

# Scholarly attention and the limited internationalization of US social science

**Charles Kurzman**

University of North Carolina, USA

## **Abstract**

What parts of the world does American social science consider worthy of scholarly attention? Analyzing the geographic focus of more than 2 million bibliographic records of journal articles, books, and dissertations, the study finds a weak trend toward internationalization of US social-scientific attention over the past half-century. Moreover, the share of scholarly attention devoted to particular regions has remained surprisingly stable over this period, with Western Europe remaining the primary focus of internationally-oriented work. Shifts in US national security priorities, international trade, student demand, and demographic characteristics account for only a small portion of the variation in the rate of social-scientific publications on world regions, lending credibility to the view that scholarly attention is shaped in large part by inertia that is built into academic institutions and cultures.

## **Keywords**

International studies, scholarly attention, social science, United States

The social-scientific study of world regions has been a source of concern in the United States for more than half a century. ‘Insufficient’ US scholarship on the rest of the world was the motivation for the establishment of the current system of federally-funded university centers for international and area studies in 1958 (Clowse, 1981; NDEA, 1958: 1581). Two decades later, a presidential commission reported degradation rather than progress in international studies: ‘We are profoundly alarmed by what we have found: a serious deterioration in this country’s language and research capacity, at a time when an increasingly

## **Corresponding author:**

Charles Kurzman, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, CB#3210, 155 Hamilton Hall, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3210, USA.

Email: kurzman@unc.edu

hazardous international military, political and economic environment is making unprecedented demands on America's resources, intellectual capacity and public sensitivity' (Perkins, 1979: 1). Almost three decades after that, the National Research Council reported, 'A pervasive lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages threatens the security of the United States as well as its ability to compete in the global marketplace and produce an informed citizenry' (O'Connell and Norwood, 2007: 1).

Within the social sciences as well, there has been persistent concern about the relative neglect of international studies, especially the study of regions outside of the North Atlantic world (Miller-Idriss et al., forthcoming). Periodic self-critiques of American social-scientific parochialism have appeared in geography (Kaplan and Mapes, 2015: 36–37; Koelsch, 2001: 269), history (Chakrabarty, 2007; Manning, 2003), political science (Hull, 1999; Munck and Snyder, 2007; Sigelman and Gadbois, 1983), psychology (Arnett, 2008; Heinrich et al., 2010), and sociology (Aldrich, 2009; Armer, 1987; Hughes, 1961; Kennedy, 2014: esp. Ch. 5; Kennedy and Centeno, 2007; Lie, 1995; Moore, 1966; Poulson and Campbell, 2010). The American Sociological Association convened a task force on the subject more than a decade ago (Task Force on the International Focus of American Sociology, 2003), but most of its recommendations, such as a standing committee on international sociology and subsidies for foreign scholars' participation at conferences, have not been adopted.

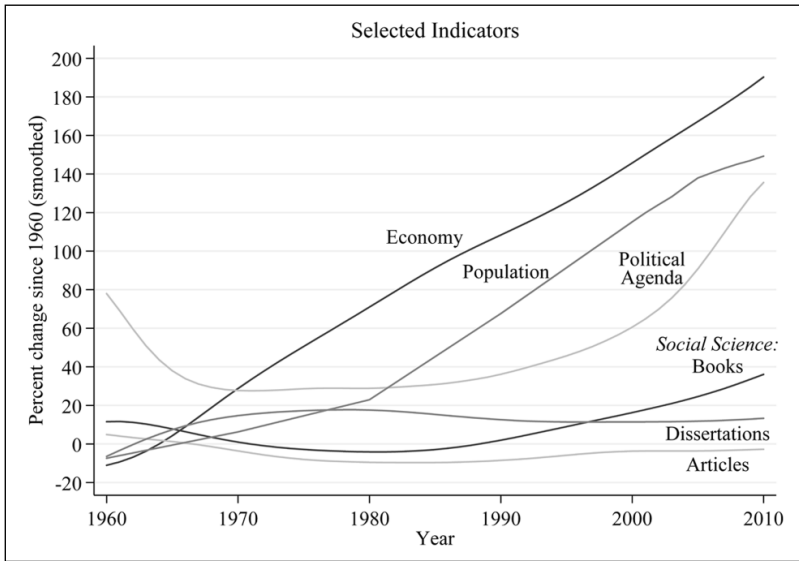
Examining bibliographic data from more than 2 million US social-scientific journal articles, books, and dissertations, this article finds that coverage of different world regions has remained remarkably stable over the past half-century. US social science has been slow to incorporate the study of foreign lands, and even slower to incorporate the study of world regions beyond Western Europe.

As shown in Figure 1, attention to international topics in US social science has grown unevenly over the past half-century. Among books, the proportion rose almost 40%; among dissertations, under 20%; among articles in top-10 US social science journals, the proportion remained almost unchanged. During the same period, by contrast, many other aspects of US society have internationalized at a far greater pace. International trade, as a percentage of gross domestic product (World Bank, 2014), has almost tripled in the past half-century; the share of immigrants in the US population (Ruggles et al., 2010) has more than doubled; and a crude indicator of political attention to international affairs, the percent of paragraphs in the presidential State of the Union address that mention foreign places (geocoded from texts at the American Presidency Project, 2013) has also doubled.

