Political Journalism in Spain.
Practices, Roles and Attitudes[1]

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Abstract
The general aim is to characterize Spanish political journalism through the discourse of editors of the political sections, to verify the extent to which it conforms to the model of a polarized pluralist media system. In Spain has had a consolidated advocacy oriented journalism, which either made the journalist part of the party or organization's strategy, or an advocate of a particular ideology. According to Hallin and Mancini we consider two indicators of political parallelism: the journalistic orientation and practices, and the relations between the media and the political system. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 14 editors. The results suggest that the Spanish political journalism meets two basic features: high levels of political parallelism and polarization. With regard to relations between politicians and journalists, they reveal an attitude of mistrust against politicians.
Keywords: political journalism; media system; partisanship; journalism culture; Spain

Periodismo político en España. Prácticas, roles y actitudes

Resumen
El objetivo general del trabajo es caracterizar el periodismo político español para comprobar en qué medida se ajusta al modelo del sistema mediático pluralista-polarizado. Se han utilizado dos de los indicadores de paralelismo político destacados por Hallin y Mancini: las orientaciones y prácticas periodísticas y las relaciones entre periodistas y sistema político. Se han realizado entrevistas en profundidad a 14 responsables de la sección de política o nacional. Los resultados permiten afirmar que el periodismo político en España cumple las características básicas del modelo pluralista-polarizado. Los niveles de paralelismo político y politización se mantienen altos. Respecto a las relaciones entre políticos y periodistas, las entrevistas han revelado una actitud de desconfianza y el distanciamiento de los periodistas frente a los políticos.
Palabras clave: periodismo político, roles profesionales, paralelismo, cultura profesional, sistema político.

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1. Political journalism in the polarized pluralist model

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), political journalism in Spain reflects the characteristics of the polarized pluralist model. One of the defining features of this media system is its high level of political parallelism. This concept has two aspects. The first is based on the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties and other social and religious organizations. In the second, political parallelism also applies to the way that media content reflects different political tendencies. Hallin and Mancini (2004: 28-29) thus break down political parallelism into the following indicators for their empirical analysis:
- The reflection of political orientations in media content.
- The links between media outlets and political parties.
- The tendencies of journalists to be active in political life.
- The partisanship of the media audiences.
- Journalistic role orientations and practices.
- The journalistic approach to political diversity.

Two of these indicators are of interest for this study: journalistic orientations and practices, and the relations between the media and the political system.

1.1. Journalistic culture: role orientations and professional practices

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the professional culture of journalists in each media system is defined by professional orientations and practices. They note that these orientations move in a continuum ranging from commentary-oriented journalism to information-oriented journalism (which aims to obtain news, and pass it on to the public). The former falls within the polarized pluralist model, while the latter is primarily part of the liberal model. Of all the features of the professional culture of journalism, analysis of journalists' roles and orientations is one of the most heavily studied research areas.

Mazzoleni (2010) uses the term "professional orientation of the news media" to refer to two ideal ways of producing political news. The first professional orientation is pragmatic, and is characterized by an approach based on exclusively journalistic interests. This is in contrast to the sacerdotal orientation, which adapts the means of news production to the needs and interests of the political system (2010: 94). A pragmatic orientation requires high levels of professionalism and a lack of instrumentation among journalists, as described by Hallin and Mancini (2004). The sacerdotal orientation is related to the concept of clientelism, which is typical of countries with a polarized pluralist model (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002).

