Construction of the image of politics in Spanish TV news programmes. The endo- and exo- balances of the quality of political information

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Abstract: In our society the image that citizens have of politics is strongly conditioned by the way politics are represented in the media and, in particular, in TV news programmes. This article, a product of an R&D project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport, analyses the presence and image of political news in eight Spanish TV channels. This article also proposes a new method to measure the quality of political information in Spanish TV news programmes through the definition of the endo- and exo- balances of the political content of news programmes. The main conclusions of this study are that the news programmes of *Televisión Española* and *Cuatro* offer a more balanced image of politics, while the news programmes from *Sexta* and *Canal 9* offer more unbalanced image. The percentage of news devoted to politics does not depend on the channels' ownership (public or private) or broadcast coverage (national or regional). On the other hand, there is a relation between the percentages of political issues and policy issues news presented on television.

Keywords: agenda setting; news quality; news programmes; television; politics; image of politics.

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1. Introduction

In contemporary society, the media, and particularly television, play a huge role in the construction of the image of politics. The TV news genre, in particular, plays a fundamental role in this construction and has a decisive effect on the image that citizens have of politics and politicians. There are numerous works that examine the effects of TV news programmes on the way society perceives politics. In general, studies of the agenda setting in news programmes draw pessimistic conclusions in relation to democracy and politics. A group of authors has noted that there has been an increase of entertainment and soft news, to the detriment of hard news, related to public policies, which has negative effects on the quality of the information of the public discourse (Bennet, 1983; Postman, 1985; Graber, 1988; Iyengar, 1991; Diamond, 1991; Patterson, 1993; Newton, 1999; Aarts & Semetko, 2003). Some authors have called this trend the "tabloidization" of news and television (Langer, 1998; Sparks & Tulloch, 2000), which in addition to simplifying events and their causes, conditions the interest of the coverage to the spectacularisation of news. However, other authors highlight the positive aspects of the mass information provided by television, without which many people would not have access to public interest news or would not be motivated to learn about them. In fact, some authors have established a strong correlation between people's exposure to media information and their levels of political and civic participation (Norris, 2000), while others have suggested that sensationalism has a positive influence on citizens' interest in politics (Ryu, 1982; Grabe *et al.*, 2001; Winston, 2002; Uribe and Gunter, 2007).

A remarkable aspect of the influence of news programmes in the image of politics is the changes occurred within the public media after the entry of private television stations to the media scene. In Europe there are studies about the imitative logic followed by private television channels, as it is the case in Italy and the "logic dell'imitazione" of its public service broadcaster (RAI) in relation to the private Fininvest group (Buonanno, 1993; Pozzato, 1995; Demaria *et al.*, 2002).

With regards to Germany, Barbara Pfetsch (1996) has published the results of a comparative study on the TV representation of politics during 1985 and 1986 (the time of the breakdown of the public monopoly) and 1993 (after the consolidation of the mixed system). Pfetsch's findings confirm the negative impact of the competitive pressure put on political information and the reduction of "serious" politics in traditional news programmes. On the other hand, some scholars have also studied the presence of the so-called "infotainment" in the leading news programmes of the main European channels.

In the case of the United States, although its television system is not mixed like in Europe and other regions of the world, there are abundant studies with similar

objectives that provide some interesting conclusions. Patterson (2000), for instance, analysed 5,331 news items from various American media, including two TV networks, between 1980 and 1999 and demonstrated that there are sufficient data to establish a correlation between the increase in soft news in the media and the loss of values in the citizenry, such as trust in the government or the honesty of politicians and interest in public issues.

2. Theoretical framework: the construction of social reality

The media's construction of reality has been studied from such disciplines as communication theory and phenomenological sociology, initiated by Alfred Schütz and developed by Berger and Luckmann (1967). The sociological perspective sees reality as a product built by the multiple actions carried out by humans. These actions include those carried out by the mass media, which have a fundamental importance due to their central position in the symbolic mediation of experiences and due to their role, socially recognised and legitimised, as creators of frameworks of reference for people (Grossi, 1985).

The social construction of reality, as defined by Berger and Luckmann (1971), is a process of institutionalisation of practices and roles. One of these roles is the journalistic activity, which is considered socially legitimised to produce publicly relevant constructions of reality. For these authors, the media are institutions that offer a particular interpretation of reality:

> "In modern times, these institutions play an essential role in the orientation of meaning, or more precisely in the communication of meaning. They act as mediators between the collective and individual experiences to provide typical interpretations to problems that are defined as typical. Whatever other institutions offer by way of interpretation of reality or values, the media select and package it, gradually transform it and decide on the form they will disseminate it." (Berger and Luckmann, 1997: 98)

A complementary view on the construction of reality that is relevant to the subject of this article is the notion of "thematisation" proposed by Luhmann (1978) and developed by Carlo Marletti (1985) and other authors. Thematisation refers to the ability of the media to select a theme and place it at the centre of public attention. Marletti suggests that the media focus on some issues and not others with the clear objective of setting the political agenda in conspiracy with the political power. The author considers that thematisation is more than a simple exposure and involves focusing on and drawing attention to certain themes:

"Thematisation means implementing not only argumentative criteria, but also criteria of useful convenience and practical influence based o which a particular theme can be included in the "political agenda" of a national community." (Marletti, 1985: 25)

In post-industrial societies the processes of thematisation are fundamentally developed by the media and the political apparatuses (Marletti, 1985). Consequently, the thematisation function is important because it shows one of the most important roles of the media: the direct influence in the field of politics.

