6</sup> However, they are still frequent for tenured positions, at least in public universities. This is because these positions are usually created by universities each time an individual researcher gets the corresponding accreditation for tenured positions (associate professor and full professor) from the ANECA. Therefore, this accreditation-new position practically eliminates competition for tenured positions.



At an individual level, the reforms and environmental changes have made internationalisation a more attractive strategic goal for researchers. Internationalisation has become a key assessment criterion in competitive funding programmes (particularly those aimed at attracting talent) (Cruz-Castro and Sanz-Menéndez 2005). But it has also become a central element of career development, as it is evident from the examination of the evaluation criteria applied to individual accreditation procedures during these years. In assessing research performance, ANECA has put particular emphasis on international publications, particularly peer-reviewed journals indexed in scientific databases (ANECA 2007, 2008, 2012, 2017, 2019). In the case of the social sciences, the reference are journals indexed in the SSCI from the Web of Science (WoS) database. Other databases, such as Scopus and some national ones are also considered, but ANECA's quality criteria are mainly aligned with the WoS. For instance, as of today, in the accreditation procedure for lecturer (contratado doctor), to obtain the maximum 30 per cent attributed to research publications, candidates must have published at least two indexed articles plus four more non-indexed items (ANECA 2007a). For associate professor (professor titular), it is required at least six indexed items out of a total of 16 publications (ANECA 2019a). Other internationalisation indicators, such as books, book chapters, research stays, participation in EU projects, evaluation experience and so on are also considered, but they are not necessarily mandatory.

Therefore, it is highly likely that this incentive structure promotes internationalisation of research activities via publication in international indexed journals and that such effect is particularly evident in those areas traditionally less internationalised, as it is the case of political science. In a competitive environment, those with experience abroad and a more extensive record of international publications in high quality indexed peer-reviewed journals have a clear advantage in receiving accreditation and in competing for positions. Besides, for those unable to find a position in any national research institution, internationalisation is also valuable as it provides a way out to continue a research career abroad, usually under better working conditions than in Spain.

## Data

We rely on two main sources to analyse the internationalisation of political science in Spain during the last twenty years. First, we use data on the PhD dissertations defended in the field of political science between 1990 and 2020. PhD dissertations are the launching platform of the authors' academic careers. The choices concerning the director, topic or the design, as well as research results, may decisively influence subsequent opportunities. Therefore, we expect that the changes in Spanish political science leading to greater internationalisation are firstly observed in PhD dissertations.

The main source here is the TESEO Doctoral Thesis Database (<https://www.educacion.gob.es/teseo>), an official source supported by the Spanish Ministry of Universities. The database includes information of all PhD dissertations defended in the Spanish universities since 1976, although the information provided is more



accurate from 2007 on, after the reform of the university system. For the information previous to that year, we have complemented the information in TESEO with that provided by the DIALNET database (<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/>), which also includes information about PhD dissertations, although less complete than TESEO. In some cases, information was checked with university departments. As indicators of internationalisation we use the language in which the thesis was defended, whether the dissertation has been awarded with a European/International mention,<sup>7</sup> and if the dissertation focuses exclusively on Spain as a case study or has a comparative approach.<sup>8</sup> We also use the date of defence of the PhD dissertation to measure the authors' cohort.

The second source of information we use is the articles authored by political scientists based at Spanish research centres and institutions and published in journals indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) SSCI between 1985 and 2020 under the categories "political science" or "public administration". Sharing research outputs with the wider community of political scientists is a key indicator of internationalisation of the discipline. Besides, the importance accreditation procedures grant to indexed journals allow us to grasp the extent contextual changes in the 2000s have influenced the internationalisation of Spanish political science. We are interested in the number of articles published yearly as well as whether the articles focus on Spanish politics.<sup>9</sup> We have also recorded whether articles were co-authored with researchers at foreign institutions and the author's affiliation to study the geographical distribution of international production.

## The internationalisation of Spanish political science in the twenty-first century

Table 2 shows the changes along time of the patterns of internationalisation of political scientists in Spain across the selected indicators. First, we must note the continuous growth in the number of PhD dissertations defended, particularly in the 2010s, a sign of the reproductive success of the Spanish political science discipline, as more researchers comply with the training process that formally allows them to start an academic career path in the discipline. However, it also denotes the growing pressure at the entry level of the academic market for political scientists.

