

Moving Beyond Data Constraints in Qualitative Political Science: The Systematic Analysis of Press and Country reports

Friedrich Plank and Ingo Henneberg

Abstract

Qualitative research in political science and international relations increasingly adapts various methods to analyse politics, policies, and polities. With complex dynamics and environments specific to these analyses, scholars face severe data challenges. Against this background, we provide insights into systematically collecting additional evidence through the analysis of large amounts of media bulletins e.g. through the Nexis database and examination of standardized and thus comparable documents such as country reports. These tools might be able to inspire triangulative approaches to political science analyses and allow for the collection of micro-level data in contexts of limited data availability, while providing systematic and replicable access. We argue that specifically qualitatively inspired research efforts benefit from these reports. This paper provides detailed instruction for collecting data with these tools, analyses best-practices, and outlines possibilities to systematically examine very large amounts of reports. Moreover, by engaging with examples of studies that have made use of these tools, we reflect on possibilities and challenges for the acquisition and evaluation of reports. This study thus provides fruitful information for scholars struggling with limited data access in complex research environments and facilitates the systematic and replicable evaluation of huge and comprehensive data in a viable and precise manner.

Keywords: Methods, qualitative research, data, press report, country reports