The idea of professional cultures of political journalism (Kuhn and Neveu, 2002) has recently been developed and includes contributions from empirical analysis of the news media's orientations, roles and functions. In the 1970s, studies by Tunstall (1970), Janowitz (1975) and Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1976) highlighted the existence of two ideal types: the neutral reporter versus the participant journalist, the passive versus the active, the liberal vs. the partisan, and the gatekeeper and the advocate. However, it was the studies by Weaver et al. that established the study of journalistic roles in theoretical and methodological terms. The results of the first survey they conducted showed three functions - the journalist as adversary, interpreter and disseminator (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1991). The survey was repeated in 1992, when it revealed the emergence of a new role among American journalists - the populist mobilizer. The interpreter journalist is the most common, as 62.9% of the respondents considered the items they composed to be very important (discussion of national policy, investigation of complex problems and investigation of politicians' actions). This was followed (51.1%) by the disseminator journalist, i.e. one who provides news quickly and removes what cannot be verified. The adversary journalist is characterized by opposition to the political and economic authorities, but only 17.6% consider this role very important. As well as the three roles above, a minority of the respondents (6.2%) make up the new category: the populist mobilizer journalist, who is characterized by encouraging the public's intellectual interests, providing entertainment, setting the political agenda and allowing citizens to express their views. This new journalist is part of what has been called Public Journalism (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996: 137-140). The latest study on American journalists (Weaver et al., 2007, p 146) once again showed the same four models, albeit with a major decline in the influence of the information disseminator role, from 51.1% to 16%.

Donsbach and Patterson (2004: 265-266) proposed a two-dimensional model for analyzing the perceptions of professional roles: in the first, the journalist assumes either an active or passive attitude with regard to the event, depending on whether he/she is acting independently of his/her own interests; the second dimension refers to whether a neutral or partisan position vis-a-vis the events is adopted.

Hanitzsch (2007: 369) defines journalistic culture as a "particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously or unconsciously, legitimate their roles in society and render their work meaningful for themselves and others". He proposes a three-dimensional explanatory model for the institutional roles, using 12 items. The first dimension (interventionism) reflects the extent to which the journalist promotes certain values, is socially committed, or on the other hand, maintains his/her neutrality, impartiality and objectivity. The second dimension is related to distance to power holders, which makes the journalist either an adversary or a collaborator. The final dimension is related to market orientation and the search for an audience, rather than the public interest and maintaining the public well informed.

1.2. Models of relationships between journalists and politicians
The relationships established between political institutions and media outlets are one of the cornerstones of the political communication system (Curran, 2005; Mazzoleni,

2010; van Aelst, Brants, van Praag, de Vreese, Nuytemans and van Dalen, 2009). Blumler and Gurevitch (1995: 32-34) conclude that the relationship between politicians and journalists can be defined as one of mutual dependence, which involves processes of competition and adaptation, in that both parties seek to achieve specific objectives as regards the audience: the journalists' priority is to attract the public's attention by capturing attention, informing and entertaining; meanwhile, politicians aim to persuade individuals about actions and proposals that are part of their political strategy.

Mazzoleni (2010: 95-102) defines five models for relationships between journalists and politicians: adversarial, collateral, exchange, competition and market oriented. In the adversarial model, journalists are either gatekeepers for the political authorities or advocates of the public interest, and do not necessarily adopt a hostile attitude toward the political system, but maintain a stance of distance between the political and journalistic spheres (2010: 96). Blumler (1990: 104) argues that as a result of the active media management of political messages, journalists run the risk of becoming part of a manipulation of public opinion. As journalists have become aware of this situation, they have reacted by seeking to distance themselves from politicians, and even by being openly suspicious of them. This leads to well-known phenomena in modern political reporting such as the adoption of tactics such as failing to report news when it is deemed to have been created with the aim of manipulation (Blumler, 1990); the emphasis on corruption, "fascination" with the misdeeds of the political elites and the attribution of spurious motives to politicians (McNair, 2000); and the recent journalistic emphasis on metacoverage, especially during election campaigns, in order to reveal the marketing strategies applied to politics (De Vreese and Elenbaas, 2008; Humanes, 2009, Brants and Voltmer, 2011). In short, these are described by Kuhn and Neveu (2002) as "cynical coverage" of politics by the media. As a result, Mazzoleni argues that this adversarial model is unlikely in media systems where there is some degree of confusion between the two spheres (2010: 94).

The collateral model occurs when politics and journalism have shared interests and aims, and is typical of countries with a high level of parallelism, where journalism is also subordinate to politics (Mazzoleni, 2010: 97-98). The exchange model is based on the mutual dependence of the media system and the political system, with the former demanding news material from the politicians, and the latter seeking to gain visibility for their proposals and ideas by means of news content (2010: 98). In the competition model, the media try to become political actors. In cases of highly politicized journalism, the media compete to have greater legitimacy and influence over public opinion than the political class. This feature distinguishes this model from the relationships in the adversarial model (2010: 99). Finally, the market oriented model basically pushes media outlets towards seeking profits, forcing them to change their political positions on the basis of profitability, either as a result of larger audiences or through advertising, or even due to business or tax advantages from the political authorities (2010: 100-102).