<sup>7</sup> The 'European doctor' mention was introduced in 2007 and changed in 2011 into 'International doctor' mention. The latter could be awarded to those PhD dissertations that comply with the following requirements: a) had been (at least partially) written and defended in a foreign language, b) the PhD candidate had spent at least three months during the period as graduate student in a foreign university or research centre; c) the dissertation obtained a favourable report from two researchers based at foreign academic institutions; and d) one of the members of the doctoral commission belonged to a foreign academic centre. In the European doctor mention, the foreign institutions and researchers should belong to EU countries.

<sup>8</sup> This has been obtained from the abstract and keywords in the corresponding TESEO record.

<sup>9</sup> In our operationalisation (based on a search in the 'abstract' field of the terms 'Spain' and 'Spanish'), articles focusing on Spain can also include comparison with other countries.



Looking at internationalisation patterns, we observe in Table 2 that, in general, training processes have become more internationalised in the last two decades, particularly since 2010. However, the landscape of research training in political science has not been radically altered. Thus, only a minority of the total PhD dissertations in the last twenty years was written in English—notwithstanding a significant change compared with the figures twenty years before. Besides, there is a similar proportion of dissertations awarded with an “International mention” in the period 2010–2020.

We also find a significant increase in the proportion of PhD dissertations adopting a comparative approach (25 percent in the last decade, in contrast to 13 percent between 1990 and 2000). The columns in Table 2 referred to articles published in SSCI journals are even more telling about the internationalisation of Spanish political science in the last two decades. The number of articles including authors from Spanish institutions published in SSCI journals has increased from only 31 in the whole period before 2001, to 410 just in the last five years. Besides, in the last decade more than a half of the articles were the result of collaboration with researchers from foreign institutions. In this respect, most international collaborations include foreign researchers, while only a minority (about 15 percent since 2011) are articles co-authored with Spanish researchers working at foreign research institutions.

If we examine authorships (that is, every time an individual appears as author),<sup>10</sup> we observe that the percentage of authors focusing on Spanish politics has decreased across cohorts (that is, depending on when they obtained their PhD degree). Thus, in cohorts before 2000, about 46 per cent published in articles focusing on Spain. The corresponding figures for the 2001–2010 and 2011–2020 cohorts were, respectively, 41.3 and 38.8 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

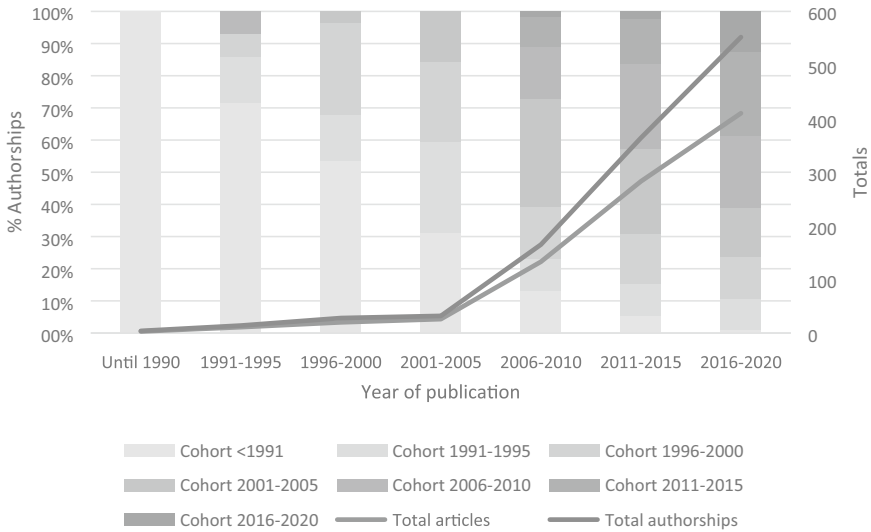
These data draw attention to the likely differential effect that institutional reforms and environmental changes affecting academic incentive structures during the 2000s may have had over internationalisation patterns. In fact, Fig. 1 shows how more recent cohorts account for a higher proportion of the authorships in the last two decades—the period where we have detected a boost in the number of articles published. Therefore, more than two thirds of the authorships of all articles published in SSCI journals since 1985 correspond to individuals who defended their PhD dissertations after 2000. If we consider specific publication periods, members of these younger cohorts account for 60 percent of authorships of articles published between 2006 and 2010, 70 percent in the period 2011 and 2015 and 77 in between 2016 and 2020.

