



**Watching the watchmen**  
**A characterization of the academic journal**  
**World Politics**  
**2005-2010**  
*Richard Sonneveld*

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](http://www.rug.nl/research/MHIR-journalreview)



## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Formal features .....	2
Editorial features: board, guidelines and procedures .....	4
Author features: gender, region and Ivy League .....	6
Articles features: length, foci and methodology .....	13
Case study: Unipolarity.....	20
Conclusion .....	23



## Graphs

1. Growth of the <i>World Politics</i> community	4
2. Origin of contributors	7
3. Gender of contributors per region	8
4. Origin of non-U.S. contributors	9
5. Origin of contributors per region	10
6. Number of authors per article	14
7. Categorization of article subjects	15
8. Regional foci of 54 articles	16
9. Division of articles by theme	17
10. Relative distribution of applied methodology	19

## Introduction

Since its founding in 1948, *World Politics Quarterly* – hereafter *World Politics* – has come to be one of the top journals in the field of political science and international relations. In 2007, Red Jasper's journal ranking site ranked *World Politics* first in a list of 82 journals on international relations.<sup>1</sup> This success is not new: in 2009, Thomson Reuters ranked *World Politics* second in terms of impact in the field of international relations between 1981 and 2008.<sup>2</sup> These rankings, though often subjected to fierce and extensive criticism regarding its validity, application and manipulation<sup>3</sup>, support the image that exists among IR-scholars of *World Politics* as a top journal in its field. The journal covers virtually all fields of political science and foreign policy analysis, and aims to remain the top provider of frontier knowledge in these fields. According to the publisher, political scientists and students of international relations turn to *World Politics* to stay on top of the latest theoretical developments in the field.<sup>4</sup>

*World Politics* is a renowned academic journal tasked with bringing frontier knowledge to the core of the field, and closely scrutinizes and reviews all submitted articles. Now, it is turn for *World Politics* to be scrutinized. In the light of the classic dilemma of 'who watches the watchmen?', this paper will provide an insight into the various characteristics of *World Politics*. In order to draw up an up-to-date analysis, it will focus on the six volumes<sup>5</sup> that were published between 2006 and 2011. In doing so, it will look at, among others, the composition of the editorial board, the editorial procedures, and various features of both the contributors and the articles published. Throughout the paper, specific attention will be placed on the question how international or 'worldly' *World Politics* really is in terms of the diversity of authors and article subjects. Before arriving at a brief conclusion, one paragraph

---

<sup>1</sup> Red Jasper, 'List Common Rankings', <http://www.journal-ranking.com/ranking/listCommonRanking.html?selfCitationWeight=1&externalCitationWeight=1&citingStartYear=1901&journalListId=350> (07-04-2012).

<sup>2</sup> Science Watch, 'Journals Ranked by Impact: International Relations', [http://sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/09/sep13-09\\_1/](http://sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/09/sep13-09_1/) (07-04-2012).

<sup>3</sup> See for instance: Michael W. Giles and James C. Garand, 'Ranking Political Science Journals: Reputational and Citational Approaches', *PS* online article (Oct.2007); accessible via [http://graduateinstitute.ch/webdav/site/political\\_science/users/jovana.carapic/public/Ranking%20Political%20Science%20Journals%20Reputational%20and%20Citational%20Approaches.pdf](http://graduateinstitute.ch/webdav/site/political_science/users/jovana.carapic/public/Ranking%20Political%20Science%20Journals%20Reputational%20and%20Citational%20Approaches.pdf) (08-05-2012).

<sup>4</sup> Description of *World Politics* by Cambridge University Press; <http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy-ub.rug.nl/browse/publishers/cup> (07-04-2012).

<sup>5</sup> While *World Politics* and the Princeton Institute it falls under at times use the term interchangeably or wrongly mix them up, I use 'issue' for the journal that comes out every three months, and 'volume' for the collective of three or four issues that are indicated to belong together, often published in one particular year. In addition, I choose to examine six volumes rather than five, for the data was easily available and the resulting picture of the journal would be just that bit more accurate. Even though the word 'between' is often used when speaking about the period under investigation, the examination *includes* all issues published in 2011.



will be reserved for an inquiry of the arguments provided in the only clear theme edition that was published in the 2006-2011 period, issue 61:1 (2009).

### **Formal features**

*World Politics* has since its founding become a highly prestigious journal, open to contributions by scholars of all academic disciplines and publishing articles on a wide range of topics that are affiliated with politics and political science. The journal is available in both print and online versions, but authors are made clear that while graphs and tables will keep their color in the online version, the printed editions of the journal only publishes in black and white. Until the publication of the last volume and issue in July 2007, it was published by John Hopkins University Press. From the start of volume and issue 60:1 in October 2007, Cambridge University Press took over the job of producing the journal. It is not clear why the Board of Directors decided to switch press agencies. Under the production of Cambridge University Press, subscribers to the journal pay a fee of \$230,00 or £130,00 to access all content of 2012 online, and \$275,00 or £155,00 to access all content both online and in print.<sup>6</sup>

The prestige that *World Politics* has accumulated throughout its seven decades of existence is irrefutable. While the competition of newer journals on international relations pushes *World Politics* a bit down on the ranking lists, in the long term lists *World Politics* consistently ranks among the top journals. The following arguments are indicators of the journal's success over the years, even though they cannot be taken for fact because the validity of the measuring techniques have been adequately called into question – not in the last place by Eugene Garfield. In 2009, the ISI Thomson-Reuters Web of Knowledge ranked the journal eight in terms of the '2008 impact factor'.<sup>7</sup> However, in the time span between 2001 and 2008, the impact of the journal in the period was ranked third overall. In the long term, the journal even ranks second in terms of the impact the published articles had. Other ranking organizations show similar results. In 2010, Red Jasper placed *World Politics* first in its list of 82 journals on international relations in terms of magnitude as measured since the

---

<sup>6</sup> The information is retrieved from the description of the journal by the Cambridge University Press. See: <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displaySubscriptionPrices?jid=WPO&sessionId=132A7A3B4A4667B4A939069822688529.journals> (07-04-2012).

