

## Notes from the Editor

### In This Issue<sup>1</sup>

Is political science the real dismal discipline? One might think so, given the head-shaking, hand-wringing, and tut-tutting for which political scientists are responsible during every election cycle. Too few citizens, we lament, take the trouble to vote, and too many of those who do vote base their decisions on superficial or whimsical grounds. The unease we feel as professionals-cum-citizens over the distance between the noble idea of elections-in-theory and the sorry conduct of elections-in-practice has a long pedigree. In the first century A.D., Juvenal decried the tendency of imperial politicians to sweep serious policy issues under the rug by satiating the populace with *panem et circenses*. Colonial-era British politicians also courted votes with food and drink. The famous 1757 painting “Canvassing for Votes” by William Hogarth depicts vote-seekers gaining electoral support based upon their skills as genial hosts, not policy advocates. In many American cities, elections have long been notoriously corrupt, the classic case being New York’s Tammany Hall and its ethos of “I seen my opportunities and I took ‘em.” Today, as fledgling democracies around the world are holding elections, they are experiencing many of the forms of electoral corruption and graft that have become so familiar in more established democracies, and undoubtedly they are devising some new forms as well.

Argentina cast off military rule just two decades ago. Susan C. Stokes demonstrates that parties there, as elsewhere, use material inducements and social pressures to try to gain support on Election Day. In “Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina,” Stokes uses a broad range of methodological tools to analyze the electoral tactics of political machines. Her analysis should be of particular interest to both comparativists and Americanists, and it should serve more generally as a reminder of both the promise and pitfalls of electoral democracy.

Argentina reappears in Tulia G. Falleti’s “A Sequential Theory of Decentralization: Latin American Cases in Comparative Perspective.” Decentralization is often seen as empowering subnational leaders at the expense of the central government. Falleti argues instead that decentralization has administrative, fiscal, and political dimensions, the combination of which does not inevitably lead to greater subnational power. Rather, the interplay of sequence and interlevel interests determines the course and consequences of decentralization. Local leaders prefer autonomy, money, and then responsibility, but a different ordering could leave subnational governments burdened with unfunded mandates. Based on fresh ideas and revealing interviews with local officials in several Latin American countries,

Falleti’s study is likely to lead to a reconsideration of widely accepted ideas about decentralization and its effects.

In many established democracies, greens, ultra-nationalists, and other non-“mainstream” parties, once mere footnotes in electoral politics, are “playing with the big boys now.” Bonnie M. Meguid examines the emergence and performance of new, single-issue, or “niche” parties in “Competition Between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success.” Existing explanations, Meguid argues, pay insufficient heed to the mainstream parties’ strategic responses to the threat that niche parties pose to their hegemony. Accordingly, Meguid develops a modified spatial model and uses it to assess the impact of mainstream parties’ strategies on the electoral performance of niche parties in 17 Western European countries.

Notwithstanding Vince Lombardi’s dictum that “Winning isn’t everything—it’s the only thing,” winning elections is only the first hurdle for political parties. The task of governing remains. But do parties really matter insofar as governing is concerned, or—at least in the American context—is party just a label? This question divides students of congressional politics. Much debate has taken place at the theoretical level, with each side ceding little ground to the other. In “Uncovering Evidence of Conditional Party Government: Reassessing Majority Party Influence in Congress and State Legislatures,” William T. Bianco and Itai Sened take the discussion to the next level by evaluating expectations drawn from the competing theories. Drawing on data from several sessions of Congress and several state legislatures, Bianco and Sened conclude that party leaders are more like chessmasters than cat-herders, often using their influence to set the agenda and to structure outcomes in favor of their parties’ interests. These findings constitute an important addition to our understanding of the role of parties in legislatures and provide a foundation for additional research.

Issues involving race and ethnicity are never far from center stage in the play of American politics. Paul Frymer takes contemporary explanations of racism to task for emphasizing individual-level psychological factors at the expense of institutional ones. Making innovative use of data from the National Labor Relations Board’s handling of cases of alleged racism in union elections, Frymer explores how rules, institutions, and politics can contribute to individual acts of racism. Both general readers and specialists in the politics of race and ethnicity will find much of interest in “Racism Revisited: Courts, Labor Law and the Institutional Construction of Racial Animus.”

Other than their shared focus on international relations and negotiations, the next three articles in this issue may seem to have little in common. Each of them,

<sup>1</sup> Drafted by APSR editorial assistant Lee Michael.

however, demonstrates that a human touch is often necessary to navigate safely through various diplomatic pitfalls and obstacles.