Concerning variation in research internationalisation patterns across organisations, Fig. 2 shows the disparities existing between universities when looking at PhD dissertations. We observe that, of the five universities accounting for about 70 percent of all PhD graduates in political science since 1990 (UCM, UAB, UAM, USAL and UPF), dissertations in English have experienced a significant increase in the last two decades in the UAB, the UAM and, particularly, in the UPF, where they

<sup>10</sup> The total number of authorships considered is 1219. We have excluded authorships from individuals with no PhD by 2020, non-political scientists and political scientists based at foreign institutions.

<sup>11</sup> The relationship is statistically significant (Chi-square test) at  $p < 0.08$ .





Note: The data only include those articles published in SSCI journals where at least one of the authors is based at a Spanish research institution had a PhD in 2020. The vertical axis refers to the percentage of ‘authorships’, defined as each time a political scientist working in a centre located in Spain appears as first, second, third or fourth author. Therefore, the figures do not count those authors based at foreign institutions. The figure does not consider either authors without a PhD dissertation. The horizontal axis represents the author’s cohort, defined in function of the year when she obtained her PhD degree.

**Fig. 1** Authorships of articles published in SSCI journals by year of publication and cohort. *Source:* Own elaboration using data from the Web of Science database (<http://wos.fecyt.es>)

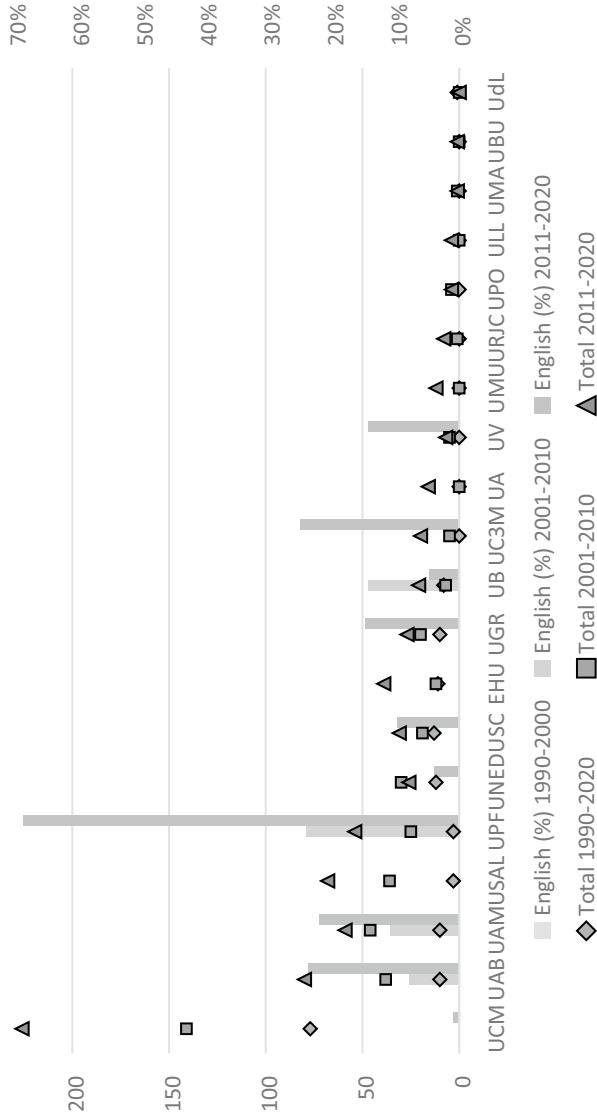
constituted 68.5 per cent of the theses defended since 2011. In contrast, in the UCM, which accounts one third of all PhD dissertations produced since 2001, only two have been written in English. In the case of the USAL, with a highly international PhD programme on Latin American studies, four of them have been presented in Portuguese since 2001. In the rest, English PhD dissertations are anecdotal or, in most cases, inexistent.

With respect to the PhD dissertations using a comparative approach, they are a small minority in most universities. We must mention two exceptions. One is the UPF, where they represent about 45 percent of all dissertations defended since 2001, with no significant changes between decades. The other is the USAL, where the specialised character of its PhD programme makes that comparative dissertations represent 65% of all dissertations (68) defended in the last decade.