<sup>7</sup> Thomson Reuters calculates the impact factor by taking the number of all current citations to source items published in the journal over the previous two years and dividing it by the number of articles published in the journal during the same period. See: [http://sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/09/sep13-09\\_1/](http://sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/09/sep13-09_1/) (08-04-2012).

start of Red Jasper's journal ranking.<sup>8</sup> In the Australian ERA-project of Deakin University, *World Politics* was one of the fourteen journals out of a total of 304 journals that received an A\*-ranking.<sup>9</sup>

The lasting success of the journal is self-reinforcing. While the quality of the articles that were published over the decades paved the way for the journal to reach the top of the ranking lists, it became more and more interesting for scholars to submit their contributions to the journal. What contributes to the journal's success is the apparent open mind it has regarding the topics of the submitted articles. It invites scholars to submit articles of analytical or theoretical nature, review articles, and articles that bear on problems in international relations and comparative politics. Despite its open mind, however, there are limits to what the journal considers for publication. *World Politics* states that it does not publish 'strictly historical material, articles on current affairs, policy pieces, or narratives of a journalistic nature'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in the 2006 to 2011 period under investigation, no articles were explicit policy pieces or of a journalistic nature, but while there are no solely historical articles, there certainly are articles that mostly focus on history. Many of these employ a quantitative method in order to analyze the development of certain processes throughout the twentieth century.

There is one main exception. In issue 63:4 of October 2011, *World Politics* published an article by the Canadian scholar Bruce Morrison called 'Channeling the "Restless Spirit of Innovation": Elite Concessions and Institutional Change in the British Reform Act of 1832'. The article is concerned with testing the hypothesis that 'elites yield democratic gains as a response to the threat of revolution'. More specifically, it considers 'the 1832 Reform Act against the comparative backdrop of the British crises of the 1790s and the late 1810s, crises that were selected for their similarity to that of the early 1830s in scale, intensity, and the potential to stimulate democratic change'.<sup>11</sup> The outspoken historical nature of the article determines the course and content of the case study, which prompts the question why *World Politics*, considering the limits it has set for itself, decided to publish it. The most likely

---

<sup>8</sup> Red Jasper's ranking list of journals on international relations in 2010. See: <http://www.journal-ranking.com/ranking/listCommonRanking.html?selfCitationWeight=1&externalCitationWeight=1&citingStartYear=1901&journalListId=350> (08-04-2012).

<sup>9</sup> ERA journal ranking project of Deakin University. See: <http://lamp.infosys.deakin.edu.au/era/?page=fordet10&selfor=1606> (08-04-2012).

<sup>10</sup> The information is based on the description of the journal *World Politics* by the Princeton Institute of International and Regional Studies at Princeton University. See <http://www.princeton.edu/piirs/worldpolitics-journal> (08-04-2012).

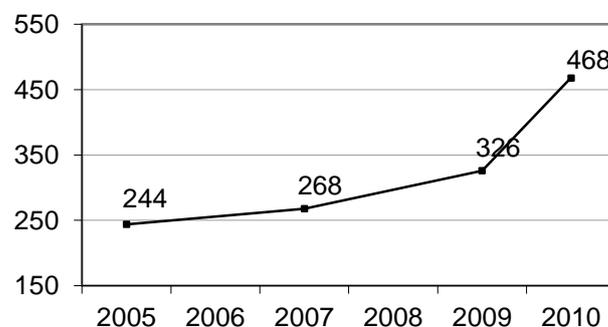
<sup>11</sup> Bruce Morrison, 'Channeling the "Restless Spirits of Innovation": Elite Concessions and Institutional Change in the British Reform Act of 1832', *World Politics* 63:4 (Oct. 2011) 679.

answer is that the conclusion is inductive and raises questions that can lead to research on more contemporary subjects. Indeed, the article concludes on democratization in the light of a shift in societal order and the relations between the more and less privileged, but not before examining the details of policy reform 150 years ago. The publication of Morrison's article is not a reason to conclude that *World Politics* does not stay true to the limits it has set for itself, but it does show that the journal, too, struggles with the question what these limits are exactly and how to act accordingly.

### Editorial features: board, guidelines and procedures

All submitted pieces that are up for publication are subjected to editorial scrutiny. The reviewing process in *World Politics* is triple-blinded, based on the anonymity of the author and the confidentiality of the reader's reports. In order to preserve the author's anonymity, the journal explicitly stresses that authors remove all self-references.<sup>12</sup> Of the three times a candidate-article is reviewed, two are done by referees from other institutions than Princeton University or the editors of *World Politics*. Every year in either the July or October issue, external referees that reviewed the articles appearing in issues of the previous year are acknowledged in a special Referee-section of the journal. For their assistance in refereeing submissions in 2010, for instance, the editorial committee of the journal thanked 468 scholars. For *World Politics*, this is an exceptionally high number. The graph below shows the growth of the *World Politics* 'community'. No clear reason can be found for the sharp rise of the number of referees between 2009 and 2010.

Graph 1: Growth of *World Politics* community



<sup>12</sup> Princeton Institute on *World Politics*, <http://www.princeton.edu/piirs/worldpolitics-journal/> (08-04-2012). This is also mentioned in the journal's style sheet. See: Style Sheet for *World Politics*, <https://webshare.princeton.edu/users/piirs/pdf/World%20Politics%20Style%20Sheet.pdf> (08-04-2012).



Noteworthy is the observation that many of these referees have already seen one or more of their articles or review articles being published in *World Politics* in the 2006 to 2011 period. *World Politics* states that all authors who are interested in submitting a review article should submit a proposal outlining how he or she intends to develop the topic at hand, including a list of books and other scholarly work that are to be included. According to the journal, a good review article should make a contribution in its own right to the literature on the themes selected. Given that the journal often commissions scholars to write a review article of recently published academic works, it may be the case that the editorial committee first turns to their database of scholars that helped refereeing articles for the journal in the past. This implies a tit-for-tat strategy: in order for an international relations scholar to get a review article published in *World Politics*, he or she first needs to enter the *World Politics* community. Upon closer inspection, 12 of the 18 review articles published between 2006 and 2011 were written by scholars who appeared on either the 2009 or the 2010 referee acknowledgement list, or on both. External referees thus do have opportunities to get their review articles published in *World Politics*, but the chances of being commissioned to write a review article are arguably much greater if a scholar already belongs to the *World Politics* community. However, too little is known to state with any certainty that the editorial committee favors scholars who have refereed submitted articles before, but the numbers at least justify raising the question.

The current editorial board of *World Politics* consists of seventeen permanent members and nine associate editors. Chairing the board is dr. Atul Kohli, a professor in International Relations at Princeton University originating from India, but educated in the United States. In his personal work, Kohli focuses on development issues, but as will be shown, his personal research interests do not influence the content of the journal. Kohli presides over an editorial board of three women and fourteen men, or 82-18 percent gender division. In the period 2006 to 2011, the editorial board has undergone a few changes in composition. One of these editorial shifts occurred between issue 59:3 (Apr. 2007) and issue 59:4 (Jul. 2007). The board went from twenty to sixteen scholars. This improved the gender division significantly: the number of women went up from four to six, among which three were new, but it is unlikely that this was the reason that initiated the transition. What the exact reasons were, however, remains unclear. The board changed again somewhere between issue 59:4 (Jul. 2007) and 63:2 (Apr. 2011). No online data is available for the period in



between. The second change implied a shift from sixteen to seventeen members, now including just three women. Since the 63:3 issue, the editorial board has remained unchanged.