3. Method and sample

The main method used in this article is part of the agenda setting tradition (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Rogers & Dearing, 1988; McCombs & Bell, 1996; McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997; Wanta & Ghanem, 2007; McCombs, 2006), which is based on the general hypothesis, based on the pioneering studies of McCombs & Shaw, that establishes an almost causal linkage between the media's agenda and the public agenda in a given period and within a specific field of political action and communication. As McCombs (2006) emphasises, the media agenda sets the public agenda and hence the importance of using this method to correctly answer our research question. Numerous studies and experiments have demonstrated the robustness of the agenda-setting theory (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Althaus & Tewksbuty, 2002; Tsfati, 2003; Kiousis, McDevitt & Wu, 2005; Sheafer & Weinmann, 2005).

The evolution of this school has led us to take into consideration the analysis of the operations and effects of priming, framing and the second level of the agenda-setting. The method presented here focuses, especially, in what the social sciences and communication define as "factual genres", which is a broad set of programmes and TV formats that claim to focus on matters of public interest, and in particular the so-called news genres –more precisely TV news programmes. This analysis is based on a classification of news into three large areas: policy issues, political issues and other issues. This classification has a long tradition in the studies conducted by the Audiovisual Communication Research Unit (UNICA) of the Pompeu Fabra University (see Pericot and Capdevila, 2009, and Pallarés, Gifreu and Capdevila, 2007). This article only focuses on the second category: political issues.

To be more precise, the sample includes the primetime news programmes of the following national TV channels: *TVE*, *Antena 3* (A3), *Telecinco* (T5), *Cuatro* (C4) and *La Sexta* (La6). The analysis also included the news programmes of the regional public channels *TV3* (Catalonia), *Canal Sur* (CS, Andalusia) and *Canal 9* (C9, Valencian Community), broadcast from 8 to 22 April, 2010. We selected the news programmes with the highest ratings in Spain according to data from the Media

Research Association (AIMC) and its General Media Study (EGM) [1] –report of February to November 2010. The audience shares of the analysed national channels are: TVE (21.1%), Telecinco (17.4%), Antena 3 (14.4%), La Sexta (6.8%) and Cuatro (6.2%). Moreover, we studied the following public regional channels with the objective of achieving greater territorial representativeness: TV3 (15.9% -Catalonia), Canal Sur (21.6% -Andalusia) and Canal 9 (11.9% -Valencian Community). The audience levels of these regional channels correspond to the shares obtained in their respective autonomous communities.

The selection of the sample was intended to avoid any relevant political event (like election campaigns or pre-campaigns) and to focus on a period of normal political activity, because this strategy is common in comparative agenda setting studies, and allows to obtain enough data about the agenda setting to draw significant conclusions. Finally, another aspect that has to be considered in this work is the definition of politics and political information. In this sense, this work distances itself from those works that define political news as those stories involving political actors (Ortells, 2009), leaving aside any other classification of the news. This study considers as political news the stories that are strictly about politics and distinguish them from policy issues news, which also involve political actors.

In this sense, our proposed definition of political news comprises five sub-categories: political system, political institutions, institutional reforms, political culture, and corruption and misuse of public funds:

Political system: news focused on issues related to the political organisation of a given national community. Example: Debate on political parties as organisations.

Political institutions: news related to the political class and political actors regulating the order and structure of the government in a given society. Example: Parliamentary sessions or debates on the state of the nation.

Institutional reforms: news focused on the modification, extension or improvement of the judicial institutional system. Example: Reform to the statutes of autonomy or the Senate.

Political culture: news about citizens' political attitudes and conceptions. This includes the democratic quality, participatory processes and innovative approaches to the intervention of citizens in politics. Examples: popular consultations, referenda or legislative initiatives.

Corruption and misuse of public funds: news about cases of corruption by public servants and politicians, such as: theft, mismanagement, embezzlement or misuse of public money. Example: appropriation of public resources for personal benefit or to finance political parties.

3.1. Quality of political information

As Pujadas (2011) points out, diversity is an indicator of the quality of contents, of programming, of the networks or the media system as a whole. In this sense, the author provides a theoretical basis for the limits of what must be understood by quality television. TV news programmes are not the exception, in the production of news, the journalistic discourse, as well as the diversity of topics covered. Politics, and the image created about it in TV news programmes, depend on the diversity of themes. We must assume, therefore, a balance between the different issues based on our definition of politics, as well as a balance between the major themes of the news programmes. In the same way, Pujadas indicates that the balance of viewpoints in news programmes is considered a quality factor (2011: 191), and this study extends this aspect to the concept of theme. Therefore, the balance in the agenda –defined by the selection and thematisation of the gatekeeper, who must act in an equitable manner (León-Gross, 2006)–, will be the indicator proposed by this research to define the quality of the analysed TV news programmes.

3.2. Methodological proposal to measure the endo- and exo-balances

This article proposes two different types of balance. The first one is called the exo-balance and is determined by the research. The balance point of each subcategory (n) is equal to 100 divided by the number of subcategories (N):

$$Px_n = 100/N$$

In this case, in the exo-balance to each subcategory would correspond 20% of the news of the thematic category, because 5 subcategories have been defined (N=5), as indicated in the previous section. It is therefore an *a priori* balance point that does not take into account the results of the content analysis of the TV news programmes, and assumes an equitable distribution of the news between the defined subcategories, without providing a qualitative distinction between them.