The adversarial, market and exchange models have little opportunity to develop within polarized pluralist media systems, as high levels of journalistic professionalism and autonomy (in the adversarial and exchange model) is a prerequisite in all

three cases, or the companies are guided primarily by economic benefits, and their ideological or political interests are a secondary consideration.

Each type of relationship marks what Cook calls the "negotiation of newsworthiness," in which politicians and journalists, and sometimes citizens, constantly interact to set the agenda in order to decide what is important (1988: 12-13).

2. The journalistic profession and political journalism in Spain

As in other countries with the Mediterranean model, the journalistic standard based on objectivity and neutrality was never consolidated in the Spanish case. This was due to the late emergence of a commercial press that had no links to political parties or institutions. There was no modern media system until the sale of the "Prensa del Movimiento" in 1982, and the emergence of private television in 1990. Furthermore, except in exceptional periods, there was no press freedom for journalism with guaranteed professional autonomy until 1978, when the Spanish Constitution was approved. Finally, the low level of professionalism is apparent in Spanish journalism's late transition into a professional area autonomous of the political sphere, in the sense outlined by Bourdieu. In short, since the nineteenth century Spain has had a consolidated advocacy oriented journalism, which either made the journalist part of the party or organization's strategy, or an advocate of a particular ideology or cause. Gradual commercialization, especially in the audiovisual market, has only recently begun to moderate this situation.

In this context, the emergence of professional models that were not based on subordination to the interests of the political class was impossible. During the "Transición" the media and the new political class began a period of cooperation, which was the result of the parallel development of the two groups after the dictatorship. The weakness of the political elites meant that journalists were key players in the fledgling democracy, and they began to acquire great prestige. From the second half of the 1980s, the media continued to play this political role, but they distanced themselves from the political authorities. Ortega (2003, 2011), proposes the concept of "complementary antagonists" to describe the basic type of relationship between politicians and journalists.

After 1982, journalists maintained their social prestige thanks to their opposition to the Socialist government, and even assumed the role of parliamentary opposition by uncovering numerous political scandals. This period saw the consolidation of the political role of journalists, by means of several mechanisms: direct representation of public opinion, the ability to legitimize certain aspects of social life, the establishment of standards of conduct and the "granting of fame" (Ortega, 1994: 43-44). As a profession, journalists came to occupy a leading position compared to other groups and institutions when details of political and economic scandals that attracted a great deal of interest were published, which came to light through the media.

Since the 1990s, "proximity to power or the opposition has defined the development of the large media groups" (Diaz Nosty, 2011: 20). Parallel processes of polarization have taken place in the political system and the media (Gonzalez and Bouza, 2009: 91). The coverage of the terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004, three days before

that year's general elections, was the most recent confrontation between the PRISA group and the Popular Party, and is a good example of these disputes.

Over the last decade, Spanish journalists have lost the social prestige that they previously enjoyed. In the *Madrid Press Association's Report on the profession* of 2010, partisan and politicized programmes were listed third (42.4%) among the contents that did the most damage to the image of journalists, according to responses from the journalists themselves. Politics is the penultimate of the journalistic specialities that comply with ethics in practice, with an average score of 2.4 in 2009 and 2.3 in 2010, on a scale of 1 to 5.

The negative perception of journalists as a profession has become widespread among the general public. In 2006, data from the "Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas" (CIS) showed journalists with their lowest scores, as the least valued profession. In the reports on the journalistic profession mentioned above, according to public opinion, partisanship, lack of independence and politicization were the second most negative aspect after the tabloid celebrity press (30.8%). On a scale of 1 to 10, the score for the level of politicization in the media does not fall below 7.3. In 2010, 44% stated they did not trust political news.