The editorial committee has changed along with the editorial board. In the 59:3-59:4 transition, the committee shrank from nine to eight members. Three members left and two were welcomed, all of whom were male. In the 59:4-63:2 transition, the committee increased in number from eight to eleven permanent members. In addition, two male members left and five new members joined, two of whom were female. Given the shrinkage of both the editorial board and committee in the period between the issues of July 2007 and April 2011, it may be that the changes were caused by financial difficulties and subsequent cutbacks at the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies.

In the editorial committee, the gender division is with four women and seven men, or 64-36 percent, more equal than in the editorial board. The relative gender distribution 'editorial team', then, comes down to 75-25. The editorial committee, too, is chaired by dr. Atul Kohli. All members of the editorial committee are employed at Princeton University. The editorial board, however, consists of members from different U.S. universities and even from different countries. Two editors are currently employed in universities in the United Kingdom – the University of Oxford and the London School of Economics – one is based in Ireland at Trinity College in Dublin, and one in Switzerland at the University of Geneva. The remaining thirteen all teach and conduct research in the United States at nine different universities throughout the country. Not surprisingly for a journal with the magnitude of *World Politics*, the editors are based at all the top universities. They are employed at the universities of Princeton, Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Cornell and Michigan, and at Dartmouth College, UCLA and MIT.

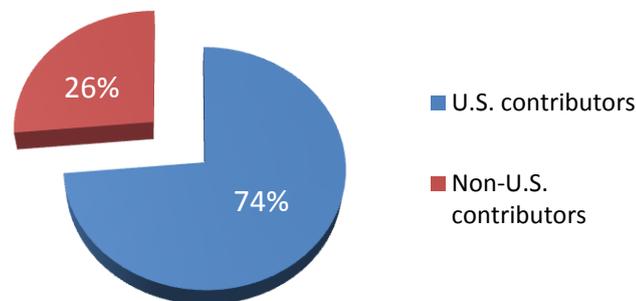
### **Author features: gender, region and Ivy League**

Over the 2006 to 2011 period, the works of 174 contributors have been published in *World Politics*. Some have made appearance more than once. Daniel Ziblatt holds the record with three publications, one of which was a review article, followed by Jason Brownlee, Marc L. Busch, Lars-Erik Cederman, Andy Baker, William C. Wohlforth and Cathie Jo Martin, who were all published twice in the six year period under investigation. All these authors have close connections to *World Politics*, for these are authors who are all an integral part of the *World Politics* community. To suggest that there is a relation between the likeliness of getting published and whether or not the scholar belongs to the *World Politics* realm as determined

by earlier efforts made may be stretching it, given the little data it would be based upon. However, like the publication of review articles, one cannot help but notice.

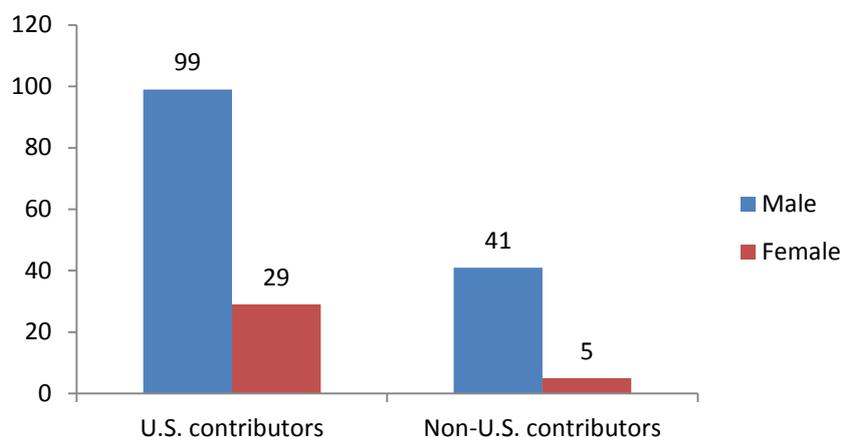
Filtering the author database for multiple contributions leaves 166 original authors, and it is this number that the following data is based upon. Of the 166 authors, 133 are male and 33 are female. This means that the relative gender distribution roughly comes down to 80 percent of the authors being male and 20 percent being female. A whole other picture emerges if the gender specifics of the total number of authors are categorized by the country in which they work. Before clarifying this, the following graphs first distinguish between ‘U.S. contributor’ and ‘non-U.S. contributor’.

**Graph 2: Origin of contributors**



In the 2006 to 2011 period, 128 authors were based in the United States, whether they worked at universities or somewhere else. 46 authors came from outside the United States. As the graph shows, this comes down to 74 percent of the authors being U.S.-based and 26 percent non-U.S. based.