In contrast, the second balance point, which we have called the endo-balance, is determined by the average percentage presence of each subcategory within the whole sample of news programmes. In this way, the endo-balance point (Pd_n) of a given subcategory *n* will be the sum of the news of that subcategory from all channels

$\left(\sum_{i=1}^{m} T_{n}^{i} \right)$ (*m* is the number of channels and T_{n}^{i} the number of news of the category *n* in

the channel i), divided by the total number of political news $\left(\sum_{i=1}^{m} T^{i} \right)$.

$$Pd_{n} = \left(\sum_{i=1}^{m} T_{n}^{i} \right) / \left(\sum_{i=1}^{m} T^{i} \right)$$

These balance indices allow us to analyse the deviation of each channel in relation to the previous balance points and to analyse how this influences the image of politics that each channel builds.

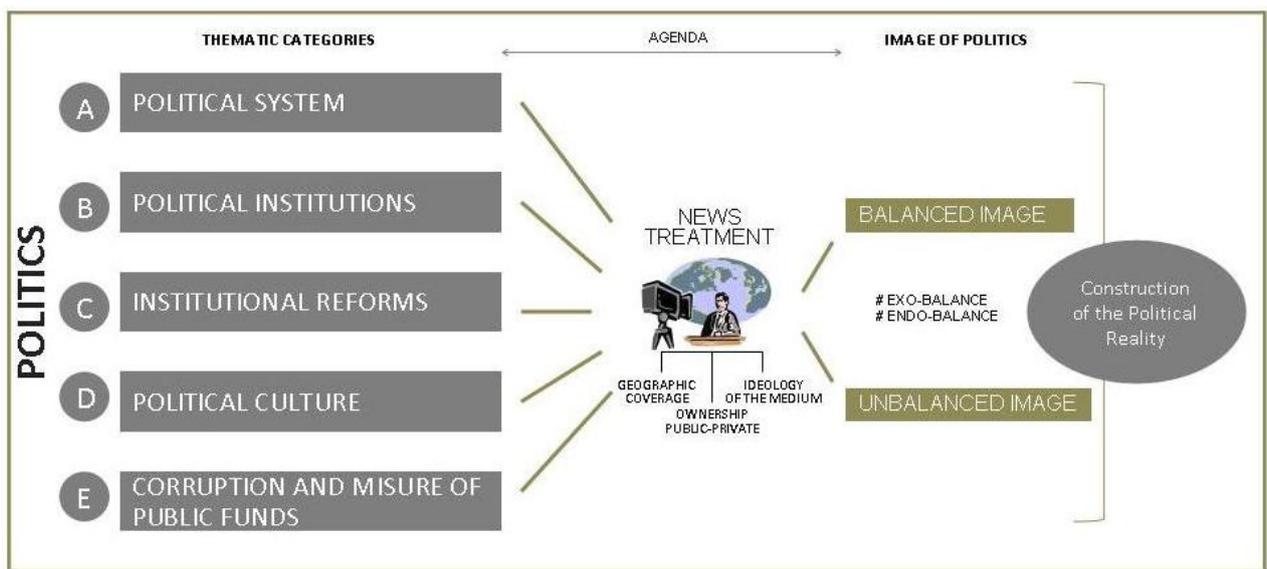The following figure graphically summarises the methodological proposal of this study

Figure 1. Conceptual map of the construction of the
political reality through the TV news programmes

4. Results

The data presented in this article have resulted from the analysis of the news presented by the primetime news programmes of the sample of eight TV channels. Section 4.1 presents the general results in relation to the proposed categories (*presence* of political news); section 4.2 presents the results of the political category in each one of analysed news programmes (*construction* of the image of politics) and, finally, section 4.3

presents the percentage presence of the five political news subcategories (*diversity and quality* of political news). This third section defines the endo- and exo-balance indices of each of the analysed TV news programmes, and a general index that will give us an idea of the quality of the political news in each of the channels.

4.1. General results

The sample analysed in this study consisted of a total of 2,566 news items distributed in the following way: TVE (383), T5 (335), A3 (324), La6 (267), C4 (242), TV3 (232), C9 (374) and CS (409).

Table 1 shows the percentage of news devoted to politics in each of these channels.

	TVE	T5	A3	La6	C4	TV3	C9	CS
Percentage of Political News	17.0	9.0	11.7	17.6	19.8	22.8	15.8	14.7

Table 1. Percentage of political news in the Spanish TV news programmes

The following table presents the percentages of the other two major news categories, which are not discussed in this study.

	TVE	T5	A3	La6	C4	TV3	C9	CS
% Policy issues news	15.1	11.9	10.8	7.9	9.9	18.5	20.9	24.7
% Other news (economy, society, culture, accidents/crime, sports)	67.9	79.1	77.5	74.5	70.2	58.6	63.4	60.6

