Editorial

Looking back... and looking forward

Hans Keman and Marc Hooghe

Acta Politica (2006) 41, 1–3. doi:10.1057/palgrave.ap.5500145

In 1967 *Acta Politica* was launched by the Dutch Political Science Association (NKWP) as a journal by, and mainly for, Dutch political scientists. Although it regularly contained articles in English, it remained primarily oriented toward academics in political science in the Netherlands. It gained recognition abroad as a journal to refer to for Dutch politics.

In 1997, the Dutch Political Science Association made the decision to publish the journal entirely in the English language, vastly increasing its visibility and accessibility outside the Netherlands and Belgium. This decision did not go uncontested and met considerable scepticism. Admittedly, at first this change of policy rather signified that mainly Dutch authors published their research in English. Manuscripts were more often than not reviewed by their colleagues at another Dutch university, and merely read by a Dutch audience.

Since 2003, the international publishing house, Palgrave Macmillan, has published the journal. This step not only marked a continuation of the internationally oriented policy, but also has had a substantial effect on improving the overall quality of *Acta Politica's* appearance and circulation. Finally, in 2003 the editorship was extended with a Belgian colleague — Marc Hooghe — and the double-blind reviewing process was intensified. At the same time, an international advisory board was recruited, consisting of respected academics from various European and North American universities and all fields of political science.

The editors, the publisher and the editorial board are proud to announce that the policy to internationalize the journal has actually paid off: as this 2006 volume, *Acta Politica* will be indexed by the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI). As is well known, the Institute for Scientific Information is quite selective in its decision-making process with respect to the inclusion of journals. In fact, worldwide only 79 political science journals are presently included in the SSCI. We therefore feel particularly honoured to be included in this index, and we see it as a sign of appreciation, not only of the editors, but in particular for the quality of the work of our authors, and of our predecessors as editors of this journal.

The inclusion of *Acta Politica* in the SSCI signifies therefore not only the apparent quality *per se*, but is also — in our view — a recognition of the policy of internationalization pursued by the Dutch Political Science Association. It

certainly reinforces the apparent need for a journal like *Acta Politica*. In particular, in contemporary Europe this need is easy to comprehend: on the one hand, the pressure for younger professionals in particular is far greater than it used to be (publish or perish); on the other hand, the development of and within the European Union is an intellectual challenge for political scientists that is conducive to more European-focused research clearly in need of an international outlet.

As set out in the Editorial in Volume 39(1) we consciously chose to develop *Acta Politica* as a broadly oriented journal that would function as an international platform for contributions covering the various sub-disciplinary fields that can be distinguished in contemporary political science. Apparently this endeavour has fulfilled considerable demand notwithstanding the prevalence of more specialist journals in our discipline. Indeed, the spread of submissions demonstrates this and also allows us to produce issues that are of interest to many, inviting the reader to transcend her or his field of expertise.

In our editorial policy, we do not favour certain approaches and topics over others. On the contrary, we welcome all serious academic forms of political science. For example, recently a Special Issue on 'Empirical Approaches to Deliberative Democracy' (Volume 40: 1 and 2) was published in which students of democracy from Europe, the United States and Australia discussed a hotly contested theme, bringing empirical research results to a current debate within normative theory. Submissions to *Acta Politica* originate from all over the world discussing politics in Africa, Latin America as well as within single countries; various approaches are presented and quite distinctive methods and data are used. We will continue this broad-based approach in the future.

We feel safe to say that in recent years *Acta Politica* has acquired a distinct European profile. This does not imply, of course, that we do not welcome submissions from outside Europe, on the contrary. A careful observer will notice, however, that political science as an academic discipline clearly has a different flavour when it is being practiced in Europe, than when it is being practiced in the United States. We expect that this European identity will even become stronger in the years ahead. The European Commission has firm plans to install a European Research Council, and this not only implies that more money will become available for European scientists, it also means that another step is taken in the development towards a European-based approach to science.

Self-evidently, we are strongly in favour of any international intellectual exchange. However, as Pippa Norris has already argued (Norris, 1997), there is still too much one-way traffic across the Atlantic, and as a result the European outlook does not always receive the attention it actually deserves. We believe this is a loss for academics working on both sides of the Atlantic, because the paradigms being developed in Europe, and the topics of interest, are relevant for a much larger and global audience.

Developing our European profile therefore does not mean that we close ourselves off from the rest of the world. European political science should be open to an international exchange of ideas, not only with our colleagues from across the Atlantic, but also increasingly with our colleagues from Asia where academic political science is rapidly expanding. The European perspective therefore will receive continued attention in our journal, but with an open eye to what goes on in the rest of the world. An example of this direction is, for instance, the forthcoming Special Issue that has been commissioned by us on the topic of 'Euroskepticism and Identity'. The guest editors are based in both regions: Europe and America, as are the contributors.

Finally, the editors hope to enhance this perspective and the future quality of the journal by a further improvement of the acceptance rate and varieties of themes, topics and approaches in *Acta Politica*. The coverage by SSCI will certainly be an accelerator of this policy as we expect to receive even more submissions that allow us to remain rigorous in the selection of articles.

Furthermore, it implies that to be published in this journal will enhance the chances to reach a wide academic audience.

To us all this implies that we will not only continue our present editorial policy, but also to develop further initiatives. Among these are to regularly publish review articles on themes and topics that are widely discussed within our discipline or concern recent approaches that are contested in Europe and beyond. In addition we will continue to include Special Issues and — last but not least — the book review section (focusing on international literature with room for the politics in Europe and of the 'Low Countries'). We are convinced that *Acta Politica* will become an even more important platform for serious research and debate in the near future.

Reference

- Norris, P. (1997) 'Towards a more cosmopolitan political science?' *European Journal of Political Research* 30(1): 17–34.