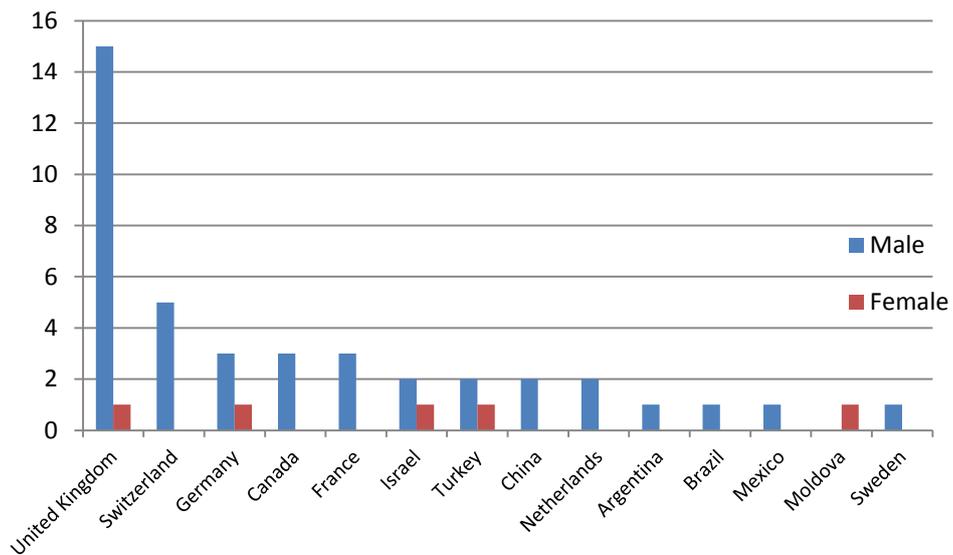
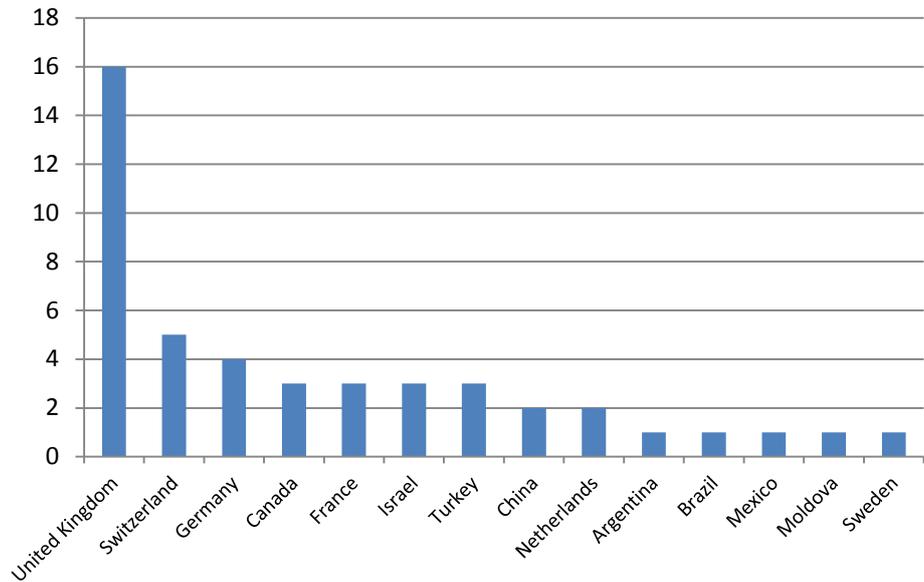
A sharp distinction between the gender division of U.S.-based and non-U.S.-based arises when the gender variable is included in the data. Gender division of authors from the United States is significantly more favorable to female contributors than among the non-U.S. contributors. Of the 46 non-U.S. contributors, 41 are male and 5 are female, while the gender division of the U.S. authors is 99 male against 29 female.

**Graph 3: Gender of contributors by region**


This means that 77 percent of all U.S. contributors are male, against 23 percent female. For all non-U.S. contributors, these percentages come down to 89 against 11 percent. There is thus a great difference between gender divisions inside and outside the United States. There seems to be no apparent reason why non-U.S. contributors are far more often male than female. The most likely reason is that non-U.S. contributors who submit an article are simply more often male than their American colleagues, and that these statistics have little to do with editorial preferences or limited publication opportunities for women. If there are more male than female scholars in political science and international relations, it can be expected, based on equal publishing opportunities, that more men will get published in *World Politics*. If indeed these statistics are representative of gender division in universities both inside and outside the United States, this would imply that in the United States there are relatively more female scholars in political science and international relations than there are outside the United States.

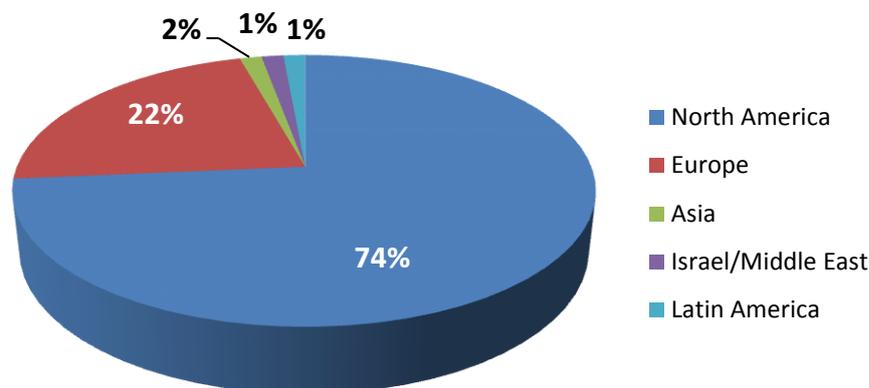
The division between U.S. and non-U.S. contributors is made, because American scholars dominate in *World Politics*. Since non-U.S. contributors encompass a very broad group with its own characteristics, this category is broken down and examined more closely. The 46 non-U.S. contributors are based in fourteen different countries spanning four regions. The United Kingdom leads the board with sixteen authors. Switzerland, more or less surprisingly, ranks second with five authors, followed by Germany (four). The graph below shows the total numbers of authors from the fourteen countries. These totals are then divided by gender.

Graph 4a and graph 4b: Origin of non-U.S. contributors



Considering the high diversity of countries and the low number of female contributors, these countries have been geographically grouped in five regions.

Graph 5: Origin of contributors by region



What becomes clear here, is that 96 percent of the authors that had their articles published in *World Politics* between 2006 and 2011 is based in the traditional Western World.<sup>13</sup> Returning to question raised in the introduction ‘how worldly is *World Politics*’, the answer in terms of the authors is: ‘not really’.

The group U.S.-based authors may not be as diverse as the group of non-U.S. authors, but it is a significantly large group that also deserves to be analyzed more thoroughly. One of the reasons behind the preponderance of American scholars in *World Politics* is the quality of the universities at which the authors are educated and are educating. U.S. contributors come from a wide range of universities: the 128 American scholars are based at 54 different universities in the United States. In total, 27 universities have provided more than one author. The universities of Columbia and Princeton are the top providers, each with eight different scholars. They are followed by Boston University, Harvard and the University of Texas at Austin. Each of these three has delivered six authors. Yale ranks third with five contributors.

What is interesting to see is whether *World Politics* confirms the predominance of the so-called Ivy League universities in the university ranking lists. The Ivy League consists of eight universities in the northeast of the United States, which consistently rank in the highest regions of most ranking lists. They are Dartmouth College, Harvard, Brown University, Yale, Cornell, Columbia, Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania. Two different ranking sites are used to compare data. One is the 2011 QS University Ranking, because it is one of the most comprehensive and well-known ranking projects. To improve accuracy, the list is specified to show the best universities in the world in terms of Political and International

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that Turkey, although arguably more a Middle Eastern than a European country, is treated here as a part of Europe.

Studies.<sup>14</sup> The second is the US News Ranking List of 2011, showing only American universities.<sup>15</sup> Much like journal rankings, the ranking of universities is or can be subjected to elaborative criticism, particularly on the issue of what factors are included that determine an institute's place on the list. Ranking lists are almost inherently misleading, and that is why the following conclusions should be seen as indicative, rather than definitive.

The table below shows the positions of the eight Ivy League universities, the number of authors appearing in *World Politics* between 2006 and 2011, and the QS ranking of the universities they are employed at.