Table 2. Distribution of non-political news in Spanish TV news programmes

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the three main types of news in the eight analysed channels. Of all the news content, political news represent 15%, policy issues news 16%, and other news (economic, social, cultural information, accidents/crime and sports) 69% [2].
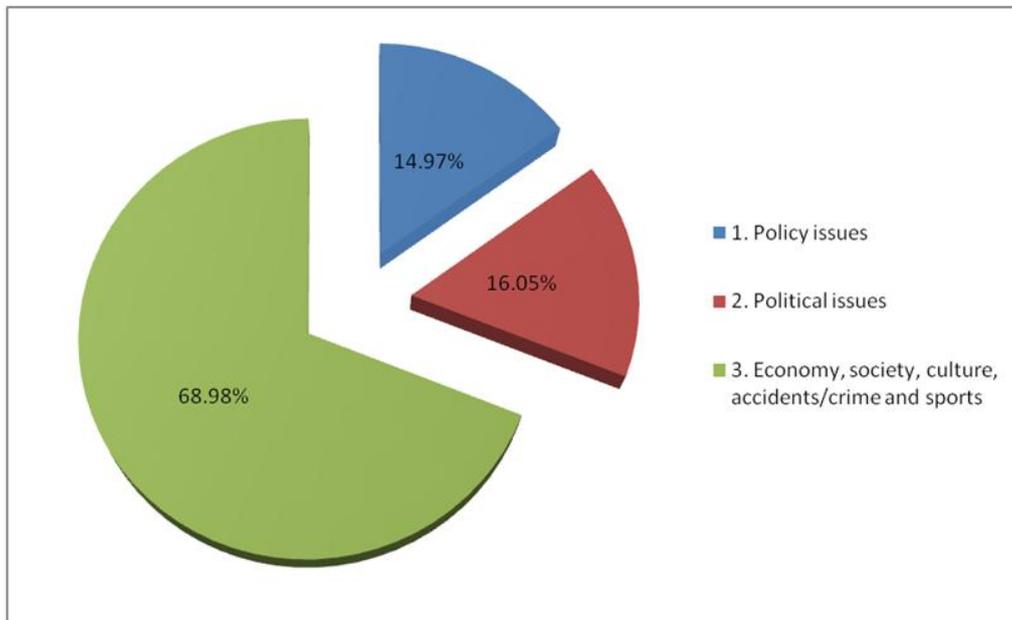
Figure 2. General distribution of political news in Spanish TV news programmes

4.2. The construction of the image of politics

The image of politics constructed by the Spanish TV news programmes is determined by the distribution of the different issues related to politics. The general distribution of five political subcategories gives us an idea of the image of politics created by the TV news programmes analysed as a whole (figure 3).
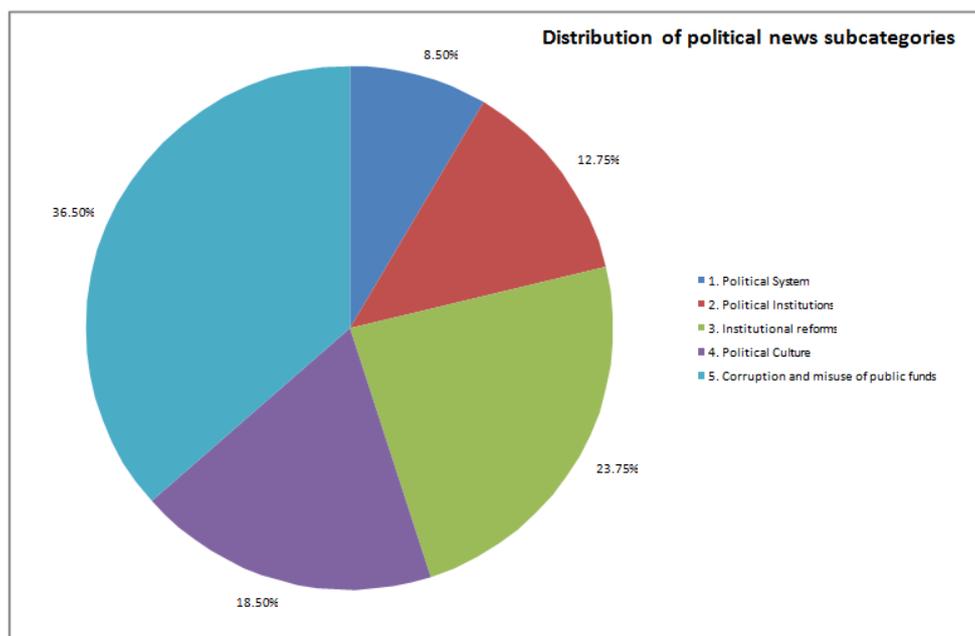

Figure 3. Distribution of political news in Spanish TV news programmes

	TVE	T5	A3	La6	C4	TV3	C9	CS
Political system	6.2	3.3	10.5	6.4	6.3	18.9	5.1	10
Political institutions	16.9	16.7	13.2	8.5	12.5	5.7	6.8	21.7
Institutional reforms	26.2	13.3	10.5	8.5	22.9	39.6	54.2	3.3
Political culture	18.5	23.3	21.1	17	20.8	13.2	17	20
Corruption and misuse of public funds	32.3	43.3	44.7	59.6	37.5	22.6	17	45

Table 3. Percentages of political news in Spanish TV news programmes

As table 3 shows, with the exception of C9 and TV3, the largest thematic subcategory is corruption and misuse of public funds. In particular, this type of news constitutes almost 60% of the political news in La6, more than 40% in A3, T5 and CS, and 32% in TVE. In contrast, the proportions of news about the political system and the political institutions are well below the other subcategories in virtually all channels. As we will see in the next section, these results indicate that, in general, the image of politics in Spanish TV news programmes is built around the theme of corruption and misuse of public funds, and to a lesser extent around institutional reforms and political culture.

