Note from the Editors

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The 2024 U.S. elections are bringing to the fore many issues on which political scientists have a lot to say. The essential knowledge, concepts, theories, and methods of our discipline could not be more relevant, and *Perspectives on Politics* is eager to fulfill its "public sphere" role by showcasing cutting-edge research to help make sense of the current moment. In this context, the two special sections in this issue bring together a diversity of works that shed light on crucial issues affecting the course of American politics at this juncture: partisanship, political division, and political communication.

Partisanship and political division

Political division is not only on display in the United States this fall but is also shaping contemporary politics across the globe. The articles in this section explore the nature and consequences of partisanship, underscoring how its enduring significance influences—and reflects—electoral outcomes, policy decisions, and individual behavior in contemporary democracies.

In "What Is It Like To Be a Partisan? Measures of Partisanship and Its Value for Democracy," Kevin J. Elliott investigates the concept of partisanship and its value for democracy. The author relies on tools of empirical political science to improve our normative theorizing about partisanship while also using political theory to demonstrate how to improve the conceptualization and interpretation of partisanship in empirical political science. On this basis, he argues that individuals experience psychological attachment to political parties in various forms, which can be conceptualized in two ways: identity, marked by a strong sense of belonging to a political party, and closeness, characterized by a more detached, evaluative relationship with a party. The study concludes that considering both forms of partisanship has important implications for understanding political participation and the functioning of democracy. Extending these insights more broadly, the work calls for more cross-pollination between political theory and empirical political science.

Shifting to domestic partisanship in "Macropartisanship Revisited," Donald P. Green, Brian T. Hamel, and Michael G. Miller analyze macropartisanship—the aggregate partisan distribution in the United States at a given time—extending to 2021 a previous analysis that examined the 1953–1987 period. While extant research has shown that macropartisanship responds to political and economic conditions, this reflection essay finds suggestive evidence that, over time, it has become less responsive to consumer sentiment. In addition, while macropartisanship is still predicted by presidential approval, these effects subside more quickly than they did in the past. Taken together, the findings indicate that macropartisanship dynamics in American politics may be shifting in an era of nationalized elections and increased affective polarization. In revisiting canonical work in this way, the authors highlight the importance of reassessing whether prior findings remain valid across different time periods.

Jacob S. Hacker, Amelia Malpas, Paul Pierson, and Sam Zacher consider other kinds of political divisions and how contemporary parties cultivate support despite them. In "Bridging the Blue Divide: The Democrats' New Metro Coalition and the Unexpected Prominence of Redistribution," the authors investigate how the Democratic Party in the United States has navigated cleavages within its coalition of poorer metro voters and affluent suburbanites. The authors argue that, rather than focusing solely on cultural and identity appeals, the party has embraced a more ambitious economic agenda. That agenda is bolder, involving increased spending and more active government intervention in markets. It is also broader in scope, in that it covers issues such as family policy, industrial policy, and antitrust regulations, which were not previously prioritized. Based on their analysis of the party's platform from 1980 to 2020, communications on Twitter between 2015 and 2022, and federal policy actions taken in 2021–2022, the authors conclude that Democrats have strategically crafted their economic agenda to offer benefits to their core voters while deftly averting potential conflicts within their diverse coalition.

Another important change in partisanship in the United States is rural populations' growing support for the Republican Party. In "Sequential Polarization: The Development of the Rural–Urban Political Divide, 1976–2020," Trevor E. Brown and Suzanne Mettler seek to explain the origins

and persistence of this rural-urban split. They argue that, rather than stemming from a single source, this division is the culmination of gradual political and economic transformations that have disproportionately favored urban areas while marginalizing rural ones. Marshaling different data sources, the study assesses the timing and sequencing of trends over four decades and identifies several factors contributing to the solidification of this place-based cleavage. Economic decline and job losses in rural regions, coupled with rising educational attainment and greater racial and ethnic diversity in urban centers, led many rural voters traditionally aligned with the Democratic Party to feel neglected by their former political home. In response to these shifts, rural populations increasingly turned to the Republican Party, which positioned itself as resistant to centralized power and major policy changes at the national level.