2.1. Roles and professional orientations of the Spanish journalists

There has not been extensive Spanish research into professional attitudes, and little consideration has been given to this issue from the standpoint of professional practice. The survey commissioned by the Madrid Press Association in 1990 (published in *Periodistas*) highlights that objectivity in reporting is one of the least valued characteristics (5.77 out of 10). The data from the study of the journalistic elite (Diezhandino, Bezunartea and Coca, 1995) and the 1995 survey of Madrid journalists on journalism and modern society (Ortega and Humanes, 2000) both agree that the main tasks of journalists are to inform and influence. The survey for the CIS in 1999 (García Cortázar and García de León, 2001) revealed that the task of entertainment had displaced information as the main objective. Canel, Rodriguez and Sanchez-Aranda asked the reporters they surveyed to rate six roles: "giving information to others, drawing attention to public problems, being the first to find out what happens, influencing the public, promoting certain values and ideas and expressing myself" (1999: 94-99). Five ways of understanding the role of the journalist became apparent: the disseminator, analyst, advocate for a cause, an adversary of power and business, in that order of importance.

However, the findings from other research reveal the shift to a less "informative" and more "trivial and sensational" journalism (Gómez Mompart, 1999: 218). The study commissioned by the Catalonia College of Journalists in 2000 used a scale with eight functions of the media to assess the importance conferred on them. The most important was entertainment, followed by informing, forming opinion, defending freedom of expression, setting the agenda, being a platform for advocating all ideas, monitoring the government and monitoring politicians.

In their survey of 201 broadcast journalists in the Basque Country, Martin Sabarís and Amurrio Vélez (2003) found that the ideal tasks of journalists were to inform the

public accurately, objectively and impartially (97%) and do so quickly (95%), followed by: to analyse complex problems, to give ordinary people an opportunity to comment on public issues, to provide information to make everyday life easier and to entertain. However, the tasks they in fact carry out are reporting quickly (93%), entertaining the public (84%) and providing information to make everyday life easier (61%).

In the study by Hanitzsch et al. (2011), Spanish journalists are part of the so-called western journalism culture (Germany, Switzerland, Austria and the United States), which is characterized by journalists exhibiting "detachment, non-involvement, providing political information and monitoring the government, as well as providing interesting political news to motivate people to participate" (2011: 281). Specifically, the items with which Spanish respondents expressed the strongest agreement are: being an absolutely impartial observer, providing interesting information, providing citizens with political information, monitoring the government and encouraging civic participation.

None of these studies focused on journalists specializing in political news, and as such our study will provide a comparison of the results of these studies with those we present below.

3. Objectives and methodology
3.1. Objectives and research questions

The general aim of this paper is to characterize Spanish political journalism through the discourse of editors of the political news sections, to verify the extent to which it conforms to the model of a polarized pluralist media system. This objective is broken down into the following research questions:

- RQ1. How do Spanish journalists define politics (the issues, actors and institutions that make up "politics") and what professional practices govern the political coverage?

- RQ2. What are the political functions of the media as regards the political system?

- RQ3. What models provide the basis for the relationship between journalists and politicians?

We also aim to corroborate the hypothesis of the high level of politicization of journalism in the Mediterranean model for the Spanish case.

3.2. Description of the sample

The data were obtained through in-depth interviews with a sample of 14 editors of Political, or National or Spanish news sections[2] in four newspapers (*ABC, El País, La Razón* and *El Mundo*), four radio stations (SER, COPE, Onda Cero and RNE), five television stations (Antena 3, Telecinco, La Sexta, TVE and Telemadrid) and one news agency (EFE). All these media outlets have coverage all over Spain, except Telemadrid. The interviews were conducted between January and March 2011.

The desk editors of the political news sections are a particularly interesting subject for research. As noted by Weaver et al., editors and other supervisors are a major in-

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[2] The name of the section that deals with political news is not exactly the same in each medium.

fluence when defining newsworthiness for other journalists (2007: 155). They are also special interviewees, as defined by Gorden (1975), who points out that this type of individual is selected due to their position within a group, community or institution. The editors of political news sections occupy a mid-point between the directors and editors of the media outlets and other journalists in their section: they are able to make editorial decisions, they know the editorial line and how to implement it, but at the same they may also receive pressure from directors and editors.