4.3. Quality of political news. The endo- and exo-balances

As indicated in the methods section, one of the contributions of this study is the definition of two balance indices that will serve as indicators of the diversity (and, thus, quality) of political information in TV news programmes and will allow us to visualise the image of politics built by these programmes based on the deviations from these balances. Table 4 shows the percentage distribution of each of the five political subcategories. In the exo-balance, the five subcategories have the same weight (20%), which are the balance points calculated from the following formula:

$$Px_n = 100/N$$

In the endo-balance, which results from calculating the average presence of each of the subcategories in the 8 news programmes with the formula $Pd_n = \left(\sum_{i=1}^{m} T^i_n \div \right) / \left(\sum_{i=1}^{m} T^i \div \right)$ there are significant variations in the percentages of each subcategory, as shown in figure 3. Figure 4 shows the deviations of each of the subcategories in the endo-balance with respect to the exo-balance.

POLITICAL CATEGORIES	Exo-balance Px_n (%)	Endo-balance Pd_n (%)
Political system	20	8.5
Political institutions	20	12.75
Institutional reforms	20	23.75
Political culture	20	18.5
Corruption and misuse of public funds	20	36.5

Table 4. Exo- and endo- balances of the political
subcategories in the Spanish TV news programmes

As shown in the previous table, the news subcategories vary considerably in the balance index defined by research (the exo-balance) and the balance index defined by the proportions of news in the whole sample of news programmes (the endo-balance). Figure 5 shows this differences between the two points of balance, which results from subtracting the endo-balance points from the exo-balance points. The first conclusion is that the first two subcategories have a significantly lower presence in the endo-balance than in the exo-balance, while the presence of the category of corruption and misuse of public funds is much higher in the endo-balance than in the exo-balance. As mentioned, this is the first indication that the construction of the image of politics is oriented to the theme of corruption.
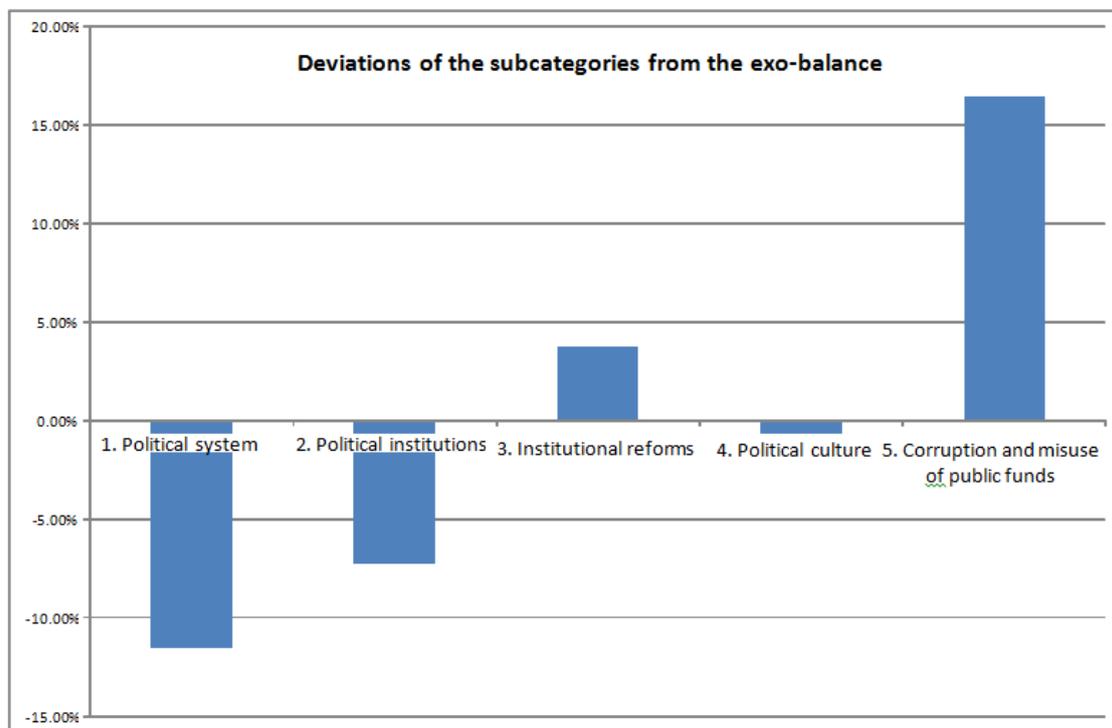

Figure 4. Deviations of the political news subcategories from the exo-balance

The following tables show the deviations of each subcategory across channels from the exo-balance (table 5) and from the endo-balance (table 6).

%	TVE	T5	3	La6	C4	TV3	C 9	C S
Political system	-13.9	-16.7	-9.5	-13.6	-13.8	-1.1	-14.9	-10.0
Political institutions	-3.1	-3.3	-6.8	-11.5	-7.5	-14.3	-13.2	1.7
Institutional reforms	6.2	-6.7	-9.5	-11.5	2.9	19.6	34.2	-16.7
Political culture	-1.5	3.3	1.1	-3.0	0.8	-6.8	-3.1	0.0
Corruption and misuse of public funds	12.3	23.3	24.7	39.6	17.5	2.6	-3.1	25.0

Table 5. Deviations of the political news subcategories from the exo-balance

The study shows that, with the exception of Canal 9, Spanish TV news programmes present, in general, less news about the political system, the political institutions and the political culture and include a greater number of news about corruption and misuse of public funds. On the other hand, the subcategory of institutional reforms follows the most unequal behaviour, as its presence is way above the exo-balance in some channels (Canal 9 and TV3), and way below it in some other channels (Canal Sur, La Sexta and Antena 3).