Table 1

University	US News Ranking	QS Ranking	Number of contributors
Harvard University	1	1	6
Yale	3	6	5
Columbia	4	7	8
Princeton	2	8	8
UPenn	5*	22	2
Brown	16	16	3
Dartmouth College	11	51-100**	3
Cornell	15	51-100**	2
Average/total	6,5	-	37

\* Shared position.

\*\* QS stopped counting accurately after the fiftieth position. This does not mean that Dartmouth and Cornell are bad universities, but that they are qualitatively comparable to universities in the rest of the world.

In total, 37 of the 128 American contributors come from eight universities in the United States. This means that the eight Ivy League universities represent 29 percent, almost one third, of the total number of contributors to *World Politics* in the 2006 to 2011 period. The other 71 percent come from the 46 other universities. Put another way, the eight Ivy League universities have delegated an average of 4,625 authors, against a 1,978 author average of the non-Ivy League universities. This shows that in the author database of *World Politics*, as in the various university ranking lists, the Ivy League institutions are far better represented than the non-Ivy League universities. The authors that had their articles published *World Politics*

<sup>14</sup> QS World University Rankings by Subject 2011 – Social Sciences, Political and International Studies. See: <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2011/subject-rankings/social-sciences/politics-international-studies> (08-04-2012).

<sup>15</sup> US News National University Rankings 2011. See: <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities> (08-04-2012).

in the specific period under investigation thus form a representative picture of the qualitative differences of American universities.

The Ivy League universities accounted for eight of the 27 universities that provided more than contributor to *World Politics* between 2006 and 2011. But what to think of the nineteen non-Ivy League universities? The universities of Boston and Texas, Austin, for instance, both delegated six authors, the same amount as Harvard. To show how well some of the non-Ivy League universities did in terms of providing authors that submit publishable articles to *World Politics*, the following table is made up according to the same principle as table 1.

Table 2

University	US News Ranking	QS Ranking	Number of contributors
Boston	53	51-100**	6
Emory	20	51-100**	2
Texas, Austin	45	33	6
MIT	5*	13	3
Stanford	5*	7	3
Georgetown	22	23	3
Michigan, Ann Arbor	28	17	2
UCLA	25	11	4
George Washington	50	51-100**	4
Ohio State	55	51-100**	3
Average/total	30,8	-	36

\* Shared position.

\*\* As in table one, this rank does not mean that these universities are have a bad reputation, but that they are roughly comparable to the best universities in the rest of the world.

This is a selection of ten of the nineteen non-Ivy League universities at which contributors who have published two or more articles in *World Politics* between 2006 and 2011 are employed. Apart from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, these universities all provided three or more different authors. The remaining nine universities all provided two authors, and for the purpose of clarity, they are not included here.

As can be seen, these ten universities roughly provided as much authors to *World Politics* as the eight Ivy Leaguers, but at the same time, there ranking in both lists is to a great

extent lower. The average US News rank of the Ivy League universities is 6,5 against 30,8 of the ten selected non-Ivy League universities. Furthermore, six of the ten non-Ivy League universities rank lower than the lowest accurately ranked Ivy Leaguer at place 22 in the QS Ranking, i.e. the University of Pennsylvania. Therefore, according to these standards, the ten non-Ivy League universities collectively cannot compete with the eight Ivy Leaguers. However, the 36 contributors of table 2 represent 28 percent of all U.S. contributors, roughly the same as the eight Ivy Leaguers. On average, the ten universities at which these scholars have delegated an average of 3,6 authors against the 4,625 of the Ivy League universities. In conclusion, there certainly is a difference between Ivy League universities and non-Ivy League universities, but in the six volumes of *World Politics* that are examined in this paper, the contributors of the non-Ivy League universities barely fall short of Ivy League contributors in terms of impact in *World Politics*.

### **Articles features: length, foci and methodology**

In the six years between 2006 and 2011, *World Politics* published a total of 115 articles. Dividing this by the number of issues, this means that on average, an issue of *World Politics* consists of five articles per issue or twenty articles per volume. On its website, *World Politics* has published a document in which it makes clear which requirements all prospected articles should meet.<sup>16</sup> All submissions, both research and review articles, should not exceed the word limit of 12.500 words, including notes but excluding all graphs, tables and appendixes.

The journal is fairly consistent when it comes to the number of articles per issue. The maximum amount of seven articles occurred in the only discernible theme issue of *World Politics*, the 61:1 issue of January 2009. On two occasions, in 2006 and 2010, one issue consisted of only four articles. When it comes to review articles, however, the journal is less consistent. In total, eighteen of the 115 published pieces were review articles. Review articles average 5,2 reviewed works per volume, the minimum being two and the maximum being nine. It happened twice that two review articles were published in one issue, and on six occasions, no review article was published at all. In particular, there seems to have been a ‘review article drought’ in 2010 and the first half of 2011: for four consecutive issues, no review article was published. One explanation for the drought would be that no qualitatively

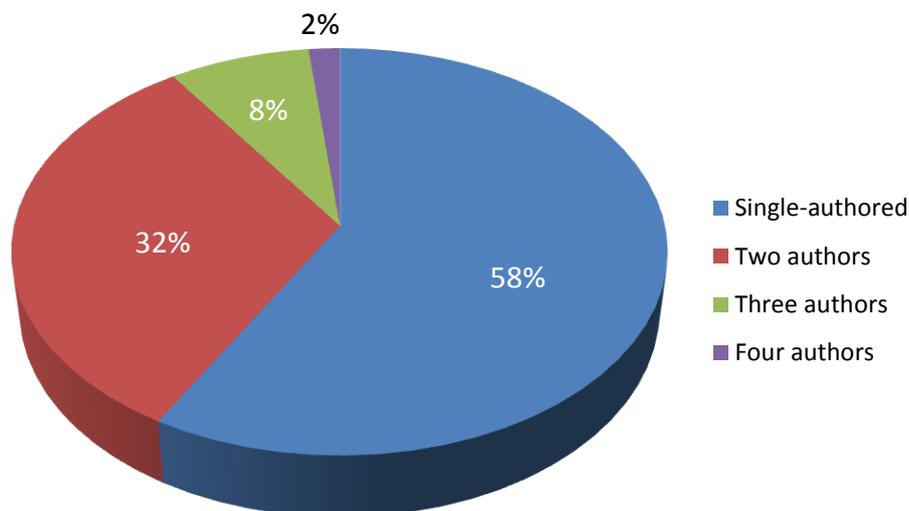
---

<sup>16</sup> World Politics’ description of the guidelines for contributors, last updated in May 2011. See: <https://webspaces.princeton.edu/users/piirs/pdf/Guidelines%20for%20Contributors%20October%202011.pdf> (08-04-2012).

acceptable reviews were submitted. As a result, the average number of review articles per volume is three.