Moving to the internationalisation of publications across centres, Fig. 3 condensates information showing publication of articles in SSCI journals by period and







Note: The point marks refer to the total number of dissertations by university in the corresponding period/cohort (left axis). The columns refer to the percentage of PhD dissertations written in English by period/cohort (right axis).

Fig. 2 Language of PhD dissertations by university and cohort. *Source:* Own elaboration using data from the Tesseo database (<https://www.educacion.gob.es/tesseo>)



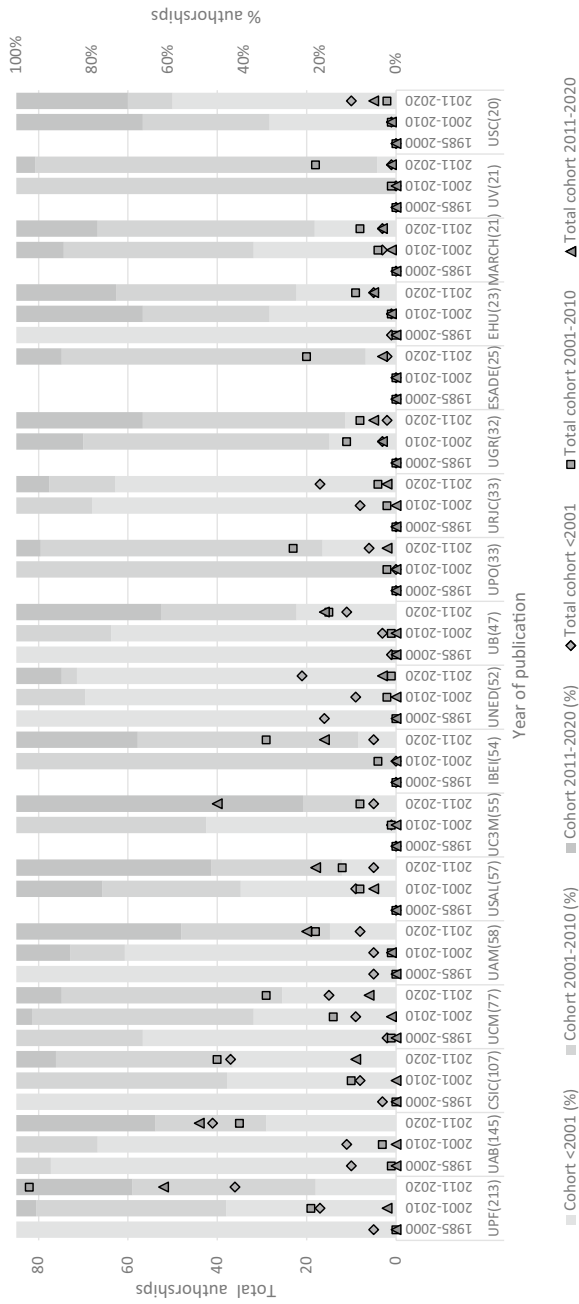
cohort. We observe that there is a high degree of correspondence between the most productive universities and the production of PhD dissertations, though not exactly in the same order. Therefore, two Catalan universities (UPF and UAB) lead the ranking, followed at some distance by the Spanish centre of scientific research (CSIC) and the UCM. We also find a second level of centres with a substantive production of more than fifty articles in the whole period (UAM, USAL, UC3M and UNED). It is remarkable how most of those more productive centres (with the exception of Salamanca) are located either in Madrid or Barcelona, as well as other centres in the right half of the figure (UB, URJC and two private centres, ESADE and the CEACS from the Juan March Foundation). The rest corresponds to established departments of political science in public universities in peripheral regions (Andalusia, Basque Country and Galicia). The other seventeen centres not included in Fig. 3 account for a total of 85 authorships in the whole period (75 in the period 2011–2020 and 9 between 2001 and 2010).

Figure 3 also shows the growing pattern of internationalised production along time found in most of centres (the only exception is the UNED), with the highest peaks concentrated in the period 2011–2020. The most remarkable case is that of the UPF, where authorships jumped from 38 in the 2000s (only 10 between 2001 and 2005) to 170 in the 2010s. A similar pattern of exponential acceleration of international production in the 2010s appears in the UAB (11 authorships up until 2000, 14 in the 2000s and 120 in the 2010s), the CSIC (3, 18 and 86, respectively) and, less pronounced in other centres (UC3M, IBEI, UAM, UB, or even the UCM).