This article asks: How well do major theoretical approaches to the sociology of social science, such as the interests of capital and the state, demographic characteristics of academia, and academic institutions and cultures, account for the observed patterns of scholarly attention to different world regions?

## **Theoretical approaches to scholarly attention**

The concept of 'attention' is foundational in the field of psychology, where it is often treated as a universal human phenomenon (for overviews, see Johnson and Proctor, 2004; Styles, 2006). Other studies have sought to historicize the concept, such as Crary's (1999) research on the development of modern disciplines and subjectivities of attention



**Figure 1.** Internationalization in the United States: social science and other arenas, 1960–2010. Note: Trends are pictured with Lowess smoothing, which accounts for 1960 figures that appear to be non-zero.

in the 19th century and various studies heralding the formation of an ‘attention economy’ in the late 20th century (Davenport and Beck, 2001; Franck, 1998; Goldhaber, 1997).

In the scholarly arena, as in other fields, ‘researchers invest their own attention in order to obtain the attention of others’ (Franck, 2002: 3). At the individual level, the concept of scholarly attention is intended to resonate with the choices that each researcher makes in selecting and prioritizing projects within the limits of time, resources, and training. Scholars may view these decisions as investments toward future career pay-offs, or as personal commitments to a research agenda, or through some other lens – this project is not designed to distinguish among individual motivations. Rather, this article examines the concept of scholarly attention at the macro level, focusing the patterns of research priorities adopted by communities of scholars – the shifting sense of what topics are important enough to warrant publication in a major journal. In the field of biomedical research, for example, a recent study examined the relative number of scientific articles on different medical conditions, and found that attention was in part a product of the toll each disease took in the country where the research was produced (though negatively related to the global toll of the disease) (Evans et al., 2014). No comparable study has attempted to analyze geographic attention in social science, operationalizing and comparing theoretical approaches from the sociology of social-scientific knowledge.

Within the sociology of social science, we may identify five distinct approaches to scholarly attention. Three of these approaches account for shifts in academia by looking at broader trends, including capitalism (Gouldner, 1970), state interests (Foucault, 1977; Useem, 1976a, 1976b), and student demand (Riesman, 1980). A fourth approach focuses on the characteristics of researchers themselves, such as their class position (Gramsci,

1971), gender (Harding, 2004), or community background (Asante, 1988; Mignolo, 2012). A fifth approach, treating academia as at least partially autonomous from external and demographic influences, emphasizes the institutions (Turner and Turner, 1990), fields (Bourdieu, 1988), or cultures (Lamont, 2009) that academics themselves have constructed, which privilege certain sorts of research questions and devalue others.

### *Capitalism*

The first of these theoretical approaches emphasizes the role of scholarship in the service of capital. The connection between business interests and academia dates back to the establishment of the modern university in the late 19th century (Newfield, 2003; Sanderson, 1972), but it has become the subject of special focus over the past quarter-century, with the rise of the ‘knowledge economy’ and declining public funding for higher education (Bok, 2003; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; World Bank, 2002). With regard to international studies, in particular, the expansion of internationalization education on US university campuses coincided with the rise of economic globalization in the late 20th century, arguably in order to produce cosmopolitan managers for multinational corporations (Miyoshi and Harootunian, 2002). In other countries, as well, universities have sought to position themselves as necessary institutions for national agendas in an era of global competition (Sidhu, 2006; Spring, 2009).

### *State interests*

Another explanation for the scholarly focus on world regions holds that academia serves the interests of the state, in addition to – or in lieu of – the interests of capital. This is the crux of critiques from the left, which bemoan the state’s influence (Chomsky, 1978; Said, 1994), and of critiques from the right, which complain that academics are ineffective in their role as national security experts (Kramer, 2001; Martin and Neal, 2001). Both sides agree that national security interests were the explicit goal of the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which pioneered federal funding for higher education in the United States (Clowse, 1981) and remains a significant source for educational expansion in international and area studies (Ruther, 2002). The dominant paradigm in American social science at the time, modernization theory, fit the optimistic, interventionist vision that animated mid-century US foreign policy (Gilman, 2003), and the US government’s particular security preoccupations of the Cold War jump-started area studies programs, especially Russian studies (Engerman, 2009). In addition, federal programs helped to internationalize traditional disciplines. Prior to the 1960s, for example, few history departments dedicated specific faculty lines for specialists on regions outside of the United States and Western Europe; by 1980, most of them did (Manning, 2003: 153).

### *Student demand*

An alternative approach emphasizes the role of student interests, rather than capitalist or state interests, in shaping scholarly attention. As higher education has come to treat students increasingly as customers (Krachenberg, 1972; Swagler, 1978), course offerings,

faculty hiring, and potentially even research agendas may be affected by student demand for certain topics (Kirp, 2003). For example, the increased numbers of Asian-American students at US universities have been a major source of support for emerging programs of Asian studies (Chang, 1999), and ‘students from Southeast Asian American communities who attend academic institutions in the United States now make up an important part of the academic constituency of Southeast Asian studies’ (Bonura and Sears, 2007: 18). Beyond connections associated with national origins, student demand has helped to boost course offerings and career prospects for specialists in Middle East and Islamic studies in recent years (Kurzman and Ernst, 2012).