On many occasions, two or more authors collaborated and published one article together. While most papers are single-authored, the journal published a significant amount of multi-authored pieces of up to four contributors per article. The graph below respectively shows the distribution of the number of contributors per article. It shows that 58 percent of the articles is single-authored, while 42 percent is multi-authored. These percentages include both research and review articles, but it should be noted that these figures are not representative for the review articles. Four of the eighteen review articles that have been published over the six years under scrutiny were multi-authored, which comes down to 78 percent being single-authored. This is not strange, since review articles are often commissioned to one scholar, but the discrepancy between research and review articles in terms of the number of authors is significant.

**Graph 6: Number of authors per article**

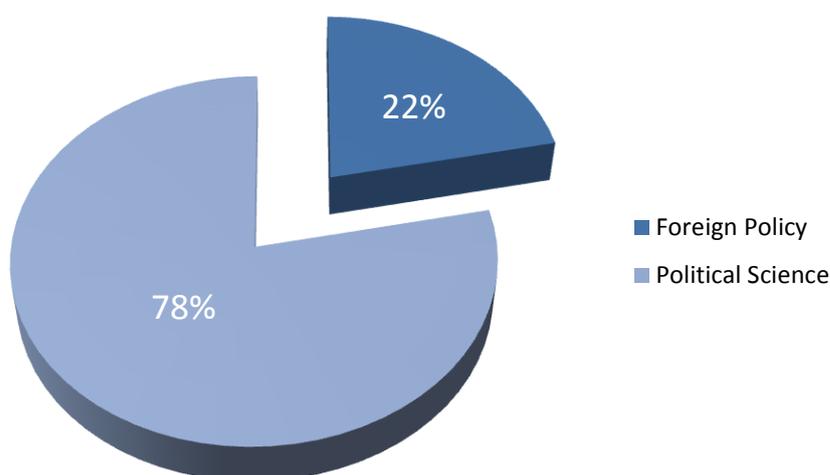


*World Politics* portrays itself as a journal that covers all fields of political science and foreign policy. Although these two categorizations have some overlap, preliminary glancing through the article titles learns that *World Politics* greatly leans toward political science, and virtually neglects to do justice to the many foreign policy topics there are. To put this to the test, each article has been examined and labeled either ‘PS’ for political science or ‘FP’ for foreign policy. The overlap of the two makes this categorization perilous and it is certainly prone to

fierce criticism. However, it is used as an indicator rather than conclusive evidence that *World Politics* does not pay much attention to foreign policy.

In order to make this categorization, the following definition of foreign policy is applied when labeling the articles. The following definition is my own, and is intentionally kept broad. Foreign policy encompasses all policies and other political means of identifiable actors, state and non-state, that are aimed at all actors that lie outside its own borders and boundaries. In other words, foreign policy implies all political means that from a certain actor radiate outward. The graph below shows the relative amount of articles that to some extent can be labeled ‘foreign policy analysis’.

**Graph 7: Categorization of article subjects**

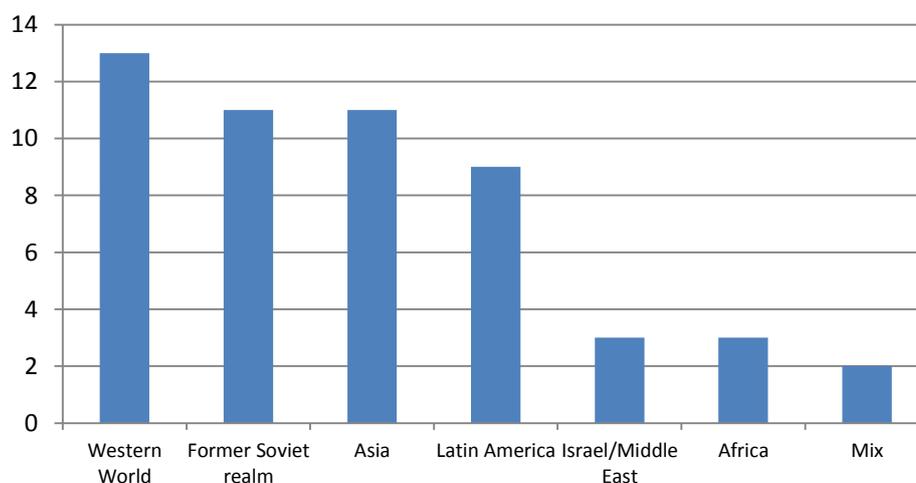


When the definition of what constitutes as foreign policy is narrowed down to include the reasonable thesis that only states and state-like actors can have explicit foreign policies, not much is left of the 22 percent. This is hardly too strict a definition, for in order to have a foreign policy, an actor must have an identifiable ‘domestic’ or ‘internal’ realm. That is why, in a strict reading of the proposed adjustment to the definition, even international organizations do not have ‘foreign’ policies. Regardless of the discussion whether to have a stricter definition of what constitutes as foreign policy or not, it can safely be concluded that for a journal that advertizes itself by stressing it covers all fields of political science and foreign policy, the articles it publishes pay disproportionately little attention to foreign policy and instead focus much on political science and its subfields. It is all the more painful that

among IR-scholars, the journal is believed to be a foreign policy, rather than a political science journal.<sup>17</sup>

When inquiring the geographical orientation of the articles published between 2006 and 2011, a significant amount has a strong and identifiable regional focus. Of the total 115 articles, 61 articles do not have a specific region on which they focus while 54 pieces do. ‘Region’ in this sense may be one of four possibilities. It may imply a specific country, like São Tome and Principe; it may imply a number of countries, like England, Denmark and Sweden; it may also refer to an actual region, like Eastern Europe; or it might even imply a continent, like Latin-America. This way, 38 regional subjects can be discerned from the 54 articles that have a specific regional focus. Particularly popular are the regions Eastern Europe, Latin America, Brazil and Russia, each respectively starring in five, four, three and three articles. In order to make sense of the 38 discernible regions, each has been categorized by geography.<sup>18</sup> This way, the following picture emerges.

