



Journal of Peace Research
A quantitative and qualitative research
2007-2012
Amarins Hielkema

This review is part of the Journal Review project of the research-master Modern History and International Relations (MHIR) at the University of Groningen. For more information, visit www.rug.nl/research/MHIR-journalreview



Contents

1. General information.....	3
Published and ranked	3
Editing process.....	3
Scope of JPR.....	4
2. Edited.....	6
Editorial board	6
International advisory board	8
3. Authors	9
University and institute countries	9
Department.....	10
PRIO	12
4. Content.....	14
Regions discussed	14
Subjects	15
Bias and PRIO influence.....	20
Trending topics	21
Peace relevancy? From a historian’s point of view	24
Article of the year	27
5. In depth: polarization.....	29
Conclusion	32
References.....	34

Introduction

*'A people free to choose, will always choose peace.'*¹

Ronald Reagan

Whether or not a people would choose peace if they were free to choose, fact is, that conflicts and wars do occur. In this article I have studied the Journal of Peace Research (JPR) over the five past years. The Journal of Peace Research was founded in 1964 in cooperation with the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). As a historian I was triggered by the challenge to choose a journal that puts its focus on international relations rather than on history. The title of the journal caught my interest. What would be the aim of this journal? Peace?

In a nutshell, the main scope for JPR is to be a global, interdisciplinary journal that can contribute to peace practice by adding new knowledge. I have structured this essay by exploring to what extent JPR's achieved these aims. By addressing the editorial board, the authors, and the content, I have examined each aim over the past five years. Special attention I put on the impact of PRIO as this institute is JPR's co-founder. To get a good overview of the journal and its making process, I start with some general information on the publisher, ranking and the scope of the journal. I continue with explaining the editing process.

In the second part, I will elaborate on the scope of the journal. To explore to what extent its aims, being global, interdisciplinary and relevant for peace search, are achieved, I start with analyzing how global and interdisciplinary the editorial board is. Next, I address how these findings relate to the choice of authors and the content of the journal, by first turning to the authors of the articles published. The university background and department of study of editors and authors will be analysed in both sections, concluding with some notes on what impact this may have on the content of the journal. Subsequently, I move to analyzing the 'global and interdisciplinary rate' in the content of articles. First, I show the geographical areas covered by JPR and secondly, the categories represented. In order to examine if there are certain developments visible that may bring JPR closer to its proclaimed aims, the section on categories is expanded by an analysis of the 'trending topics' in JPR during these five years.

The third of these aims, the 'peace search relevancy', poses us for a complicated question. It is extremely complex to assess how these articles may have contributed in conflict

¹ R. Reagan, Speech at Moscow State University (31 May 1988).



situations. Due to constricted time and therefore limited research possibilities, I have not examined the relevancy by a quantitative method, but I make some notes on why the peace relevancy may be rather restricted, exploring the articles from a more meta historian point of view. In the following paragraph the ‘articles of the year’ are being analyzed, providing insight in what JPR considers to be high quality and how these articles correspond with JPR’s scope of being innovative.

Up to this point we have discussed JPR from a rather global, generalizing level, which demands a shift to study JPR as well on a more profound micro-level. Therefore, I then present a short in-depth study on the topic ‘polarization’, connecting this debate again to the foregoing conclusions on JPR. I finalize with a conclusion in which my main research questions will be answered: is JPR a global, interdisciplinary journal that adds new, relevant knowledge for peace search?

1. General information

Published and ranked

The Journal of Peace Research (JPR) is a journal of scholarly work in peace research. It is published by SAGE publishers, an international publisher of journals, books, and electronic media. The journal was founded by the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, who was also founder of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in 1959. This is a non-profit research institution, that conducts research on the conditions for peaceful relations between states, groups and people.² In cooperation with PRIO Galtung set up this first academic journal in peace studies and in 1964, the first edition of the Journal of Peace Research appeared. It started with three issues a year, counting about 250 pages in total. By now, it has expanded to a bimonthly journal, with around 800 pages per year. Every issue contains about 6 to 10 articles, on average 15 book reviews and 1 or 2 pages of received books.³ In the volumes of 2010 and 2011 there was an extra section for ‘Special Data Feature’.

In the Red Jasper ranking of journals in International Relations 2010 JPR was sixth in line. The most recent ranking of Thompson Reuters however did not even include JPR in the top 10. Over the period 2001 to 2008 it recorded an impact factor of 3,42 based on citation quote, resulting in a number seven grading. From 1981 to 2001 it a scored number eight position, with an impact factor of 6,43.⁴ Although it is questionable if one could really assess an ‘impact factor’ on the basis of citations or whether a journal could be ranked at all, it does tell at least something about its position and status in the international research field. Being in the top ten means international recognition and a high standard. Comparing JPR with other journals in peace and conflict studies, it is only the Journal of International Security and the Journal of Conflict Resolution that were ranked higher in the past years.⁵

Editing process

JPR is a double blind reviewed journal. The reviewer has the possibility to reveal his name to the author in his review, but the standard procedure is for both to remain anonymous. It is

² <http://www.prio.no/>; visited on 31-3-2012.

³ In my research I have not included book reviews for they only form a very small part of the issue, about 5 to 10 pages out of 120 to 140 per issue.

⁴ http://sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/09/sep13-09_1/; visited on 1-4-2012.

⁵ Ibidem.

explicitly stated that double submissions, submissions of old work or slightly changed, earlier articles is not accepted. Occasionally, articles will be accepted that are extracts from books published at the same time, as well as articles which have appeared in other languages, but I have not come across any of these in one of the past five volumes. Articles should be written in English, although in some cases an exception can be made to translate the article. The maximum amount of words is 10,000, which is the same as other comparable journals such as the Journal of Conflict Studies.

Scope of JPR

To study the background of this journal, I started out reading the editorial of 1964, since this was the only editorial that JPR has ever seen since. It was argued in here that any article afterwards should speak for itself.

In the editorial the following is stated: *'Man can now be seen as fighting against the strong forces driving him towards the GCW (General and Complete War) corner. He makes fumbling steps forwards, he slips and rolls back, then forwards again: it may be disputed whether he progresses much at all.'*⁶ Will man make any progress at all? It was not the kind of optimistic peace talk that I had presumed to be in this journal. However, the editorial continues to argue that this is not a reason to believe that research on this topic has no value. Its scope is even quite pretentious: peace research should be peace search. So the idealist part is in there, but this does not block the road to a realistic approach.⁷

Very clear is the way peace research should be done. That is, *the way* does not exist. The editor explicitly emphasizes that peace research is international and interdisciplinary, for *'it is concerned with the human condition all over the world, and this should be reflected in a geographical and disciplinary distribution of topics, authors and research teams. To exclude a discipline a priori, even to say that 'peace research is mainly a question of studies in international relations', may impair the free search for the relevant.'*⁸ According to the editor, the interdisciplinary working method that peace research requires, does not fit into the existing 'institutional borderlines and mental compartments' of scholars. Hence, scholars should cross these borders to achieve the interdisciplinary platform from which peace

⁶ Editorial, *Journal of Peace Research* 1 (1964) 3.

⁷ Editorial, *Journal of Peace Research* 1 (1964) 4.

⁸ *Ibidem*.



research could be done. Second, the author argues that topics as well as authors ought to be geographically distributed.

The article continues in a more combative way than one would expect in a journal on peace: *“It does not limit us to research on peace - health can only be understood against a background of illness. Nor does it limit us to peaceful means, although we would focus on them.”*⁹

Nor does the journal focus on one methodology in the articles that are to be published. Again, an interdisciplinary method is recommended. Statistics, mathematics and other methods should all be included. Merely conceptual discussions, authors that add nothing new to existing theory or without propositions for the future, ought to be avoided. Preferably, articles should have relevance for peace policy and emphasize what the new knowledge means for peace policy.

Clearly, JPR had an interdisciplinary, global, innovative and peace policy focused approach from the outset. In this essay I only study the last five years of the JPR, but according to its official website, the goals from 1964 have more or stood the test of time. It is still described as an interdisciplinary journal with a global focus on peace, in which articles that try to find new ways to peace are favoured.

⁹ Ibidem, 5.

2. Edited

From the general information on JPR about its publisher, editorial process and scope, we move on to the composition of the editorial board. The main questions are to what extent this can be called an international and interdisciplinary board.