### *Demographics*

Rather than look outside of academia, a fourth approach to social-scientific attention focuses on the demographics of academia itself. Changes in immigration policy in the 1960s have made the US population significantly more diverse than a half-century ago, with growing communities from many world regions. These migrants and their children have reshaped the undergraduate and graduate student populations at American universities (Aud et al., 2010; Gray, 1996; Thurgood et al., 2006), as well as the demographics of social science. Not all scholars choose to study their country or region of origin, of course, but a ‘large and growing reservoir of interested and highly qualified scholars’ from a particular region may result in greater scholarly attention to the region (Katzenstein, 2001: 790). Much foundational work in Middle East studies, for example, resulted from Christian Arab scholars, such as Albert Hourani, Elie Kedourie, and Edward Said, who undertook graduate study in Western Europe and North America in the mid-20th century. The demography of social science worldwide may also affect US social-scientific attention, as scholars around the world increasingly contribute to academic publications in the United States, despite ongoing barriers to participation (Alatas, 2003; Anderson, 1992; Canagarajah, 2002; He and Spink, 2002; Mosbah-Natanson, 2014; *World Social Science Report*, 2010). However, this article does not have systematic data on the location of authors and cannot assess this factor.

### *Academic institutions and culture*

Finally, an alternative approach views scholarly attention as the product of relatively autonomous processes within academia, as certain themes are deemed important and others are not (Callon, 1980). Scholarly autonomy has been a longstanding goal of intellectuals (Kurzman and Owens, 2002), although current conditions of academia, as with other professions, may have eroded autonomy (Brint, 1994; Krause, 1996). Scholars may attempt to retain control over their research agendas through systems of academic reproduction by which professors evaluate research based on their own priorities, a form of inertia that may slow the pace of change in scholarly attention. Conversely, academic autonomy might facilitate shifts in scholarly attention, as topics come into and fall out of fashion (Frank and Gabler, 2006; Frank et al., 1994, 2000). These shifts within academia form part of scholarly attention, and are not readily observed separately from the geographic focus of publications that this article aims to explain. Rather, academic institutions and cultures are treated here as a null hypothesis – the failure of other factors to account for patterns in scholarly attention.

## **Dependent variable: US social-scientific attention to world regions**

This study focuses on seven disciplines of American social science: anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology. These are hardly the only disciplines that might be included in the study, and some may argue that anthropology and history should be classified with the humanities rather than the social sciences, or psychology with the natural sciences. Nonetheless, these disciplines form the core of the social sciences – all but geography were involved in organizing the Social Science Research Council in the 1920s; all but history are included in the National Science Foundation's Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences; and all but anthropology are governing members of the Consortium of Social Science Associations.

The dependent variable, the geographic focus of US social-scientific attention, is proxied by three indicators: the percentage of social-scientific journal articles, books, and dissertations in the United States studying each region of the world, measured each year over the period 1960–2010. The sample of journal articles is comprised of the 10 US-based journals in each discipline that the Institute for Scientific Information ranked highest in citation impact factor. Rankings in 1977, the first year available, are used for the period 1960–1980; 1990 rankings are used for the period 1981–1990; 2000 rankings are used for 1991–2000; and 2010 rankings are used for 2001–2010. ProQuest made its International Bibliography of the Social Sciences available for this project, including titles and abstracts for articles in these journals. Additional bibliographic records were downloaded from JSTOR and other sources. Journals for which complete runs could not be downloaded were excluded from the analysis, leaving 82,231 articles in 106 journals in seven disciplines.

The sample of journals does not count items published in foreign journals by US social scientists – a comparative perspective analyzing publication trends in other countries would be valuable, but I have not been able to collect bibliographic material as systematically as for the United States. The sample does not exclude items published in the US by scholars who were based abroad, because information on authors' institutional affiliation was not consistently available in the bibliographic data. Rather, the journals represent high-status gate-keeping in US social science – what counts as important work according to US journal editors and reviewers – regardless of the location of the researcher. Citation patterns are an imperfect representation of high-value scholarship, but no alternative approach to journal selection seems preferable. (A subset of only the flagship journals in each discipline yielded similar results to this analysis of top-10 journals in each field.)

The sample of books comes from the WorldCat database of bibliographic records from more than 3000 academic libraries in the United States. OCLC, the organization that manages WorldCat, made the database available for this project. From this database, the project analyzes all 1,945,415 books published in the United States during the period 1960–2010 that bear a Library of Congress call number in the range C-JX, which designates the bulk (though not all) of social-scientific subjects. (A subset of books published by university-affiliated US publishers yielded similar results.)

Doctoral dissertations were drawn from Digital Dissertations, the Library of Congress's official depository of dissertations at US universities, which ProQuest made available for this study. The analysis includes all 258,459 dissertations in the US during

the period 1960–2010 whose ‘Narrow Field’ designations include the seven social science disciplines under study (the database does not indicate the department in which the dissertations were produced).