%	TVE1	T5	3	La6	C4	TV3	C 9	CS
Political system	-2.4	-5.2	2.0	-2.1	-2.3	10.4	-3.4	1.5
Political institutions	4.2	3.9	0.4	-4.2	-0.3	-7.1	-6.0	8.9
Institutional reforms	2.4	-10.4	-13.2	-15.2	-0.8	15.9	30.5	-20.4
Political culture	-0.0	4.8	2.6	-1.5	2.3	-5.3	-1.6	1.5
Corruption and misuse of public funds	-4.2	6.8	8.2	23.1	1.0	-13.7	-19.6	8.5

Table 6. Deviations of the political news subcategories from the endo-balance

With respect to the endo-balance, the one defined by the distribution of subcategories in the eight analysed news programmes, obviously, there is a more uneven distribution across channels. The disparity is particularly remarkable in the subcategories of institutional reforms (whose presence is way below the endo-balance in four channels, T5, A3, La6 and CS, and way above it Canal 9 and TV3) and corruption and misuse of funds (whose presence is way above the endo-balance in La6 and way below it in TV3 and Canal 9).

Figures 5 and 6 show the deviations from the exo- and endo- balances of each subcategory in the 8 channels.
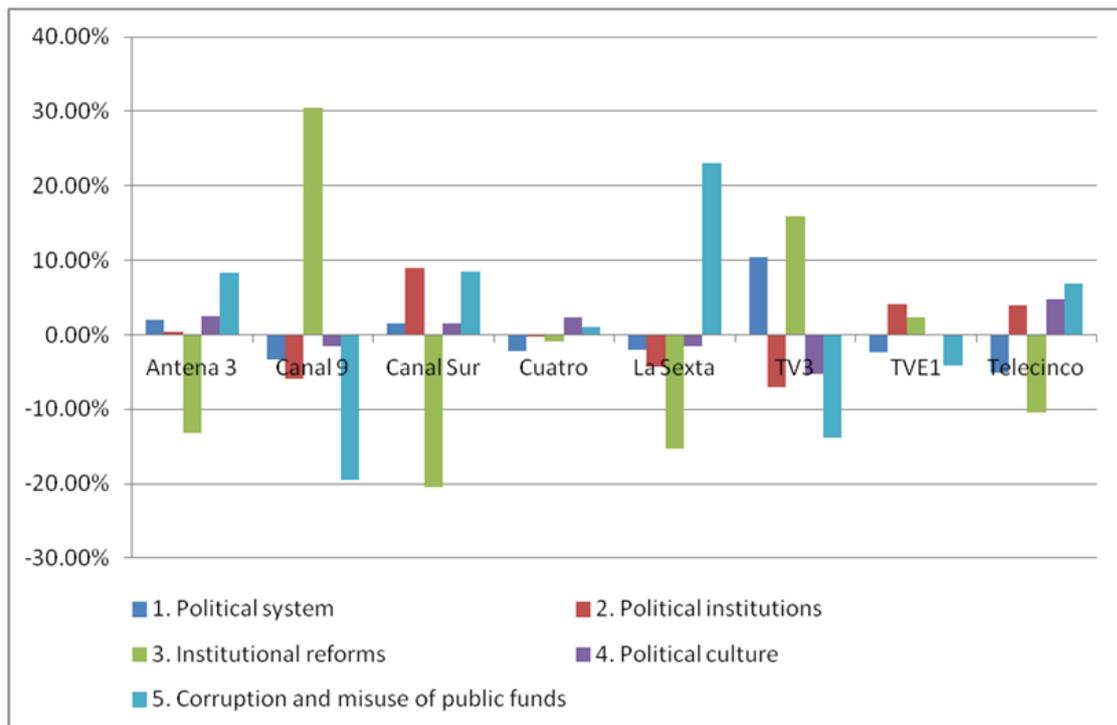
Figure 5. Deviations from the exo-balance of the
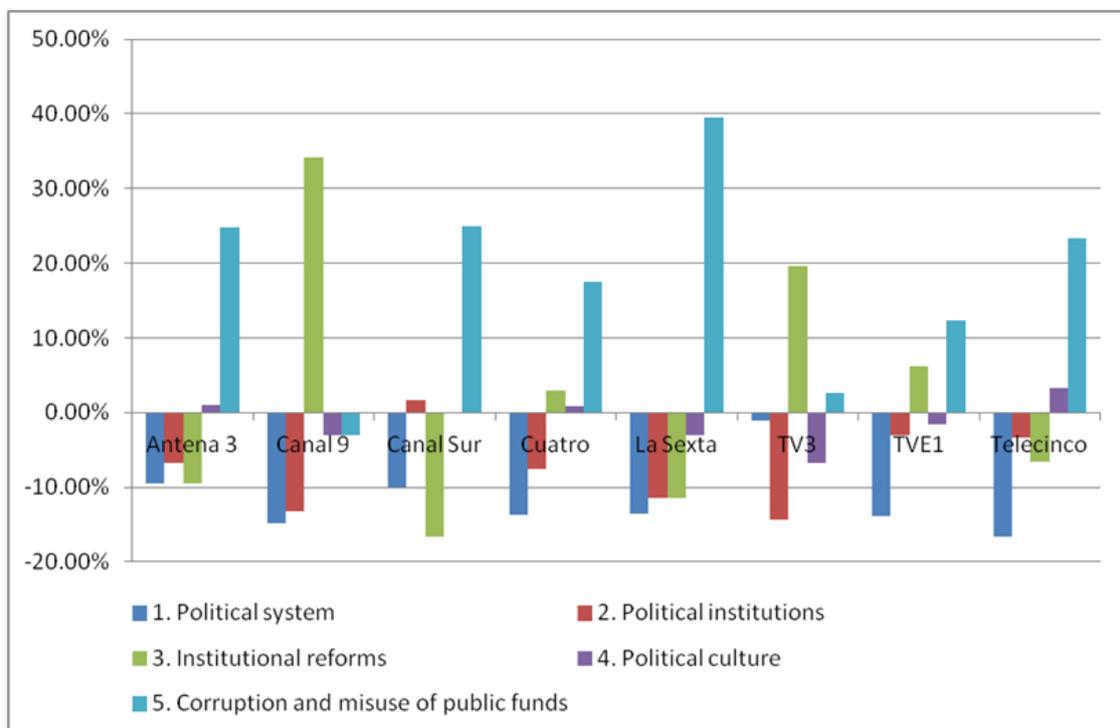political news subcategories across channels

