

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the first-ever February issue of the *APSR*, which, by no coincidence, is also our first book reviewless issue. As indicated in prior “Notes from the Editor,” beginning with the first issue of Volume 97, the *APSR*’s cover dates now become February, May, August, and November, rather than the familiar March, June, September, and December. This change has been made to accommodate the APSA’s new *Perspectives on Politics*, which will be published on a quarterly basis, with its inaugural issue appearing a month from now, in March 2003. Formerly bundled with the *APSR*, *PS* will now appear in your mailbox in January, April, July, and October; by now you should already have received the January 2003 issue. These changes have been necessitated by the complexities of publishing and distributing three quarterly journals rather than two.

The launch of *Perspectives on Politics* is also the reason why book reviews, a staple attraction of the *APSR* in decades past, do not appear in these pages. The book review operation is alive and well, but has emigrated to the new journal, in whose March 2003 issue it will reappear. The new challenge for the *APSR* is to claim, or to reclaim, the attention of those who in the past have opened up the *APSR*, if at all, to keep abreast of new books in their areas of interest. If that description fits you, then I invite you to take a few minutes to browse recent issues of the *APSR*, including this one. If you do, I am confident that you will find something (or, I strongly suspect, several things) well worth reading—and I hope that the exercise will prove habit-forming.

IN THIS ISSUE

In another departure from long-standing practice, the address of the immediate past President of the American Political Science Association does not appear as the lead article in this, the *APSR*’s first issue of the year. The reason is that the interested parties—Robert Putnam, the president who delivered the address, Jennifer Hochschild, the editor of *Perspectives on Politics*, and I—agreed that presidential addresses fall more within the purview of *Perspectives on Politics* than of the *APSR*. Accordingly, President Putnam’s address is to appear in the June 2003 *Perspectives on Politics* rather than here, and in future years the addresses of Presidents Skocpol, Rudolph, and their successors will continue to be printed in *Perspectives on Politics*.

Putnam may be gone from this issue, but he is not forgotten. In our first article, Robert T. Gannett, Jr. addresses the distinctly Putnamian theme of civic engagement. In “Bowling Ninepins in Tocqueville’s Township,” Gannett notes that many scholars, and most prominently Putnam, have drawn on Tocqueville to guide their interpretations of what they consider the distressingly low levels of political participation in the United States today. However, Gannett disputes a reading of Tocqueville as trumpeting the importance of a dense social network that breeds interpersonal

trust, energizing the populace and thereby breeding healthy democracy. That reading, Gannett argues, is not so much incorrect as it is incomplete, for it neglects the distinctly *political* origins of civic vitality. (Hence this issue’s cover graphic: a township hall. As readers will soon see, though, that idyllic image is distinctly out of keeping with the sanguinary subject matter of several other articles in this issue, which deserve an “R” rating for violence.) Gannett’s analysis not only clarifies the meaning of Tocqueville’s work, but also serves as a superb example of how deep familiarity with political theory can enrich our understanding of important contemporary political processes.

An intriguing pairing with Gannett’s reconsideration of Tocqueville is Vincent Phillip Muñoz’s reconsideration of the thought of another icon, James Madison, the “Father of the Constitution.” Proponents of sharply contrasting positions routinely cite Madison on a wide variety of issues, a tendency nowhere more evident than in disputes about the proper relationship between church and state. In “James Madison’s Principle of Religious Liberty,” Muñoz contends that those who have tried to use Madison’s teachings as a guide to the proper constitutional interpretation of church-state relations have consistently misunderstood Madison’s position. According to Muñoz, Madison’s guiding principle was that the Constitution is “religion-blind,” and the implications of that principle for what constitutes an “establishment of religion” or the “free exercise thereof” turn out to differ dramatically from what Madison’s interpreters of various schools of thought have urged. This is a genuinely interesting analysis that specialists and general readers alike will profit from reading, and one that could inform policy debates for decades to come.

Yet another influential figure whose analyses of key aspects of American politics and society have long outlived him was W.E.B. Du Bois, whose writings concentrated on “the problem of the color-line.” In “Unreconstructed Democracy: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Case for Reparations,” Lawrie Balfour addresses a question that “has gone largely unasked in American public life”: “What does the United States owe the former slaves and their descendants?” While conceding that Du Bois himself would not necessarily endorse a campaign for reparations, Balfour nonetheless finds in Du Bois’s analyses several bases for favoring reparations, or, at the very least, for giving the case for reparations a more serious hearing than it has heretofore received.

The likelihood of reparations may seem remote (indeed, Du Bois dismissed reparations as a pipedream), but other policies intended to ameliorate the long-term consequences of slavery and racial injustice are quite real. Race-conscious legislative redistricting and minority-majority districts have been a source of controversy in this country for two decades now, and no cessation of the controversy is yet in sight. In “Black Opinion on the Legitimacy of Racial Redistricting and Minority-Majority Districts,” Katherine Tate uses this

controversy as a means, not only of understanding African Americans' opinions on this important policy issue, but more broadly of clarifying how citizens try to counterbalance competing principles and goals—in this case, a belief in “color-blind” policies, on the one hand, and a desire for greater minority representation, on the other.

The emphasis on conflict—among competing values and/or different groups—that runs through the first four articles in this issue of the *Review* plays out even more starkly in the next six articles. In “No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder Since 1955,” Barbara Harff identifies 35 cases of genocide or political mass murder (“politicide”), analyzes the conditions that gave rise to them, and, importantly, points to specific nations where these conditions are present today. Harff's research warrants serious attention from scholars interested in understanding why geno-/politicide occurs as well as from anyone who is concerned with preventing it.