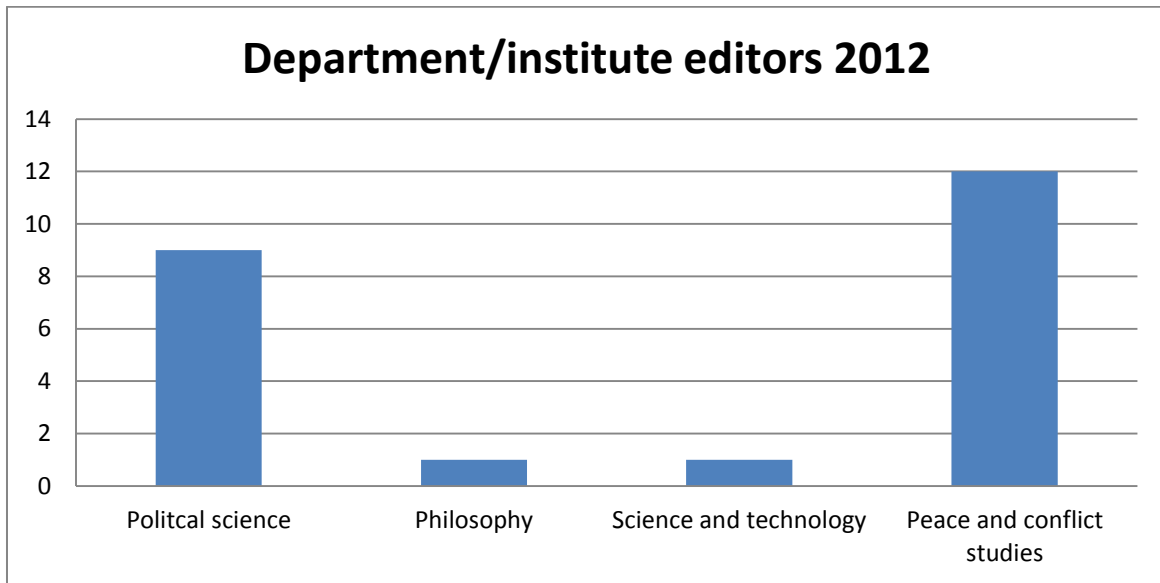
Editorial board

As founder Johan Galtung was a sociologist, this seems to have had its impact on the first volumes of JPR. Glancing through these starting years, titles such as ‘A Structural Theory of Aggression’, ‘Foreign Policy Opinion as a Function of Social Position’ and ‘Notes On Social Science Principles for World Law and Order’ are not unusual and seem to confirm the more sociologist stamp he put on the journal. Also, the urge for JPR to be an interdisciplinary review, originates from this period. Johan Galtung has been described as a ‘founding father’ of peace and conflict studies in the early 1960s. Peace research was introduced as a new field of study in which all other disciplines, such as technological, economic, political and legal studies, could contribute. In the passing of time, this interdisciplinary urge has lessened as peace and conflict studies were more and more incorporated as a branch of political science.

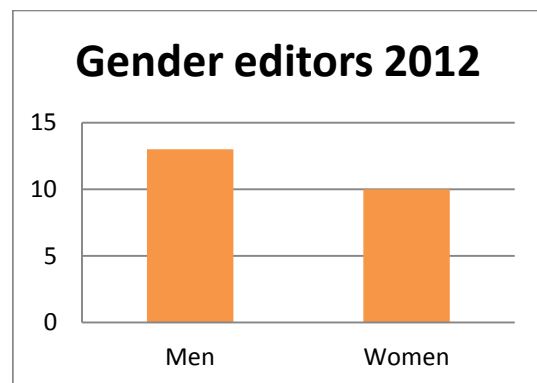
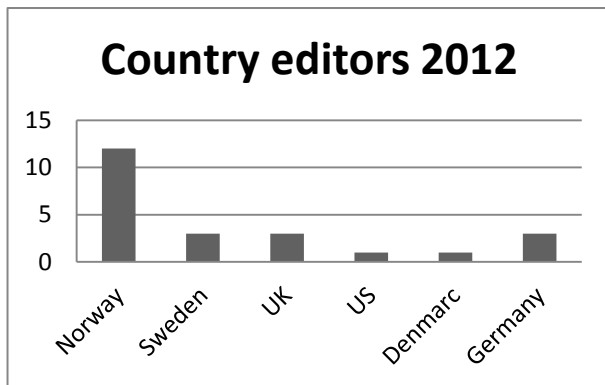
From 1983 to 2010 sociologist, political scientist and former director of PRIO (in 1972 and 1977-78) Nils Petter Gleditsch took over Galtungs editorship. Although I cannot speak for all of the issues in these years, my research outcomes do prove that in the last five volumes JPR has become a journal dominated by political science scholars. In 2010 political scientist and senior researcher at PRIO, Henrik Urdal became chief editor of JPR, but it is hard to assess his influence so far. However, very clearly can be concluded that PRIO has had a great influence on JPR in choosing the editors and authors, but on this I will further elaborate in the paragraph on content.

Although SAGE is an American publisher the editorial board, consisting of 24 people, it is dominated by its Scandinavian roots.¹⁰ The following circle diagrams show the university departments or institute, country and gender of the editors.

¹⁰ By editorial board I mean the chief editor, the managing, viewpoint, book review and associate editors and the editorial committee.



11



The graphs above show that the average editorial board member is a male from Norway specialized in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies or Political Sciences. The high rate of Peace and Conflict editors is to a large extent determined by scholars connected to PRIO. 14 out of the 23 board members come from the PRIO. This high score of PRIO associates within the board and the influence of this institute should be taken into account while studying the journal. It also explains the high number of Norwegian editors, as PRIO is an institute founded and located in Oslo. The second largest contributors for the editorial board are Sweden, the UK and Germany.

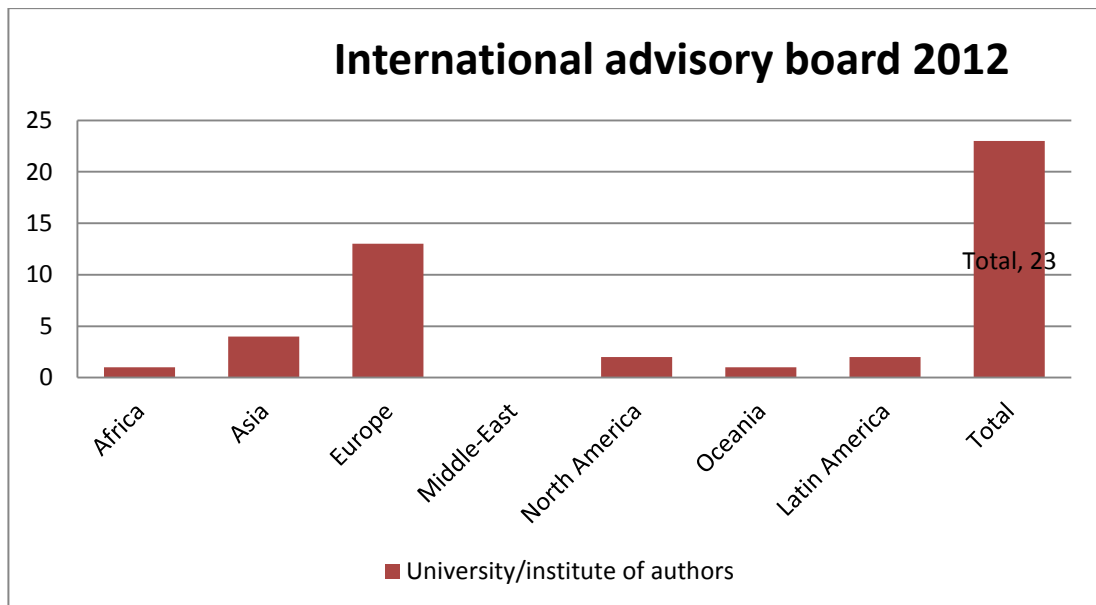
We can conclude that the editorial board is not very interdisciplinary, nor globally distributed.

¹¹ It should be noted here that some people have two positions, for example PRIO and Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo. I have put these exceptions in both of the categories.

International advisory board

To assist this editorial board there is an international advisory committee composed of scholars located all over the world. Since the international advisory board is usually not involved in the daily editing process, I have not included these data in the editorial board counting. However, the advisory board often does function as a ‘window dressing’ for a journal. The main image JPR appears to carry out to the world with the composition of this board, is their global focus, as it includes scholars from almost every continent. But more important, the great number of European scholars seems to function as a counterweight to the American hegemony in the international research field.

In the following paragraph on authors I will examine to what extent these proportions are reflected in the range of authors writing for JPR.

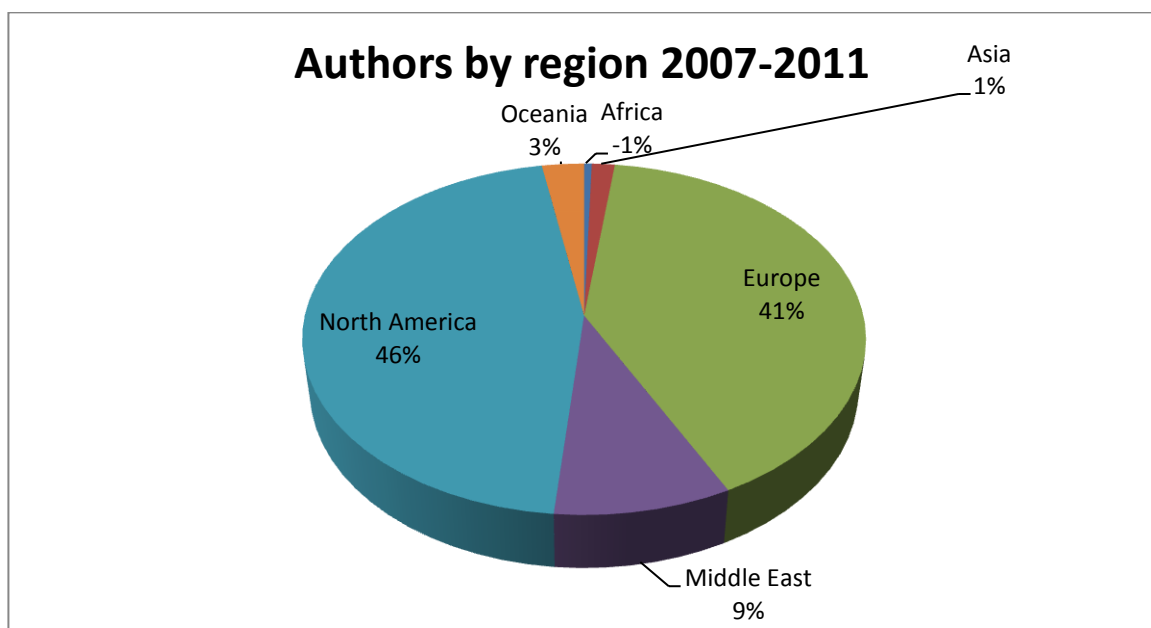


3. Authors

From the editorial board we move on to the authors, focussing on the question if they deserve the interdisciplinary and global label that JPR strives to achieve. In the circle diagram below the research results of the 400 authors during five years JPR are shown.¹²

University and institute countries

To make the overview easier to compare, I merged countries to areas, usually determined by continent. However, for the Middle East I made an exception for I believe it would not cover the cultural and social differences if I had ranged Israel in Asia or Egypt in Africa. For the same reason, I have chosen Latin America instead of South America, so Mexico, which is geographically in North America, could be counted in this category.¹³



¹² Some notes on the research procedure should be made in advance. Authors have been counted by their university and not by their origins or residence country during the writing of the article. This approach has been chosen because the university or institute one works for is often more relevant than where someone originally grew up, or lived while doing his or her research. That is complemented by a practical aspect, for it is very often very hard to find out where an author has lived while writing an article. By examining the university or institute countries I am aware of the bias I put on my study subjects: if a Chinese scholar teaches in America, he does not have to be American citizen, nor does he necessarily have to hold an American point of view. However, I presume that most scholars are to some extent influenced by their institute and therefore by the country in which the institute is based. In case the scholar was associated to more than one institute, I only counted the first in line mentioned.

