SYMPOSIUM

Perestroika in Political Science: Past, Present, and Future

Editor's Introduction

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Anniversaries, for good or ill, are often hard to ignore. The finiteness and roundness of a century proves almost too irresistible for us to not stop and try to derive some sense of accomplishment and meaning from our individual and collective efforts. The recent 100th anniversary of the *American Political Science Review* in 2006, for example, proved too much to ignore and, as a result, provided us with just such a reckoning (see, e.g., Sigelman 2006). As alluring as the end of a century is for such reminiscing, this impulse is even more forceful at the end of a millennium. Such a closing represents a chance for letting go of the past, gaining some sense of forgiveness, and with the hope of constructing a new future, taking a chance to begin again. This notion of renewal and change was very much on the mind of the individual behind the original "Perestroika" e-mail, circulated in the fall of 2000. In the e-mail, Mr. Perestroika called into question the relevance of the APSA and the *American Political Science Review* (*APSR*), questioned the narrowness of our methods, and bemoaned the whiteness and maleness of most of the leadership positions within the discipline. The new millennium seemingly called for a new approach to the study and practice of political science that would move us away from the "coterie" of "East Coast Brahmins" who dominated the APSA and *APSR*. The tenth anniversary of Mr. Perestroika's e-mail offers us a chance to reflect on and revisit the millennial promise of the Perestroika movement, examine its impact upon the discipline, and assess the nature of its future.

The following articles examine the history, impact, and practice of the Perestroika movement over the past 10 years. They are written by self-ascribed Perestroikans, former Perestroikans, and those simply interested in the history of the discipline. Luke and McGovern provide an historical context for the movement by examining the founding of the Caucus for a New Political Science, the Women's Caucus for Political Science (WCPS), and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS), as well as looking at each movement's success in APSA elections and peer-reviewed publications. Although the authors find some short-term success in publications and elections, long-term, revolutionary change is much more challenging and difficult to assess. Kasza, following up on previously published research in this area, examines the content of the *APSR* and the *American Journal of Political Science* (*AJPS*) to assess changes in their content during the years following Mr. Perestroika's e-mail. Much of the substantive dialogue of the early years of the Perestroika movement consisted of calls to open up the journals to nonquantitative approaches to political science and for editorial boards

The authors argue that many of Perestroika's concerns regarding methodological pluralism have been subsumed by the activities of the newly-created Qualitative and Multi-method Research section in the APSA. However, the potential successes of this section in meeting Perestroika's demands for change may be compromised by ongoing journal practices, research regulations, management and productivity measures, and other activities that challenge the legitimacy of non-quantitative practices.

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to recognize a broader array of methods. While the *APSR* under the editorship of Lee Sigelman did see a modest increase in the number of qualitative articles, more recent volumes of the *APSR* and *AJPS* have shown a decrease. Kasza argues the need for collective editorships with greater qualitative representation if qualitative articles are to have a real chance of publication. Jeffrey Isaac's article is a response to Kasza's piece, and while sharing his concerns regarding pluralism in the discipline and its journals, Isaac is puzzled by Kasza's failure to include in his analysis the journal *Perspectives on Politics*. Isaac, the current editor-in-chief of *POP*, argues that much of what Perestroika argued for may be found in *POP*'s pages. Moreover, he notes, *POP* is funded and published by the APSA and is a substantial, important journal. As such, Isaac believes that there has indeed been appreciable change within the discipline, for the better, over the last 10 years. Kasza's subsequent response to Isaac is that his focus was on change within the journals Perestroika targeted for critique; *POP* was not among them. Additionally, *POP*'s existence does not, he argues, change the fact that the *APSR* remains essentially hostile to qualitative concerns within the discipline. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea examine another target of Perestroika's attention: methodological practices with respect to teaching, publishing, and hiring within the discipline. The authors argue that many of Perestroika's concerns regarding methodological pluralism have been subsumed by the activities of the newly-created Qualitative and Multi-method Research section in the APSA. However, the potential successes of this section in meeting Perestroika's demands for change may be compromised by ongoing journal practices, research regulations, management and productivity measures, and other activities that challenge the legitimacy of non-quantitative practices. As such, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea conclude that Perestroika's voice is still needed. Rudolph and Rudolph also explore the discipline's practices in their article "Economics' Fall from Grace." They focus on how many political scientists have envied economics because of its claim to be scientific, like physics. After the 2008 recession discredited this claim, some political scientists still continued to believe that the discipline can predict behavior because of its ability to discover lawful regularities that are independent of context. Monroe and Sadiq assess the continuing need to allow graduate students further time to conduct international, cross-cultural research and the challenges regarding the perceived value of such work. Scott and Smith agree that Perestroika was right to confront the discipline's methodological parochialism. But, they argue, Perestroika failed to address some greater inequities: the profession and academia cater to some researchers who do little teaching and neglect the needs of many members who are required to do too much. Scott and Smith believe that these problems compromise the core mission of political science. Finally, Caterino provides a critique of the movement for having failed to follow up on its original promise of making the profession relevant. He believes that the decision to have candidates run for APSA office ultimately undermined the grassroots character of the movement, shifting it away from its early practical engagement with political concerns outside the academy to leadership and career concerns within it and ultimately compromising its raucous spirit of change.

There are, of course, limits to trying to assess a movement as broad and deep as Perestroika. Many voices, approaches, desires, and positions fell under and are still claimed by the movement. There is no one voice or clear dogmatic position that prevails. In this symposium, we clearly have not addressed all the intricacies and intrigue that Mr. Perestroika's e-mail message generated. The articles here, as noted previously, are written by both those who have been involved with the movement from the beginning and others who have not been involved directly. Much of what is presented here was simply perceived by the authors to be the most important elements to review in the 10 years since the e-mail went out in late 2000. As Kristen Monroe points out in her edited work on the subject, "Perestroika raised complex issues, and the contributors vary in their positions on some of these issues" (2005, 2). That observation holds for this symposium as well. These articles are not a final judgment on the movement, but rather constitute an attempt to assess the impact that Perestroika has had on the discipline and the role that it might have in fashioning its future course. ■

NOTE

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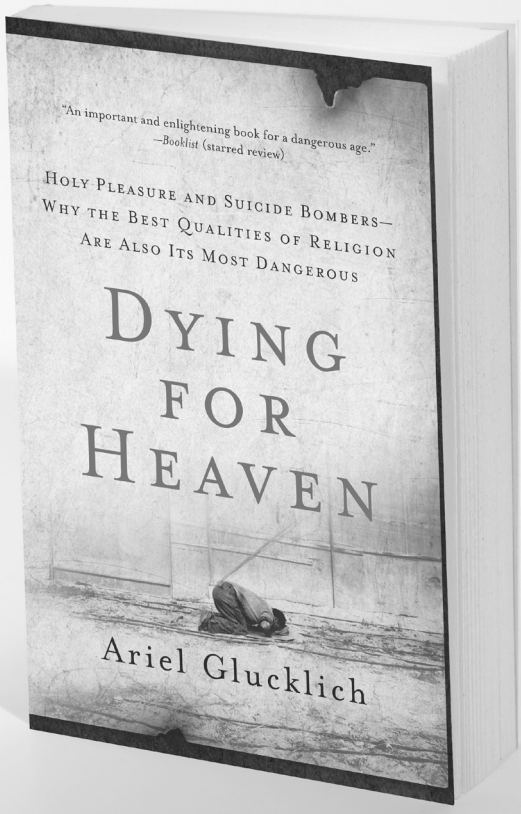
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