Mia Carbone, Allison Harell, and Stuart Soroka move the study of political divides from the strategies of political parties to the behavior of citizens. In "Critical Race Theory: How Policy Language Differentially Engages Symbolic Racism and Partisanship," the authors investigate the impact of policy language on public attitudes and the construction of policy. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate how different descriptions of culturally relevant pedagogy impact public support for teaching about race in public schools. The authors hypothesize that the phrase "critical race theory" (CRT) is more likely than other frames to activate not only racial biases but also partisan identity independent of racial biases. Using a survey experiment with 2,020 respondents, the authors find partial support for their theory. While support for teaching about race decreased when CRT was mentioned, the difference between the frames that mentioned CRT, discrimination, or privilege were often negligible. CRT did, however, appear to activate a combination of partisanship and symbolic racism more powerfully than some other descriptions of similar phenomena, particularly among Republicans. This research contributes to our understanding of the power of words in public debates and primary election campaigns.

Sung Eun Kim and Krzysztof Pelc examine the effect of partisanship and polarization on a different outcome: altruistic individual behavior. In "Does Political Diversity Inhibit Blood Donations?" the authors investigate the relationship between political diversity and social capital by studying citizens' decisions to donate blood. Based on responses of approximately 275,000 participants in a Cooperative Election Study survey, as well as an original survey of 3,500 individuals, the study finds that the evidence for the impact of immigration and racial diversity on blood donations is mixed or nonexistent. However, political diversity has a highly significant negative effect. Specifically, individuals are less likely to donate blood when their partisan position diverges from the mean

political identity in their state or commuting zone and when they perceive themselves to be political outliers in their community. These findings reveal connections between ideological polarization and reduced social capital, challenging assumptions about prosocial behavior across partisan lines. More generally, the study contributes to discussions on affective polarization's behavioral effects and the debate on the relationship between trust and diversity in studies on social capital.

In "The Emergence of Right-Wing Partisanship in Poland, 1993–2018: Reconciling Demand-Side Explanations of the Success of Illiberalism," Marcin Ślarzyński closes out this section by taking us from the United States to partisanship in Eastern Europe. Using survey data, this study traces the gradual consolidation of a distinct right-wing electorate over time in Poland. Whereas existing theories attribute the rise of illiberalism solely to shifts in public opinion or economic factors, Slarzynski emphasizes the importance of partisan competition. Analyzing data from the Polish Panel Survey, which has been conducted every five years since 1988, the author reveals how right-wing parties successfully mobilize voters around a coherent ideology and policy platform. The findings question the notion that populism and democratic backsliding are sudden, recent phenomena, and instead highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the development of these trends over time.

Political Communication

The 2024 US elections also highlight the critical role of political communication, and this issue's second special section takes on this topic from a variety of angles.

Opening this section is "Strategically Hijacking Victimhood: A Political Communication Strategy in the Discourse of Viktor Orbán and Donald Trump." Jessie Barton Hronešová and Daniel Kreiss develop the concept of "hijacked victimhood": a communicative strategy in which political leaders present dominant groups as being in danger of subjugation, disappearance, or suffering due to oppression by marginalized and subaltern communities. To illustrate both commonalities and contextual differences in the use of hijacked victimhood, the authors qualitatively analyze speeches by Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Donald Trump in the United States. They find that Orbán has relied on themes of historical suffering, resistance, and battle to target constructed domestic enemies, whereas Trump has claimed economic, religious, and cultural harms in order to target the Democratic Party. Their research provides an analytical framework for further investigation of narrative appeals that invert victim–victimizer relations, shedding light on the intersection between communication and grievance politics, at large.

The question of how leaders use political communication also raises the question of how that communication

resonates within society. In "'The Pandemic Was a Global Exam, and Our Country Came in First': Autocratic Performance Legitimacy in Saudi Arabia," Bruno Schmidt-Feuerheerd analyzes the processes that render authoritarian legitimation claims effective. Examining Saudi Arabia's response to COVID-19, he argues that the government presented broad themes and government successes, which media entrepreneurs and progovernment supporters then further developed and amplified. Analysis of government speeches, media content, survey data, and more than 90 original interviews demonstrate how this performance legitimation discourse generated the societal understanding that Saudi Arabia's pandemic response constituted a unique middle way between China's repressive approach and the West's individualistic disregard for collective well-being. The study encourages research on political communication to go beyond state rhetoric to consider how intermediaries coproduce relational narratives and also trace how societal forces receive them.

"Censoring the Intellectual Public Space in China: What Topics Are Not Allowed and Who Gets Blacklisted?" turns from what leaders say to what they prevent from being said. Xiaojun Yan and La Li argue that, while most research on state censorship in China focuses on popular public spaces, censorship of intellectual spaces follows a different logic. They apply unsupervised machine learning to examine a one-of-a-kind, comprehensive collection of Chinese public intellectual writings between 2000 and 2020. Leaked from a leading website, the database contains 144,280 articles by 28,494 authors, among which 5,406 articles were censored. The authors find that state regulators engage in both "thematic censorship," to block writings that oppose official narratives of national policies, and "persona censorship," to silence completely intellectuals who defy the state's authority by making pejorative remarks about supreme state leaders. Their work encourages greater attention to both scope and context as two factors driving variation in state censorship criteria.