In an era of globalization and free trade, governments are often conflicted about honoring international trade agreements, lest they be viewed as insincere abroad, without angering citizens anxious about job security, lest they risk defeat at the polls. This Putnamesque insight underlies B. Peter Rosendorff's "Stability and Rigidity: Politics and Design of the WTO's Dispute Settlement Procedure." Rosendorff argues that the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement procedure enables states to have it both ways by suspending their obligations temporarily during periods of increased domestic pressure for protectionism. Because this analysis assesses the balance between rigidity and stability in the design of international institutions, is likely to resonate across a wide readership, ranging from scholars concerned with institutional design to those concerned more generally with the relationship between the international and domestic arenas and the effect that this intersection has on policy outcomes.

People behave differently—often "better"—when they know they are being watched. That, according to Jennifer Mitzen, is particularly true for diplomats who must explain their country's positions to other diplomats across the negotiating table; the simple act of talking things out in a visible, public forum can "refine and enlarge" views of allies, adversaries, and even enemies. Mitzen's "Reading Habermas in Anarchy: Multilateral Diplomacy and Global Public Spheres" contributes significantly to international relations scholarship by treating horizontal discourse between states as a public sphere capable of legitimating state action and mitigating anarchy, and broadens the theoretical foundation for scholars interested in a wide range of topics, including the security dilemma, global governance, the democratic peace, and discourse theory.

Before trying to scale a high fence, it can help to throw something valuable over the top first; that should enhance the motivation to succeed. Political leaders employ a similar logic when they publicly predict negotiating successes in hopes of precluding unwanted compromises or concessions, argue Bahar Leventoglu and Ahmer Tarar in "Prenegotiation Public Commitment in Domestic and International Bargaining." The structure of the bargaining situation provides incentives to overstate one's goals, which, in turn, should maximize one's potential gains. The danger is that when all parties at the table use this tactic, the likelihood of deadlock is greatly increased. Leventoglu and Tarar's analysis provides a formal proof of the common wisdom that agreements and compromises are best forged in secret, as Middle East peace negotiators, constitutional convention delegates, and sequestered cardinals can all attest.

Large-N or small? Both approaches to comparative research have their advantages and their limitations. In "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research," Evan S. Lieberman offers a much-needed guide for combining the two approaches

in a single research design, in the form of a nested analysis. A mixed strategy of using the large-N approach in case selection and casual inference and the small-N approach to inform measurement and model specification can, Lieberman contends, greatly enhance the methodological quality of research and thereby bolster the validity and reliability of research results.

Few predictions have ever seemed safer than one that was issued in our November 2003 "Notes from the Editor," to the effect that Sebastian Rosato's "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory" would be "sure to stir controversy." The trio of responses to Rosato's article that appear in the "Forum" section of the current issue indicate the great interest and high feelings that surround democratic peace theory. The controversy turns less on the empirical regularity of peace between democracies itself than on the explanation for this phenomenon. Is there something inherently different about the *modus operandi* of democracies, as democratic peace theory advocates contend, or has a *pax Americana* imposed order and stability over Western Europe and the New World during the post-World War II era, as realists like Rosato argue?

In "No Rest for the Democratic Peace", David Kinsella argues that because democratic peace theory is dyadic in its logic, not monadic, much of Rosato's monadically-based analysis is off-target. Branislav L. Slantchev, Anna Alexandrova, and Erik Gartzke, in "Probabilistic Causality, Selection Bias, and the Logic of the Democratic Peace," find in Rosato's analysis an insufficient appreciation of the probabilistic nature of democratic peace theory, and go on to raise concerns about the impact of selection bias on the substantive results that he reports. Returning in "Three Pillars of the Liberal Peace" to the Kantian basis of democratic peace theory, Michael W. Doyle reminds all involved that republican representation, support for human rights, and transnational interdependence work to produce democratic peace only jointly.

Responding to these critiques in "Explaining the Democratic Peace?," Rosato stands by his original points. To Kinsella, Rosato concedes that the empirical regularity on which democratic peace theory is based is dyadic, but emphasizes that the six original logics he identified are monadic. To the methodological concerns of Slantchev, Alexandrova, and Gartzke, Rosato does not disagree that the theory is probabilistic, but sees it as failing even when understood as such; he also argues that new evidence on accountability makes the selection bias charge unconvincing. Finally, Rosato concurs with Doyle that Kantian democracies will rarely go to war but sees their co-pacifism as having little to do with democracy.

This four-sided exchange concludes the discussion insofar as the *APSR* is concerned, but another safe prediction is that it will not conclude the discussion overall. As debate and research continue on the root causes of war and peace, we hope that this "Forum" exchange will play a useful role in clarifying the remaining theoretical, conceptual, and methodological issues.

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