Figure 6. Deviations from the endo-balance of the
political news subcategories across channels

4.4. The balance index as an indicator of diversity

Based on the results shown in tables 7 and 8, we defined the balance indices as the standard deviations of each channel. In this way, we obtained two indices: the exo-balance index and the endo-balance index, as indicators of the quality of the political information.

	TVE	T5	A3	C4	La6	TV3	CS	C9
Exo-balance index	0.10	0.15	0.14	0.12	0.22	0.13	0.16	0.20
Endo-balance index	0.03	0.07	0.08	0.02	0.14	0.13	0.12	0.18

Table 7. Exo-balance and endo-balance indices of the Spanish TV news programmes

Based on these indices, we defined the general balance index as the average of the exo- and endo- balances and obtained the following results:

	TVE	T5	A3	C4	La6	TV3	CS	C9
Balance index	0.07	0.11	0.11	0.07	0.18	0.13	0.14	0.19

Table 8. General balance index of the Spanish TV news programmes

Thus, the results (see figure 7) indicate that the two most balanced networks, which consequently have, in principle, political information of better quality and build a more balanced image of politics, are TVE and C4 (0.7). Following behind are A3, T5, TV3 and CS (with general balance index between 0.11 and 0.14). Finally, the two networks whose political information is the most deviated from the two balances and which consequently offer a more unbalanced picture of politics, are La6 (with 0.18) and C9 (with 0.19). The image of politics built by La6 is very deviated towards the theme of corruption and misuse of public funds, while C9 presents very few news about that political subcategory and a large number of news about institutional reforms.
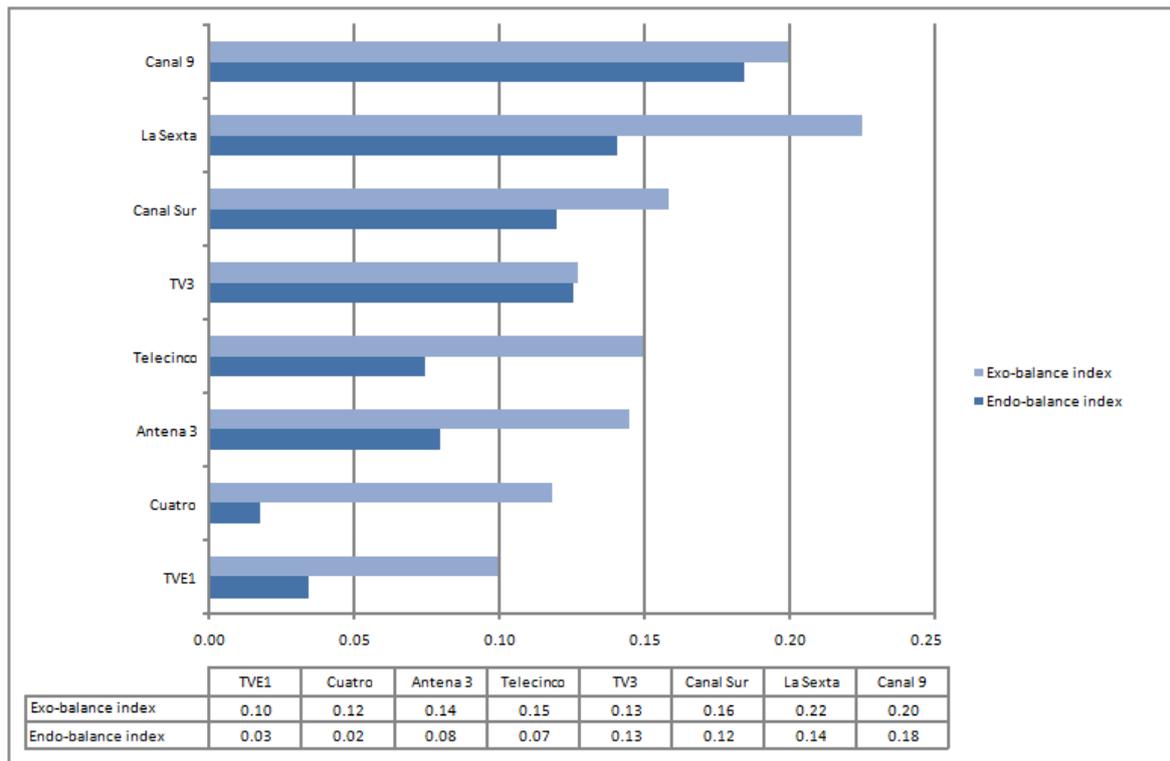
	TVE1	Cuatro	Antena 3	Telecinco	TV3	Canal Sur	La Sexta	Canal 9
Exo-balance index	0.10	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.13	0.16	0.22	0.20
Endo-balance index	0.03	0.02	0.08	0.07	0.13	0.12	0.14	0.18

