

## Notes from the Editor

### IN THIS ISSUE<sup>1</sup>

This issue is headed by six political theory articles that provide new evidence, as if any new evidence were needed, of the wide variety of scholarly work that passes under the label “political theory.” By my inexpert reckoning, the first of these theory articles is more or less classical, verging on contemporary; the second is more or less contemporary, verging on feminist; the third is more or less feminist, verging on modern; the fourth is contemporary, of the pragmatist persuasion; and the fifth and sixth are formal. In recognition of this variety, our cover graphic depicts an array of spices—the obvious connection being that variety is the spice of the political theory field, just as it is of our far-flung discipline more generally.

If, as Edward Teller said, “Two paradoxes are better than one; they may even suggest a solution,” then might not three be better still? That, at any rate, is Bonnie Honig’s approach to resolving the paradoxes of deliberative democracy in the lead article in this issue. In “Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory,” Honig uses Rousseau’s paradox of politics (a vicious circle in which good people require good law, whereas good law requires good people) to illuminate two paradoxes: that of democratic legitimation, that is, that a people formally constrained by democratic norms can will freely; and that of constitutional democracy, that is, that the very constraints placed on government serve to strengthen it. Rather than regarding these paradoxes as problems requiring solutions, Honig treats them as symptoms and asks why they hold us captive and what problems they might resolve for us. Honig pursues her arguments with a zest and clarity that should make her analysis fascinating and accessible not only for political philosophers but also for political scientists more generally.

Where does the private end and the public begin? In “The Politics of the Personal: A Liberal Approach,” Corey Brettschneider addresses that question in the context of both liberal and feminist theory. In a refreshing revitalization of some classic feminist debates, Brettschneider explores the works of John Rawls and Susan Okin, arguing that the theory of political liberalism can incorporate contemporary feminist concerns through the medium of free and equal citizenship. This enlightening piece will no doubt be widely cited in future efforts to negotiate the competing demands of the public and private spheres.

In “The Genders of Citizenship,” Stephen T. Leonard and Joan C. Tronto claim that although feminism and republicanism generally share a disdain for one another, given the masculine origins of republicanism and the feminine origins of feminism, gender need not be a divisive issue in critical discourse on citizenship and civic life. Leonard and Tronto examine the

evolution of eighteenth-century conceptions of gender and civic identity and illustrate the unintended consequences, such as the role of politics in constructing gender, for identity in society today. This highly original work should be read by a broad range of readers interested in normative political and democratic theory in general and gender issues in particular.

“Democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried,” or so goes a famous quip attributed to Winston Churchill. In “The Priority of Democracy: A Pragmatist Approach to Political-Economic Institutions and the Burden of Justification,” Jack Knight and James D. Johnson provide a highly original defense of the role of democracy in assessing other institutions, including markets. Knight and Johnson not only bluntly acknowledge the continued existence of irreconcilable differences among actors in a deliberative setting but also celebrate these differences and place them at the heart of their account of the value of deliberation. Unusual for being highly informed by both political and economic theory, this analysis is exemplary in its ability to combine theoretical, methodological, and substantive arguments.

It offered the opportunity to purchase an improved public image for a small price, rational politicians presumably would get in line to buy. Yet in “Scandal, Protection, and Recovery in the Cabinet,” Torun Dewan and David P. Myatt argue that prime ministers face a dilemma when they are considering firing cabinet members who are involved in scandals. The dilemma arises in the prime minister’s choice between protecting or sacrificing cabinet members, for scandal might erupt from personal misbehavior or from the pursuit of policy initiatives that the prime minister favors. In the age of the negative campaign, the line between policy and personal considerations is not clearly demarcated. Importantly, Dewan and Myatt are interested not just in whether a prime minister should fire a cabinet member, though that tactical issue is interesting in itself. Rather, they probe the conditions under which governments can successfully implement a policy agenda. Thus, beyond the important insights that it offers into both parliamentary and presidential cabinet governance, this analysis offers some important and nonobvious lessons for broader considerations of governmental effectiveness.