Estimating the risk of another form of mass political violence, civil war, is the focus of James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin's “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.” After identifying 127 civil wars during the post-World War II era, Fearon and Laitin observe that what puts countries at risk of civil violence is not ethnic or religious diversity, but rather a host of other conditions that give rise to insurgency (defined as a military conflict technology characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas). The conditions that favor insurgency, Fearon and Laitin establish, are “largely independent of cultural differences between groups and even group grievances.” This conclusion bears directly on the validity of widely held interpretations of the sources of political instability and violence, and—like the conclusions reached in several other articles in this issue—has major policy implications as well.

A different form of political transition comes under scrutiny in E. Spencer Wellhofer's “Democracy and Fascism: Class, Civil Society, and Rational Choice in Italy.” Here the underlying question is how a political system can rapidly change from democracy to fascism—a question that has been extensively studied in the context of Weimar Germany. Analyzing Fascist voting patterns in Italy, 1919–1921, Wellhofer turns up evidence that directly contradicts a class-based interpretation and offers only mixed support for a “civil society”-based interpretation, but seems consistent with a rational choice-based interpretation. That is, Fascist electoral successes in Italy appear to have been most marked among those who stood to gain the most materially from the Fascist program—a pattern that Wellhofer chillingly characterizes as the “rational” appeal of fascism.

Similar questions motivate Debra Javeline's analysis of mass grievances and the potential for political protest in transitional Russia. The point of departure for “The Role of Blame in Collective Action: Evidence from Russia” is the observation that when people are victims of severe hardship and injustice, their typical response is to suffer in silence. Only occasionally do

they protest, and when they do, political scientists seem unable to explain why they are acting in this unusual way. Javeline constructs an account that centers on the role of blame, the disarmingly simple idea being that discontent is unlikely to lead to protest unless specific wrong-doers can be identified against whom to protest. This idea performs nicely, Javeline finds, in the case of mass responses to the wage arrears crisis in Russia, and it holds out considerable promise, she argues, for broadening our understanding of various forms of collective action in Russia and elsewhere.

In Branislav L. Slantchev's “The Power to Hurt: Costly Conflict with Completely Informed States,” the spotlight stays on conflict but the scene shifts to the international arena. Slantchev's guiding question is why, given the enormous costs of a war, the combatants delay in reaching a settlement that would end it. The key distinction in his analysis is between a nation's ability to bear the costs of war and its ability to impose them, and the most intriguing result—reached via a sophisticated formal modeling exercise and enlivened by confrontation with several specific historical cases—is that each side will keep fighting as long as it maintains its ability to impose costs on the other side, i.e., as long as it has the “power to hurt” its enemy. As viewed from this perspective, the answer to the question of why nations continue to wreak damage on one another appears to be “Because they can.”

Of course, some wars inflict more casualties than others. Mercifully, while relatively minor skirmishes flare up regularly, particularly brutal wars with many casualties occur infrequently. This tendency has been well known to students of international conflict for more than a half a century, and is so consistently borne out in practice that it seems to be one of the rare instances in political science of the operation of something approaching an empirical law. However, as Lars-Erik Cederman points out in “Modeling the Size of Wars: From Billiard Balls to Sandpiles,” it is an “acute embarrassment” that scholars have generally ignored this lawlike behavior rather than trying to account for it. That is precisely the task that Cederman sets for himself. Employing an agent-based approach, and importing state-of-the-art theoretical advances from physics, Cederman provides an original and compelling theoretical explanation for the “power-law” distribution of war severity.

A certain resemblance in spirit and in substance to Cederman's analysis of wars is evident in Bryan D. Jones, Tracy Sulkin, and Heather A. Larsen's “Policy Punctuations in American Political Institutions.” Here the phenomenon to be accounted for is the tendency of political institutions to produce long periods of policy stasis interrupted by sudden sharp breaks. Incrementalism may be the norm, but the real engine of dynamism comes as a “punctuation” that overcomes the normal “friction” or “stickiness” of political institutions. Jones, Sulkin, and Larsen integrate this interpretation theoretically and distill from it some straightforward statistical implications. They go on to demonstrate that these implications are indeed borne out in a wide array of political phenomena in the U.S., including election

results, media coverage patterns, legislative enactments, and budget outlays. Here, then, is a theoretical approach at once broad enough to encompass political phenomena that are typically treated in isolation from one another; concrete enough to yield specific, testable propositions; and powerful enough to produce accurate predictions.

The perils of producing accurate predictions motivate the final article in this issue. In “Coping with Uncertainty: Analyzing Risk Propensities of SEC Budgetary Decisions, 1949–97,” George Krause notes that uncertainty permeates decision-making in all sectors of government. Focusing on one particular agency, the Securities and Exchange Commission, Krause tests a model of budget requests, the key insight of which is that these requests provide agencies with a means of hedging against an uncertain future. Faced with uncertainty in its political environment and a consequent inability to anticipate the consequences of alternative courses of action, an agency should proceed cautiously, in a risk-averse manner. Krause’s case study of the SEC yields evidence consistent with this interpretation, thus providing initial empirical support for a line of interpretation that should be expected to find broader applicability in research undertaken in a wide variety of decision-making contexts.

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