¹³ For gender is not one of my main interests, if have decided not to take this factor into account for my research.

Although the editorial and the international advisory board both seem to prove otherwise, it could hardly be denied that the Journal of Peace Research is dominated by writers from the United States. Throughout the years there were some slight fluctuations, but on a whole no significant developments within this short time period can be traced. Only in 2008 the European authors actually outnumbered the North American hegemony. Even then, 36% of the European authors consists of authors from the United Kingdom, so even in this European section at least the English speaking part prevails. Another distorted image one may get out of this circle diagram is the relatively high participation of Middle-Eastern scholars in JPR. In fact, 27 of the 36 Middle Eastern writers are from Israel. It is therefore rather doubtful what the ‘global focus on peace’ actually means for JPR. Rather, JPR seems to contain a view on the globe, but not from a global point of view.

On the other hand, this should be put in perspective. Many African countries for example are lacking the means to set up the kind of university system Western countries have. Therefore, their output amounts far less and often the most talented scholars move to Western universities to complete their study, in which case I have actually ranged them in the Western section for this research.

Department

From the geographical viewpoint, I will now turn to the department of studies. Usually authors for JPR work for a university, in some cases for research institutes or a combination of both. Remarkably, in 2007 there were two subsequent issues in which all of the articles were written by Phd authors, except for one article. Afterwards, I have not come across a single notification of Phd scholars again.

As we have seen earlier, the editorial board was dominated by peace and conflict studies followed by political sciences. In the editorial of 1964 it was argued explicitly that JPR should be an interdisciplinary journal that could cross the departmental borders that rule university systems and minds of scholars. To what degree were these borders actually crossed? The graphs beneath show what fields of study authors come from over the past five years, followed by a table of the amount of articles that were written by authors from two or more disciplines.

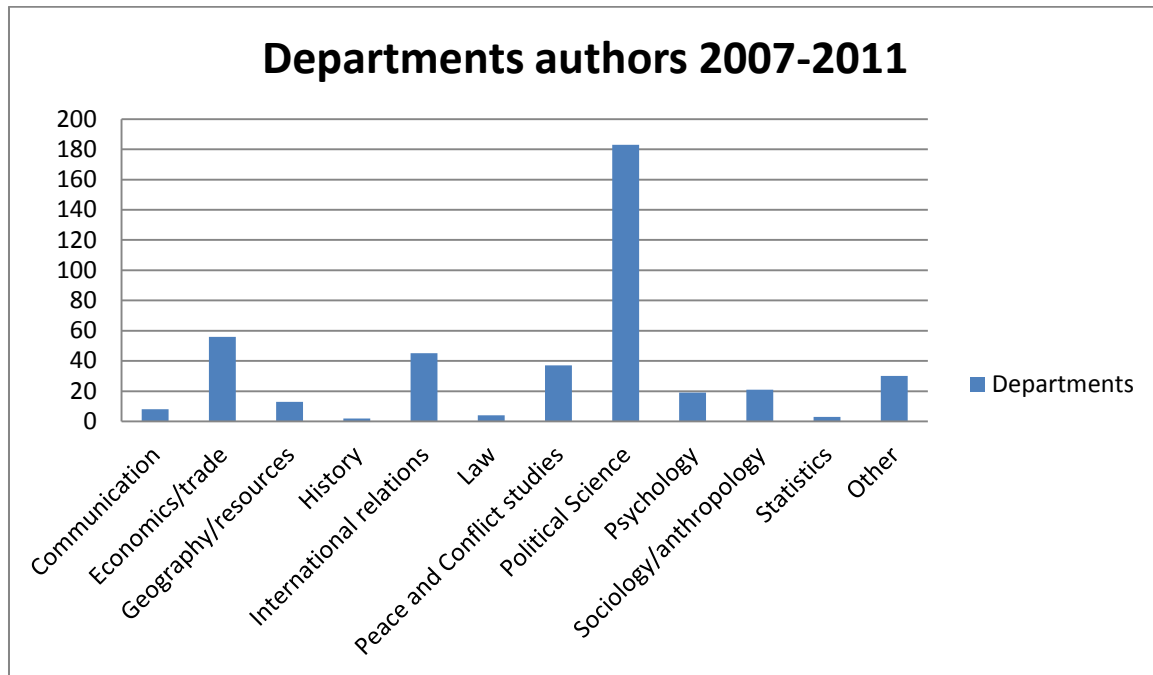


Table 1: Interdisciplinary level by author¹⁴

	2007-2011
Number of articles	236
Interdisciplinary articles	44
Interdisciplinary rate	19%

From the graphs above it is easily concluded that political sciences, even more than in the editorial board, dominate the JPR authors. Again, like the geographical distribution of authors, there is no clear development throughout the years, although the relative amount of political science scholars did grow a little. Except for 2007, economics was usually second in line, followed by international relations and peace and conflict studies. As the number of authors from the international relations field is rather high, it is remarkable that the editorial board includes not even one scholar from these studies. Moreover, it may be questioned why there are not more IR authors contributing to JPR, for peace research pre-eminently seems to be a subject concerned by international affairs. Of course, political science covers up a great deal,

¹⁴ It should be noted that this ‘interdisciplinary rate’ only provides a limited view. Articles written by scholars from the same department are considered as non-interdisciplinary, no matter how border crossing its content may be. Neither could mono-authored articles. Therefore, take into account that this is only an indication of scholars of different departments cooperating, but it leaves out the content. I will come back to this in the next paragraph.

but still it is a remarkable fact and it may have to do with the composition of the editorial board.

Looking at the table of interdisciplinary rate over these five years, we find that the scope to be a border crossing journal, has been achieved only partly. The data fluctuated across the years, without an obvious explanation, but most multi-authored articles are still written by scholars from the same department. This does not mean however, that the content could not be interdisciplinary, but I will elaborate on this in the next paragraph.

PRIO

As we have noted by analyzing the editorial board, the influence of PRIO is a factor we should further examine. In how far does the PRIO actually determine the authors and content? This is not easy to examine, for we cannot take a look into the editing office to find out whom decides upon this. Hence, I have counted the number of authors associated with the PRIO during all of the years, to find out whether they are overrepresented, as they are in the editorial board. The following table shows the results:

Table 2: PRIO authors in JPR

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of articles	37	44	43	60	52
Number of authors	58	85	74	97	90
Number of authors per article	1,6	1,9	1,7	1,6	1,7
Number of PRIO authors	3	6	4	8	1
PRIO author ratio	5%	7%	5%	8%	1%

Interesting is the great downfall in the percentage of articles written by PRIO associated scholars from 2010 to 2011, going from 8% to 1%. However, I have not been able to come up



with a reasonable explanation for this decrease any more legitimate than wild speculation. It may be just a fluctuation, but to find out about this one would have to do research on a longer period of time.¹⁵

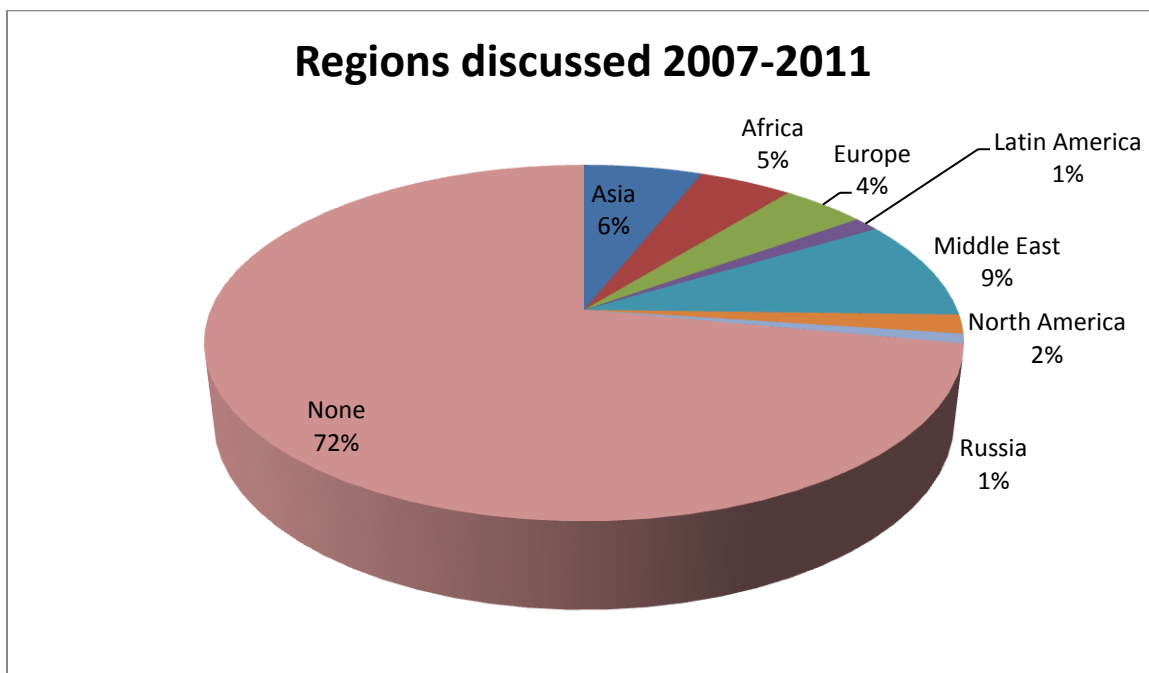
Yet on average, about 5% of the authors works for PRIO. As over these five years there were 1,7 authors per article, this means that about 2% of the articles was written by PRIO associates. So on the author level, they do not have a great impact. On the level of content the influence is harder to assess, but I will come back to this in the paragraph on content.