To identify the geographic focus of each book, article, and dissertation, the project constructed a dictionary of place names. Exhaustive lists in geographical databases generated too many false positives, since many English words are place names somewhere in the world, including Many (a town in Fejer County, Hungary), Word (a community in Leake County, Mississippi), Place (a community in Strafford County, New Hampshire), and Name (a town in Niassa Province, Mozambique). Instead, the project developed a more restricted list of geographic terms, including contemporary and defunct country names, subnational regions of the United States and Canada, capitals and large cities, and demonyms and ethnic groups.

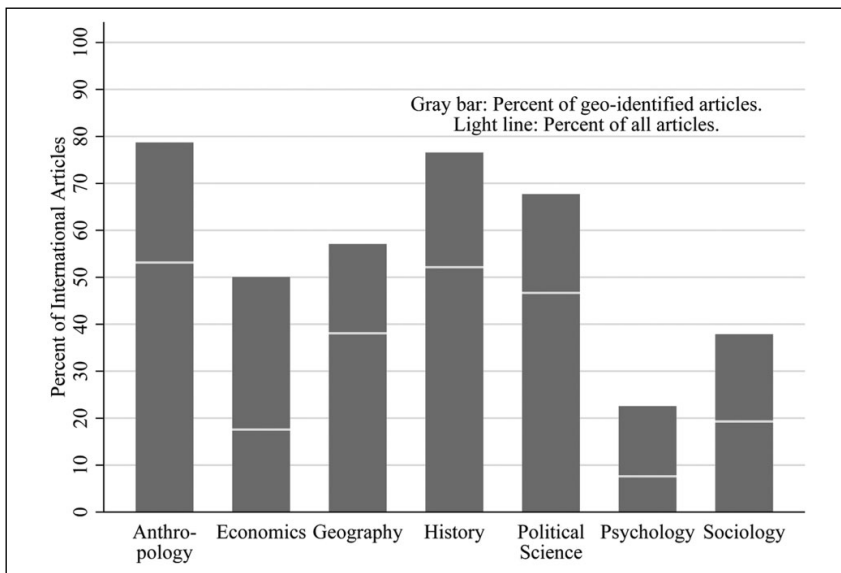
Each place name was assigned to a world region, based on the US Department of Education’s categories for international and area studies: East Asia, Eastern Europe/Eurasia, Latin America, Middle East (including North Africa), South/Southeast Asia (including Oceania), Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe. The United States was treated as a separate category. Antarctica and Canada were excluded from the multivariate analysis, as were cross-regional terms such as ‘developing countries,’ ‘global,’ ‘tropics,’ and ‘world.’ (These references were included in the descriptive analysis, including Figures 1 and 2.)

To identify geographic terms in the bibliographic material, this project developed a geosearch algorithm in the Python 2.7 computing language. Details and reliability checks are available on request. This process identified geographic locations for 67% of books, 50% of journal articles, and 79% of dissertations.

The weak internationalization of US social-scientific attention, displayed in Figure 1, begins from different baselines with each of the three forms of social-scientific production. Among books, international attention rose from a third of geo-identified social science books in the 1960s to 43% in recent years.<sup>1</sup> Among dissertations, international attention grew from 43 to 49% of all geo-identified dissertations over the past half-century. In social-scientific journals, beginning the period with a higher representation of international studies, attention fell slightly to 57% of all geo-identified articles.<sup>2</sup>

These overall trends hide major variation among disciplines (Figure 2). The portion of articles in anthropology and history journals – measured either as a percentage of geo-identified articles or as a percentage of all articles – is double the rate in psychology and sociology journals, with other disciplines in between.<sup>3</sup> These differences are consistent almost every year since 1960, and deserve more detailed study in future research.

Taking the seven disciplines as a whole, US social science has exhibited an unexpectedly stable distribution of regional attention over the past half-century (see Figure 3). Among internationally-focused work, Western Europe has consistently remained the leading focus of attention, followed at a distance by Latin America. The portion of articles devoted to the Middle East has grown, especially among books, while attention to Eastern Europe has dropped, though less among books. Attention to unspecified cross-regional subjects – such as the whole world or developing countries – has also grown, possibly as a result of the proliferation of cross-national datasets.



**Figure 2.** International attention in top-10 US social science journals, 1960–2010, by discipline.

## Independent variables

This analysis juxtaposes multiple approaches to social-scientific attention to world regions with the best available indicators, drawn from disparate sources, that operationalize each of the theoretical perspectives discussed above: capitalist linkages, state interests, student demand, and the demographics of social science.