The prominence of younger cohorts (those having obtained their PhD since 2001) in the internationalisation of Spanish political science in the last decade is also evident in Fig. 3. However, patterns vary across universities. For instance, in the UPF, international publications in the last twenty years have been led by individuals of the 2001–2005 cohort. The same applies to the CSIC, UCM, URJC and UGR. In these cases, the productivity of this cohorts (or some members therein) seems not having been affected by the process of career advancement. In the IBEI, UPO, EHU, UV and the MARCH-CEACS the leadership is exerted by individuals from the 2006–10 cohort. In other centres we observe that there is some kind of “generational renewal”, with usually younger cohorts overtaking in productivity to older ones in the last decade. This has occurred in the UAM, UAB, USAL, UC3M, UNED and the UV.

Finally, Fig. 4 illustrates that though there is a correlation between the size of the institution and the number of articles published, productivity highly varies and is not dependent on the size of the faculty. Hence, the UCM (with the largest number of political scientists in its staff) demonstrates a relatively low productivity (each member in their three departments published an average of about 0.4 articles in SSCI journals between 2016 and 2020). In contrast, Fig. 4 shows the high productivity of the UAB and the UPF, where their members published, on average, 2.8 and 2.4 articles, respectively. Among the bigger departments or institutional units, high productivities are also observed in the CSIC, IBEI, UC3M; and of the smallest institutional units (left panel in Fig. 4), we must remark the cases of the UV (2.4 articles per member), the UPO or the USAL. In the case of the micro-units (less than 5 members), some also show high productivities (UAL, UDC, UDG).

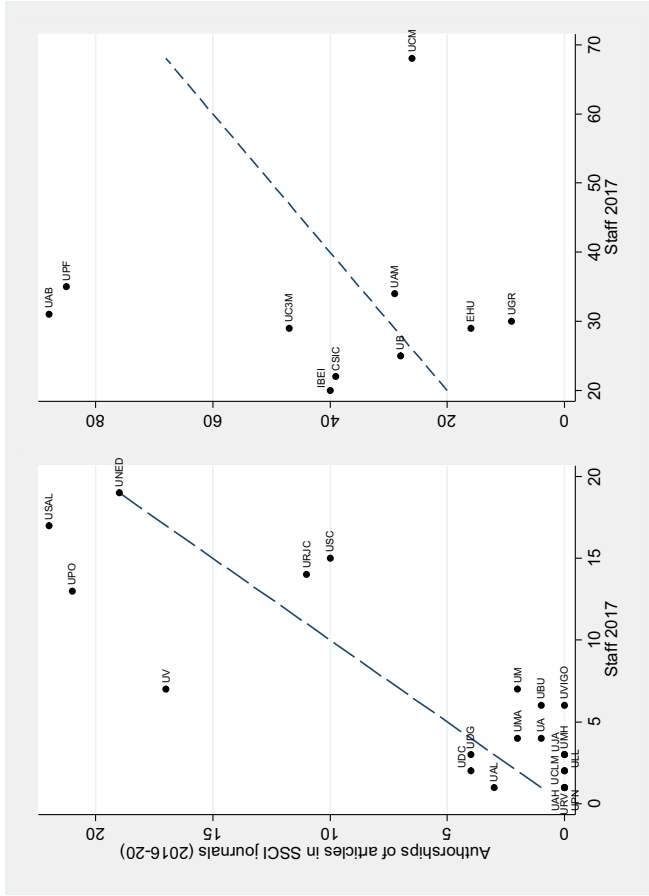




**Fig. 3** SSCI article authorships by centre, period of publication and cohort (1985–2020). *Note:* Centres with 20 or more authorships in the whole period. The point marks refer to the total number of authorships by university in the corresponding period/cohort (left axis). The columns in parentheses represent the total authorships by period/cohort (right axis). The figures in parentheses represent the total authorships by university.

*Source:* Own elaboration using data from the Web of Science database (<http://wos.fecyt.es>)





Note: Only public universities and research centres. The staff does not include part-time positions (*profesores asociados*) and temporal replacements. The dashed lines represent the ratio 1:1.

**Fig. 4** Scatterplot of number of authorships in SSCI journals (2016–20) and political science staff by centre in 2017. *Source:* Own elaboration using data from the Web of Science database (<http://wos.fecytes>)

## **Conclusion. The international convergence of Spanish political science**

The previous analysis has described how in the last twenty years Spanish political science has greatly increased its internationalisation, particularly in terms of their presence in international peer-reviewed journals, where they can share their research with wider audiences. Therefore, if the 1980s and 1990s were the years of the institutional consolidation of the discipline, the 2000s and 2010s have been the years of convergence and integration in a wider international political science community.