¹⁵ I did contact the editorial board about this, but so far, I have not received an answer.

4. Content

Regions discussed

To further examine the JPR aims in practice I now move from the authorial background to the article subjects and I will try to connect these two. In the first section, I start with the geographical facts again, showing what geographical regions are covered in JPR,¹⁶ Afterwards, I will continue with the subjects JPR deals with and highlight some of its trending topics.



As the circle diagram above shows, the major part of the articles is not about a region at all. This usually means that it contains multi-regional research, which is the most published type of article in the journal. An example of research like this, is the article ‘The spoils of nature: Armed civil conflict and rebel access to natural resources’.¹⁷ The author tests the theory which implies that resourceful countries are more likely to deal with civil conflict or rebellion. He does this by using multi-regional datasets and combines these into models that should reflect the predictability of conflict issues in areas rich of resources. These kind of studies cover three quarters of the journal. In case that one region or country is explicitly emphasized this

¹⁶In regions discussed I have chosen Russia as a separate region, for it is situated on two continents and could not really be included in the section Europe, nor in Asia.

¹⁷P. Lujala, ‘The spoils of nature: Armed civil conflict and rebel access to natural resources’, *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (2010) 15-28.

usually means that a theory or model could only fit into this particular area, or, the induction way: a case study has been made to set up a theory.

Although the major part of the authors is American, this does not mean that most articles are about the US. However, often when an article is about a region, the American authors tends to write from US involved perspective, such as the economic policy of the US towards the particular country. Whenever Europe was exposed, this usually meant the regions Cyprus/Greece/Turkey or Ireland. Besides existence of a long term conflict between Greece and Turkey, the rather frequent appearance of articles about this area may have also been influenced by the Cyprus Centre located in Oslo and founded by PRIO.

Against my expectations, there has been written remarkably little about Russia, as it did have severe conflicts in Georgia and Chechnya in this period, or specific conflicts in Africa. These areas are included in datasets such as the number of conflicts in 2009 all over the world, but they are not addressed in depth. Whether this is due to disinterest, little expertise on the topic or political reasons, I have not been able to discover. Another surprise was to find not a single word devoted to the Arabian spring. In a short mail conversation with chief editor Henrik Urdal he explained that the reason for this is that JPR does not try to cover current affairs.¹⁸ Furthermore, an article typically takes at least 12 to 18 months from submission before it is in print, so this highly limits the possibility of engaging current issues.

On the one hand this is a disadvantage, as the actuality of these conflicts arouse interest of many. On the other hand, it may be an advantage, for in this way JPR is not controlled by briefly lasting hypes.

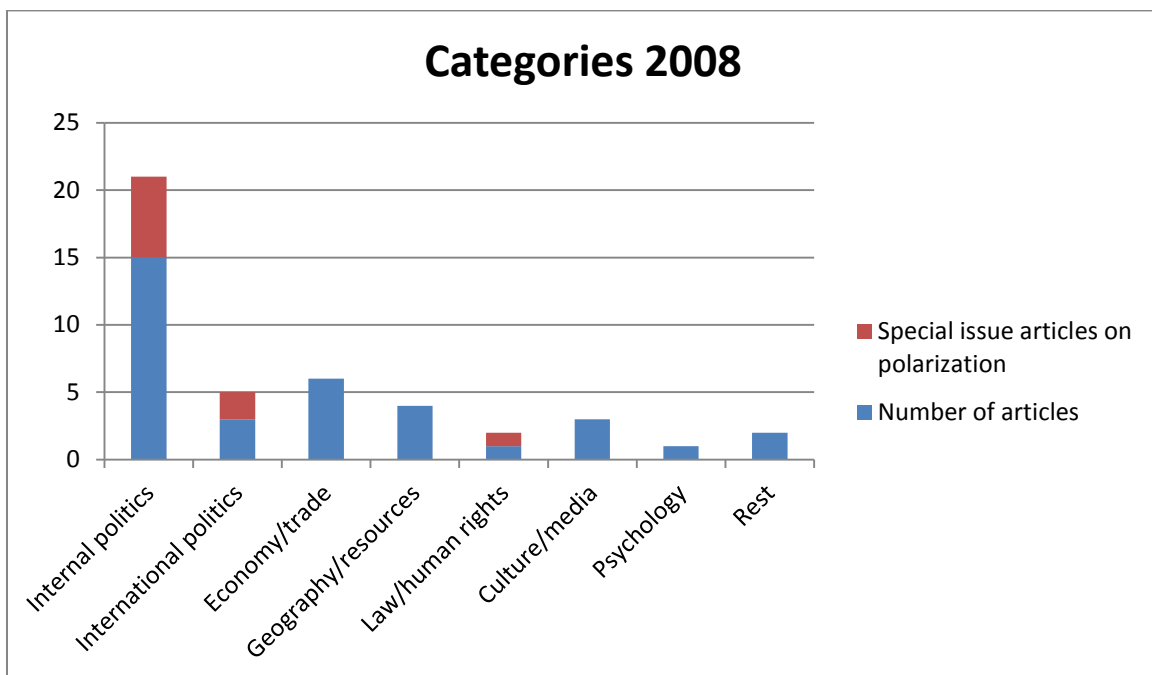
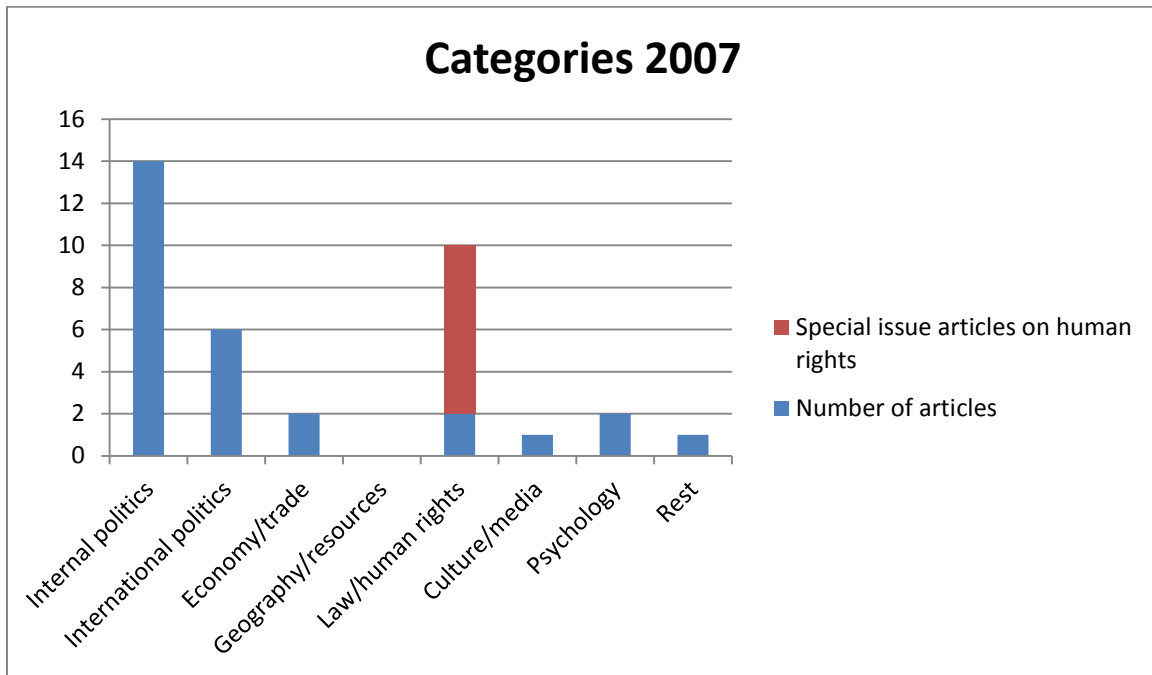
Subjects

Yet from regions alone, we do not learn what JPR is exactly about. Therefore, from the geographical part we move to subjects.¹⁹

