

Review Editor's Introduction

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The constant stream—deluge might be a better word—of new books making their way to our offices makes vivid, on a daily basis, how productive is our discipline. There is so much work being done, on such a range of topics and employing such a range of approaches. And—as we have understood ever since Thomas Kuhn—while academic fields and subfields most assuredly are organized in part to channel and “discipline” such intellectual energies, the contemporary academy is at the same time a space of extraordinary intellectual diversity. There is no overall “plan” to this outpouring of ideas, no single “method” to the madness that drives us continually and persistently to research and write, to revise and resubmit, and to enter the fray with ideas that, at their best, will prove their true worth by serving as fodder for the next generation of scholars.

At the same time, it is possible to discern certain overarching preoccupations and themes and also, by calling attention to these themes, to enhance their visibility and thus nurture further attention to them. I have used my Editor's Introduction to the Book Review to do precisely this, and in my new job as Editor-in-Chief, I will continue to use my Editor Introduction to offer my perspective on the scholarly perspectives on politics contained in these pages.

Amidst the broad range of topics covered in the Book Review in recent years, a few recurrent themes stand out. Three of them are well addressed in the current issue: the dynamics, structuration, and limits of democratization; the transnationalization of politics; and the role of ideas, including academic ideas, in these processes.

Gerardo L. Munck's review of Carsten Q. Schneider's *The Consolidation of Democracy: Comparing Europe and Latin America* focuses both on broad questions of democratic transition and consolidation, and methodological questions of conceptualization and measurement central to the comparative study of democratic transition and consolidation. Brett O'Bannon's review of three books on challenges of democratization in Africa accentuates these questions (many of which were raised by the contributors to last issue's symposium on Robert Bates's *When Things Fell Apart*). Similar questions are also addressed in the reviews of Bruce K. Rutherford's *Egypt after Mubarak*:

Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World, and Daniel McCool, Susan M. Olson, and Jennifer L. Robinson's *Native Vote: American Indians, the Voting Rights Act, and the Right to Vote*.

The latter book in particular makes clear how protracted is the process of “democratic consolidation” in even the most supposedly “consolidated” democracies, and how powerful are the obstacles to political inclusion. Such obstacles to democratization have been the focus of some of the most interesting recent work in comparative politics which, in focusing on the ways in which authoritarian regimes can sustain their own forms of equilibrium, have helped to call into question some of the teleological assumptions behind much of the scholarly and public discourse about “transitions to democracy” (a theme raised in a famous 2002 *Journal of Democracy* essay by Thomas Carothers entitled “The End of the Transitions Paradigm”). Jennifer Gandhi's *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*, and Tom Ginsberg and Tamir Moustafa's anthology *Rule by Law: The Politics of Courts in Authoritarian Regimes*, both reviewed below, are important recent contributions to this ongoing discussion.

At issue in these discussions is not simply how we understand and categorize the domestic politics of a range of nation-states that arguably fall “short” of certain conceptions of “democracy, but also the ways that the dynamics under consideration elude the very boundaries of the nation-state. Whether such “transnational” dynamics are conceived as questions of “world politics” or “globalization” or “foreign policy,” they are being addressed with increasing frequency by political scientists, as evidenced by many of the books reviewed below. Antje Weiner's *The Invisible Constitution of Politics: Contested Norms and International Encounters*—reviewed in our International Relations section—and Daniele Archibugi's *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy*—reviewed in our Political Theory section—both address the global diffusion of norms (in his review of the latter book, William Scheuerman poses some skeptical questions about the limits of normative diffusion). Mary Ellen O'Connell's review of Mark Gibney's *International Human Rights Law, Returning to Universal Principles* and Thomas G. Weiss's *Humanitarian Intervention*:

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Ideas in Action deals with a similar set of issues from the standpoint of international law. A number of books approach the global transmission of “democratic” norms in a more *realpolitik* vein, treating this as a question of the foreign policy of states and international actors, especially the U.S., seeking to enhance their power on the world stage. In different ways Alice Amden’s *Escape from Empire: The Developing World’s Journey through Heaven and Hell*, Jeffrey T. Jackson’s *The Globalizers: Development Workers in Action*, Benoit Challand’s *Palestinian Civil Society: Foreign Donors and the Power to Promote and Exclude*, and Thomas Legler, Sharon F. Lean, and Dexter S. Boniface’s anthology *Promoting Democracy in the Americas* each contribute to this discussion. Peter Andreas’s *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* is a particularly interesting account of the way in which the global politics of “humanitarian intervention” can institute perverse incentives for the prolongation of conflict.

The issue at stake here is at least in part the unintended consequences of our practical interventions, and the role of academically-based scholars in promoting such interventions, for good and/or ill. This topic is addressed by two engaging books reviewed below by Eric M. Patashnik—Lawrence D. Brown and Lawrence R. Jacob’s *The Private Abuse of the Public Interest: Market Myths and Policy Muddles*, and Bryan D. Jones and Walter Williams’ *The Politics of Bad Ideas: The Great Tax Delusion and the Decline of Good Government in America*—both of which underscore that arguments for “non-intervention” can be as consequential, in intended or unintended ways, as arguments for “intervention” (in this regard both books are reminiscent of Albert Hirschman’s now-classic 1991 book *The Rhetoric of Reaction*). The ethics of responsible intellectual engagement in public life are addressed in a more constructivist vein by Elizabeth K. Minnich’s review of Albert W. Dzur’s *Democratic Professionalism: Citizen Participation and the Reconstruction of Professional Ethics, Identity, and Practice* and Robert J. Lacey’s *American Pragmatism and Democratic Faith*.

These discussions make clear that we social scientists are most assuredly part of the world that we study, and that our research too is a part of this world. At its best,

this work helps to enhance intelligent public discussion and debate and to promote constructive political engagements, whether collaborative or contentious. In my opinion Nancy Rosenblum’s *On the Side of Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* and Dara Z. Strolovitch’s *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics* represent political science at its best, which is why we have chosen to add both to the list of books around which we organize featured symposia. Both books exemplify scholarship that links empirical, theoretical, and normative concerns. Both deal with questions of political representation, the democratic strengths and drawbacks of political contention and the channeling of contention through conventional routes, whether parties or interest groups (and Rosenblum seems more sanguine about the former than does Strolovitch regarding the latter). The books nicely complement each other in a substantive and a “generational” sense. Rosenblum’s is the work of an established scholar, and represents a further exploration of the role of particularity in democratic life developed in a number of previous works. Strolovitch’s is the first book of a recently tenured Associate Professor (it is also the winner of the American Political Science Association’s 2008 Gladys M. Kammerer Award for the best book in the field of U.S. national policy, the Leon D. Epstein Outstanding Book Award from the Political Organizations and Parties section of the American Political Science Association, the 2008 Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Book Award from the American Sociological Association’s section on Race, Gender, and Class, and the 2008 Virginia Hodgkinson Research Prize awarded by ARNOVA and Independent Sector for the best book on philanthropy and the nonprofit sector that informs policy and practice). The two symposia published below feature some of the top scholars in American political science working in and across a number of subfields. And they exemplify the advantages of vigorous and constructive dialogue and debate in our profession. We promise much more of this in future issues of *Perspectives*. And this seems like a fitting thought with which to conclude this Introduction, and my tenure as Book Review Editor. An ending that is also a new beginning, as the best endings always are.