Such convergence is manifested, first, in the preference of a growing proportion of the Spanish political science community for sharing the results of their research through their publication in international peer-reviewed journals, a quite rare practice twenty-five years ago. This process is similar to what has occurred in other countries where political science experienced a late institutionalisation, such as Italy (Plümper and Radaelli 2004; Capano and Verzichelli 2016).

Convergence induced by publishing in peer-reviewed journals entails several implications for the domestic community. One is normative, since it implies the acceptance of methodological, quality and other procedural standards abided by the wider international community. Convergence has also had implications for higher education institutions, since international publication has been accompanied by a greater involvement of individuals and research centres in international networks, as the significant growth in the proportion of articles co-authored with foreign researchers indicates.

Convergence, however, does not mean assimilation nor loss of identity of the political science community in Spain. In terms of research topics, we have shown that internationalisation does not necessarily imply abandoning the traditional focus on Spanish politics, though there is an increasing interest in expanding their interest beyond the national turf—a trend also present in other countries experiencing similar processes (Camerlo and Terra 2018). However, it would be desirable that both areas of research would develop simultaneously and hand in hand. The international relevance of Spanish politics studies might be enhanced by its connection to a wider comparative framework.

Convergence has also affected professional reproduction patterns, though in a lesser extent. Still, only a minority of dissertations receive International mentions or, more importantly, are written in English, in contrast with what is happening in other non-speaking European countries (PROSEPS 2019). We have also witnessed a slight trend among recent cohorts of PhD graduates to avoid focusing exclusively on Spanish politics.

This international convergence has taken place in the context of institutional reforms and external events affecting the Spanish systems of higher education and science. Surely, they are not the only factor that explains the internationalisation and growing productivity of Spanish political science. It also may come from institutional and cultural maturation leading to a progressive departure of younger generations from habits and practices existing when the discipline was still embryonic (Matthies and Torca 2019). In this respect, specific individual experiences abroad or



institutional projects such as the CEACS' graduate programme in the 1990s might have made new generations aware of how political science was done abroad and set the path for convergence in values and practices in Spanish political science.

However, the data suggest that cultural and institutional maturation (where existed) was accelerated by institutional and environmental factors. The accreditation system inaugurated in 2002, with its emphasis on international research and the scarcity of positions (particularly at the entry level) in the 2010s motivated younger cohorts of political scientists to adapt their research strategies, which included to prioritise international publications, particularly in indexed peer-reviewed journals.

Our analysis also suggests that this general picture—growing internationalisation of research and convergence of Spanish political science, boosted by younger cohorts of political scientists—has different shades when we look into the details. Growing internationalisation has affected most political science units. The bulk of the convergence is associated with a few hubs in Barcelona and Madrid (except for the USAL). The case of the centres in Barcelona (UPF and UAB) probably reveals the importance of the promotion since the early 2000s of institutional cultures within these departments that prioritise competitiveness and internationalisation, in line with the scientific policies in this respect developed by the Catalan government (Mas i Colell 2003; GroupConnectEU-SSH 2012; Martorell and Castellà 2013). In the case of the UC3M and Salamanca, they have also implemented active policies for the attraction of talent and international students and scholars and increasing faculty excellency.

In contrast, many other higher education institutions are impervious to internationalisation of publications. These are most small departmental areas in the territorial periphery of the country (this being defined as everything outside Madrid or Barcelona). And, finally, there is also an important fraction of Spanish political science units (some of them in metropolitan areas) where international scientific productivity is probably far below their potential. This suggests that these centres still lack a consolidated institutional culture about the convergence of research with international standards and that signs of internationalisation are mostly the result of the efforts of specific individuals, mostly from younger cohorts. Subsequent work should try to shed light on these different patterns and why these differences across organisation exist.

In conclusion, Spanish political science today is very much different to what it was twenty years ago. External institutional changes have affected individual and institutional behaviours, opening the doors for new normative understandings about the workings of the profession and its convergence with the international community. Yet internationalisation and convergence are still nascent in other aspects, particularly concerning the attraction of foreign talent and the reincorporation of brain-drain expats (issues that are not exclusive of the political science discipline). National and regional governments have made in the form of different talent attraction programmes. However, to potentiate a more intense international convergence of political science in Spain, as it has occurred in the area of publication, wider institutional and structural reforms are required aimed at increasing the openness and improving job conditions in the Spanish academic market.