At the intersection of how political decision-makers employ some kinds of political communication and thwart others is the topic of indoctrination. Nevertheless, as Anja Neundorf, Eugenia Nazrullaeva, Ksenia Northmore-Ball, Katerina Tertytchnaya, and Wooseok Kim argue, research on indoctrination has been limited by the lack of clear concepts and comprehensive comparative measures. "Varieties of Indoctrination: The Politicization of Education and the Media around the World" begins by defining indoctrination as a regime-led process of socializing "ideal-type" citizens who espouse the values, principles, and norms of that regime. Applicable to autocracies and democracies alike, this definition supports two interventions: it captures indoctrination's two main dimensions (potential for indoctrination and content of indoctrination) and offers a basis for measuring indoctrination across

its two primary channels (education and media). Building on this theoretical framework, the authors present "Varieties of Indoctrination" (V-Indoc), an original expert-coded dataset covering an array of indices and indicators in 160 countries from 1945 to the present. Their crafting, validation, and application of the dataset offer a resource for future study of how and when regimes invest in indoctrination, as well as examination of its implications for political attitudes and regime survival.

Other Articles

The remaining papers in this issue take on other questions related to rights, democracy, and political science research methodologies.

Myles Williamson notes that many studies treat the LGBT community as a homogenous group, using sexual orientation as a proxy for transgender rights and thus neglecting experiences and issues specific to the latter. "A Global Analysis of Transgender Rights: Introducing the Trans Rights Indicator Project (TRIP)" seeks to rectify this problem by presenting a first-of-its-kind dataset on the legal situations of transgender people in 173 countries from 2000 to 2021. Encompassing hand-coded data drawn from a variety of governmental and nongovernmental sources, the dataset includes 14 indicators that capture the presence or absence of laws related to criminalization, legal gender recognition, and anti-discrimination protections. As a preliminary exploration, Williamson uses the data to examine questions regarding the extent of transgender rights protections, their change over time, the conditions that favor them, and how they compare to the legal rights of sexual orientation minorities. Future work can utilize TRIP data to research still other questions and also empower advocacy organizations and policymakers.

In "Empowering Digital Democracy," Roberta Fischli and James Muldoon trace an emerging literature on what they call "digital democracy," thereby synthesizing works that use different terms and come from a range of disciplines. On this basis, they develop the concept of "decentralized participatory democracy," a new theoretical lens through which to interpret emerging experiments in digital democracy. Bringing democratic theory into conversation with critical data studies, this approach prioritizes questions of power and shifts focus from national institutions to municipal associations and citizen networks that seek to democratize aspects of the state, society, and digital economy. Analysis of the experience of two EU-funded projects, D-CENT and DECODE, moves beyond the primarily U.S.-centric literature on democratic government to highlight the factors that contribute to the success or failure of digital democratic experiments. This study challenges skeptics who question the efficacy of still-incipient digital democratic forms or which reduce them

to merely instrumentalist efforts to increase the efficiency of policy-making. Instead, it encourages us to understand how technology can revitalize democratic governance, empower citizens, and cultivate a more participatory society.

Finally, Rachel A. Schwartz shifts from political questions to the question of political science knowledge production. She notes that it is not uncommon that researchers, upon immersing themselves in the field or facing unforeseen developments there, realize that the original rationale on which they selected their research cases no longer holds. "Embracing the Crisis of Research Design: How the Collapse of Case Selection in the Field Can Uncover New Discoveries" discusses causes of such breakdown of case selection and presents four strategies to help scholars iterate when it occurs: 1) rethinking what constitutes a "case" when fieldwork upends one's understanding of the population to which the original case(s) belong; 2) reorienting the object of analysis from outcomes to processes when new insights cast doubt on the values of the outcome variable within one's original case(s); 3) returning to dominant theoretical models as ideal types for comparison and explanation when unanticipated changes block data or field site access; and 4) dropping case(s) that become extraneous when fieldwork leads to changes in the project's comparative logic. This reflection essay not only provides new guidance on how to recover in the face of case-selection collapse but also encourages more open conversations about research processes in general. It challenges us to rethink the incentives that lead scholars to present research designs as if they unproblematically execute a predesigned plan and instead openly discuss such issues and train graduate students to anticipate them.

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