**Graph 8: Regional foci of 54 articles**



To return to the introductory question ‘how worldly is world politics?’, it is safe to say that, concerning the distribution of the articles’ regional foci, *World Politics* has quite an open mind, but is not without regional bias. The Western world provides the most ground for articles, followed by the former Soviet sphere of influence. This region ranks second, because it provides researchers with the opportunity to study processes of democratization in countries and economies that experience a discernible paradigmatic transition. While Asia is studied for various reasons, the countries in Latin America are, deciding by the specific topic

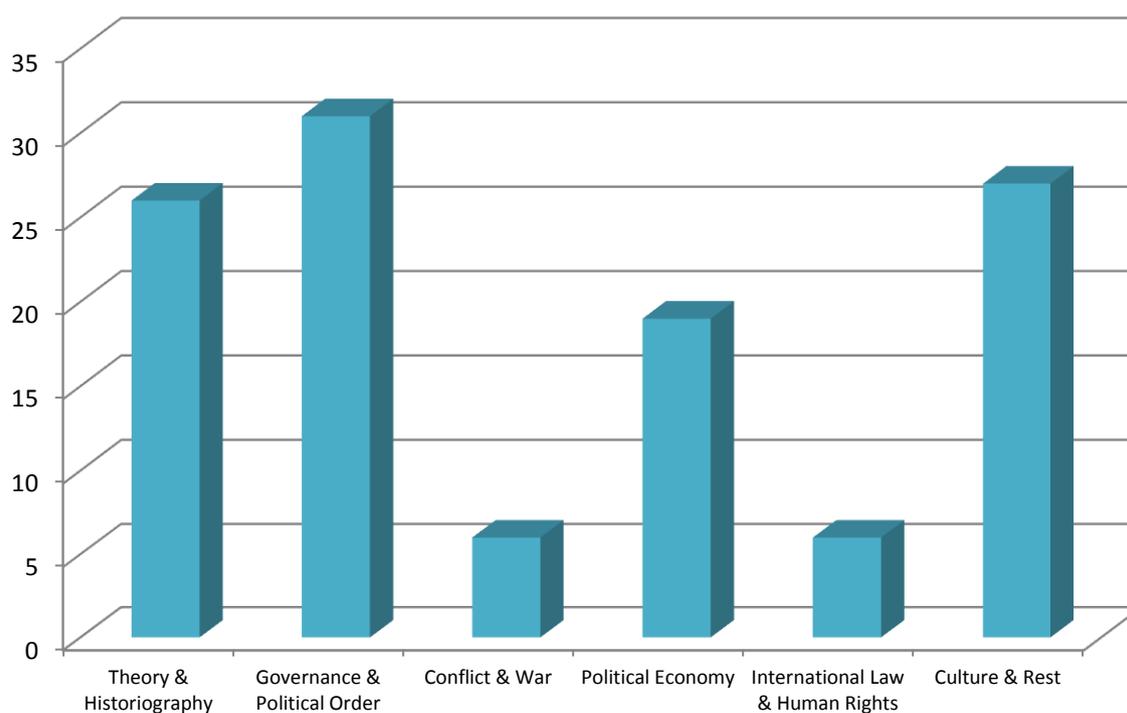
<sup>17</sup> Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge 2009) 97.

<sup>18</sup> For the sake of argument, the Middle East is considered a continent.

of the article, especially studies for economical purposes. However, two of the three remaining categories are reasons to argue that *World Politics* is not as ‘worldly’ as the name might suggest: Africa and the Middle East, two regions that have made frequent appearances both on the news and in studies of international relations over the last years, are fairly underrepresented in the journal’s articles.

With regard to the articles of *World Politics*, two more variables are worth analyzing. The first concerns the themes of the published articles. Six categories have been distinguished: theory and historiography, government and political order, conflict and war, political economy, law and human rights, and culture and the rest. Graphically, the articles themes of *World Politics* look as follows.

**Graph 9: Division of articles by theme**



A few things are notable in this graph. The first is the high amount of articles focusing on government and political order. This is not surprising, both because the theme is very broad and because it is the explicit focus of the journal. Subthemes that fall under ‘government and political order’ are, specifically but not exhaustively, democracy and democratization, federalism, authoritarianism/dictatorship/autocracy, European integration, international

organizations, leadership and governance. Many of the articles that have been found to be about foreign policy are included in this category as well.

The second aspect that stands out is the low amount of focus on conflict and war. Some of the published articles are concerned with conflict mediation and management; some focus case studies of war, but these articles are fairly rare. This is not strange, considering the low number of regional foci on the Middle East and Israel.

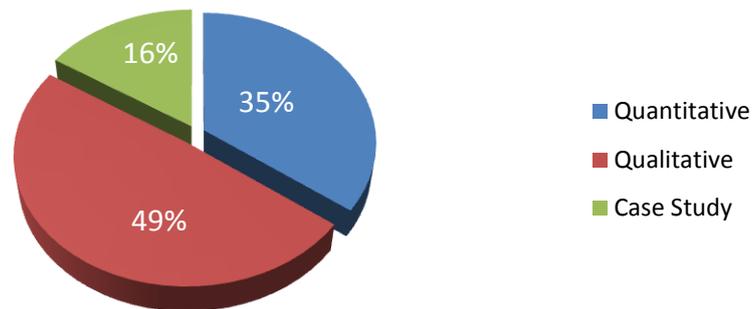
A third noticeable aspect is the height of the ‘Culture & Rest’ column. The first five categories consist of articles that can be expected to be found in the journal. Because the magnitude of the articles that are *not* found to fit these labels is found to be too limited to give them their own category, they have for the sake of clarity been dubbed ‘rest’. These articles deal with such subjects as elections, political parties, campaign strategy, education policy, immigration and unemployment, each represented in only one or two articles. The same goes for articles on subjects that arguably *would* provide valid independent categories, such as ethnicity, identity and religion: these subjects too are only found in one or two articles. Including them as independent categories would greatly distort the picture above, and therefore the limited numbers of articles on these topics do not justify them being further elaborated on. However, the height of the ‘Culture & Rest’-column does provide a valuable conclusion. The significant amount of articles with subjects that do not necessarily fall into the five main categories, represented through the height of the rest-column shows that World Politics is creative and open minded in the sense that it is willing to publish articles on subjects that are ‘internationalized’ by the authors, rather than being intrinsically international.

The last aspect concerning the articles is the methodology that is used. Three methods are discerned based on *Models, Numbers and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations* by Detlef F. Sprinz and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias (eds.).<sup>19</sup> Following their terminology, all articles are labeled ‘Qualitative’, ‘Quantitative’ or ‘Case Study’. One of the 115 articles is intentionally left out, because it explicitly presents itself as an article that makes use of all three research methods. The following, then, is a representation of research methodologies as employed in 114 articles from six volumes of *World Politics*.

---

<sup>19</sup> Detlef F. Sprinz and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias (eds.), *Models, Numbers, and Cases. Methods for Studying International Relations* (Ann Arbor 2004).

**Graph 10: Relative distribution of applied methodology**



Of the 114 articles examined, 56 authors employed a qualitative method of analysis, 40 used a quantitative method, and the remaining 18 articles were first and foremost case studies.