## References

- ANECA. 2007. *Programa PEP: Principios y Orientaciones Para la Aplicación de Los Criterios de Evaluación*. Madrid: ANECA.
- ANECA (2007b) Principios y orientaciones [online]. Principios y orientaciones. Available from: <http://www.aneca.es/Programas-de-evaluacion/Evaluacion-de-profesorado/PEP/Documentos-de-ayuda>.
- ANECA. 2008. *Programa Academia: Principios y orientaciones para la aplicación de los criterios de evaluación*. Madrid: ANECA.
- ANECA (2008b) Principios y orientaciones [online]. Principios y orientaciones. Available from: <http://www.aneca.es/Programas-de-evaluacion/Evaluacion-de-profesorado/PEP/Documentos-de-ayuda>.
- ANECA (2012a) Programa Academia: Principios y orientaciones 2.0, Madrid: ANECA.
- ANECA (2012b) Principios y orientaciones 2.0 [online]. Principios y orientaciones 2.0. Available from: <http://www.aneca.es/Programas-de-evaluacion/Evaluacion-de-profesorado/PEP/Documentos-de-ayuda/Principios-y-orientaciones-para-la-aplicacion-de-los-criterios-de-evaluacion>
- ANECA (2017a) Criterios de Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas. Criterios de evaluación (noviembre 2017).
- ANECA (2017b) Criterios de evaluación [online]. Criterios de evaluación. Available from: <http://www.aneca.es/Programas-de-evaluacion/Evaluacion-de-profesorado/ACADEMIA/Criterios-de-evaluacion-noviembre-2017>.
- ANECA (2019a) Criterios de Ciencias sociales y Jurídicas. Criterios de Evaluación (diciembre 2019).
- ANECA (2019b) Criterios de evaluación [online]. Criterios de evaluación. Available from: <http://www.aneca.es/Programas-de-evaluacion/Evaluacion-de-profesorado/ACADEMIA/Criterios-Dicmbre-2019>.
- Camerlo, M., and D. Terra. 2018. 'Portuguese political science in Portugal and abroad: Publications in major journals (1999–2014)'. *European Political Science* 17: 77–92.
- Cancela, J., T.D. Coelho, and J.P. Ruivo. 2014. Mapping political research in Portugal: Scientific articles in national academic journals (2000–2012). *European Political Science* 13 (4): 56.
- Capano, G., and L. Verzichelli. 2016. Looking for eclecticism? structural and contextual factors underlying political science's relevance gap: Evidence from the Italian case. *European Political Science* 15 (2): 69.
- CDTI. 2020. *Resultados Provisionales de la Participación Española en Horizonte 2020 (2014–2019) (30 June 2020)*. Madrid: Ministry of Science and Innovation.
- Cruz-Castro, L., and L. Sanz-Menéndez. 2005. Bringing science and technology human resources back in: The Spanish Ramón y Cajal programme. *Science and Public Policy* 32 (1): 39–53.
- Cruz-Castro, L., and L. Sanz-Menéndez. 2007. Research Evaluation in Transition: Individual versus organizational Assessment in Spain. In *The Changing Governance of the Sciences: The Advent of Research Evaluation Systems*, ed. R. Whiteley and J. Gläser, 205–223. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Cruz-Castro, L., and L. Sanz-Menéndez. 2015. Policy change and differentiated integration: Implementing Spanish higher education reforms. *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 11 (1): 103–123.
- EUA Spain. 2017. University Autonomy in Europe III. Country Profiles Brussels: European University Association.
- Grasset, C. 2013 Internationalization Rationales, Obstacles and Drivers: A Multiple Case Study of Spanish Higher Education Institutions, University of Minnesota.
- Graziano, L. 1991. The Development and Institutionalization of Political Science in Italy. In *The Development of Political Science*, ed. David Easton, et al., 127–146. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- GroupConnectEU-SSH. 2012. Strategic Research Agenda in Social Science and Humanities ([https://www.upf.edu/documents/3207907/3241356/Strategic\\_Agenda\\_SSH.pdf](https://www.upf.edu/documents/3207907/3241356/Strategic_Agenda_SSH.pdf)). Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra/Group Connect-EU.
- Hernández Armenteros, J., and J.A. Pérez García. 2019. *La Universidad Española en Cifras, 2017/18*. Madrid: CRUE.
- Ilonszki, G., and C. Roux. 2019. *Report of Working Group 1 "The State of Political Science in Europe."* Bologna: PROSEPS COST Action.
- Jerez, M., and J. Luque. 2016. Treinta años de ciencia política en España: Profesionalización, expansión y ajuste. *Revista Espanola de Ciencia Política* 1 (40): 72.
- Jerez Mir, M. 1999. *Ciencia Política: Un balance de fin de siglo*. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales.