The decision to undertake the study using the in-depth interview technique was primarily based on the overall objective of this study, which was to reconstruct the self-generated discourse of journalists who are to some extent able to decide on the coverage of political news, and who act as a conveyor belt between the medium's management and its editors. As noted by Mancini (1999), journalists' self-perception often does not coincide with the image they project to the public by means of the content they produce or their own actions. However, a comparison of the coverage of politics and with the views of citizens is only possible by obtaining this discourse.

The final composition of the sample of journalists interviewed began with the selection of media, combining the following criteria: type of media outlet, ownership, ideological position, size of audience and media group (Table 1). Each ideology was assigned to a media outlet based on the data obtained from two sources. First, the data from the *Report on the journalistic profession in Spain* (2010: 117), which asked a sample of citizens to place the outlets on a scale of 1 to 10 (left-right) was considered. Second, the classification by Reig (2011: 209) was also included. This expresses the tendency by each media outlet to favour one or other of the two major political parties in the general elections in 2008. Finally Spain's most important news agency, EFE, was included in the sample.

Table 1.Characteristics of the media sample					
Medium	**Type of medium**	**Ownership**	**Ideology**	**Audience /readership**	**Media group**
El País	Press	Private	3.9/PSOE	1,915,000	Prisa
El Mundo	Press	Private	6.9/PP	1,234,000	Unidad editorial
Abc	Press	Private	7.2/PP	660,000	Vocento
La Razón	Press	Private	7.3/PP	298,000	Planeta
RNE	Radio	State-owned public	4.7/PSOE	1,529,000	-
Ser	Radio	Private	3.9/PSOE	4,078,000	Prisa
COPE	Radio	Private	8.1/PP	1,655,000	Conferencia Episcopal
Onda Cero	Radio	Private	5.8/PP	2,255,000	Planeta
TVE	Television	State-owned public	4.5/PSOE	20.2% share	-
Telemadrid	Television	Public-autonomous region	-	1.1% share	-
Antena 3	Television	Private	5.8/PP	14% share	Planeta
La sexta	Television	Private	4/PSOE	6.1% share	Planeta
Telecinco	Television	Private	5.6/PP-PSOE	16.8% share	Mediaset
EFE	News agency	State-owned public	-	-	-

After the media outlets had been selected, we contacted the editors-in-chief or section chiefs, and promised them that their responses would remain confidential. We

are grateful for the ease and speed with which the respondents agreed to our request. Table 2 shows the basic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 2. Characteristics of the sample of journalists interviewed				
Sex	**Experience in the profession**	**Experience in the politics section**	**Experience in current position**	**Experience in media other than the current**
- 11 men **- 3 women**	-More than 20 years: 9 -Less than 20 years: 5	-More than 5 years: 12 -Less than 5 years: 2	-More than 5 years: 6 -Less than 5 years: 7	-Yes 11 -No 3

3.3. Description of the interview script

The interview script was structured in four parts. The first asked the participants about the structure, organization and decision-making processes. They were asked to define their concept of political news, how their section is structured and how decisions about coverage are made. The second part of the questionnaire focused on roles, functions and relationships with other actors in the political system (politicians, media offices and the audience). They were asked to consider the journalistic coverage of politics and its evolution in Spain. The final part of the interview was a section on the impact of the new media (digitization, internet, social networks) on political journalism.

4. Findings

4.1. The journalistic definition of politics

Entman's classic definition (1993) states that by framing a social occurrence, journalists select some aspects of reality to which they give a specific definition, an interpretation of its causes and an evaluation. As a result, we were first interested in ascertaining the discourse of the interviewees as regards defining the raw material for their work: politics. This definition guides the processes of selection, prioritization and treatment of politics.