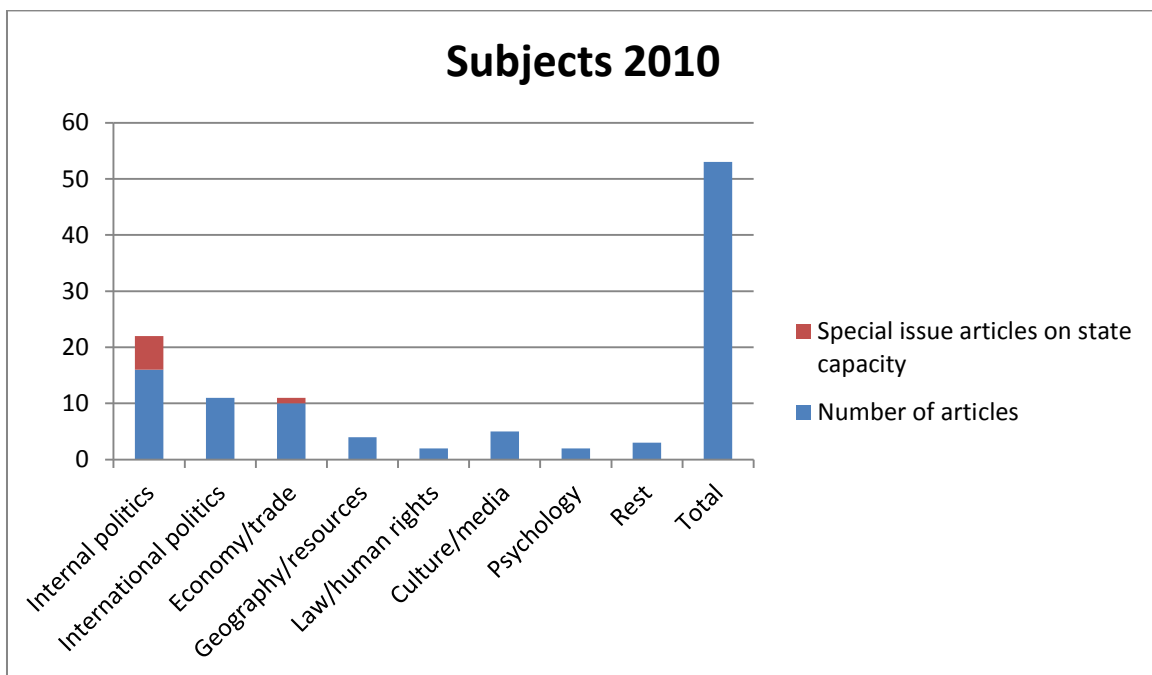
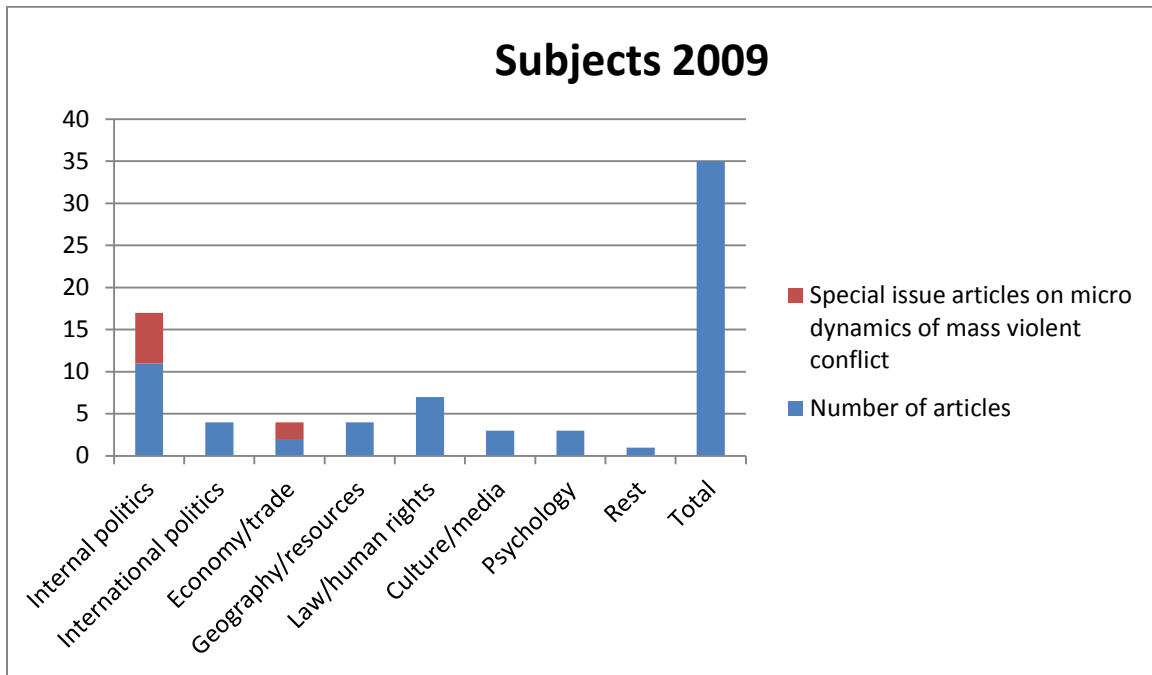
In some cases special issues could outbalance the normal amount of articles on one subject. Therefore I have presented the data in separate graphs per year and I have marked these pieces red in the graphs, before showing the results of the five years combined.²⁰

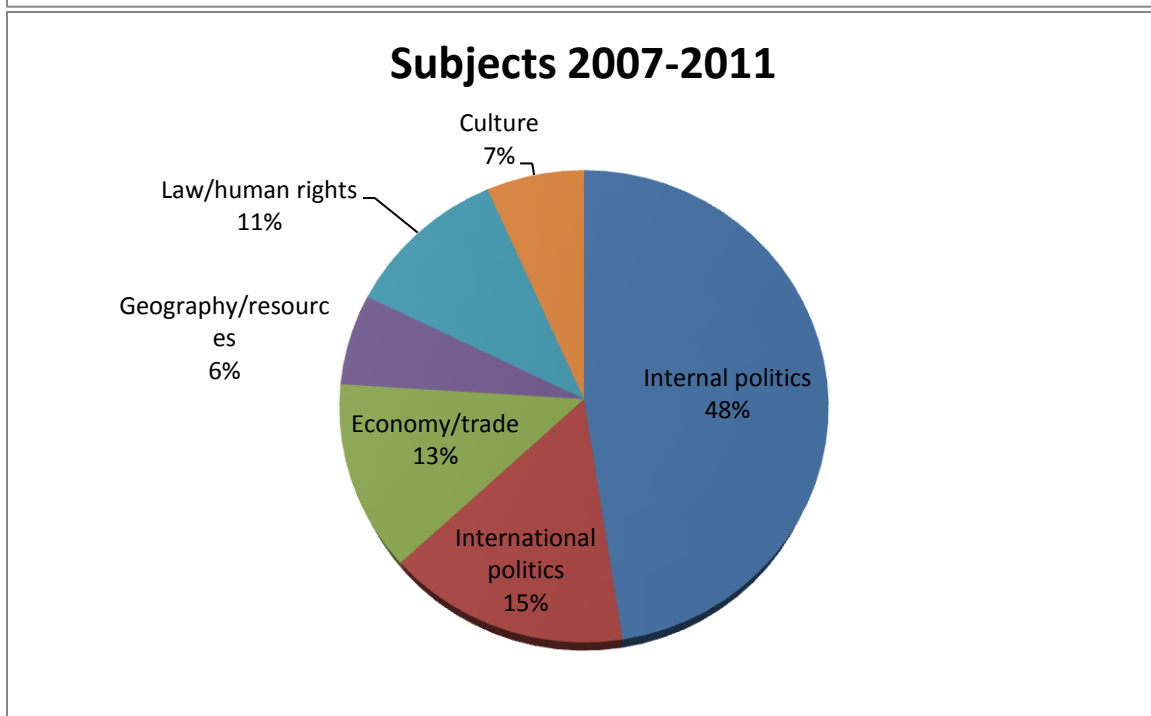
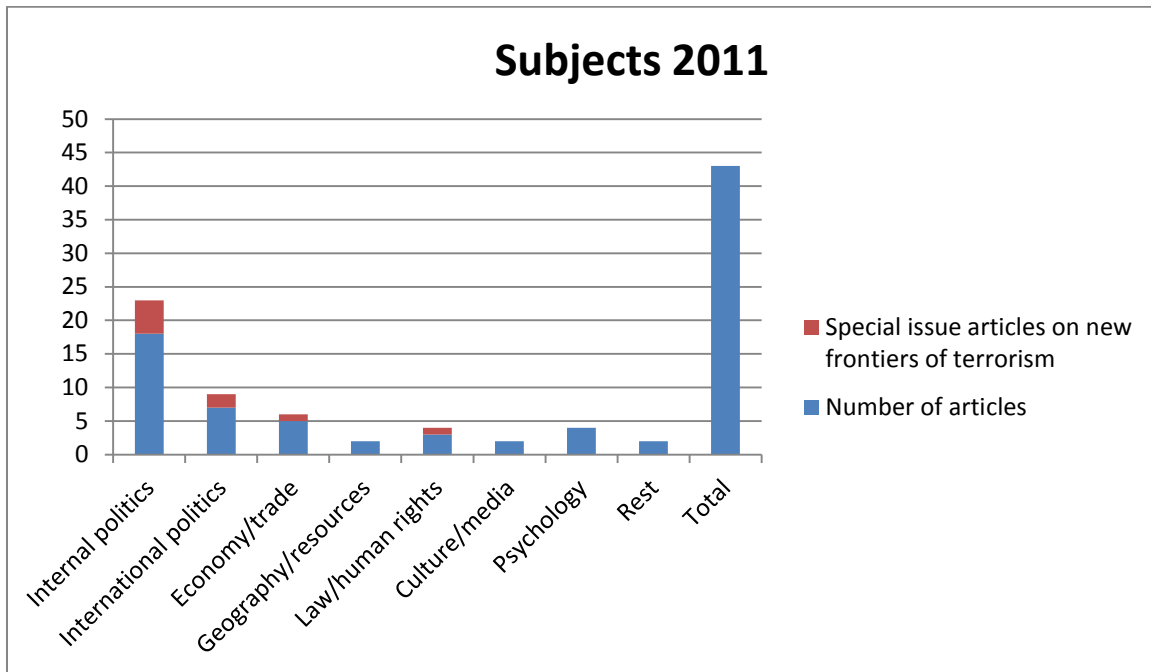
¹⁸H. Urdal, mail to A. Hielkema, 9 May 2012.

