

Notes from the Editor

Readers of a certain age who are still able to summon up memories of those thrilling days of yesteryear may recall that the previews for Hollywood movies used to feature such come-ons as “Years in the making!,” “With a cast of thousands!,” and “In living color!” The articles in this issue of the *APSR* may or may not have been years in the making, though I am pleased to attest that the review and production phases of their creation fell well short of epic proportions. Nor, although some of these articles are co-authored, did their *dramatis personae* ever exceed a sub-DeMillean three. As Louis B. Mayer might have said, though, color we’ve got. As usual, our cover shimmers. But this time the color comes in multiple hues rather than the normal monochrome, and the color can be found not just on the cover but in our lead article as well, where the cover graphic reappears along with several multi-color accompaniments. Where, the traditionalists among us may wonder, will it all end? Brightly colored covers were bad enough—but when the next issue of the *APSR* arrives, should three-dimensional scattergrams be expected to pop up out of its pages? Will question-wording appendixes be intoned in the *basso profundo* of James Earl Jones? Will the textual analyses self-deconstruct? The mind boggles; the slope is slippery; a little color is a dangerous thing.

Because my job as editor consists in large measure—though, thankfully, by no means exclusively—of delivering bad news to 90 percent or so of those who submit their work for consideration here, I hope I can be forgiven for what may appear to be an unnatural fixation on bright colors and striking graphics. That is a “fun” part of the job. A source of far greater pleasure, however, is the intellectual diversity of the papers that we publish, and this issue is an excellent case in point. Geographically and temporally, this issue ranges from ancient Athens to the NeverNeverLand of Beita. Methodologically, we have simulation, textual analysis, policy analysis, formal modeling, case studies, symbolic interactionism, high-powered statistical analysis, constructivism—you name it and it’s likely to be here, or forthcoming in our pages. Please stay tuned.

IN THIS ISSUE

Our lead article, the colorful “Secessionism in Multicultural States: Does Sharing Power Prevent or Encourage It?” has a dual agenda. Substantively, Ian S. Lustick, Dan Miodownik, and Roy J. Eidelson’s point of departure is the often-contradictory array of results that have been reported by “small-n” and “large-n” researchers interested in ethnic mobilization and secession. Methodologically, in their attempt to bring some order to this field in disarray, Lustick and his associates pursue an analytic approach—agent-based modeling—that is simultaneously high-tech and highly

compatible with a perspective—constructivism—that is not ordinarily associated with high-tech approaches. This article, featuring one of the first forays of agent-based modeling into a mainstream social science journal, should be of interest to an unusually broad spectrum of readers, and not just for its colorful graphics.

In “The Inefficient Use of Power: Costly Conflict with Complete Information,” Robert Powell maintains Lustick et al.’s (and our discipline’s) focus on power, but sets out in a different direction. Powell wonders why, when players bargain over the costly “pie” of conflict, their use of power fails to achieve a Pareto optimal outcome. Rather than treating asymmetric information as the cause, Powell argues that commitment problems are to blame for inefficient uses of power. Identifying a rapidly shifting environment as a condition of inefficiency, Powell demonstrates how all equilibria of a two-actor stochastic game will be inefficient despite the perceived advantage of having complete information. Powell’s analysis not only promises to provide a starting point for explaining why the use of power produces unintended consequences in various contexts, but also signals the need for additional research to clarify why rapid environmental shifts occur in the first place.

Conventional wisdom about public policy in the United States, especially as it bears on the welfare state, centers on its inertial character—its bias toward the status quo and the difficulty of changing directions once they have been established. However, in an important new analysis, Jacob S. Hacker challenges the conventional view of inertia and what is required to overcome it. In “Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States,” Hacker argues that even in the absence of visible, legislated policy change, substantial alterations to welfare policy can occur through the mechanisms of drift, conversion, and layering—strategies that are used to sidestep political and institutional barriers to outright policy change. This model of policy change, both overt and hidden, has the potential to guide analyses not only of social policy in the United States, but more broadly of policy processes, institutional politics, and political change in a wide array of settings.

“Remodeling the Competition for Capital: How Domestic Politics Erases the Race to the Bottom,” by Scott J. Basinger and Mark Hallerberg, provides an excellent companion piece to the Hacker article. Basinger and Hallerberg want to know why the outcome that would have been expected based on the “race to the bottom” model of interstate competition for capital has not materialized. Based on their analysis of tax policy choices in 20 OECD countries, they conclude that the answer lies in domestic politics. Analyzing policy decisions from a “tournament” perspective, they argue that states take into account not only the tax reforms that their competitors have instituted, but also such

domestic political considerations as ideological resistance to the reforms and the operation of domestic veto players. This analysis, then, turns our attention toward the domestic factors that shape policies resulting from interstate competition for capital and make tax reforms possible.

