

# Introduction and Comments

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June 23, 2003

By now, you have developed a routine in which you read *Perspectives on Politics*, cover to cover, within a short time after receiving it. You discuss its contents with your professional colleagues as well as with friends outside the discipline, you include its articles in your syllabi, and you use its insights in your research and writing. You have completed the review that we requested. Perhaps most important, you are putting the finishing touches on a broad, synthetic, innovative, politically relevant, elegantly written draft manuscript that you will submit to the journal very soon.

Such, at least, is our aspiration for *Perspectives*, and with each issue we hope it is coming closer to reality. In the editorial offices, we have moved past the sense of needing to invent everything from scratch, right away, and have developed procedures for handling queries and manuscripts and for making solicitations. We have even progressed so far as to be revising some of those procedures, based in large part on helpful comments from authors, reviewers, and readers. (This comment does not apply to the book review editors, who had well-established routines before they joined *Perspectives*.)

In any case, we are pleased with the lineup for the third issue of *Perspectives on Politics*. Stathis Kalyvas starts us off with a fascinating *tour d'horizon* of civil wars in "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'" He rejects claims that civil wars either result from grand ideological contests or grow out of local idiosyncratic contestations, arguing instead that they encompass both. His goal is to develop an analytically elegant theory of an intrinsically messy and fluid confluence of events; in doing so, he provides us with both an incomparable set of examples of internecine conflict and an array of new research questions that should keep us busy for years.

Keith Whittington and Daniel Carpenter agree with Bill Clinton that "[t]he president is relevant," even in an era of apparent congressional dominance. In "Executive Power in American Institutional Development," they show us how, when, and why the presidency has mattered over the twentieth century. When I was a student, scholars worried about "the imperial presidency"; a few decades later, Congress as well as congressional scholarship appeared to have swept the field; as I now write, the president again appears to be dominant, even imperial. Whittington and Carpenter provide essential historical ballast and theoretical rigor to give a context to these shifts in direction and to show how the efforts of the framers to create a constitutional balance of power actually operate.

In "National Identity and Self-Esteem," Jeff Spinner-Halev and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse accomplish one of the main goals of *Perspectives on Politics*: they bring important arguments from another discipline (in this case, social psychology of groups and self-esteem) to bear on important arguments in political science (here, political philosophies of liberal nationalism). The results are not very pretty, but they are indeed illuminating. Political philosophers who care about how their theories would work in practice—that is, those unlike my friend who describes himself as the kind of philosopher who, when he needs a fact, makes it up—ought to come to grips with the risks of nationalism on the ground. And all scholars who care about not just what happens but how nationalist identities should be judged and shaped need to consider whether liberal and nationalist values can both be promoted—and if not, which should take priority.

While most of the world castigates the United States for behaving (almost) unilaterally in its interactions with other nations, John Ikenberry asserts that the United States has acted and will continue to act in conjunction with other nations, at least most of the time. He explains how and why in "Is American Multilateralism in Decline?" Ikenberry covers an array of international relations issues, ranging from how nations recognize and act on their own interests (and when they do not) to how economic and military security should be understood in relation to each other. He addresses a burning topical question with concepts and arguments that will last long after Iraq has or has not been democratized.

A theme that has appeared in every issue of *Perspectives* so far, and that will undoubtedly continue to appear, is that of the nature, growth, and decline of civil society. Ian Johnson, in "The Death and Life of China's Civil Society," provides this issue's dose of that essential topic. Johnson is one of a rare breed: he is a prize-winning journalist who knows political science and takes it seriously. In this "Perspectives" essay, he shows how scholarship has shaped his reportorial work in China and how it has in his view gone wrong. He tells us much of interest about both China and journalism, opening some windows in our sometimes hermetically sealed ivory tower.

The two review essays in this issue of *Perspectives on Politics* point readers to fascinating books while making important arguments of their own. In "The Racial Retreat of Contemporary Political Theory," Hawley Fogg-Davis calls on political philosophers to incorporate racial or ethnic difference and hierarchy into the core of their theorizing—something that philosophers, who

often operate at a high level of abstraction, have been slow to do. To push them along, Fogg-Davis analyzes a set of new books about African Americans, and non-Anglos more generally, that individually and collectively provide new evidence, new viewpoints, and new theories. She links the increasingly sophisticated literature on race to feminist theory and brings American race theorists into a much-needed discussion with European race theorists.

Benjamin Valentino takes on a more dismal topic, focusing less on theory and more on lessons to be drawn from scholarship for political and policy interventions. In "Still Standing By," he examines four books on the border between journalism and academia that seek to understand how powerful nations such as the United States could stand by and allow members of one group to kill members of another in horrifyingly large numbers. He finds all too many reasons for permitting genocide, in Rwanda as well as Germany or Kosovo, and does not offer much reason to believe that even these wrenching books will make a lot of difference. But he offers the analysis, as do the authors of the books he explores, with the hope that understanding can lead to more effective and appropriate action.

Valentino's arguments about genocide bring us back to Kalyvas's analysis of why civil wars occur, to Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse's evidence on the dangers of nationalism, and to Ikenberry's analysis of multilateralist interventions. Ikenberry, in turn, brings us back to Whittington and Carpenter's demonstration that American presidents can be strong in the arena of

foreign policy. We did not plan this issue of *Perspectives* thematically, but it appears in retrospect that many of our discipline's most exciting thinkers are exercised by connected themes.

The book reviews, as always, are a mainstay of the journal, and I remain grateful to our book review editors and their assistants. In addition to corralling the hundreds of books that flow into their office and the dozens of reviews that flow out of it, they solicited Fogg-Davis's review essay and have other fascinating ones in the works.

Issue 4 is already taking shape. It will include a symposium on Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward's classic book, *Poor People's Movements*, as well as an Oakeshottian analysis of controversial public policy issues, an evaluation of the role of ideas in international relations, a plea for civic populism, and other articles and essays.

As always, the associate editors, the student assistants to the editor, and I are brainstorming about review essays to be solicited, journalists and public actors to be approached for "Perspectives" essays, and public policy issues that need thoughtful attention. We welcome your proposals, manuscripts, ideas, and reactions to articles we have published. To quote the editors of *The New Yorker* (in *Fierce Pajamas*): "[A]s an old bit of magazine wisdom has it, you get what you publish." We trust that *Perspectives* is publishing articles of such an array and quality that you will continue to send us your most thought-provoking and wide-ranging manuscripts.