¹⁹Before showing my research results, again some notes should be made in advance. Categorizing these articles was not always an easy task, for in most cases articles did not fit into one category but could be placed in several, or worse, in none. Simultaneously, these difficulties immediately show that the interdisciplinary character of the journal is more present than one would conclude from the number of different department collaborations only.



²⁰For example, this has obviously been the case in 2007 when there was a special issue on human rights.





The graphs show that the bulk of the articles is about internal politics.²¹ This may be surprising, as nor peace, nor conflict is often a case of merely internal causes. Second in line

²¹ For the section politics, I decided to divide it into an internal and an international part, because the overwhelming part of JPR consists of politics. It was sometimes hard to make a strict partition for the two are very often intertwined, but the subdivision does give a little more insight into the actual content. Culture and media I have joined in one section, for frequently articles on media were concerned with identity or opinion forming, which can be seen as an expression of cultural values.

are international politics, which primarily consists of research on wars and alliances, and then follows economy and trade. The number of articles per subject fluctuates throughout the five years, but we do see that special issues can either have a lowering or heightening effect on the interdisciplinary rate of an issue.

For the category psychology it should be noted that its score would not be as high, if there had been less Israeli authors, as most of their research is on psychology or media. It is an interesting fact that exactly this country, a country that has dealt with wars and severe conflicts for more than sixty years now, turns to psychology and communication as the main research fields for studying conflict, instead of politics or economics. Although speculatively, it might be that years and years of experiencing ongoing conflict and a future perspective that does not provide much hope, makes one search in other explanations than the usual fields. One may start to wonder how it is possible that men are willing to hold on to a war that does not benefit either party, which is a possible explanation for the Israeli focus on different research areas such as the psychological side.²²

Comparing these results to a similar journal in the field of conflict studies, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, we get an insight in how far JPR can be considered an interdisciplinary journal.²³ The graph below shows that this journal is dominated by politics far less, than JPR is.²⁴ Although it concerns a slightly different range of topics, we see that the amount of articles per subject is more equally distributed in *Terrorism and Political Violence*.

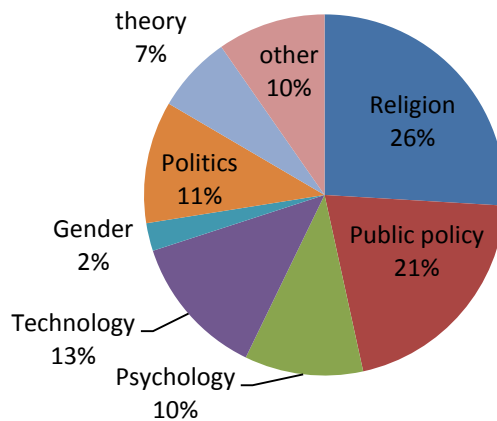
Hence, on the aim of being interdisciplinary there is still some work to be done for JPR.

²²I have also tried to find out whether the Israeli departments of Psychology and Communication may be among the leading in the world. This could have been a reason for JPR to publish preferably psychology pieces from Israeli universities. But these universities are not renowned for their outstanding contributions in these particular fields.

²³*Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, www.tanf.co.uk/journals/journalofterrorismandpoliticalviolence.

²⁴E. van Leeuwen, *Journal Analysis Terrorism and Political Violence* (2012) 9.

Subjects Terrorism and Political Violence 2007-2011



Bias and PRIO influence

The Israeli articles discussed above have broadened the multidisciplinary perspective, but simultaneously they narrow the global view. For in *JPR* there are only Israeli authors writing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Articles like ‘Power or Justice? Rule and Law in the Palestinian Authority’ by Hillel Frisch and Menachem Hofnung, who explain why the Palestine legal system is so weak, demand a counterbalance from the Palestinian side.²⁵ But not once, a Palestine author contributed to an issue of *JPR* in the five past volumes.

The same we find, when studying the American input. They add research of a high standard on intervention techniques in Iraq, but we do not get to know how the Iraqi scholar would comment on the intervention. An example of the rather US based viewpoint is clearly reflected in the title of the article ‘When Are Democratic Friends Unreliable? The Unilateral Withdrawal of Troops from the ‘Coalition of the Willing’.²⁶ Although written by the Japanese scholar Atsushi Tago, it is obviously a title that favours the American side of the story. Their ‘friends’ had promised to fight the war in Iraq together, and suddenly they were backing out. It is highly doubtful whether these ‘unreliable friends’ should be positioned as the ‘bad ones’ who treated on their friend, or whether it should be the other way around.

²⁵ H. Frisch and H Hofnung, ‘Power or Justice? Rule and Law in the Palestinian Authority’, *JPR* 44 (2007) 331-348.

²⁶ A Tago, ‘When Are Democratic Friends Unreliable? The Unilateral Withdrawal of Troops from the ‘Coalition of the Willing’,’ *JPR* 46 (2009) 219-234.

The predominantly American side of the story presented in JPR, does not imply that the journal leaves no room for other sounds. For example, in the article ‘Empathizing with Rogue Leaders: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Asad’ by Akan Malici and Allison L. Buckner the non-American angle is explicitly chosen. The authors approach the international relations between the US and Iran and Syria, from the Iranian and Syrian perspective.²⁷

From the American angle, we move to the PRIO perspective. In the paragraph on authors I have counted the number of scholars writing for JPR and associated with PRIO, but these results do not yet account for the influence of PRIO on the choice of subjects. However, ranging the subjects PRIO authors write about, it shows that their subjects are just as varied as the rest of the journal subjects. Nevertheless, as a PRIO member, one can have a favoured position as to call attention to their own special projects. For example, present chief editor Henrik Urdal has been senior affiliate of the Households in Conflict Network since 2007 and in the volume of JPR 2009 appeared a whole special edition about the micro-level dynamics of violent conflict, guest edited by P. Verwimp, P. Justino and T. Brück, three associates of the Household in Conflict Network.²⁸

Trending topics

Is there a sign that JPR by choice of content over the past five years, has tried to come closer to its proclaimed aims? In order to examine this, I have analyzed the trending topics in this period and put the results per year in circle diagrams that are presented beneath.²⁹

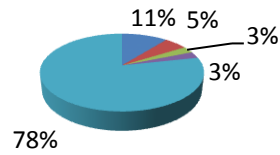
²⁷ A. Malici and A.L. Buckner, ‘Empathizing with Rogue Leaders: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Asad’, *JPR* 45 (2008) 783-800.

²⁸ P. Verwimp, P. Justino and T. Brück, ‘The Analysis of Conflict: A Micro-Level Perspective’, *JPR* 46 (2009).

²⁹ Since I have only studied five years of JPR, it is hard to say whether these topics were actually trending in this particular period, or for a longer period. At least these were remarkably often addressed themes.

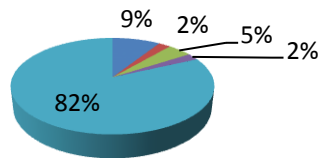
Special categories 2007

- Intervention/mediation
- Terrorism
- Liberal peace theory
- Media
- Rest



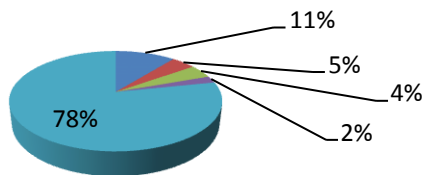
Special categories 2008

- Intervention/mediation
- Terrorism
- Liberal peace theory
- Media
- Rest



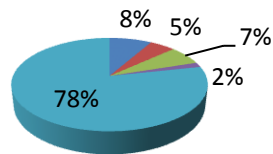
Special categories 2009

- Intervention/mediation
- Terrorism
- Liberal peace theory
- Media
- Rest



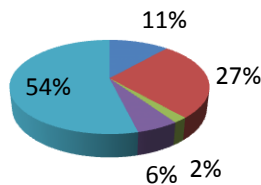
Special categories 2010

- Intervention/mediation ■ Terrorism
- Liberal peace theory ■ Media
- Rest



Special categories 2012

- Intervention/mediation ■ Terrorism
- Liberal peace theory ■ Media
- Rest



Since I expected media to be one of the ‘hot topics’ in the debate as well, I included this category. But in reality, it was not until 2011 that covered 6% of the articles in JPR. The real trending topic as we can see, is intervention and mediation. This corresponds to the fact that JPR has developed its approach since 1964 from a more sociological and philosophical stance of what peace actually contains, to an approach that is more focussed at conflict management. The current political situation may add to this, since most of the Western world, the main contributors of JPR, are not being directly at war themselves, but they are often active in intervention operation elsewhere in the world.

Another trending topic is terrorism. The fact that it is quite a hot issue in JPR is probably predominantly a remaining inheritance of 9/11, reinforced by terrorist attacks afterwards. Simultaneously, it may be incited by the try to fight terrorism and the demand from governmental and organizational sides to research how this could be fought. As chief

editor Henrik Urdal mentioned, many of the JPR contributors are policy makers themselves, so they take an interest in current policy directed topics such as the fight against terrorism.³⁰

What does this mean for the aims of being interdisciplinary, global, innovative and in search of peace? Both intervention and terrorism are subjects that are usually addressed from a Western point of view, and subsequently they do not increase a global point of view. On the other hand, it concerns subjects that may take place all over the world, so in that sense, they may increase a global focus. Topics like mediation and terrorism are also highly relevant for peace policy.

