

SUMMARIES

Referendums: between Liberalism and Democracy. Statements of Worth and Empirical Observations

by Pier Vincenzo Uleri

Is the referendum phenomenon a manifestation of direct democracy and hence rooted in ancient democracy or the result of political conflict within the democracy of today? Are referendums in democracies the first step down the slippery slope to a plebiscitary hell or are they the humus that can foster a wide-ranging diversification of experience while staying within the bounds of modern-day, representative democracies? The author takes the stance that the referendum phenomenon stems from modern-day, representative democracies and does not necessarily jeopardise their stability or legitimacy. As a perfect example of popular sovereignty in action, are referendums to be perceived as more favourable towards society's democratic component rather than its liberal one? The author holds that referendum voting enables both liberal and democratic issues to be faced and discusses Sartori's analysis according to which the referendum is a manifestation of ancient democracy incompatible with the requirements of modern-day democracy, especially concerning matters of a liberal nature. In the area of referendum experiences, the author offers a critique of Sartori's analysis and argues in favour of the compatibility between liberal democracies and referendums.

Surviving without Governing: Israel's Direct Election of the Prime Minister

by Emanuele Ottolenghi

Following a protracted period of political paralysis, in March 1992 Israel's parliament adopted a new and original institutional reform meant to address the political system's shortcomings – mainly a

fragmented party system where small parties were viewed to hold excessive power and where government coalitions were ineffective and costly. The new system – adopted in 1996 and repealed in March 2001 – introduced the direct election of the Prime minister alongside general parliamentary elections whose voting system remained unchanged. This article discusses the nature of the Israeli reform, its impact on Israel's political system as well as the reasons that ultimately led to its early demise. In particular, the article documents how certain shortcomings in the reform – the use of a double ballot, the possibility of by-elections for the Prime minister only, the persistence of the confidence vote and the parliamentary power to vote early dissolution – led to split ticket, party fragmentation, unworkable coalitions, government paralysis and frequent early elections. A discussion of the system's performance in the period 1996-2001 helps clarify why it failed to achieve its goals and why it was replaced with a slightly modified version of the old system in place before 1996.

From Andreotti to Berlusconi: The Territorial Representation of Italian Governments, 1976-2001

by Ugo M. Amoretti

This article examines the territorial composition of Italian governments since 1976. Prior studies, covering the 1948-1976 period, have shown how Italian governments were highly representative from a territorial viewpoint. Their composition reflected the distribution of electors across the country in such a way as to give each region a share of cabinet posts roughly proportional to its share in the overall electoral strength of governing parties weighted by its share of the total electorate. Regression analysis of 1976-2001 data show that, on the whole, this pattern of cabinet seat distribution has not changed over time. From legislature to legislature, however, differences do exist and the explicatory power of this model is somehow limited when applied to the 1996-2001 term. A brand new innovation as compared to the 1948-76 period consists instead of the presence of a growing number of non-MP executive members. However, one, must distinguish between non-partisan non-MP government members and partisan government members who are simply not members of the parliament. The former have been especially frequent during the years 1992-1994; the latter after 1996.

Metaphors and International Relations Theory

by Matteo Stocchetti

The political role of international theoretical discourse is an essential and most contested issue in the IR contemporary debate. The resistance of traditional perspectives to the inclusion of self-reflective elements on the agenda of international political analysis reflects the inadequacy of their theoretical framework to bear with the ambiguous relation between political and theoretical discourse. I argue that metaphorical analysis has the potentialities to offer both an important self-reflective contribution to IR discipline but also to discard its theoretical boundaries – as defined by positivist and neo-positivist assumptions.

Political metaphors establish meanings that frame both political and theoretical discourse. The distinction between these two, albeit possible on analytic ground, is in practice much less tenable and the cognitive representations of each commonly spill over to the other. Once metaphorically established, the meanings attached to these representations play a role that is both influential and latent or, more precisely influential *because* latent. The analysis of political metaphors offers the opportunity to shed some light on, expose and investigate the latent meanings that theoretical discourse assimilates from political discourse and vice versa.

However, the theoretical requirements of metaphoric analysis are not compatible with the main assumptions that constitute the theoretical framework of IR traditional perspectives. In the second part of the article, I present the reasons why metaphoric analysis, while comfortably adaptable to critical and constructivist research programmes, does indeed «threaten» IR disciplinary boundaries – as defined by the realist, pluralist and structuralist triad – but it also offers the opportunity to expand them towards grounds that appear more acceptable both socially and theoretically.