- Jerez Mir, M. 2010. The Institutionalization of Political Science: the Case of Spain. In *Spain in América*, ed. G. Castro and J. De Miguel, 281–329. Madrid: Fundación ENDESA/Ministerio de Educación.
- Martorell, J.M., and A. Castellà. 2013. Política catalana de I+D: desafíos y oportunidades para salir de la crisis. *Presupuesto y Gasto Público* 72 (3): 127–143.
- Mas I Colell, A. 2003. The European pathways of Catalonia: Research. *Contributions to Science* 2 (3): 381–387.
- Matthies, H., and M. Torka. 2019. Academic Habitus and Institutional Change: Comparing Two Generations of German Scholars. *Minerva* 57 (3): 345–371.
- Mény, Y. 2010. Political science as a profession. *European Political Science* 9 (S1): 11–21.
- MINECO. 2016. *Plan Estatal de investigación científica y técnica y de innovación 2017–2020*. Madrid: Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad.
- Morlino, L. 1991. Political science in Italy: tradition and empiricism. *European Journal of Political Research* 20 (3–4): 341–358.
- OECD. 2020. *Gross domestic spending on R&D*. France: OECD Main Science and Technology Indicators.
- Plümper, T., and C.M. Radaelli. 2004. Publish or perish? Publications and citations of Italian political scientists in international political science journals, 1990–2002. *Journal of European Public Policy* 11 (6): 1112–1127.
- PROSEPS (2019) *The State of Political Science in Europe* [online]. Retrieved from <http://proseps.unibo.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Working-Group-1-Report-The-State-of-Political-Science.pdf>.
- Sanz-Menéndez, L., L. Cruz-Castro, and K. Alva. 2013. Time to Tenure in Spanish Universities: An Event History Analysis. *PLoS ONE* 8 (10): 1–18.
- Vallès, J.M. 2002. Ciencia política. In *Les idees i els dies*, ed. P.L. Font, 311–327. Barcelona: Proa.
- Vallès, J.M. 2020. *¿Para qué servimos los politólogos?* Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata.
- Witte, J. 2009. Parallel Universes and Common Themes: Reforms of Curricular Governance in The Bologna Context [online]. In *European Integration and the Governance of Higher Education and Research*, ed. A. Amaral, G. Neave, C. Musselin, and P. Maassen, 227–255. Netherlands: Springer.

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

**Manuela Ortega Ruiz** is an assistant professor at the University of Jaén, Spain. Her research interests focus on the political leadership in the Spanish contemporary history and the political thought. She co-edited the book *Sobre Política* (Comares, 2018), and she is the author (with Javier Luque) of “Reforming the core executive to undermine the influence of the minister of Finance? A case study from Spain: the first Zapatero government (2004–2008)”, *International Journal of Iberian Studies* (forthcoming).

**José Real-Dato** is an associate professor at the University of Almería. His current research focuses on the role of political elites in the incorporation of specialised knowledge into the policy process and political elites’ attitudes towards the EU. He has also recently published (with Aleksandra Sojka) “The Rise of (Faulty) Euroscepticism? The Impact of a Decade of Crises in Spain”, *South European Society and Politics*, published online: 30 June 2020, DOI: 10.1080/13608746.2020.1771876.

**Miguel Jerez Mir** is professor at the Department of Political Science and Public Policy of the University of Granada and responsible for the Andalusian Research Group in Political Science. His main research interest topics are political elites and history of political science. He is author (with Juan Rodríguez Teruel) of “The Selection and Deselection of Technocratic Ministers in Democratic Spain”, in António Costa Pinto, Maurizio Cotta and Pedro Tavares de Almeida (eds.) *Technocratic Ministers and Political Leadership in European Democracies*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