An often addressed topic within the economic category was the theory of liberal peace. A substantial part of the articles in the latter section is based on this theory, which implies that trade can promote peaceful relations between countries. This is usually combined with the Kantian or democratic peace theory, arguing that democratic countries do not go to war with each other, leading to the conclusion that trade can reduce the risk of violence in the more democratic countries. Data research in JPR shows that this is the case, however not only once, but it has appeared various times in every volume.^c

The repeating structure and outcomes of the research on this topic is not in line with the innovative character that JPR aims at. In the editorial of 1964 that repetition of hypotheses, or research that did not add new insights to the older work, should be avoided. This does not correspond to the content of these largely overlapping articles which argue that trade may reduce the risk of violence.

Peace relevancy? From a historian's point of view

So far, I have left the aim of JPR to be relevant for peace search, rather unanswered. In the journal articles the aim of peace search is quite evident, for every article is concluded by a section that explains how this research could add to peace policy. However, these parts are obligatory. Without these additions, the article is not published. The question still remains whether the research done has any relevance in practice.

³⁰ H. Urdal, mail to A. Hielkema, 9 May 2012; The high score in 2012 however, owes to the special issue on terrorism in this volume.

As explained in the introduction, it acquires a complex research to explore the relevancy of JPR for peace that would far exceed the restricted time for this essay. As the chief editor Henrik Urdal explains: “In the larger setting I think and hope that research does influence politics, at least that's an important rationale. Many researchers who publish in JPR are also advising policy makers. But any ‘direct’ influence is likely difficult to measure.”³¹

Therefore, I approach the question of peace relevancy from a more qualitative method instead of quantitative, posing the question: could the research as it is being done at the moment in JPR ever totally capture a conflict? While reading JPR it is striking for a historian that there are scarcely any articles which deal only with the history of a conflict. More than 95% is concerned with the period after World War II. Only a fraction of conflicts can be fully explained by the events that have occurred in this rather short time span. Whenever a JPR author do writes about history, this is usually combined with a theory or suggestions for future policy, which is of course in line with JPR’s aim, but how relevant are these suggestions if they do not take into account the specific background of the conflict?

As we have seen above, 10% of the articles is about peace meditation and intervention. This is a subject that usually addresses a current conflict, demanding a practical approach, an ‘act on the spot’-mentality. Such articles are hardly ever written as most historians tend to do. That is, less concerned with the ‘action’ part and more from a ‘considering’, or describing method. Historians, at least the not deterministic part, usually less try to fit events into a model that could be used for the future. They are more led by the time-frame, the underlying structure, in which they put the events, instead of the other way around. Many scholars in JPR seem to start from the events, the separate elements, putting them together in a functional causal relation with other separate elements, which constitute a time-frame together. However, in the latter case a lot of background information, the more complete picture that the underlying time frame structure could reveal is lost.

Many scholars implement theories on separate elements, try to deduct a theory from specific situations or set up models when trying to explain or clarify a conflict. This methodology is probably influenced by the fact that JPR is dominated by scholars of political sciences, who are more inclined to use modelling and theories. These can be applied in different situations, in different countries, only by leaving out the complexity that a time

³¹ H. Urdal, mail to A. Hielkema, 9 May 2012.

frame, the broader picture, demands. Yet, it should not be forgotten that reality is not that simple.

Models to predict conflicts may enhance insight in a situation, but it should not be assumed they can explain everything. Authors in JPR certainly do not claim to explain everything, but at some points I did notice that there is a strong inclination to quantify subjects, as if the use of models and theories make articles more legitimate in the scientific debate.

In the first place however, these models consist of separate elements. They do not capture the whole picture. Moreover, the use of models seems to confirm the assumption that conflict and war are rational decisions made by rational people, and once we have found out how this system works by theories and modelling, we can fix these matters in a rational way. What I would like to argue against this, is that there is no such thing as a rational conflict or war. It is hard to think of World War II in rational terms. Equally hard to rationalize, is the persisting conflict between Israel and Palestina, which was just as much incited by religious reasons and proud, aggravated by miscommunication, revenge and in the passing of years by a stubborn history. The rebels or freedom striders fighting against Assad in Syria at the moment, were not inflamed by the threat of death, but by the ideology of freedom and a hunger for change. Thousands of young men inspired by an idea, a magical word, or just the enthusiasm to fight.

The world is not a logical system: conflicts are made by men and women who do not necessarily operate on merely rational reasons. The motives mentioned above are elements that are hardly quantifiable or caught by models and theories. Besides, the sum of the elements in this system do not constitute the whole. This synergy leads to a complexity that cannot fit a sound model. By trying to fit a conflict into a model or theory, we tend to focus on separate elements, the similarities in different countries of one aspect. This may distract our sight from the particularities, the uniqueness of an arising or existing conflict. Social situations, cultural background, psychology, communication and even more important, miscommunication, media, ethnics, anger, fear: all of these are factors that have their part in the process. The study of separate elements provides us with insight in this, but we should not lose the broader picture out of sight. The number of datasets published in JPR is impressive, but if we know how many democracies jumped into war, we do not necessarily prove whether or not democracy is the best state form for a peaceful world.

If research is to be relevant for peace, theories and models do not suffice. When making suggestions for future peace policy, the background of the particular conflict has to be reconsidered. Conflicts and peace do not run by schemes and past performance does not guarantee future results. The suggestions that rise from research based on separate elements, are not always applicable in the complexity of conflicts. This is certainly not a call against models, it is only a suggestion to include in JPR more articles written from a perspective which takes into account that human action may not be based on rationality and that these humans function in a complex world that may not be captured by the model.

So in terms of the ‘peace search question’, JPR offers a starting point. A platform that still demands a long path before this peace research can actually become peace search.

Article of the year

However, it is not exactly my opinion that counts in the decision on content for JPR. Therefore, next I turn to what is a high standard type of article according to JPR itself. This can be examined by studying the JPR award winning articles. In 2009 JPR introduced the so-called ‘JPR Article of the Year Award’, for the best article written in the past volume. The first winners of this award were Stathis N. Kalyas and Matthew A. Kocher, who had written the article ‘The Dynamics of Violence in Vietnam: A Analysis of the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)’.³²

This article indeed contains very interesting research, for it argues that in civil wars, the most contested parts are the parts where violence against civilians by state or insurgents occurs least. This is explained by the fact that using homicidal violence against civilians is a means to exercise territorial control by rival sides. The research is based on a case-study of Vietnam. In case Vietnamese insurgents did not coerce full control over a region, they relied on selective violence. On their turn, South Vietnamese government and US forces used violence against civilians in those parts that were partly dominated by rebels. However, in the most contested areas, violence was less common. The jury describes it as ‘theoretically grounded, innovative, and relevant to current policy issues’, which is indeed the case. It combines a hypothesis with empirical data analysis and results into new conclusions. These conclusions contain among others that the success or failure of civil war cannot be examined

³² S.N. Kalyas and M.A. Kocher, ‘The Dynamics of Violence in Vietnam: A Analysis of the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)’, *JPR* 46 (2009)

merely by taking the number of violent incidents as an indicator, but that the character of the incident is of great importance.

In 2011 the JPR-Award was awarded to Michael D. Ward, Brian D. Greenhill and Kristin M. Bakke, who had written the article ‘The Perils of Policy by P-value: Predicting civil conflicts’.³³

The pretentious connotation of a title containing ‘predicting civil conflicts’ immediately arouses curiosity, and even more, suspicion. However, the authors do not claim to be able to predict civil war. They test two old models for predicting civil war and they show how potentially misleading the traditional reliance on statistical significance is. Therefore they argue that more attention should be paid to finding better variables to predict civil war.

What do we learn from this about the ‘JPR measuring’ of articles? Both of the articles contained a new vision of existing theories, so the innovative element is certainly highly valued. Secondly, it is quite surprising to find that both of these articles are actually to some extent consistent with the remarks I had made in the former paragraph. The first one deals with a case-study and argues that conflicts cannot all be ranged in one category, but that one should take into account the different types. The second states that models on civil war do not correspond to practice and that more variables should be included.

Are these two articles in line with the scope of JPR? Both are innovative and add new knowledge to foregoing debates, so in that sense, they are. They also contribute to a global focus, for one contains a case-study in Vietnam and the other contains multi-regional research. Simultaneously, they do not enhance the global viewpoint, for all authors come from the US or UK. As with regards to the interdisciplinary rate, this is neither represented in the choice of the articles since all authors are political scientists. However, in methodological terms they are actually in line with the aims of JPR, combining theoretical, empirical and statistical data.

In short, we can conclude that the articles of the year do not entirely correspond with the aims of JPR. Their innovating character seems to have been the main reason for rewarding these articles.

³³ M. D. Ward, B.D. Greenhill and K.M. Bakke, ‘The Perils of Policy by P-value: Predicting civil conflicts?’ *JPR* 47 (2010)363-375.

5. In depth: polarization

So far, we have only explored the themes and debates in JPR from a rather distanced level. Hence, I continue with an in-depth study of one debate and I will conclude by trying to connect this debate to the former conclusions on JPR.

In March 2008 JPR published a special edition on the theme ‘polarization’.³⁴ This theme has been one of the trending topics in The Netherlands ever since Dutch politicians Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders made their appearance in the Dutch political arena. In The Netherlands, an ongoing flood of opinions and articles about this have found their way into the public debate, and it would be interesting to examine what research has been done in the international field so far.

