

# The past, present and future of parliamentary and legislative studies

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## THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY AND LEGISLATIVE STUDIES

### Summary:

This special section emanates from the roundtable on the past, present and future of parliamentary and legislative studies, held as part of the PSA Parliaments specialist group's 2020 annual conference.

### Key words:

Future; Legislative studies; Parliamentary studies; Past; Present; Sub-discipline

The theme of the 2020 Annual Conference of the UK Political Studies Association's Parliaments Specialist Group<sup>1</sup> was *Parliaments in 20:20 Vision*. When organising the conference, we thought it would be interesting and useful, not only to take a perspicacious view of parliaments and legislatures, but also of the sub-discipline which studies them. To this end, and to answer such questions as *what does the sub-discipline of parliamentary and legislative studies look like in the early 2020s, how did we get here, and where are we going?*, we decided to organise a roundtable and survey on the state of the sub-discipline, as well as undertake a bibliometric analysis of its three most prominent journals. The outcomes of all three can be found in the four articles contained within this special section.

The first article, written by the five of us, details the results of the survey and the bibliometric analysis of *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and *Parliamentary Affairs*. The other three articles, all co-authored by Emma Crewe, Shane Martin and Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson, consider the past, present and future of parliamentary and legislative studies and build on the contributions of the authors to the roundtable.

As the four articles demonstrate, parliamentary and legislative studies has a rich and significant past, a vigorous present and an exciting future. Yet, as detailed in the articles, the sub-discipline is not without its (perennial) problems: parliamentary and legislative studies (like the parliaments and legislatures it studies) often does not look like the societies of which it is a part; parliaments and legislatures in certain parts of the world have more attention paid to them than others with potential consequences for intellectual and career pathways, as well as parliamentary development; dialogue between scholars of different theoretical and methodological persuasions and with different empirical foci is often not as receptive and free-flowing as it might be; parliamentary and legislative studies is perhaps not as prominent and influential within the wider discipline of political science as it once was; and the sub-discipline faces some specific external issues, beyond those faced by academia more generally, which may increasingly impact on the ability of scholars to undertake (their best) research. As well as a celebration and stocktake of parliamentary and legislative studies, then, we hope that this special section can both offer some insights into these problems and be a springboard for further debate and action.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://psaparliaments.org/>