At first, all the section chiefs agreed on the difficulty of establishing single and stable criteria to define political news. An editor-in-chief at a commercial radio station admitted that "everything is politics," and added: "I would find it very difficult to define what political news is, I think it is everything that in some way passes through the filter of political interpretation." However, the centrality of the institutional political system as the focus for news became apparent when they were asked to specify the issues that their section dealt with. The activities of the President of the Government, the political parties, especially in the Congress of Deputies and the Senate, and the governments of the Autonomous Communities are the contents that the section is based on every day. As well as these areas, there is the news generated by the Royal Family, the law courts (particularly the High Court) and the Home Office and Ministry of Defence.

Interestingly, a subject which begins its news cycle in other sections (especially society and the economy) becomes political news if it is discussed or negotiated by the political parties. According to one of the journalists interviewed: "when issues affect political negotiation, between the parliamentary groups, that is covered by the National section. (...) For example, the general state budget, its contents, when they are

presented by the Vice-President [for the economy], comes under the area of the Economy. The government's negotiation [for the budgets] with the Basque Nationalist Party, if there is an agreement or no agreement, is generally covered by the National area." This means that other subjects (experts, social organizations, citizens) have no constant presence in political news.

This fulfils the hypothesis that the coverage of politics that focuses on the political process rather than on the process of policy discussion. These political debates become newsworthy because they generate partisan controversy: issues are "politicized" when conflicts arise between parties, even when the issue is not strictly political. Politics is a game of "opposing views," typical of a polarized pluralist model.

The definition of political news and its centrality to the media define the section's working routines. The news desk is organized to ensure ongoing coverage of political actors and institutions, and specialist journalists are assigned to monitor their activities. The anticipated institutional agenda defines most of the coverage, although there is also an ongoing concern to include more long-term issues or topics that are of particular interest to the media outlet's editorial line. These issues are more likely to be published in the newspapers, which are considered a benchmark for the other media: "Today, news in Spain, I don't know how long it will last, is defined by the newspapers, by *El País*, and by *Abc*, it is defined by all the newspapers."

The respondents highlight two trends as regards coverage of politics. In the broadcast media, there is an overabundance of statements-based journalism. An editor-in-chief describes the way they work: "I believed we have entered a sharp dynamic of statements-based journalism, I think that they are taking advantage, it is linked to the economic crisis. The people who produced political news used to be people with a lifetime of experience, and now you find people doing political news who have just left university because it is much cheaper for a company." They also confirm the use of soft news formats. The pressure to obtain more viewers or readers strongly pushes the media outlet towards simplified, dramatic, highly visual news that are easy to consume. This situation is particularly serious on television: "sometimes we take out politics or put it at a low level to switch to lighter topics, that are more entertaining because maybe political news is often covered from the point of view of politicians, and then people aren't interested in it and reject it." An analysis of the political, economic and international news coverage in *El País* and *Abc* for the periods 1985-86 and 2002-03 reached a similar conclusion: the number of news stories in these areas had fallen by 25%, while the number of soft news items had increased (Humanes, 2006: 60).

The print media aims to retain its hallmark of journalistic reporting, assessment of context and documented information. In the continuum of the canonical distinction between news and opinion, "political journalism seems to be searching for formats that are shifting from the first pole to the second, creating "hybrid formats".

4.2. Functions of political news

The political news section is considered the most important in each media outlet. Among the descriptions used are: "it represents the medium", "it is the basis for the

creation of the public agenda", "it is the most authentic expression of the medium's editorial line", "it demands the most public attention," "it includes most of the issues in the contents"... It has the most editors and supplies most of the cover stories. In addition, all the respondents believe in the need to enhance political information compared to other lighter types of content. Politics is of interest to the public, provided it does not focus on "politicians' problems".

When the journalists interviewed were asked about the functions of political news they produced a canonical discourse, containing the three classic objectives of reporting on events, analyzing them and guiding opinion: "First, and obviously, informative. Trying to report what has happened. Second, analytical or interpretive. That means not only presenting some events or figures to the reader, but contextualizing them in the political situation. And third, a purely opinion-based or guiding or merely ideological function".

However, there are also nuances in the interviewees' discourse that give us a more complex perspective. Providing information, as the sole function, is only mentioned by one of the editors. For the majority, news is combined with other journalistic roles. First, they mention the need to interpret events, to enable citizens to have informed opinions on which to base their decisions. In the state-owned public media, this function is related to providing balanced and plural points of view. Reporting and acting as a counterweight are the main roles for the respondents working for newspapers. For most respondents, providing information that enables events to be interpreted is as important as shaping public opinion, but this is done in order to influence it, by the public dissemination of the media outlet's "editorial line."

