

Abstracts

Reasoning Chains: Causal Models of Policy Reasoning in Mass Publics

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How do people figure out what they think about political issues, given how little they commonly know about them? This article suggests that they rely on aids to judgement, or heuristics. Three heuristics are of particular importance: affect (likes and dislikes); ideology (liberalism/conservatism); and attributions of responsibility (the so-called desert heuristic). The relative importance of these aids to judgement varies with respondents' levels of political awareness and sophistication (as assessed by education). Thus, the policy reasoning of the less well educated tends to be affect-driven (i.e. under the direction of their feelings); of the well educated, cognition-driven (i.e. under the direction of ideology). The causal relations among these heuristics and policy preferences on racial issues are established, initially in a recursive model, subsequently in a parallel set on non-recursive models, which provide an original insight into the reciprocal relations among citizens' beliefs, feelings and policy preferences.

pp. 405–430

Presidential Leadership and the Resurgence of Trust in Government

JACK CITRIN AND DONALD PHILIP GREEN

After declining sharply between 1966 and 1980, trust in government among Americans then increased, attaining pre-Watergate levels by the end of Reagan's first term. This article investigates the causes of the resurgence of political confidence, looking at the influences of economic outcomes, policy preferences and evaluations of presidential style and performance. Our analysis of the 1980, 1982 and 1984 Michigan National Election Studies shows that the president's persona had a significant independent influence on the level of political trust and that favourable opinions about Reagan's leadership skills were particularly important in stimulating a rise in confidence during economically troubled times. After 1982, the rise in trust was sustained by improvement in the economy. The implications of these findings for the debate over whether the decline of political trust indicated a crisis of legitimacy and governability are discussed.

pp. 431–453

Philosophy into Dogma: The Revival of Cultural Conservatism

JEREMY RAYNER

This article examines one form of recent conservative argument: the 'cultural conservatism' connected with the work of Roger Scruton and the *Salisbury Review*. It focuses

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on the claim that a feeling of allegiance to a common culture is a source of authority. The fact that feelings of this kind are often incapable of discursive expression except in the form of myth poses a critical problem for cultural conservatives. To analyse the myths that sustain authority is at the same time to question them. To identify a myth as a myth is to destroy its usefulness in politics, as radical demythologizers are aware. It is argued that this paradox appears in a split between those conservatives who believe in an immutable human nature and those for whom 'human nature' is a convenient political fiction.

pp. 455–473

Searching for an Appropriate Concept of Soviet Politics: The Politics of Hesitant Modernization

RONALD AMANN

Since the end of the Brezhnev era, the rapidly changing and contradictory character of the Soviet political system has become increasingly difficult to interpret by means of existing concepts. Many of the available conceptual approaches that influence our attitudes towards the Soviet Union as well as assisting our understanding offer penetrating insights into particular aspects of Soviet politics, but the overall emphasis needs to be adjusted in the light of recent developments. At the heart of the dilemmas that currently perplex Western specialists lies the constant tension between, on the one hand, a deteriorating economic performance that can only be improved through substantial institutional reform and, on the other hand, the political restraints upon this reform process. The characteristic ebb and flow of reform and of the disparity between rhetoric and reality are indicative, in the author's view, of an underlying 'politics of hesitant modernization'.

pp. 475–494

More Power to the Soviets? Reform and Local Government in the Soviet Union

DARRELL SLIDER

City government in the Soviet Union is unable to influence much that happens within its boundaries. The local soviets are constrained by serious limitations imposed by a centralized administrative system in which most decisions are made by branch ministries. An important experiment, which expands the power of officials over local enterprises, began in 1981 in the Georgian city of Poti. A 'territorial inter-branch association' was created to co-ordinate various economic activities and to concentrate funds to meet production and social needs. The Poti experiment has been endorsed by Gorbachëv and other top Soviet leaders whose promotions suggest that the experiment may be a key element of future administrative reforms in the Soviet Union.

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