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Seeking information or pressing for action

Analysing the function of parliamentary oral questions in a comparative perspective

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- Compel the executive to justify its actions or disclose relevant information
 - Press the executive to pay attention to an issue
 - Do constituency work
 - Gain personal publicity
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Research question:

Which of the two is prevalent and under which conditions

Research design: large-N design



Three moderators

- Majority/Opposition
 - Media attention (policy content of articles of a major newspaper)
 - Procedural/political differences (Belgium vs Portugal)
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Hypotheses

	Opposition	Majority
Executive(t-1) -> Questions(t0)	H1. Accountability(+)	H2. Diversion(-)
Questions(t-1) -> Executive(t0)	H3. Agenda-setting(+)	H4. Anticipation(+)
Questions(t-1) * Media(t-1) -> Executive(t0)	H5. Media moderation(+)	H5. Media moderation(+)

	Majority PQ		Opposition PQ	
	BE	PT	BE	PT
H2 Diversion	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Media(lag)	0.0648* (0.0346)	0.0517 (0.0737)	0.0111 (0.0305)	0.1112** (0.0549)
Executive(lag)	-0.0370* (0.0219)	-0.0594 (0.0379)	0.0115 (0.0193)	0.0362 (0.0282)
Majority PQ(lag)	0.0357** (0.0149)	-0.0294 (0.0235)	0.0570*** (0.0131)	-0.0421** (0.0175)
Opposition PQ(lag)	0.0174 (0.0169)	0.0147 (0.0318)	0.0349** (0.0149)	0.1465*** (0.0237)
N	4956	1911	4956	1911
R-squared	0.0032	0.0026	0.0064	0.0261
Adj. R-squared	-0.0518	-0.0607	-0.0484	-0.0357
F Statistic	3.7134***	1.1824	7.6061***	12.0330***
***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1				

Cross-sectional time series fixed-effects panel model (lag of 1 week)

	Executive agenda					
	BE	PT	BE	PT	BE	PT
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Media(lag)	0.0861*** (0.0225)	0.0626 (0.0450)	0.0626*** (0.0239)	0.0097 (0.0458)	0.0438* (0.0251)	0.0210 (0.0501)
Executive(lag)	0.0449*** (0.0142)	0.0658*** (0.0231)	0.0464*** (0.0142)	0.0654*** (0.0229)	0.0454*** (0.0142)	0.0655*** (0.0231)
Media(lag)*Majority PQ(lag)	H4 Anticipation		0.3658*** (0.1270)	0.9686*** (0.1897)	H5 media moderation	
Media(lag)*Opposition PQ(lag)					0.4933*** (0.1313)	0.4093* (0.2175)
Majority PQ(lag)	-0.0043 (0.0097)	0.0342** (0.0144)	-0.0307** (0.0133)	-0.0388* (0.0202)	-0.0034 (0.0097)	0.0350** (0.0143)
Opposition PQ(lag)	0.0154 (0.0110)	0.0014 (0.0194)	0.0153 (0.0110)	-0.0012 (0.0193)	-0.0240 (0.0152)	-0.0364 (0.0279)
N	4956	1911	4956	1911	4956	1911
R-squared	0.0059	0.0091	0.0077	0.0233	0.0089	0.0111
Adj. R-squared	-0.0489	-0.0538	-0.0473	-0.0393	-0.0460	-0.0523
F Statistic	6.9843***	4.1273***	7.2569***	8.5629***	8.4280***	4.0148***
***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1						

Cross-sectional time series fixed-effects panel model (lag of 1 week)

Conclusion

- In both countries, parliamentary oral questions on the floor fulfil *agenda-setting* and *anticipation* functions but media attention is needed (H5)
 - No evidence of opposition checking on the executive (H1)
 - Probably achieved through other channels
 - Probably activated when executive decisions are final
 - Type of majority coalition matters when looking at the functions of majority questioning (H2 and H4)
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