4.3. Relations between journalists and politicians

In general, the respondents' answers agree with the concept of "complementary antagonists" which Ortega uses to refer to relations between the two actors: "Politicians and journalists, even when they have their own spheres of action, inevitably share the new media space. Politics today is impossible without the visibility that that space provides, which is why politicians must appear in it if they want to have the images and visibility that makes them able to deal with electoral competition. However, journalists can hardly aspire to control the public realm if they do not concern themselves with political issues, meaning that the visibility that their work makes possible is continually directed towards politics" (Ortega, 2011: 63).

All the editors of section mention a necessary relationship between journalists and politicians, because they share and operate in the same public space but have different professional interests (which are not necessarily antagonistic, but not always collaborative). The expressions "necessary [relations]" and "mutual need" are used in ten cases. In addition, they also state that it is a "[relation] based on interest" and/or one of "mutual interest". In three cases, they mention the concept of "[mutual] dependence."

These expressions cover two positions. First, the "distance" and "mistrust" as regards politicians is emphasized, and can be interpreted as an indication that there is a very close proximity between politicians and journalists. Journalists feel that politi-

cians "use them" and journalists "let themselves be used" in exchange for exclusive information. The discourse tends to reinforce or emphasize the need to preserve journalists' professional values in the face of the trend towards news "management," especially by press offices. In general, the respondents prefer politicians to be their direct source of information rather than relying on the news management systems of the political parties and institutions. This argument of distrust of the political system is predominant in the discourse of the section chiefs. For the editors of political news in the print media, interaction is a "game" in which the politician tries to "deceive me, get me on his side, and sell his product." Politicians are the focus of suspicion: "most of them don't amount to anything. There is a vast majority who are professional politicians," or the accusation: "there is a democratic deficit in Spain that I don't think exists in other countries, politicians go without showing their faces for months and months."

In the public media, the need for equidistance and balance is related to a feeling of being monitored by the political parties under the terms of the parliamentary scrutiny provided for in the state regulations on public broadcasting in Spain. This is very typical of the polarized pluralist model.

A second argument states that the relationship is preferably "collaborative," but this is clearly used by only a minority of the respondents. It is even suggested as a compromise in the quality of political news: "So, as I said before, it's about ask me, ask whatever you want, and I'll give you whatever answer I want" to make the answer seem like a response but they quickly focus their response on the message they want to put across and divert attention (...) political journalists who see politicians every day aren't worried that politicians will stop talking to them, but rather that they will stop giving them sensitive information at certain times and they run the risk of becoming the ally of the politician rather than the citizen, who is who the journalist represents."

4.4. Politicization of the political coverage

Despite the politics section being considered the most important to the medium, as mentioned above, all the respondents deny any direct control over decision-making by the management, although some reference is made to the 'editorial line' as a standard of professional work. The editorial line is defined as business interests, but also as a service to an audience profile similar to the editorial line (political or ideological profile or ideological and religious profile).

In seven cases, the parallelism between the media and ideological and political currents are mentioned explicitly, and three interviewees mention an "alignment" between journalism and politics. This parallelism is grounds for criticism (three cases) and is considered a characteristic of the media system in Spain or as something positive (four cases). When criticized, the parallelism is defined as a result of the corporate structure of the media, as the result of government policy for radio and digital terrestrial television concessions or as a result of the distribution of institutional advertising. The political parallelism has also been further exacerbated by a growing ideological and political polarization since the 1990s: "the debate in the press in recent years has been tougher and bitterer than it was before, especially since the later years of Felipe González".

Table 1 shows that the two sources that have been used to place each medium ideologically are the same - except for Telecinco - which suggests that it is a good indicator of the high level of parallelism. Indeed, some respondents have no hesitation in pointing out a recognizable ideological bias as characteristic of the medium in which they work.