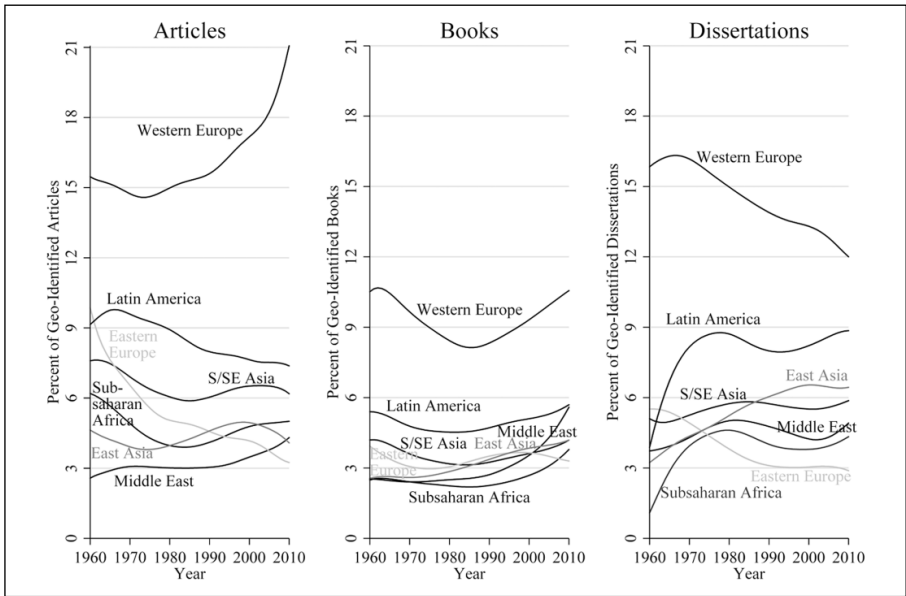
### *Capitalism*

This analysis uses two proxies for US capitalism’s engagement with world regions: trade and investment. Trade is measured as the sum of imports and exports, in current US dollars, between the United States and each country in each year between 1960 and 2009, drawn from the Correlates of War Project Trade Data Set (Barbieri and Keshk, 2012; Barbieri et al., 2009). US direct investment is drawn from tables developed by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, a unit of the US Department of Commerce (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2014).

### *State interests*

The primary source for determining the geographic focus of US national interests is a set of 16 documents spelling out the national security strategy of the United States (Mohr et al., 2013), produced in the 1960s by the Department of Defense (1960, 1962, 1964, 1969) and thereafter by the White House (1970, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010). The original printed documents were broken down into





**Figure 3.** Regional attention in US social science, 1960–2010.

Note: Datapoints smoothed with Lowess function. Canada, Antarctica, and global studies are not shown.

single-page units, and project personnel counted the number of pages with one or more references to each region of the world as a concern for the security of the United States. Because the documents varied in length, these counts were divided by the maximum number of pages referencing concerns in any single region.

For an alternative approach to state interest in each world region, the article examines US military and economic aid (USAID, 2014), measured as the dollar value of foreign assistance activities by more than 30 US government agencies and departments to governmental and nongovernmental recipients in each country (see also Tierney et al., 2011).

The article also analyzes a more limited indicator of state interest in world regions that measures a possible mechanism for state influence on the international focus of US social science: spending through the US Department of Education’s ‘Title VI’ program, which was established in 1959 to promote the study of foreign languages and area studies at US colleges and universities (Wiley and Glew, 2010). Although the level of funding is relatively low – less than 1% of the Department of Education’s budget – it has subsidized faculty research and graduate student training at hundreds of programs around the country. Data on the proportion of funding provided for the study of each world region were collected by Ann Imlah Schneider (1995), who helped to run the program for many years, and updated through 2010 by Ann Betteridge (2013) of the University of Arizona. The figures are averages over multiple fiscal years (1959–1972, 1973–1981, 1981–1983, etc.). As the state’s interests shift over time, we would expect to see funding move from one world region to another, opening new opportunities for research on regions of current national interest. Oddly, these shifts have not been very dramatic. For example, Russian

and Eastern European studies (now called ‘Eurasian’ studies) dropped from an average of 16% of Title VI funding during the Cold War to an average of 13% since then. The Middle East’s share of this program rose only from 12% prior to 9/11 to 14% since then.

### *Student demand*

As a proxy for student demand for international studies, the analysis uses enrollment in foreign language courses in US colleges and universities. The Modern Language Association (2015) has collected these figures every two or three years since the late 1950s (see also Goldberg et al., 2015).

### *Demographics*

The demographics of US social scientists are derived from public use micro-datasets of the US Census, collected each decade from 1960 through 2000, and the American Community Survey, held each year from 2001 through 2010 (Ruggles et al., 2010). Social scientists are identified through occupations (occ1990 categories) that appear to overlap significantly with the social sciences, although not everybody who selects these categories is an academic: economists (code 166) and economics teachers (119), history teachers (123), political science teachers (124), psychologists (167) and psychology teachers (118), sociologists (168) and sociology teachers (125), and social scientists not otherwise categorized (169), totaling 55,719 respondents. For these occupational categories, the dataset includes information on national ancestry (since 1980), which the project cumulated into world regions, race, and Hispanic ethnicity.

