

Notes from the Editor

IN THIS ISSUE¹

The American founders were distrustful of the masses and concerned about controlling their political influence. Might the greater threat, however, emanate not from the “have-nots” but from the “haves” – as symbolized by our cover photo of the fabulously wealthy J. P. Morgan being restrained by a peace officer while angrily swinging his cane at one of his social lessers? In the lead article in this issue, “Contain the Wealthy and Patrol the Magistrates: Restoring Elite Accountability to Popular Government,” John P. McCormick argues that the long-standing preoccupation with controlling the masses is misdirected. Looking beyond the American founders to ancient constitutions for guidance about present-day problems, McCormick provides a typology of measures meant to curb undue elite influence. Along the way, he offers evidence that modern republics are in far greater danger from the excessive influence of political and economic elites than from the discontents and passions of the masses. This is important food for thought for all, regardless of one’s bank balance.

Torben Iversen and David Soskice also focus on economic haves and have-nots, but in the narrower context of electoral politics. In “Electoral Institution-sand the Politics of Coalitions: Why Some Democracies Redistribute More Than Others,” Iversen and Soskice connect theories of redistribution and partisanship with the empirical regularity that majoritarian electoral arrangements favor center-right parties while proportional representation systems tend to produce center-left governments. In government, parties of the left redistribute more than do parties of the right. Thus, electoral systems influence both the prevalence of rightist or leftist governments and the extent of income inequality. Iversen and Soskice’s findings suggest that electoral rules constitute a key mechanism shaping class politics in advanced democracies.

For most readers of the *APSR*, “zombies” may evoke memories of Halloweens past or of low-budget movies about the “undead,” but what do zombies have to do with Japanese politicians? In another consideration of electoral systems, “Electoral Incentives in Mixed Member Systems: Party, Posts, and Zombie Politicians in Japan,” Robert Pekkanen, Benjamin Nyblade, and Ellis S. Krauss argue that parties allocate posts in response to individuals’ reelection needs as well as the parties’ collective interest in maximizing their total share of seats in the legislature. Analysis of the Japanese case enables the authors to overcome the limitations of prior research that has focused on the U.S. because it opens up the question of *how* electoral rules affect legislative organization. If the striking title of this article does not pique your interest, then its substance should, for it addresses issues considered important not only to scholars of Japanese politics but more broadly

to those interested in parties, elections, and legislative politics.

The holding of elections presupposes the presence of candidates who have decided to offer their services to their fellow citizens. That decision – to run or not to run – is the question that Cherie D. Maestas, Sarah Fulton, L. Sandy Maisel, and Walter J. Stone pose in “When to Risk it? Institutions, Ambitions, and the Decision to Run for the U.S. House.” Political scientists have frequently applied variants of ambition theory in their analyses of what drives a politician’s decision to run for office. Maestas and her associates model this decision as a two-stage process, taking into account not only how ambition develops but also whether and when politicians decide to risk their current office to run for a higher one. The article highlights the importance of state legislative professionalism in the emergence of House candidates, and its findings will guide future research in this area.

Once in office, legislators must turn their attention to the consideration of policy issues. Much of what passes for action in a legislative context is talk, and critics often accuse legislators of being all talk and no action. David Austen-Smith and Timothy J. Feddersen, in “Deliberation, Preference Uncertainty, and Voting Rules,” view talking as an integral part of the legislative process that can help committee members make better decisions. Austen-Smith and Feddersen develop a formal model of the effect of decision rules on the quality of deliberation, addressing the specific issue of whether committee members are more comfortable sharing information when a unanimity decision rule is in place. Their results address questions at the heart of the theory of deliberative democracy, making this an important contribution to the growing formal-theoretic literature on deliberation and voting.