Recurring political scandals in the United States have led to the enactment of many reform measures aimed at reducing the influence of special interests. Repeatedly, though, these reforms have fallen short of achieving their stated goals. In “Bargaining in Legislatures over Particularistic and Collective Goods,” Craig Volden and Alan E. Wiseman try to explain why, by developing a predictive model of when such reforms are likely to succeed. Volden and Wiseman incorporate both particularistic and collective spending decisions into their model, enabling them to examine both types of choice at once along with the accompanying

<sup>1</sup> Drafted by Editorial Assistant Elizabeth Franker.

tradeoffs. This unified model produces results that are of considerable relevance for students of pork barrel politics and broader legislative studies as well.

Could the influx of special interest money into political campaigns actually lead to better public policy? That idea may sound panglossian, but in “Buying Expertise: Campaign Contributions and Attention to Policy Analysis in Congressional Committees.” Kevin M. Esterling answers it in the affirmative. Central to Esterling’s analysis is the idea that members of Congress who can secure substantial sums of reelection money gain for themselves the freedom to become policy experts and thereby make more informed policy decisions. This result adds to growing theoretical and empirical indications that campaign contributions may have few adverse effects on the policy process and may even contribute to “better” public policy.

When policy changes, to what extent does public opinion follow along? It was widely supposed that the Clinton administration’s welfare reform efforts would have major effects on mass opinion concerning the Democratic Party and poverty efforts more generally. However, in “A Public Transformed? Welfare Reform as Policy Feedback,” Joe Soss and Sanford F. Schram find that the Clinton reforms produced surprisingly little change in mass opinion. To explain this result, Soss and Schram advance a more extensive theoretical framework for the study of policy feedbacks that suggests general conditions under which feedback effects should be more or less likely.

Government agencies are routinely called on to issue projections of various sorts. Some agencies, it seems, err on the side of optimism; others, on the side of pessimism. In “Explaining Bureaucratic Optimism: Theory and Evidence from U.S. Executive Agency Macroeconomic Forecasts,” George A. Krause and J. Kevin Corder argue that this is no accident, for an agency’s level of optimism reflects basic characteristics of institutional design. More specifically, whereas agencies with little turnover at the top tend to be more concerned about maintaining their long-term reputation, agencies with relatively rapid turnover are more susceptible to political influence—including pressures to issue optimistic forecasts. Here, then, is a sophisticated analysis that conveys insights that help us understand political phenomena that we regularly encounter in the daily flow of news.

Yet another entry in the seemingly endless parade of analyses of the rationality or irrationality of voting? Yes, but a rather different one, in the form of David K. Levine and Thomas R. Palfrey’s “The Paradox of Voter Participation? A Laboratory Study.” By using the laboratory to hold other factors constant, Levine and Palfrey are able to isolate three comparative static effects: the size of the electorate, the expected closeness of the election, and the tendency toward greater turnout for the less popular candidate. The conclusion? Voting is not only rational but also highly strategic. This analysis provides new insight into the long-running debate on the rationality of voting, making this article a must-read for both proponents and critics of rational choice theory.

One of the reasons why ethnicity exerts a powerful force on politics in Africa is thought to be that those in power reward members of their own ethnic groups with resources and benefits. Kimuli Kasara argues, however, in “Tax Me If You Can: Ethnic Geography, Democracy, and the Taxation of Agriculture in Africa,” that this supposed patronage dynamic does not necessarily hold in practice. By exploiting the congruence between ethnoregional identity and crop choice, Kasara is able to isolate the effects of government taxation policies. She finds that, contrary to literature-based expectations, farmers in the president’s home area are beset by higher tax rates than those outside of it. Kasara’s research makes significant contributions to the literature on political accountability and ethnic politics in the developing world.

In an article titled “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” which appeared in the February 2003 issue of the *Review*, James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin argued that during the post-World War II era ethnic and religious diversity have not been among the conditions that put countries at risk for civil war. In this issue, Lars-Erik Cederman and Luc Girardin, in “Beyond Fractionalization: Mapping Ethnicity onto Nationalist Insurgencies,” employ a new measure of ethnonationalist exclusiveness that links ethnic political marginalization to violence. Responding to Cederman and Girardin, Fearon, Kimuli Kasara, and Laitin maintain that countries with greater ethnic diversity are not more civil-war-prone, and although countries under ethnic minority rule have been somewhat more likely to experience civil war, the effects are weak and uncertain.

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