## **Explaining regional patterns of scholarly attention**

What might account for patterns of scholarly attention? Table 1 presents panel-corrected standard error (PCSE) estimates with AR(1) autocorrelation. These models use region-year as the unit of analysis, with the percent of a year’s internationally-oriented journal articles focusing on a given world region as the dependent variable. The independent variables are the percent of US trade with a given region in a given year, the percent of US foreign direct investment in the region, the percent of pages mentioning the region as a threat in US national security strategy, the percent of US foreign aid, the percent of Title VI Department of Education funding for the region, the percent of foreign language enrollments focusing on the region, and the percent of US social scientists with ancestry from the region.<sup>4</sup> For independent variables that are not measured each year, such as data on national security strategies, foreign language enrollment, and ancestry, the values for missing years are imputed through linear interpolation and extrapolation. This procedure guarantees that these indicators exhibit autocorrelation, so models control for panel-specific first-order autocorrelation in the error term.<sup>5</sup>

As shown in Table 1, only one variable is consistently correlated with US social-scientific attention to world regions: the ancestry of US social scientists. In models not shown here, this finding emerges also with a more limited variable measuring the race and ethnicity of social scientists corresponding to four world regions: Africa, East Asia,

**Table 1.** Multivariate analysis of regional attention in internationally-focused US social science, 1961–2010.

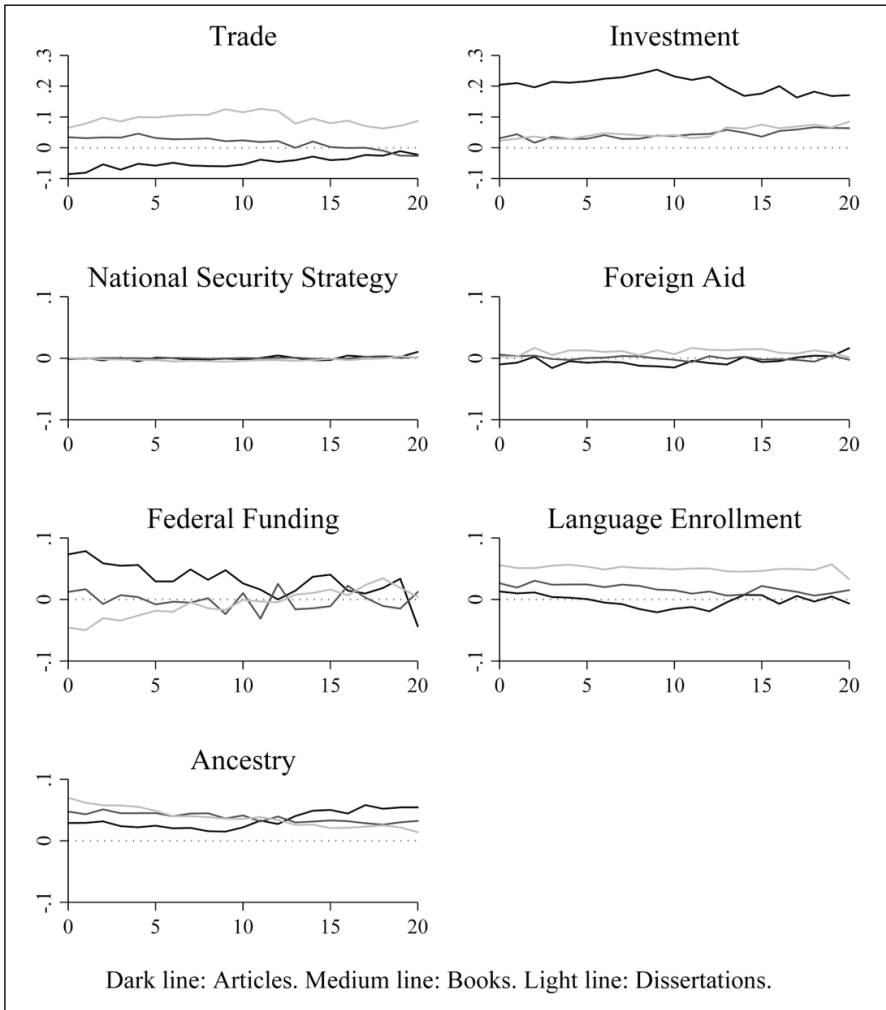
| Independent variables:           | Dependent variable:<br>Regional attention in internationally-focused US social science |                   |                   |
|----------------------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|
|                                  | Articles   | Books             | Dissertations     |
| US trade                         | −0.09*<br>(0.03)   | 0.03*<br>(0.01)   | 0.06*<br>(0.02)   |
| US investment                    | 0.20*<br>(0.03)  | 0.03<br>(0.02)    | 0.02<br>(0.02)    |
| US national security concern     | <−0.01<br>(0.005)  | <−0.01<br>(0.001) | <−0.01<br>(0.002) |
| US aid                           | −0.01<br>(0.01)  | 0.01<br>(0.004)   | <0.01<br>(0.006)  |
| US federal funding               | 0.07<br>(0.04)   | 0.01<br>(0.02)    | −0.05*<br>(0.02)  |
| US student demand for languages  | 0.01<br>(0.01)   | 0.03*<br>(0.01)   | 0.06*<br>(0.01)   |
| Ancestry of US social scientists | 0.03*<br>(0.01)  | 0.05*<br>(0.01)   | 0.07*<br>(0.01)   |
| Constant                         | 0.04*<br>(0.01)  | 0.02*<br>(0.003)  | 0.04*<br>(0.005)  |
| R <sup>2</sup>                   | 0.74   | 0.59              | 0.85              |
| Number of groups                 | 7  | 7                 | 7                 |
| Number of cases per group        | 50   | 50                | 50                |

\* $p < .05$ . Standard errors in parentheses.