The idea that politicians try to divert blame for controversial decisions is commonplace. What seems surprising is that politicians tend to choose legal dispute resolution over bilateral negotiation when they expect their decisions to produce significant dissatisfaction domestically. Adding a layer to Robert Putnam’s notion of two-level games, Todd L. Allee and Paul K. Huth make this argument in “Legitimizing Dispute Settlement: International Legal Rulings as Domestic Political Cover.” Allee and Huth find, based on their analysis of nearly 1,500 rounds of talks concerning disputed territorial claims, that domestic accountability and issue salience are strong predictors of the resort to international arbitration. This article is a must-read for scholars of international institutions and third-party dispute resolution, as well as for those concerned with the effects of domestic factors on foreign policy decision-making.

Turning from elite decision-makers to the general public, Jens Großer and Arthur Schram assess the impact of social context on the decision to vote in “Neighborhood Information Exchange and Voter Participation: An Experimental Study.” In their “participation

¹ Drafted by Editorial Assistant Elizabeth Franker.

game,” Großer and Schram distinguish between early and late voters in order to determine whether turnout increases when the participation decisions of early voters are revealed within subgroups or neighborhoods. Großer and Schram’s experimental results complement, modify, and extend findings from survey-based studies of contextual effects on voting, and should attract considerable attention among political scientists and others generally interested in contextual effects on political behavior or specifically interested in voter turnout.

After reconnoitering neighborhoods with Großer and Schram, we home in on the families who live therein. In “Competing Visions of Parental Roles and Ideological Constraint,” David C. Barker and James D. Tinnick III provide an intriguing account of how family values shape political behavior and constrain attitudes across issue areas. Using data from the 2000 American National Election Study, Barker and Tinnick find support for the idea that “nurturant” visions of parental roles engender egalitarian and humanitarian political values, while “disciplinarian” visions of proper parenting are associated with political individualism and traditionalism. Here, then, is a stimulating perspective on the red/blue “culture war” that in recent years has captivated the media and the popular imagination.

In “Drawing the Line of Equality’: Hannah Mather Crocker on Women’s Rights,” Eileen Hunt Botting and Sarah L. Houser argue that the consensus has wrongly assumed Hannah Mather Crocker was a conservative political thinker who reinforced rather than challenged the idea of “separate spheres” for the sexes. A careful reading of Crocker’s works, though, indicates that she was a more complex and radical writer than has previously been understood, because she relied on subversive rhetorical strategies that subtly and gradually revealed her support for egalitarian principles. This new interpretation suggests that Crocker should be recognized as a proto-feminist advocate for women’s rights and equality whose writings can inform discussions regarding a reconciliation of equality and difference feminism as well as illuminating accounts of the anti-Revolutionary era and the backlash against political radicalism during her time.

What is the relation between between rationalism and politics, thought and action, reason and history? Historicism and esotericism present two opposing answers to this set of questions. In “Esotericism and the Critique of Historicism,” Arthur M. Melzer contends that the Straussian critique of historicism stems from an aspect of Strauss’s thought that might at first seem irrelevant: his theory of esoteric writing. Melzer not only connects historicism and esotericism in such a manner as to clarify each notion, but also demonstrates how the doctrine of esotericism played a crucial role in Strauss’ complex argument against historicism. This important but overlooked connection in Strauss’s thought has the potential to open up new considerations of the tension between historicism and esotericism in contemporary political theory. Melzer’s analysis should command attention from committed Straussians and critics alike, as well as more general readers concerned with broader

questions such as the evolution of classical political thought and the foundations of contemporary philosophical interpretation.

Our May 2005 issue included “Madison’s Opponents and Constitutional Design,” in which David Brian Robertson argued that understanding the results of the Constitutional Convention required a more complex analysis of the politics among the designers, in particular James Madison and Roger Sherman. In this issue, Keith L. Dougherty and Jac C. Heckelman, in “A Pivotal Voter from a Pivotal State: Roger Sherman at the Constitutional Convention,” offer an alternative to Robertson’s personality-centered explanation by focusing instead on the situational power that Sherman enjoyed. In his response (“A Pivotal Politician and Constitutional Design”), Robertson contrasts his original argument and Dougherty and Heckelman’s reinterpretation and concludes by emphasizing the importance of the continued study of political manipulation. This exchange contains the classic elements of the agency versus structure debate, in which it is certain that the last word has not yet been spoken.

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