

Introduction and Comments

James Johnson

We open this issue with a vigorous exchange on a matter that, to put it mildly, is politically fraught. In a series of provocative publications beginning in 2006, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt address what they call “the Israel Lobby” and detail what they see as the dire consequences that that lobby has generated for American foreign policy making. In our lead essay here, Robert Lieberman challenges Walt and Mearsheimer in precisely the way I think debate on their thesis needs to proceed. Lieberman focuses on the causal claims Walt and Mearsheimer advance, the evidence they adduce for those claims, and the ways that their arguments fit with established research on how American politics operates. Mearsheimer and Walt have written a spirited response to Lieberman who, in turn, offers a brief reply. It is safe to say that neither party to this exchange has persuaded the other. Yet, though their exchange is frank, both Lieberman and Mearsheimer and Walt keep their eye on the ball—they are concerned to establish whether and to what extent the Israel lobby exists and operates in the way Mearsheimer and Walt claim it does.

In our next two contributions Ido Oren and Piki Ish-Shalom step back from the first-order debate that we see in our opening exchange. Oren wonders how realists like Mearsheimer and Walt can consistently take part in debates over policies and ideas, given their own views about how recalcitrant political reality is in fact. Ish-Shalom raises questions that are perhaps even broader. He is concerned to assess the extent to which political theorists are responsible for the sometimes strange careers their academic research may take on once it is appropriated by various agents in the “real” world of politics.

In the next essay in this issue Debra Candreva asks us to consider the writings of Joseph Conrad for what they can contribute to contemporary debates over imperialism. On a personal level, I am especially pleased to see this paper appear in print. I participated on a panel where Candreva presented an early version of this essay, encouraged her to consider submitting it to *Perspectives*, and have watched as she refined her argument through the editorial process. Following Candreva, we have another political theorist, Ben Berger, who hopes to persuade political scientists to

retire the concept of civic engagement. He recommends that we replace it with a finer-grained set of concepts that will facilitate our understanding of the ways—political, social, and moral—in which Americans interact. Only then, he suggests, can we grasp the ways various forms of engagement might work to sustain democratic politics.

The final contribution to this issue is a “Perspective” in which John Carey reflects on the ongoing political and legal travails of Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé who has served as both Chief Justice of the Bolivian Supreme Court and as president of the country. Carey writes against the background of his own field research as well as informal correspondence with Rodríguez himself and, placing the former president’s predicament in a broader framework, raises pointed questions about the possibility that political actors, whether in Bolivia or here in the United States, might take steps to mitigate it. I am pleased to publish this short essay not just because it addresses a topic of practical political import and broad substantive interest, but also precisely because, by departing from the sort of familiar academic paper with which political scientists are most comfortable, Carey is pushing us to expand our repertoire. That is the sort of intellectual work I hope *Perspectives* will continue to encourage.

This is the final issue of *Perspectives on Politics* that will appear during my term as editor. I wish Jeff Isaac the best as he takes over the journal. Jeff has done a masterful job with the book review section over the past four years and I am confident that he will be a wonderful editor in chief. I want to thank all the editorial assistants who have worked with me here in Rochester, all the colleagues who have served as Associate Editors and, especially, Linda Lindenfesler, who has worked so hard as Managing Editor. This is the second time Linda has lent her organizational and editorial skills to a journal of the association. We are all in her debt.

My own experience at the journal has been decidedly mixed. On the one hand I have very much enjoyed working with and learning from many of the authors who,

successfully or not, have submitted their work in hopes we might publish it. Whenever anyone has asked how things are going with the journal, I have tried to make clear that I truly value the opportunity to work with colleagues as they seek to move their research from their office or the conference circuit into publishable form, and then to print. I am proud of the work that has appeared in *Perspectives* during my term. On the other

hand, editing *Perspectives* has provided more exposure to the politics of our profession and of the American Political Science Association than anyone really needs to have. And there have been times, I must honestly say, where I felt that that politics threatened the operation of the journal. My sincere hope is that such episodes are now safely past.

Notes from the Managing Editor

Correction

In the Table of Contents of the March 2009 issue of *Perspectives on Politics*, the author's name for the Presidential Address was misspelled. The Address was written by Dianne Pinderhaughes.

Forthcoming

The following articles and essays have been scheduled for publication in a forthcoming issue of *Perspectives on Politics*.

Christopher M. Duncan. "The Christian Right's Postmodern Turn: Sometimes Satan Comes as a Man of Peace."

Henry Farrell, Eric Lawrence, and John Sides. "Self-Segregation or Deliberation: Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics."

Brian J. Gaines and Jeffrey Jenkins. "Apportionment Matters: Fair Representation in the U.S. House and Electoral College."

Robert E. Goodin and James Mahmud Rice. "Waking Up in the Poll Booth."

Leslie McCall and Lane Kenworthy. "Americans' Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality."

Lawrence M. Mead. "Scholasticism in Political Science."

Mariah Zeisberg. "Should We Elect the U.S. Supreme Court?"