They mainly criticize the role of the "lapdog" of some colleagues, especially when participating in talk shows on radio and television. These shows go over political controversies, but now involve journalists related to each side of the disagreements. It is this format that contains all the features of political parallelism.

5. Conclusions and discussion

Although the respondents argue that it is not easy to define the purpose of political news, they all agree that they focus their work on the same actors, institutions and issues. The "negotiation of newsworthiness" (Cook, 1988) is dominated by the political system - and by the political parties in particular - especially when it prioritizes disputes between them. This way of understanding politics is not restricted to this section, but instead affects all the other sections related to it, as when an issue is politicized it always migrates to the politics section.

Political news characterized in this manner is the flagship of all the media outlets analyzed. Even in the most commercial outlets, coverage of political affairs persists due to the need to exert influence, although sometimes it does not provide the audience share that other content offers.

Political journalism is clearly highly politicized and is based on ideological alignments. The perspective of the respondents coincides with the data from the reports on the journalistic profession, which highlight this same perception among both the professionals surveyed and the public. There appear to be basically two reasons for this situation. First, the tensions between the media and political parties created by the successive granting of licenses in the broadcasting sector since the 1990s and aid to the press in its various forms (advertising, grants). Second, the consolidation of commentary-oriented journalism, conveyed through talk radio and television, in which reporters act as representatives of ideological positions that coincide with those of the political parties. The growing political polarization finds its media parallel in this talk format. The Spanish case is consistent with the findings of Mazzoleni, who says that in some contexts the media's role as an adversary does not involve defending the public interest, but is instead a strategy for political action (2010: 99).

Almost all the respondents believe that the standards of political journalism have worsened, as a result of politicization and polarization, as well as technological changes and marketing processes. The editors of the political sections are aware that the traditional media are no longer the public's only way of obtaining political news, and are conscious that they must adapt to this new situation. For example, monitoring the content of social networks (especially Twitter) has become an essential working routine. Meanwhile, the pressure to obtain audience share primarily affects the broadcast media and leads them to produce a more trivial kind of news, which is determined to a greater extent by images and statements, and by spectacular events.

The interviews revealed an almost unanimous level of distrust and distance in the relationships between politicians and journalists. One interpretation of these expressions suggests a hypothesis of a drift towards the adversarial model, at least as a professional aspiration. However, more empirical data will be needed to confirm this trend. The real situation mentioned by the respondents when asked to assess modern political journalism is most similar to relations of competition, especially at a time of increased political and media polarization.

The emergence of communication and news management offices run by political parties is seen as an attempt to control journalism. It has recently become common practice among Spanish politicians to call press conferences without admitting any questions, and to refuse admission to election rallies to cameras and reporters.

In view of these results, it can be said that political journalism in Spain has the basic features of the polarized pluralist model. The levels of political parallelism and politicization remain relatively high. This is apparent in the survival of journalistic formats that are clearly commentary-oriented. State intervention continues thanks to two instruments: the granting of licenses and institutional advertising. In the publicly-owned media, the Audiovisual Communication Act of 2010 greatly diminished the management model that was less subordinate to the party in government, but this situation has not yet become widespread among the publicly-owned media in the Autonomous Regions. However, the model is changing due to the tendency towards commercialization.

One of the virtues of the work presented here is that it covers the study of the professional culture among Spanish journalists in a particular area: political news. Unlike previous studies on the roles and attitudes of Spanish professionals, we have provided evidence that increases our knowledge of journalistic culture. It is clear that the results of studies that cover all types of journalists are not exactly the same as those presented here. While journalism that is less closely linked to the Mediterranean model seems to predominate in other research (Canel, Rodríguez and Sánchez Aranda, 1999; Martín Sabaris and Amurrio, 2003; Hanitzsch, 2011), the editors of section confirm that political journalism at least continues to maintain the practices inherent in the polarized pluralist model.

In methodological terms, the use of the interview technique helped us to study the discourse of the editors of political news sections in more depth. Although self-perception of their professional work is oriented towards providing an ideal vision, they gave us a more realistic discourse when they were asked to consider the general situation. Naturally, only a comparison between this study and those preceding it and analysis of political news coverage will shed some light on the subject studied here in.

6. References

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