Notes: Models are panel-corrected standard errors with panel-specific AR(1) autocorrelation. Portuguese and Spanish are counted as Latin American languages for the purposes of this comparison, because more people speak these languages in Latin America than in Western Europe. Canada was removed from the analysis because Canadian immigration is underreported in the ancestry variable.

Europe, and Latin America. Ancestry remains statistically significant when independent variables are lagged up to 20 years, and no other independent variable is consistently significant, either in current-year models or lagged models, across all three forms of scholarly production: articles, books, and dissertations (Figure 4).

International trade is positively correlated with attention in social science books and dissertations, but negatively correlated with attention in journal articles; US foreign direct investment is positively correlated with attention in articles, but not in books or dissertations. (The same relationships hold when the variables are entered into the models singly.) These inconsistent correlations may reflect the rapid growth of US economic interests in East Asia, which occupies more than 60% of US international trade (up from 10% in the early 1960s) and almost 10% of US foreign direct investment (up from 2%). Scholarly attention to the region, by contrast, has remained low. The attention of US social science, both in the discipline of economics by itself and overall, has not reflected the magnitude of this shift in US economic interests in the region.



**Figure 4.** Coefficients of independent variables with lags up to 20 years, regional attention in US social science, 1960–2010.

Note: Based on models in Table 1.

National security strategies are not correlated with social-scientific attention, even when the discipline of political science is analyzed on its own. Neither are other indicators of US national security interest in each world region (in models not reported here): military engagement, unarmed involvement in international crises, the number of US troops in each region, or the number of US troops involved in military engagements. Within several world regions, however, shifts in the security documents do appear to be associated with shifts in social-scientific attention. Eastern Europe, for example, drops from a central place in US national security strategies in the 1960s–1980s to 10% of the pages in the 2000s, while social-scientific attention

**Table 2.** Effect of shifts from 1st to 75th percentile in independent variables on regional attention in US social science, 1961–2010.

| Independent variables:           | Dependent variable:<br>Percent change in regional attention<br>in US social science |       |               |
|----------------------------------|---|-------|---------------|
|                                  | Articles  | Books | Dissertations |
| US trade                         | -1.5  | 0.6   | 1.1           |
| US investment                    | 4.0   | 0.6   | 0.4           |
| US national security concern     | -0.1  | -0.1  | <-0.1         |
| US aid                           | -0.2  | 0.1   | <0.1          |
| US federal funding               | 1.1   | 0.2   | -0.7          |
| US student demand for languages  | 0.4   | 0.8   | 1.7           |
| Ancestry of US social scientists | 0.5   | 0.8   | 1.1           |

Note: Cells report the product of the coefficient of each variable, based on models in Table 1, multiplied by the difference between the 75th and 1st percentiles of that variable.

drops as well, though the decline in social-scientific attention begins in the 1970s, predating the decline in national security attention. Iran, by contrast, is mentioned as a threat in none of the six national security documents issued between 1959 and 1977, but in 8 of 10 documents issued after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, rising to one-sixth of the pages in 2006 and 2010; social-scientific attention to Iran has increased as well, though not as dramatically, appearing 50% more often in journal articles since 1979 than before.

US aid is not significantly correlated with social-scientific attention, while federal funding for international and area studies is non-significant (for articles and books) or significantly negative (for dissertations, a relationship that disappears with lags of five or more years).

Student interest in world regions, as proxied by language study, is significantly correlated with US social-scientific attention in books and dissertations, but not in journal articles. Over the past half-century, Spanish language study has overtaken all other languages, now comprising more than one-half of all language enrollments, with no corresponding shift in journal articles devoted to predominantly Spanish-speaking countries. Among less commonly taught languages, many of which have increased their proportion of language enrollment over the past half-century, only Middle Eastern languages exhibited a corresponding increase in scholarly attention.

Beyond statistical significance, however, a further finding is robust across all three forms of scholarly production: demographics and other factors account for a very small portion of the variation in social-scientific attention to world regions. To convey just how small this effect is, Table 2 displays the expected change in scholarly attention associated with a shift in each independent variable from the 1st percentile of observed values to the 75th percentile – that is, from the lowest value in the dataset to a relatively high value. In no case does scholarly attention shift more than a few percentage points, and in most cases it shifts less than 1%. Similar findings emerge with race/ethnicity instead of ancestry. Lagged independent variables fare no better.

In other words, even a large shift in the independent variables is associated with only a small shift in scholarly attention.

The small scale of these effects is consistent with the finding (pictured in Figure 3) that scholarly attention to each world region has not changed much since 1960.

## **Conclusion**

Over the past half-century, the scholarly attention of US social sciences has not internationalized as rapidly as many other aspects of American life. Among social-scientific works that do focus outside of the United States, the proportion devoted to each region of the world has not changed much over the past half-century: Western Europe continues to attract more scholarly attention than any other region, followed by Latin America. Attention to Eastern Europe has been dropping since the 1970s, though less so in books than in articles and dissertations. Scholarly attention to the Middle East has grown since the 1990s, but is still low.