Figure 7. ENDO and EXO balance indices in the political
news of the Spanish TV news programmes

5. Conclusions

This article has three main objectives. First, to measure the presence of politics in Spanish TV news programmes; second, to determine how the image of politics is built in these programmes; and third, to define two balance indices that allow establishing which channels offer the political information with the highest quality, based on the diversity and proportion of the different thematic subcategories of the political category.

With regards to the presence of politics in the Spanish TV news programmes, we have seen that, with the exception of T5 and A3, which dedicate 9% and 11.7% of the news content to politics, the rest of the channels dedicate between 15% and 23% of their news contents to this theme. The first conclusion in this regard is that the percentage of news devoted to politics does not depend on the ownership (public or private) or the territorial coverage (national or regional) of the TV channels. However, if we do not distinguish between political and policy news, then there is a relation between the presence of these types of news and the ownership and coverage of the channels (see table 9). In this case, the networks presenting the largest number of political and policy news are public and regional –TV3, CS and C9– followed by TVE (a public network with national coverage). In contrast, the private networks dedicate less space to

political and policy news (between 20.9% and 29.2%). Thus, in Spain, the proportion of news about politics and policy issues is greater in the news programmes produced by public TV networks than in programmes produced by private channels.

	TVE	T5	A3	La6	C4	TV3	C9	CS
Percentage of political and policy news	32.1	20.9	22.5	25.5	29.8	41.4	36.7	39.4

Table 9. Percentage of political and policy news in Spanish TV news programmes

On the other hand, we have divided the political news category in five subcategories [3]: political system, political institutions, institutional reforms, political culture and corruption and misuse of public funds. The study shows that the image of politics is built, mainly, around the subcategory of corruption and misuse of public funds, which constitutes 36.5% of the total political news content. This subcategory is followed by political reforms, with 23.75%; political culture, with 18.50%; political institutions, with 12.75%; and political system, with 8.5%. With the exception of CS, private networks build the image of politics with the greatest proportion of news about corruption -La6 (59.6%), A3 (44.7%), T5 (43.3) and C4 (37.5%). In contrast, news about "institutional reforms" have the greatest presence in the public channels: C9 (54.2%), TV3 (39.6%), and TVE (26.2%). News about political culture are presented the most in T5 (23.3%) and A3 (21.1%), and presented the least in TV3 (13.5%) and TVE1 (18.5%). News about political institutions and the political system receive a different treatment in public and private TV channels. Therefore, CS is the channel that presents the largest proportion of news about political institution (21.7%), while TV3 is the channel that presents the largest proportion of news about the political system. However, based on these data it is not possible to conclude that, in general terms, the images of politics constructed by private and public TV channels are different.

Therefore, in order to establish a better indicator of the construction of the image of politics in the news programmes of the different TV channels, we have defined the exo- and endo-balance indices. Based on these indices we can quantify the diversity and quality of the political news content, and identify those channels that are closer to the balance points (and, therefore, also build a more balanced picture of politics), and those channels that deviate the most from them. In addition, based on the two indices we have defined a general balance index that can be used to analyse the rest of the themes represented in the TV news programmes. With regards to the sample of TV channels, the balance indices have allowed us to distinguish the 8 channels into three groups: a group of two channels that offers a very balanced political news content (TVE and C4), a second group of four channels that offers a relatively balanced political news content (A3, T5, TV3 and CS) and, finally, a third group, formed by

La6 and C9, which offers a very unbalanced political news content. Thus, despite being unable of establishing a direct relation between the ownership and territorial coverage of the TV channels and the image of politics they offer, we defined an indicator of the quality of the political news content. The three different groups of channels (with very balanced, balanced, and unbalanced political news content) are formed by both public and private channels and by both national and regional channels. In general terms, corruption is the theme that causes the greatest imbalances, due to both excessive presence, as in the case of La6 (+23.1), and severe absence, as in the case of C9 (-19.6). The other thematic subcategory that also shows great imbalances is institutional reforms, also due to excessive presence –in TV3 (+15.9) and C9 (+30.5)– and severe absence –in CS (-20.4) and La6 (-15.2)–.

Although it is not the objective of this article to connect these imbalances with the TV channels' ownership features and their links to certain political sectors, it is important to note that although the sample selection aimed to avoid outstanding political events, the occurrence of the Constitutional Court's ruling on the Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia and the *Gürtel* case may have affected the distribution of news in the sample of news programmes. In this sense, this research work should be repeated in the future, based on the same sample of channels and news programmes, in order to complement and compare its results about the political news content.

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7. Notes

1. 2010 data taken from: *Marco General de los medios en España 2011* (General media framework in Spain 2011). AIMC, Capitán Haya, 61 28020, Madrid. Available at: http://www.aimc.es

2. The news belonging to these subcategories have not been described because this is not part of the objectives of the

3. The five subcategories proposed in this research are defined in section 3.2.

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