In the introduction to this special issue the authors conclude their piece by writing: “Although most commentators believe that increased divisions within a society endanger democracy and undermine social progress, we have only just started to understand these processes and their impact upon society.”³⁵ Indeed, most commentators in The Netherlands emphasize the fact that the division of society is a danger and that the falling apart into several groups should be avoided to prevent future trouble. However, research in JPR seems to point into a different direction: increased divisions may not necessarily endanger democracy, nor undermine social progress. In this section, I will have a closer look on this argument.

Although polarization is a common word these days, it is not always used in one way, nor is it always clear what can be understood under the term. To avoid confusion, I will stick to the definition given by in the introduction in JPR defined by Joan Esteban and Debray Ray, which describes polarization as ‘resulting from interaction of within-group identity and across-group alienation.’³⁶ This should not be mixed up with the term ‘fractionalization’ which is often closely linked. Fractionalization means the probability that two random chosen individuals belong to different groups.³⁷ The main difference with polarization in the first place, is that fractionalization implies many different groups, whereas polarization is concerned with two ‘poles’, or a few groups. Secondly, in examining the level of polarization one takes into account the cultural, social or economic distance between the groups in a

³⁴ *JPR* 45 (2008) 131-312.

³⁵ J. Esteban and G. Schneider, ‘Polarization and Conflict: Theoretical and Empirical Issues’, *JPR*45 (2008) 131-141, 132.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ J. Esteban and D. Ray, ‘Polarization, Fractionalization and Conflict’, *JPR*45 (2008) 163-182.

society. In examining the level of fractionalization, the distance between entities is not necessarily an indication of a higher level of fractionalization.

So far the defining part. The main question is, to what extent could these types of interaction between groups influence the level of (violent) conflicts in a society? There is broad consensus on the fact that it is groups, and not individuals, that play a decisive role in large-scale violent conflicts. But the exact role that groups have in a conflict, and by what mechanisms they function, is still centre of debate. On the one hand, a part of the scholars argues that a more socially fragmented society leads automatically to a higher level of social unrest. On the other hand, some scholars state that the risk of violence is higher in case that a society consists of only a few groups, than the ones that are fragmented into many different groups.

Research evidence from Estaban and Ray shows that the latter assumption can be supported partly.³⁸ By using game theory, they prove that conflicts are more likely to occur in fragmented societies, for there are more parties to be satisfied. However, the risk of severe violent conflict is far higher in strongly polarized systems. In a polarized society, the few parties that stand at the opposite of each other risk high costs in case of an eventual conflict and hence, conflict is to be avoided. But if a conflict does escalate, all of society is actually involved and therefore the conflict is far more severe than it would be the case, when smaller groups in a fragmented society start a conflict.

Now what does this mean in practice? Are there less violent conflicts in diverse societies? This question brings us to the article of G. Schneider and N. Wiesehomeier, who have studied the impact of the different types of diversion in their institutional context.³⁹ Their research shows that in democracies fractionalization actually reduces the risk of violent conflict, whereas in democratic institutions functioning by majority rule, the risk of violence increases.

These are interesting findings for already fractionalized societies, but examining the impact of diverse groups on the level of violence, does not explain how these groups are being formed in the first place. One can state that polarization is a danger for society, but to tackle the problem, it is important to know what causes it. One of the possible explanations has been

³⁸ J. Esteban and D. Ray, 'Polarization, Fractionalization and Conflict', *JPR45* (2008) 163-182.

³⁹ G. Schneider and N. Wiesehomeier, 'Rules That Matter: Political Institutions and the Diversion-Conflict Nexus' *JPR45* (2008) 183.

studied by Indridi H. Indridason.⁴⁰ She elaborates on the discussion by adding the impact of external factors, in this case, the impact of terrorist activities on the level of polarization. Indridason based her research on an analysis of coalition formation in 17, primarily Western European, parliamentary democracies over a period of half a century. She concludes that government forming is easier in a period after terrorist activity has taken place, for there are less polarized ideologies. Therefore, it is argued that external threats lead to less polarized country.

As the hypothesis was based on Western Europe, it is interesting to apply it to a case-study of The Netherlands. According to Indridason's theory it should have become a less polarized society after events like the terroristic attack on Theo van Gogh in November 2004 and 9/11. If this is true, then why did polarization become a 'hot topic' in the period after this attack? As Esteban and Ray had stated, polarization is 'resulting from interaction of within-group identity and across-group alienation.' This is exactly what seems to have taken place shortly after terroristic attacks in The Netherlands. The 'within-group identity', in this case the Dutch identity, was strengthened by focusing on the 'alien identity' of the across group, predominantly muslims. The events led to a sense of shared grief in the first few days, that quickly developed into a fierce debate on cultural differences and a growing mentality to pose an 'us' against a 'them'. Politicians such as Geert Wilders even explicitly use external threat, or rather, internal factors presented as an external threat, to invigorate this type of polarization.

Of course, with this concise case-study, only based on a few loose facts, I certainly do not want to claim Indriason's research to be invalid. However, I do want to argue that the statement 'terroristic activity leads to less domestic polarization' that she tends to apply to Western European countries, may be reconsidered and extended. The tricky part in this, is that she seems to consider polarization as a few big contesting groups in society, that are represented in politics. However, in case of The Netherlands for example, a form of polarization took place with one major and one minor group. The identity of a larger Dutch group was strengthened by polarization, so that indeed coalition forming of the within-group could be eased. Yet, this by no means meant a decrease of polarization, it only enhanced differences between two poles.

⁴⁰ I.H. Indridason, 'Does Terrorism Influence Domestic Politics? Coalition Formation and Terrorist Incidents', *JPR* 45 (2008) 241-259.

What Indridason in fact has proven with her study, is that fractionalization, and not polarization, decreases right after terroristic activity. As mentioned above, fractionalization implies the probability that two random chosen individuals belong to different groups. External threat exceeds the grounds upon which individuals, or in this case, political parties may have been fractionalized in the past, such as economic or social visions, which increases the opportunity of becoming one pole. Hence, terroristic activity may enhance polarization.

For the future, polarization remains a process that should be followed cautiously, as it may cause a lot of damage to unstable societies. Simultaneously, it has been proven that some forms of diversity can actually benefit a society, but in what ways may be subject of interesting future research.

How does this debate relate to the profile of JPR? Obviously, polarization fits the ‘peace and conflict’ field, as it is a phenomenon that may cause severe conflicts in societies. It is subject of global concern as it may occur in countries or regions all over the world. Moreover, it has a strong interdisciplinary global focus, as polarization can be approached from different disciplines, such as anthropology, politics, law, economics and psychology. And indeed, in this issue number on polarization the international and departmental diversity were relatively higher than the average.⁴¹

Conclusion

Research on five years of JPR has uncovered many interesting findings, but to what extent can we conclude that JPR actually achieved its scope in practice?

In short, the scope of JPR is to be an interdisciplinary, global journal, combining peace research with peace search and adding new knowledge to existing debates. The interdisciplinary aim has been achieved partly: a number of articles has been written by cooperating authors from different departments. The choice of subject is interdisciplinary to some extent. The major part of the articles is about the political side of peace and conflict, but also other fields of study such as economics, international relations and psychology are represented. Yet compared to other journals, it shows that the interdisciplinary distribution may still be improved.

⁴¹ I have compared it with other special issues and a higher level of international and departmental diversity was not necessarily the case in these issues.

The aim of presenting a global viewpoint is not very present in JPR. Although the international advisory board seems to show differently, the overwhelming part of the editorial board has its origins North European countries. Regarding the authors, the larger deal is from universities or institutes in the US. This has its influence on the content: one may question whether it is not rather an American, or at least Western, view on the globe. The fact that all articles about the Israel Palestina conflict have been written by Israeli writers, confirms this statement. Simultaneously, although it is not very often the case, there is room left for angles different from the Western perspective. Also, when taking into account the regions JPR covers, we see that it does partly meet its aim as the major part of the articles contains multiregional research.

Considering to what degree peace research has been peace search, JPR seems to be right on track at first sight. Most articles end with a section on how their research could actually contribute to understanding conflict, or providing suggestions for future peace policy. However, these sections are obligatory and the fact that they are included, do not necessarily make them relevant yet. The peace relevancy in practice is hard to assess. Trending topics like intervention and mediation do clearly show a view immediately directed to peace policy in practice. Nevertheless, it may be wondered whether parts of JPR are not too much trying to quantify, theorize and model conflicts, losing the particular character of conflicts out of sight. It is likely that the high rate of political scholars among others has influenced the content in this.

Special attention I have put on the impact of PRIO since this was JPR's founding institution. Indeed, this has some influence, as the editorial board mainly consists of PRIO members and in the choice of topics PRIO presumably favours its own activities to some extent. For the choice of authors it does not have a big impact.

This research concludes in mixed results. The content is influenced by a Western, political science perspective and PRIO has put its stamp on the editorial board. The choice of the two articles of the year showed that innovativeness is rewarded, but the other JPR aims have been achieved only partly.



References

Literature

- *Journal of Peace Research* 44 (2007).
- *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (2008).
- *Journal of Peace Research* 46 (2009).
- *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (2010).
- *Journal of Peace Research* 48 (2011).
- Editorial, *Journal of Peace Research* 1 (1964) 3.

Other

- Reagan, R. Speech at Moscow State University (31 May 1988).
- <http://www.prio.no/>; visited on 31-3-2012.
- http://sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/09/sep13-09_1/; visited on 1-4-2012.