In “Diverging Orbits: Situation Definitions in Creation of Regimes for Broadcast and Remote Sensing Satellites,” M.J. Peterson operates from an analytical perspective seldom seen in political science, symbolic interactionism, which spotlights interactions among those involved in a particular situation. Peterson’s analysis centers on two simultaneous sets of negotiations concerning cross-border information flows that took place during the 1960s and ended with different results. Rather than simply looking at the immediate interests of the involved states, Peterson (echoing the domestic politics emphasis of the Basinger-Hallerberg analysis) focuses on how domestic actors who were not immediately involved in the international arena came to influence national policies and the international negotiation process. Peterson’s symbolic interactionist approach is the key element in her explanation of the development of a state’s preferences and its behavior in the international arena.

From space in Peterson’s (remote sensing satellites) sense we turn to space in the very different sense of Jonathan Bendor and Adam Meirowitz’s “Spatial Models of Delegation.” Bendor and Meirowitz expand our understanding of when and to whom delegation occurs by modeling delegation in ways that go beyond the assumption of risk-aversion. Especially because their nested family of models helps pinpoint conditions responsible for various outcomes, Bendor and Meirowitz’s approach combines simplicity, rigor, and generality in a model that promises to be a fertile source for future research on a wide-ranging set of issues.

Ancient Athens has long been held up as an exemplar of classical and direct democracy for the modern age. Given Athens’ special importance in Western political traditions, its political arrangements should be of widespread interest, but most political scientists’ understandings of how Athenian democracy functioned are rudimentary at best, and their attempts to use the Athenian case to bolster their arguments about current issues accordingly fall short. In “Athenian Democracy and Legal Change,” Melissa Schwartzberg unearths evidence that the ease of modifying institutions and laws was a defining characteristic of Athenian democracy. Schwartzberg’s underlying premise is that by examining the balance that was struck in ancient Athens between flexibility and innovation and between legal continuity and predictability, contemporary democrats can draw important insights about the merits of their own attempts to balance responsiveness and stability.

The next three articles in this issue all fall into the “methodological” category, and in so doing demonstrate the extraordinary scope of that subfield, which extends all the way from highly abstract treatises about ways of knowing to extremely concrete developments in data analysis technology. In the first of these contributions, Ryan Patrick Hanley reintroduces

Isaiah Berlin’s oft-overlooked consideration of political inquiry. In “Political Science and Political Understanding: Isaiah Berlin on the Nature of Political Inquiry,” Hanley points to the need for moral excellence and “humanism” when solving contemporary political problems, two important points that often fall victim to the pressures of scientific rigor. Hanley’s analysis re-establishes the priority of one of Berlin’s important messages: that social scientists must continue to act responsibly in formulating their questions. As Hanley puts it, “More necessary than method . . . is what comes before method, namely the judgment that enables us to determine which ideas are worth our attention and efforts, and which are—to use a favorite locution of Berlin’s—‘justly forgotten.’”

John Gerring asks and answers two key methodological questions in “What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?” By assessing the virtues and limitations of the case study approach to social science research, Gerring advances our understanding of social science methodology and the trade-offs that confront researchers. Preferences differ: Some political scientists would prefer to explain 10 percent of the variance in 100 cases, while others would prefer to explain 90 percent of the variance in a few cases. Gerring finds value in both types of analysis. Rather than disparaging case studies as a lesser or even primitive mode of inquiry, he argues that they should be accepted as integral components of social science research, complementary to the full range of other social science methodologies.

Closer to the technical end of the methodological continuum is Joshua Clinton, Simon Jackman, and Douglas Rivers’s “The Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data.” The ability to estimate spatial parameters from roll call voting data has produced a burgeoning literature in the past two decades, originally among students of Congress but with important spillovers into other research subfields as well. Continuing to develop these methodological tools, Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers use a Bayesian procedure to “revise and extend” the statistical underpinnings of the now-familiar NOMINATE scores, which have become a key component in quantitative analyses of legislative politics. Their findings demonstrate, among other things, how others can innovate in developing models that are attuned to specific formal and other theories.

In an article that was published in the March 2000 issue of the *APSR*, Nathaniel Beck, Gary King, and Langche Zeng asserted that the widely used and accepted logit statistical model was not the best tool for deriving good forecasts of militarized disputes in the international arena. Instead, they suggested that neural network models are superior for this purpose. However, in “Untangling Neural Nets,” which appears in our “Forum” section, Scott de Marchi, Christopher Gelpi, and Jeffrey Grynviski take issue with Beck, King, and Zeng’s characterization of the logit model and argue that logit models compare favorably to neural network models in terms of parsimony, interpretation, and model fit. Their critique and the accompanying response by Beck, King, and Zeng (“Theory and Evidence in International Conflict: A Response to

de Marchi, Gelpi, and Grynaviski”) shed new light on the relative merits and demerits of these statistical techniques and, in so doing, promise to inform quantitative modeling methods efforts for some time to come.

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