### Case study: Unipolarity

Between 2006 and 2011, *World Politics* published one discernible theme issue, or as the journal calls it a ‘special issue’. Issue 61:1 of January 2009 is dedicated to the theme ‘unipolarity’. Under the guidelines for contributors on the Princeton Institute’s website, it reads that all prospective guest contributors should submit a draft proposal that presents the main argument, idea or debate that will be developed by an issue of a volume. However, it is unknown who of the authors, if any, submitted the idea of dedicating an issue to this theme. *World Politics* did reserve quite some space for the issue; it is remarkably long. It contains seven articles written by international relations heavyweights, such as Jack Snyder, Robert Jervis, Martha Finnemore, William C. Wohlforth and Stephen M. Walt. Most of the authors are outspoken proponents of the international relations theory of structural Realism, which is, given the theme, not strange. Martha Finnemore is the most evident exception, favoring rather social constructivist topics and methods in her works. The choice to highlight unipolarity here is based not on the representativeness of what *World Politics* publishes on, but rather because the seven articles in this issue are the best examples of foreign policy analyses there are to be found in the journal.

The three authors of the introductory article describe the issue as a ‘systematic inquiry into the logic and dynamics of unipolarity. Its starting point is the distinctive distribution of capabilities among states in the contemporary global system. The central question driving our inquiry is straightforward: to what extent – and how – does this redistribution of capabilities matter for patterns of international politics?’.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, it reads that the thesis all contributors work with is that ‘the end of the Cold War did not return the world to multipolarity. Instead the United States – already materially preeminent – became more so. We currently live in a one superpower world’.<sup>21</sup> The key to ascribing the term ‘unipolarity’ to an interstate system lies in the premise that one actor has enough power to subject the other actors in the system to its will, or that one actor is unrivaled. Being unrivaled often implies that one actor such an amount military force at its disposal that it dominates the other actors in the system. To give a clearer understanding of the debate on unipolarity, the article introduces the core questions as being ‘What is the character of domination in a unipolar distribution? If world politics is always a mixture of force and consent, does unipolarity

---

<sup>20</sup> G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno and William C. Wohlforth, ‘Introduction: Unipolarity, State Behavior, and System Consequences’, *World Politics* 61:1 (Jan. 2009) 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, 1.

remove restraints and alter the mix in favor of force? Is a unipolar world likely to be build around rules and institutions or based more on the unilateral exercise of unipolar power? To what extent and in what ways can a unipolar state translate its formidable capabilities into political influence?<sup>22</sup>

The findings in the special issue ‘ultimately take us back to basic questions in the study of international relations’.<sup>23</sup> Since the authors all approach the theme differently, it is representative for the contribution to the debate of this special issue of *World Politics* to conclude on the core arguments of the authors by looking at what *they* conclude. However, due to space restrictions, this paragraph will select three of the six substantive articles for closer examination. First, William Wohlforth concludes by suggesting that unipolar systems witness less violence and are theoretically less prone to violence than other forms in international orders. In addition, the most dangerous aspect about unipolar systems, is when they shift back to bipolar or multipolar systems. It is then that international systems are most unstable, and therefore, ‘the route back to bipolarity or multipolarity is ‘fraught with danger’.<sup>24</sup> Second, and in line with her social constructivist outlook, Martha Finnemore argues that like any social system, ‘the one constructed by a unipole is bound to contain contradictions’.<sup>25</sup> It is the hypocrisy that underlies always some of the unipole’s actions and words that will eventually undermine its legitimacy in such a way that it will be corrected by the rest of the system. ‘Balancing contradictions and maintaining the legitimacy of its power’, Finnemore concludes, ‘requires at least as much attention from a unipoles as building armies or bank accounts’.<sup>26</sup> In contrast to the constructivist Finnemore, Stephen Walt is a clear example of what constitutes as a structural Realist. In his contribution to the issue, he focuses on the shaping of alliances in a unipolarly structured system. He argues that ‘if a unipole is geographically close to weaker neighbors, if it is openly committed to imposing its preferences on others, and, most importantly, if it is willing to use force to do so, then (...) the unipole will be much less likely to retain wide-ranging allied support’.<sup>27</sup>

In conclusion, the debate on unipolarity is multi-faceted and can be approached from different angles, even without colliding with scholars who have a different opinion. The

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, 27.

<sup>24</sup> William C. Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War’, *World Politics* 61:1 (Jan. 2009) 57.

<sup>25</sup> Martha Finnemore, ‘Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn’t All It’s Cracked Up to Be’, *World Politics* 61:1 (Jan. 2009) 84-85.

<sup>26</sup> Idem, 85.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen M. Walt, ‘Alliances in a Unipolar World’, *World Politics* 61:1 (Jan. 2009) 120.



inclusion of such an outspoken ‘anti-Realist’ as Martha Finnemore in a debate on a subject that has been as colonized by Realists as unipolarity only fosters academic progress. It has served *World Politics* well to dedicate an issue to this topic, specifically because it offered to be a platform of a debate by authors with very different academic backgrounds, preferences and research interests.



## Conclusion

*World Politics* is a highly diverse journal with a particular open mind. It is open to contributions on all kinds of political topics and written by all kinds of academic scholars. The diversity is visible in the gender composition of both the editorial team and the collective of authors, although gender distribution among non-U.S. contributors significantly differs from that of their U.S. counterparts. The consistently high ranks of the journal in various international ranking lists indicate, not to say prove, that *World Politics* is among the best journals in the field of political science. Its open mind, combined with its high-profile editorial team and strict procedures for submission and publication, prevent the journal from having disturbingly influential vices.

However, this does not mean that the journal does not have any vices or biases. Male scholars are much better represented than their female colleagues. Of the total number of authors, only 20 percent are women. Furthermore, U.S. scholars still dominate the total of published authors. Almost 74 percent of the authors is based in the United States, and as much as 96 percent comes is based in the West. Only 17 percent of the authors is based outside and the United States and the United Kingdom. A particular vice is the lack of articles focused on foreign policy rather than political science. For a journal that portrays itself as highlighting both political science and foreign policy alike, the articles it has published between 2006 and 2011 pay remarkably little attention to the latter and favor the former. This is, for instance, visible in the low number of articles on the themes of Conflict & War and International Law & Human Rights. In addition, the Middle Eastern and African regions are virtually neglected in the articles with a particular regional focus. These articles instead favor analyzing the Western world, the former Soviet realm and Latin America. All in all, it is safe to conclude that while *World Politics* is a highly regarded and prestigious journal in the field of political science and international relations, but in terms of author origin and article subjects, it is not as ‘worldly’ as its name suggests it to be.