

EDITORIAL NOTES

Manuscripts

The goals and procedures that I have adopted as the new editor of the *Review* are undoubtedly very similar to those of my predecessors. Nevertheless, an initial statement of the criteria used in selecting articles for publication may be useful.

First, and of greatest significance, is the criterion of major theoretical significance. Articles that are published in the *Review* should not simply test hypotheses, apply novel new statistical analyses, construct ingenious indices. To justify space in the *Review* an article must demonstrate explicit theoretical relevance. If there is any consensus across referee reports, it is the requirement that an article speak theoretically and significantly to major questions within the discipline.

To say that an article must be theoretically grounded, however, is not the same thing as saying that it must appeal to a general audience. This is a criterion that some referees have used in assessing articles. An examination of the articles that have appeared in the *Review* in the past four to five years suggests that a single general readability/interest criterion is no longer possible. One of the consequences of a developing, maturing discipline is that it becomes increasingly difficult for researchers in one area to read and appreciate the ideas and results in other areas. This means that if the journal is to service the discipline as a whole, two options are open. The *Review* can become a broad survey vehicle which summarizes key findings in the subfields of the discipline, or it can continue to publish major but specialized research articles and retain reader interest by attempting to represent most of the subfields in any given issue.

Some have agreed that the first option is the direction that the *Review* should take. But such a decision would drastically change a long-standing tradition. Thus we are left, for the moment at least, with a second alternative. Given that the field has multiple subfields and that researchers in any one may at best be interested in or prepared to read articles in only one or two subfields, the *American Political Science Review* must attempt to provide a balance of articles across subfields. Balance, then, will be a second criterion for article selection.

Finally, a third criterion is accuracy. An article should be logically sound in the argument it presents. Statistical analyses should be appropriately and correctly applied. Mathematical results must follow clearly and correctly from stated assumptions. Because political science has become increasingly sophisticated in the methods it uses, the criterion of accuracy is ever more difficult to achieve. When assigning referees to articles, there is obviously an attempt to find readers with the requisite technical background. But this is not always possible, particularly when a new statistical or mathematical approach is used. Consequently, there are times when an article will need to be subjected to two waves of referees. The first wave is a substantive, political science evaluation. If the article passes this phase and contains technical components that have not been adequately evaluated in the first wave, it may then be necessary to subject the study to a more careful statistical and mathematical evaluation.

Book Reviews

My recent duties as book review editor have occasioned reflection on a number of questions. (1) What functions does the book review section serve? (2) What should be reviewed? (3) How should these materials be reviewed? (4) When should they be reviewed? (5) By whom should they be reviewed? I would like to share some preliminary answers to these questions and invite you to share your thoughts with me.

(1) What functions does the book review section serve? One primary function is to apprise political scientists of relevant current research and

its quality. In particular, the book review section should delineate the major and minor research questions asked by political scientists and, to the extent possible, the major questions asked by professionals in our cognate disciplines. Hopefully these delineations will indicate why such questions are relevant to political science and its subdisciplines, how these questions are being answered, the answers offered thus far, and the extent to which these answers are reliable, significant, complete, etc. A secondary function is to provide authors with a professional forum for the dissemi-

nation and discussion of their research. This is a secondary function in part because authors and publishing houses often disseminate some information, in part because a presumptive right of review is not necessarily consistent with the primary function above, and in part because the volume of material being published renders such a presumptive right impossible to implement.

(2) What should be reviewed? Two considerations define the parameters of my answer. First, the materials should serve at least the primary and hopefully the secondary function outlined above. Second, space limitations dictate that we review only one title per three-to-five books received. Recent volumes have reviewed approximately 400 books per year, but the estimates on books received range from 1,200 to 2,000. A number of decision rules help us determine what books will not be reviewed. We do not review second editions unless the revisions are substantial. We try not to review collected essays previously published elsewhere. We seldom review books written for the general or lay public, particularly those already reviewed in popular tabloids. Textbooks and descriptive works present other difficulties. Some textbooks do include original research, syntheses, and analyses. Some descriptive works demonstrate little original research, synthesis, or analysis. Materials falling into these grey areas are examined very closely. As a final check, books not selected for review are itemized, and these lists are distributed to members of the Book Review Board for further scrutiny.

(3) How should these materials be reviewed? The present format dedicates fairly lengthy reviews (700-900 words) to most books and much shorter annotations (50-75 words) for reference materials. To accommodate more books and authors, we have asked reviewers to shorten reviews (600-700 words). Our limited experience suggests that the shorter reviews are crisper, less discursive, and actually closer to the primary function discussed above. We intend to continue the annotation section and hopefully expand the

number of titles covered there. In the June issue we will introduce an experimental section on topical reviews in which a small number of scholars will present current research areas in political science through bibliographic reviews of two or three recent contributions to the literature. We hope to experiment with a similar format on current teaching areas in political science. These essays will range from 1,200 to 1,500 words.

(4) When should they be reviewed? Quickly is the facile answer. In practice, it takes several months from copy editing to release of the volume from the publisher. In addition, it takes time to commission a review and receive a completed review. We are streamlining all parts of this process over which we have some control, ranging from the invitation to review through copy editing. As we work through the current backlog, we expect to commission a review and publish that review within six to eight months from the time we receive the book. Because the vast majority of this time is consumed by the typographer and printer, we need the cooperation of authors, publishers, and especially reviewers. To avoid lengthy delays, we cancel late reviews and recommitment the title. Hopefully this procedure will increase the chances that a book commissioned for review will in fact be reviewed. I regret to say that several people have requested belated reviews of books first published in 1978 or 1979. Although we have attempted to accommodate those whose books were written in 1980, neither time nor space permit us to commission reviews on 1978 or 1979 books. The same limitation soon must be applied to 1980 titles.

(5) By whom should they be reviewed? In a recent issue of *PS* we have asked department chairs and individual members to forward current vita and a statement of current interests for potential book reviewers. We hope to call upon academic and nonacademic members across the profession as well as scholars from cognate fields. Our success here depends upon the amount and quality of information we receive from you.