This inertia is ironic in the context of critiques of US academia for having abandoned the study of the United States and Euro-American civilization more generally (Bloom, 1987; Lippmann, 1941). US social scientists may not study Western civilizations from perspectives that these critics appreciate, but they are still focused primarily on the US and Western societies.

Inertia is awkward from the perspective of social science methods, which privilege variation on the dependent variable. Perhaps for this reason, the study of continuities is rare in empirical social-scientific research (though not in social-scientific theory). Yet as Patterson (2004) and others have noted, continuity may be just as important to analyze as change. In this project's study of scholarly attention, continuity is intriguing not only because it is somewhat unexpected, but also because it contrasts with the much wider variation exhibited by some of the proposed drivers of scholarly attention.

The small and inconsistent effects of the independent variables leave the null hypothesis standing: the suggestion that US academia enjoys considerable autonomy in its selection of subjects, notwithstanding shifts in US capital, state interests, student demand, and even the demographics of its own profession. It is rare in social science to base statistical findings on the null hypothesis. Readers may wonder whether better indicators or a different analytical approach might lead the null hypothesis to be rejected. These reservations are understandable, though in a consistently skeptical world these reservations would be raised for other findings just as often as for null hypotheses. I can only reassure readers that this project amassed all the relevant cross-national time-series indicators it could, analyzed the data with a variety of statistical techniques, and found no robust factors to cast doubt on the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis of scholarly autonomy seems to be the most consistent picture in the data.

Writing a half-century ago, sociologist Wilbert Moore thought the days of 'parochialism' were over in US social science, when 'to exaggerate only slightly ... society was American society, the family was the American family, and so on' (Moore, 1966: 477). No doubt such parochialism has few defenders in social science today, but the internationalization of scholarly attention does not appear so dramatic as Moore predicted.

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## Notes

1. Because newer bibliographic records are more likely than older records to include abstracts and subject headings, the geosearch algorithm was more successful at identifying place names in recent publications than in publications from a half-century ago. Including non-geo-identified items in the denominator yields similar trend lines.
2. Some disciplines published more articles each year than other disciplines, but an unweighted average of the seven disciplines yields a similar trend line.
3. Comparison across disciplines is difficult for social science books and dissertations, since Library of Congress call numbers and Digital Dissertations field designations do not consistently match disciplinary boundaries.
4. For the purposes of multivariate analysis, Spanish and Portuguese are designated as Latin American languages, since most people speaking these languages live in the region.
5. PCSE models with ordinary first-order autocorrelation (not panel-specific) and with no autocorrelation generate similar results. Random-effects models with first-order autocorrelation also generate similar results. Fixed-effects models with first-order autocorrelation generate no statistically significant coefficients, as between-case effects are swamped by much larger within-case effects – this finding is consistent with the article’s conclusion that scholarly attention is driven primarily by inertia rather than by shifts in the academic environment.

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## Author biography

Charles Kurzman is a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA) and co-director of the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations.

## Résumé

Quelles parties du monde les sciences sociales nord-américaines considèrent-elles dignes d'intérêt ? À partir d'une analyse de l'axe géographique de plus de deux millions de registres bibliographiques d'articles de revue, de livres et de thèses de doctorat, cette étude fait apparaître une faible tendance à l'internationalisation de l'orientation de la recherche en sciences sociales aux États-Unis au cours des 50 dernières années. Par ailleurs, la part de l'intérêt scientifique porté à certaines régions du monde est demeurée étonnamment stable sur cette période, l'Europe occidentale restant l'objet principal des travaux d'orientation internationale. L'évolution des priorités des États-Unis en matière de sécurité nationale, des échanges internationaux, des

intérêts des étudiants et des caractéristiques démographiques n'explique qu'en petite partie la variation du taux de publications en sciences sociales portant sur les différentes régions du monde, ce qui semblerait étayer la thèse selon laquelle l'intérêt scientifique est en grande partie guidé par l'inertie propre aux institutions et aux cultures scientifiques.

### **Mots-clés**

États-Unis, études internationales, orientation de la recherche scientifique, recherche en sciences sociales

### **Resumen**

¿Qué partes del mundo considera dignas de atención académica la ciencia social norteamericana? Este estudio analiza el ámbito geográfico de más de dos millones de registros bibliográficos de artículos de revistas, libros y tesis doctorales y encuentra una débil tendencia hacia la internacionalización en el ámbito de atención de la ciencia social en los Estados Unidos durante el último medio siglo. Por otra parte, la proporción de atención académica dedicada a determinadas regiones ha permanecido sorprendentemente estable durante este período, y Europa occidental sigue siendo el ámbito principal de los trabajos de orientación internacional. Los cambios en las prioridades de seguridad nacional de los Estados Unidos, el comercio internacional, los intereses de los estudiantes y las características demográficas explican sólo una pequeña parte de la variación en la tasa de publicaciones en ciencia social sobre las diferentes regiones del mundo, dando soporte a la tesis de que la atención académica es en gran parte moldeada por la inercia presente en las instituciones y culturas académicas.

### **Palabras clave**

Atención académica, Estados Unidos, estudios internacionales, investigación en ciencia social